

## Reflections on the Pan Canadian Symposium

Joan Russell

McGill University

I am personally acquainted with colleagues from other countries, but although names of Canadian colleagues are familiar to me, the London Symposium was the first opportunity I've had to put faces to names, to have glimpses of personalities, speaking styles, scholarly interests and concerns. The experience of the symposium has reinforced for me the folly of thinking that there is *a* Canadian experience of music education and a Canadian perspective on music education. It was also an opportunity to discover that there are lots of colleagues across the country who have interests, purposes, perspectives, values and practices that are similar to mine. It is always gratifying to know that one is part of a larger community of practice.

I was glad to meet up once again with my colleagues from Laval University. This contingent, comprising a francophone Québécois, an Anglophone originally from Manitoba, and a colleague from Spain, is a microcosm of the cultural mosaic that makes up this country. The University of Laval is surely fortunate to have such a multicultural mix of professors in the area of music education. It made me think about the importance having access to multiple perspectives and experiences in our post-secondary institutions.

Listening to people present their reports on their respective provinces was valuable because of what we could learn about what goes on in other parts of this large country. Getting together with the same people over dinner generated different insights and impressions. My favourite was dinner at a large round table with some of the

Russell, J. (2007). Reflections on the Pan-Canadian Symposium. In K. Veblen & C. Beynon (Eds. with S. Horsley, U. DeAlwiss, & A. Heywood), *From Sea to Sea: Perspectives on Music Education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/musiceducationebooks/1/>

Maritime representatives. It was an opportunity for me to chat face-to-face with folks whose works I've read and whose articles I've assigned as readings for my students. Things I've been doing with my students provoked interest; invitations to visit were proffered. I hope to take advantage some day. During this chance meeting, I was able to obtain insider information on a book chapter that I am writing on integration of the arts across the curriculum. One of my favourite activities is singing – singing in public, spontaneously. But this doesn't happen very often, even when I am with musicians, which never fails to surprise me. In Bertoldi's, an Italian restaurant in London, while waiting to be served, I joined in singing with Newfoundlanders who were at the table. This is a common practice in Newfoundland; I wish it were common elsewhere. In many parts of the country reluctance to sing spontaneously in public places suggests we've lost part of our soul as musicians and as leaders of musical experience in this country. Why don't we sing? Are we afraid that our singing will be assessed and found wanting?

Shifts and changes in Québec schools in the last 40 years reflect huge social changes, expectations and practices. Music education in the Anglophone sector – and I can speak only for the Anglophone sector - is now recovering from these shifts, and the caliber of students we are getting at McGill – from within Québec and from other provinces – is of such a high standard that it makes me very optimistic for the future of music education in the English schools in this province. Music teacher education at McGill attracts a large proportion of out-of-province students: they bring their perspectives from their parts of the country, and they learn new ones from immersion in Montréal's dynamic and diverse cultural milieu.

I like the idea of a national symposium, for it brings us together in a space and place, and it gives us a sense that we are part of a larger whole, a mosaic of different situations, cultures, and languages.