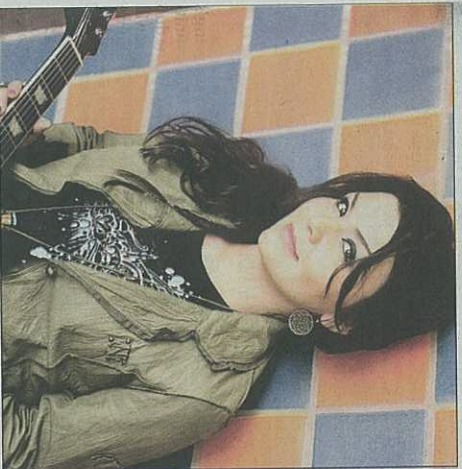




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Featured Artist



**Crystal Shawanda**  
'Onanigwendanda'

She has deep roots in this continent, roots that go back more than mere generations but drill through cultures and changes in the landscape. Maybe that's what informs Crystal Shawanda's voice full of old soul; maybe that's her musical divining rod.

A member of Ontario's Ojibwe reserve on Manitoulin Island, Shawanda's dad was a trucker whose route frequently took him through Nashville and she loved to ride shotgun. Always a singer and ever a country fan, at 13 she got up and sang a song at the famous Tooniste's Orchid Lounge, historic saloon stop for country music ancients like Webb Pierce, Patsy Cline and Willie Nelson. The owner was so taken with her he said she could come back anytime. She did, frequently.

After a decade of hard work she was signed to a Sony/BMG recording contract resulting in her *Dawn of a New Day* album — the English translation for Shawanda —

and the release of singles like "You Can Let Go."

"That was a huge deal for me," she says. "It was about recognition and these wonderful people who opened a door for me and embraced my music."

For our inaugural featured Artist segment, "Onanigwendanda," a traditional Christmas song in the Ojibwe language. She remembers it from her hymn book.

"It's essentially about what all other Christmas songs are about: love and joy. I was taught the song when I was a little girl and I used to sing it for my grandparents and at the nursing home. My mom explained that when the language was lost among the younger generation, sometimes the elders missed it, they got homesick for it. It'd always notice the look on their faces when I sang this, it took them far away."

— **John P MacLaughlin**  
[jpmac@gmx.net](mailto:jpmac@gmx.net)

# No fear of a silent night here

Also on the Province Playlist this week



**KENNY HESS**  
'Christmas Dishes'



**DAN BEER**  
'Christmas Time on the Other Side'



**JOE STANTON**  
'12 Days of Christmas'



**JUANITA**  
'Sounds of Christmas'



**MELISSA RAE**  
'Anne My List'



**THOMAS DONOVAN**  
'All We Need for Christmas'



**KAREN FOWLE**  
'Christmas is Tomorrow'



**HILARY GRIST**  
'Branch's Arms'



**SUE IRVING**  
'Silent Night'



**LINDSAY MAY**  
'Reindeer Touch Down'



**ANDREW ALLEN**  
'I Wanna Be Your Christmas'



**SEAN HOGAN AND FRIENDS**  
'It's Christmas Time'

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Featured Artist



**John Lee Sanders**  
'Christmas With the King'

"This was long before he moved on to Graceland and none of us ever saw him again. Sure, he was huge, but he was also just one of the guys in the neighborhood.

"He and the family had moved in from the projects to this middle class part of town and one day I went over to the house and knocked on the door and his Dad, Vernon, answered and he gave me a tour of the house and Elvis' room and I saw his guitar collection."

About four years ago while driving back to the Okanagan from California, he hit upon the idea of a song about a down-on-his-luck musician who is hitchhiking and gets a ride in almost on some Tennessee backroad. He is taken to this mansion, Graceland, and winds up having dinner with Elvis.

"The family used to go to look at the holiday lights at Graceland and we all knew the great American rags-to-riches story and used to wonder what it would be like having Christmas dinner there. What I came up with was this song that is a

bit of *It's a Wonderful Life* meets rock 'n' roll."

Sanders says that the song incorporates gospel tinges and a bit more of a traditional structure than the straight-to-the-guts blues he makes his bread and butter with.

A graduate of the renowned music program at North Texas State University in Denton, he's played all over America and Europe. From tours with Long John Baldry's band — which first brought him to B.C. — to dates such as a recent one in Washington, D.C., with such songwriting aces as Jimmy Webb or last week's fundraiser for the Kelowna Film Festival with Keith Emerson of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Sanders is always up for the gig.

This year he won three British Columbia Interior Music Awards for his latest CD, *Bucket Full of Blues*. Check out more information on John Lee Sanders on the Province Playlist and [johnleesanders.com](http://johnleesanders.com).

— **Stuart Derden**  
[stderden@theprovince.com](mailto:stderden@theprovince.com)