Decolonizing Music Education: A Journey of Reflection and Reconciliation

Eric J. Zwicker, Western University

Supervisor: Hodgson, Jay., The University of Western Ontario
Co-Supervisor: Toft, Robert., The University of Western Ontario

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Abstract

This research-creation project explores the journey of an Indigenous music scholar seeking to decolonize music education by embracing Indigenous methodologies and reflecting on their identity and culture throughout the music-making process. Drawing inspiration from Indigenous stories, knowledge, and cultural practices, the researcher creates a musical artifact as the central outcome of the project, which highlights the significance of music as a form of reconciliation.

The researcher emphasizes the value of practice-based creative processes within research-creation, highlighting the paradigm's compatibility with Indigenous ways of knowing. The project advocates for research-creation as a pathway that leads to a more diverse and authentic representation of culture and music in education, thus contributing to reconciliation.

This research journey reflects on the complexity of decolonizing education, discussing the need for inclusive and accessible learning environments that honour differing cultural perspectives. By acknowledging and respecting Indigenous stories and music, the researcher argues for a shift away from standardized perspectives imposed by colonial constructs and toward recognizing unique expressions of culture through music as methods that lead to new knowledge.

Ultimately, the project underscores the importance of listening, respecting, and engaging in meaningful conversations with Indigenous communities to ensure research-creation artifacts contribute to reconciliation efforts. By integrating Indigenous methodologies to decolonize music education, this project advocates for a future where
all individuals can learn from and share cultural knowledge, fostering a sense of unity and respect among diverse communities.

*Keywords: research-creation, reconciliation, decolonization, practice-based research, practice-led research, reflexivity*
Summary for Lay Audience

This research-creation project follows my journey to decolonize music education. I use Indigenous stories, knowledge, and practices to create music that promotes reconciliation. The project advocates for a more diverse and authentic music representation in education. It also addresses historical injustices faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada.

My project emphasizes self-reflection, honouring Indigenous knowledge, and engaging with cultural traditions in the creative process. Utilizing Indigenous methodologies, the project aims to make music a means of learning and sharing cultural knowledge in academic settings, promoting inclusivity and respect.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my community, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, for shaping my values and identity, and gifting me invaluable knowledge.

I would like to thank my mother for all she has done in helping me with my education and music, she has made me into the music scholar that cares for culture and community.

I would like to thank Mother Earth, for we benefit from her land every day.
Message for Indigenous Readers

I know academics will have their comments, and their critiques, about my musical album and my research, but I was never really nervous about that. But I have been nervous every step of the way on how my Indigenous community will react to my album and the learning process that led to it. I truly kept you all in my mind every step of the way to make sure my album was an authentic portrayal of my Indigenous identity, as well as respectful to the community at large. I recognize I still have much to learn about my history and culture, and pledge to never stop learning. I had an incredible experience making this album and look forward to my future in music knowing what I know now. I hope you enjoy my story.
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Introduction

I am Anishinaabe, Ojibway, from Chippewas of Rama First Nation. I have spoken the previous sentence many times in my life, to which I have received various responses and questions from people. I would answer their queries and move on without giving these encounters any more thought, and yet, as I grew older, I began to have my own questions about my identity.

This research-creation dissertation is an attempt to learn more about my Indigenous identity through music while demonstrating ways in which music contributes to reconciliation. There are countless ways to go about a journey for self-discovery, but because I am a musician, there was only one way that made sense to me, self-discovery through music. Musician: a word that most would say describes people who are not themselves. Even I have sometimes hesitated to call myself a musician before completing this project but, in reality, everyone can be a musician, as everyone can be musical. All of us have a spirit that connects us to music. I learned this truth, and many more, while undertaking this research-creation project. I have learned that music interconnects with everything that exists.

Today, Indigenous peoples are using music to reclaim their histories and regain agency over their lives. Institutions, such as universities and colleges, can act as allies on the journey toward reconciliation by normalizing Indigenous thought, history, and culture within academia. Academic work on, and through, music should provide insight into Indigenous histories and cultures. In this spirit, I created an album of music, Work for
Turtle Island,¹ as the central part of this creative project that demonstrates how researchers/creative practitioners can use music to participate in the ongoing process of reconciliation, while simultaneously demonstrating a decolonized alternative to teaching and creating music in modern academic settings.

While this document exists, it should not be regarded as objective truth but rather as a subjective retelling of my creative journey. I do not claim this document as a definitive contribution to Indigenous scholarship, as I do not claim to be an expert on Indigenous history, culture, or social and political issues. If you have not listened to my creative artifact, this document will hold limited meaning, as this document is primarily a reflection on my creative artifact.

Nonetheless, I hope people will listen to my album, learn from it, and hear how music can contribute to reconciliation. I hope people will read this document to understand my choices in the creative process and observe how my story and Indigenous teachings are conveyed through my album. I hope listening to my album will inspire people to learn more about Indigenous music, culture, and history in the same manner as Indigenous musicians have led me to knowledge throughout my creative process.

Many musicians inspired me throughout this project, such as Jeremy Dutcher and his album, Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa.² In making this album, Dutcher's work during his graduate career at Dalhousie University showed me how my project could be a reality at a university. In addition, the Halluci-Nation and their album, We are the Halluci-Nation,³

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² Jeremy Dutcher, Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa, released 2017, Independent Label, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoXc46zFknc&list=PLBZ9z9BZSUay8UF40Z0QKqPDZT5R8HYhH.
demonstrated that Indigenous expression can sound however we, as Indigenous people, want it to sound. Lastly, listening to Willie Dunn and his anthology album, *Creation Never Sleeps, Creation Never Dies: The Willie Dunn Anthology*,\(^4\) illustrated just how rich with information Indigenous music can be. His ability to share knowledge about Indigenous culture and history through his songs was something that I found inspiring for my own work. I hope people who hear my record will be motivated to be musical and engage with music, just as these albums inspired me.

As someone with limited expertise in musical theory and no mastery of any instrument, audio engineering techniques, or mixing and mastering skills, creating this album was a way to demonstrate that I could even make an album and learn from the process, and even more so, inform others about the musical process. In addition, being of German descent with blonde hair and blue eyes, I have always felt reluctant to express my full Indigenous identity. This album has been a way to further explore and articulate my Indigeneity. In the years I worked on my creative artifact, my grandfathers passed away. In these last few years, I have reflected more than ever on my identity and ancestry. In this process, I have realized that my “Indigenous identity” is not separate from my identity, and I genuinely believe all aspects of my identity are represented in this artifact.

One might question whether I, as a zero-accoladed Canadian music hobbyist, am qualified to delve into topics of music and indigeneity. I grappled with these doubts, which motivated me to embark on this creative project. As a white-passing Indigenous

person, my heritage is often doubted by society, and I usually find myself in situations where I have to "prove" my Indigenous heritage. There are initiatives underway that hope to remedy this problem. For example, Western University is currently in the process of finalizing a policy to affirm declarations of Indigeneity. I will volunteer to be subject to the draft policy where members of an Indigenous Identity Affirmation Committee affirm my claim to Indigeneity. I will volunteer as I recognize its importance in academic society today, as claims of Indigeneity are being scrutinized more closely. I understand that it is crucial for universities to have assurance in the Indigenous scholars they support, as instances of Indigenous ethnic fraud are becoming increasingly prevalent.

The issue of Indigenous ethnic fraud has garnered increasing attention, particularly within academic and cultural spheres. For example, Queen’s University and other Canadian institutions are actively addressing cases of false claims to Indigenous identity. These institutions are establishing guidelines and processes that emphasize community validation over institutional judgment to avoid perpetuating colonial practices. Professor Kim TallBear of the University of Alberta discusses the phenomenon of "race-shifting," which has historical roots and is driven by a desire for belonging and moral authority. She notes that this form of identity fraud is deeply harmful, as it exploits narratives of Indigenous dispossession and marginalization for personal gain.

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This is a large topic and academic viewpoints on the matter are still developing. To wade further into this area would lead this paper into areas well beyond its scope. This is, after all, a written exegesis concerning the audio artefact of my creative project, my creative project and should be read primarily as an explanation of my creative process, not as a thoroughgoing treatment of Indigenous identity and the attendant problem of ethnic fraud.8

The pressure for an Indigenous person to validate their Indigenous identity can lead to many experiencing imposter syndrome. Racial and general imposter syndrome involve frequent doubts and fears of being exposed as a fraud.9 While imposter syndrome causes people to question their accomplishments and abilities, racial imposter syndrome entails doubts about racial and ethnic identity.10

In academia, imposter syndrome encompasses feelings of inadequacy and inauthenticity, leading individuals to believe their abilities are lacking and their work is insignificant. People may feel that their advancements in higher education are not earned on merit but achieved through deception or luck.11 The general perception of imposter syndrome in universities is that everyone, regardless of their position in the academic hierarchy, occasionally experiences feelings of inadequacy. However, a brief review of

8 For more on the so-called “Indigenous ethnic fraud” please see: “Native “Identity” Fraud is not Distraction, but the Final Indian Bounty,” “The “Pretendians” exploiting Indigenous communities through fraud,” “Real Indians: Policing or Protecting Authentic Indigenous Identity?”
research on higher education inequalities reveals that universities can perpetuate significant socio-economic barriers among staff and students.¹²

Racial imposter syndrome can influence every aspect of a person's identity. Individuals struggling with their racial identity may feel they will never be accepted for who they are, leading them to hide or alter aspects of their identity. This syndrome can be a significant source of stress, causing some to withdraw from social situations. It can harm self-esteem and lead to intense insecurities about cultural identity, leaving people constantly needing to prove themselves and their worth to others.¹³

One of the easiest ways to remove feelings of inauthenticity is to find ways to deepen your connection with your cultural heritage. Reconnecting to your roots can be a powerful reminder that you do belong.¹⁴ I needed to create an album to gain confidence in my Indigenous and musical identities and eliminate my imposter syndrome. The work to complete my album has helped me to better view myself as a competent musician who is a member of Rama First Nation.”

Chippewas of Rama First Nation

My connection to the Chippewas of Rama First Nation community has been an integral part of my life for as long as I can remember. While I cannot pinpoint the exact moment I became aware of my Indigenous ancestry, I have vivid memories from my childhood of my mother sharing Indigenous stories, as well as visiting the reserve for

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Powwows with my family. Growing up, I attended naming ceremonies for my grandfather, mother and uncles, and later, I had my naming ceremony alongside my sisters. Glenda Snache, our Elder, has played a significant role in guiding my family for many years, carrying out the naming ceremonies and offering her wisdom and support, and even speaking at my grandfather’s funeral. Her influence has extended into my musical journey and has helped shape my music and sense of identity. Glenda’s presence has been a source of immense value and strength in my life.

Being Indigenous is about recognizing the importance of our connections—with others and the earth—and putting effort into nurturing these relationships. Through creating my album, I have come to understand this deeply. My relationships were instrumental in making the album; they influenced its content and played a crucial role in its creation. Many people often overlook how challenging it can be to find a supportive community to collaborate with in music-making. When undertaking research projects, people can examine any subject by themselves. However, with a research-creation project involving music, because one person often does not play every instrument, teamwork is built into the creative process.

This experience taught me firsthand that making music is a collaborative effort. The Rama First Nations community has been a constant support and inspiration throughout this journey. Their openness and assistance have been invaluable to me. I incorporated a number of elements from my community directly into the album, such as our community powwow, field recordings from around the reserve, and the wisdom of my Elder Glenda. The spiritual presence of my community was palpable as I worked on my project, infusing it with the teachings and values I have learned from them.
Witnessing the strength of my community made me appreciate my musical collaborators, who played essential roles in bringing this album to life. Each person involved contributed to creating a vibrant musical community around this project. Our communities and relationships are the threads that carry our stories forward. Through my music, I hope to forge connections with others and share the lessons I have gleaned from my communities. My album reflects my identity, encompassing the various layers of who I am, including my identity as a member of Chippewas of Rama First Nation.

**Terminology used**

Before continuing with the rest of the essay, it requires a note on terminology throughout the paper. This paper uses many different terms when referring to Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people, and this may or may not have been the right approach. The term "Indigenous peoples" represents the collective of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples - mixed blood of French and Indian or English and Indian - who live in Canada.\(^\text{15}\) “Indigenous peoples” is currently the most common terminology in Canada. The term “First Nation” came into use in the 1970s to replace “Indian band.” “First Nation” can refer to a single band (nation) or multiple bands (nations). Indigenous people in Canada can also be called “First Nations.”\(^\text{16}\) “Aboriginal Peoples” and “Indians” represent those who have rights and obligations under the provisions of the *Indian Act* and Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982.\(^\text{17}\) The politics surrounding specific terminology can be complicated and confusing.

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\(^{17}\) Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, 12.
This document does not advocate for any specific terminology and alternates between various terms. Legally, "Indian" remains the correct term in Canada due to the Indian Act (1876). The continued use of "Indian" is tied to the existence of this legislation. Changing the name of the Indian Act (1876) seems like it could be a meaningful step toward reconciliation. But, as Thomas King stated at the beginning of his book, *The Inconvenient Indian*, "Terminology is a rascal." There is a variety of terminology used in this document, and exploring the complex histories and implications of the many terms in this document would take a separate research project entirely.

In her book, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada*, Chelsea Vowel explains that there is no universal consensus on a single term for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous communities are incredibly diverse, with many internal debates about which terms are best, what they mean, and why specific terms should be rejected. What one person finds acceptable might offend someone else. An individual must always listen to people's preferences regarding the terms they prefer and respect their choices. This simple act can go a long way in maintaining respectful and productive dialogue.

You will notice as you read that I always capitalize the various terms used to describe Indigenous peoples. This choice is deliberate and something I have observed in all Indigenous writing. The debate over whether to capitalize Indigenous terms also underscores the complexity of Indigenous terminology. When writing this document, I

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18 Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian* (Canada: Anchor Canada, 2013), xiii.
wrote based on what I encountered in my research and heard from community members. This approach resulted in a mix of terms throughout the document. Conversely, I paid much more attention to language while creating my album, understanding the importance of terminology in song titles, lyrics, and the album title.

When people asked why I did not include the English translation of the Anishinaabe word "Miigwech" in brackets for the song title "She Said Miigwech," I hoped for one of two outcomes: either listeners would be prompted to engage more deeply with the song and its lyrics to understand its meaning, or they would look up "Miigwech" themselves to discover its English translation and be led to knowledge through my music. I want this document to inspire further research and learning, serving merely as a starting point, just as I hope my album does.

In her book, Vowel also discusses terminology for non-Indigenous people. She notes that there are no widely accepted terms to refer to the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada. Vowel lists terms like "White," "non-Native," "non-Aboriginal," "non-Indigenous," "European," "settler," and "settler colonials." In the Inconvenient Indian, Thomas King also addresses this issue, but states using "Whites" is his preferred term and humorously suggests "cowboys."

Vowel explains that when referring to non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada, she uses the term "settler," which is short for "settler colonial." She notes that "settler" is a relational term, not a racial category, making it more useful. I have adopted the terms "settler" and "colonial" throughout this paper. Settler colonialism refers to the deliberate

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23 Thomas King, The Inconvenient Indian (Canada: Anchor Canada, 2013), xiv.
occupation of land to assert ownership over it and its resources. The original European settlers brought their laws and customs, applying them first to Indigenous peoples and later to all non-settler immigrants. In the context of this reflexive paper, "settler" and "colonial" refer to these established laws and customs, many of which persist today.

Vowel emphasizes that terminology is messy and complicated, just as Thomas King noted, and I have found also, and while she highlights the importance of terms for settlers as we have for Indigenous peoples, she doesn't resolve it in her chapter on terminology. Vowel notes that "settler" is also used for those moving to Canada, emphasizing that colonialism continues. Though useful, it obscures how external colonialism forces many to seek homes in Canada. Similar to European-descended lower classes in early colonization, non-European peoples displaced by colonization are absorbed into the settlement process upon arrival.

I want to end this chapter by directly quoting how Chelsea Vowel ends her chapter on terminology, “Although this entire section is focused on terminology, I have no desire to get overly hung up on specific words, because there are much more interesting topics to explore. So, let’s get to it!”

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Chapter One: Work for Turtle Island

**Spirit Name**

I released my album, “Work for Turtle Island,” under my Spirit Name, Northern Lights Warrior Horse, Wassnoodeg Miigaadwin Bezhigoongnzhii, in Ojibway. I was given this name by my Elder Glenda, who received it from the spirits. I was fifteen when I had the naming ceremony on the Chippewas of Rama First Nation reserve. When I received my name at the ceremony, I was told of its significance. When given a Spirit Name, one should reflect on the name throughout life, as it will come to mean different things. At fifteen, I was told my name would lead to an awakening within my soul that would take me to meet, socialize, and interact with native peoples. These past years of working on my album, I now understand what the spirits intended when they gifted me my Spirit Name. Music has led me back to my culture. My purpose is to educate those on the benefits of creating, and reflecting on, music.

**Concept and Inspiration**

First and foremost, I was inspired by my own love of storytelling, and I wanted to create a story I could be proud of, and others would enjoy. Storytelling is essential in Indigenous culture; thus, I wanted the songs to be interconnected, an Indigenous story one can learn from. The album expresses my feelings about climate change and informs others about the important role we play in maintaining Mother Earth. I hope my album helps listeners connect to the land, as I felt connected to the earth while creating my album. I included many field recordings as a way of connecting my music to the land, and vice versa, for they show how musical Mother Earth can be.
I was also inspired by the need for reconciliation in Canada, and I wanted my album to epitomize how music can bolster reconciliation. Self-reflection throughout the project led me to make creative choices to foster reconciliation that I would not have made if reconciliation were not on my mind. For instance, I deliberately included Indigenous themes and sounds, such as using my hand drum throughout the album.

Last but not least, I was inspired by my community, Chippewas of Rama First Nation. I am grateful for everything they have taught me, particularly their help in bringing my story to life. I learned so much about my culture and the environment from them. I strengthened and formed new relationships with many people, all which shaped my identity, and therefore my album.

*Blue Skies*

To begin my research-creation project, I wrote a song. The first song I wrote was "Blue Skies." This initial step is typical in research-creation projects, because the musical journey takes precedence. Initially, I envisioned an album revolving around a love story set against the backdrop of the world ending, and "Blue Skies" was meant to fit into this narrative. However, after completing the song with my acoustic guitar, I felt it lacked what I considered an "Indigenous sound." This prompted me to uncover what constitutes the "Indigenous sound" and the Indigenous songwriting process. I believed that if my compositions did not sound Indigenous, I could at least claim they were written in an Indigenous manner.

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29 Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Blue Skies,” in *Work for Turtle Island*, 2023, track eleven.
Upon reflection, I now realize that anxieties about my Indigenous identity clouded my initial perception of the song. In truth, "Blue Skies"\textsuperscript{30} is an Indigenous song because the song is an authentic expression of my heart and spirit. But it was not until much later that I recognized this, having initially removed the song due to doubts about its Indigenous authenticity, despite it being my favourite.

This experience has taught me that Indigenous music transcends rigid definitions and cannot be confined to societal constructs. I have come to appreciate the fluidity and expansiveness of Indigenous music, a realization that has deeply resonated with me. All Indigenous artists must define for themselves what Indigenous music is, though I predict, like me, they will have difficulties reaching a definitive conclusion.

\textit{Good Medicine}

The song "Good Medicine"\textsuperscript{31} incorporates elements of traditional jingle dress sounds, a powwow song honouring the sacred medicine dance, teachings from my Elder, and archival history woven into a contemporary musical context. Reflecting on this fusion raises questions about the distinction between traditional and contemporary music—when does one become the other, or are they inherently intertwined? Furthermore, drawing inspiration from Shawn Wilson's notion that research is ceremony, I certainly feel this album is sacred to me. Creating the album was a profound experience, blurring the lines between traditional, contemporary, and sacred music.

I believe powwow music is an excellent example of how music from Indigenous people can belong to the contemporary, traditional, and sacred realms of music.

\textsuperscript{30} Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Blue Skies,” in \textit{Work for Turtle Island}, 2023, track eleven.

\textsuperscript{31} Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Good Medicine,” in \textit{Work for Turtle Island}, 2023, track eight.
Powwows celebrate all aspects of Indigenous culture through song and dance. 

Powwows are open to the public and can even be intertribal. Most importantly, powwows are a safe space to celebrate with the community. I wanted my album to represent the essence of powwow music, sharing culture in a safe musical space. However, I am hardly the first Indigenous person to want to achieve this with my music, as The Halluci-Nation popularized the notion of interpolating powwow music into their electronic dance music.

A goal with this album was to celebrate the diversity of Indigenous music by incorporating various styles and sounds, challenging the notion of a singular "Indigenous sound." As such, I embrace the richness and complexity of Indigenous musical traditions, such as powwow music. I believe my music embodies elements of tradition, contemporary, and sacredness. I want listeners to engage with my album and form their opinions about its nature. Is my album traditional, sacred, contemporary, or perhaps all of these?

My music is meant to provoke discussion and inspire individuals to explore their interpretations. This dissertation project aims to raise questions about music, rather than provide definitive answers. I hope listeners will learn from my expression and reflect on how the record encourages thought about Indigenous music, the same way I reflected on Indigenous music while writing it.

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Responsibility

I drew inspiration from history and incorporated archival recordings into my music to bridge the gap between music and history. Through this, I aimed to illustrate that music serves as both a means of education and a connection to our past, present, and future. Specifically, the song "Responsibility"\textsuperscript{34} was designed to offer listeners a glimpse into the past and highlight the educational potential of music. This concept guided my decision to include various soundbites of 'Magic Bow' throughout my album. By listening to these recordings, listeners gain insight into Indigenous representation in the past and become part of the new narrative I am weaving through my album.

Work for Turtle Island

My culture heavily influenced this album, and the track "Work for Turtle Island"\textsuperscript{35} generates new knowledge by presenting a reimagined version of the Ojibway creation story. During conversations with members of my Indigenous community, I discovered that when we relay sacred or traditional stories, we should share stories of those stories. This practice allows us to continue passing on cultural knowledge and traditions even in non-sacred or non-traditional settings. Through this song, I am engaging in this tradition by sharing a reinterpretation of a traditional story, thereby contributing to the evolution of Indigenous storytelling while honouring its cultural roots.

By confidently altering and adapting traditional narratives from my culture, I am expressing my unique Indigenous identity. This process demonstrates my willingness to

\textsuperscript{34} Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Responsibility,” in Work for Turtle Island, 2023, track twelve.
\textsuperscript{35} Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Work for Turtle Island,” in Work for Turtle Island, 2023, track nine.
contribute to the ongoing evolution of Indigenous storytelling and affirms my confidence in expressing my cultural heritage in a contemporary context. The narrative conveyed in my album was of the utmost importance. Choosing the song title “Work for Turtle Island” as the album title was significant, for it symbolizes both the journey of the character within the story and my journey in creating the album. Thus, this research-creation project is work for Turtle Island.
Chapter Two: Research-Creation

What is Research-Creation?

Research-creation is, as defined by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC),

“An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media. … Fields that may involve research-creation may include architecture, design, creative writing, visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, textiles), performing arts (e.g., dance, music, theatre), film, video, performance art, interdisciplinary arts, media and electronic arts, and new artistic practices.”

Research-creation allows researchers to gain new knowledge about themselves and the world around them, including, but not limited to, their relationship with practice. In her report, Practice-Based Research: A Guide (2006), Linda Candy outlines two models under research-creation: practice-based or practice-as research and practice-led research.

Research is practice-based when knowledge is derived from creating and completing a creative artifact. For example, knowledge garnered from practice-as

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38 Candy, "Practice Based Research," 3.
research is the wisdom I gained from my community while undertaking work on my musical album. Throughout the songwriting process, I visited my community to learn how my culture engages with music, because I wanted to follow a similar path when creating my album. During one particular visit, I learned Chippewas of Rama First Nation had a marching band from the 1920s to the 1940s, comprised of men in the community and called The Silver Nightingale Band.\(^{39}\) Due to the implementation of the *Indian Act* (1876), Indigenous music and culture was banned until 1951.\(^{40}\) This led the Indigenous peoples to engage with instruments and musical styles beyond what people perceived as the "Indigenous sound." I learned this new knowledge as a direct result of working on my creative artifact.

Research is *practice-led* when the primary goal of the research is to gain new understandings of practice.\(^{41}\) An example of new knowledge I obtained from practice-led research is found in my creative process for the song I wrote about the Anishinaabe creation story, "Work for Turtle Island."\(^{42}\) I have known about the creation story for a long time and was told the story by my mother, as well as members from my community. I educated myself further on the story to prepare writing my song by reading a book my Elder recommended, *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*.\(^{43}\) By educating myself on the creation story, I gained information on the story itself and from the story’s teachings. The experience of learning about Indigenous culture through practice illuminates how practice can be a form of reconciliation and highlights the connection


between music and social justice. Furthermore, in this example, though I set out to explore practice and its relationship with reconciliation from a practice-led perspective, I am also conducting practice-based research because I was working on a creative artifact, and I learned knowledge beyond practice itself. Throughout my research-creation project, I had numerous experiences in which learning arose from practice-based and practice-led methods simultaneously. These occurrences illustrate the interconnectedness of practice.

The relationship between music and musical practice leads me to believe that research-creation is best understood through a holistic lens. This is why my project employs a hybrid model of research-creation and combines practice-based and practice-led research. I am convinced that incorporating a holistic mindset, which resonates with Indigenous perspectives of the world, will enhance research-creation as an ideal research method for studying music-making. By embracing Indigenous values and ways of thinking, research-creation can effectively capture the interconnectedness inherent in practice and shed light on the intricate relationships among individuals, communities, and their cultural contexts throughout the creative process. Accepting a holistic approach also highlights the interplay between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the human experience within the realm of practice. The field of research-creation continues to evolve. Not only is research-creation of recent emergence in academia, but it also originated from theories of practice that did not involve music. Donald Schön's work on practice, which laid the foundation for research-creation, initially focused on professions involving engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy, and town planning.44

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Candy explores Donald Schön's innovative work on reflective practice as a methodology in her book, *The Creative Reflective Practitioner* (2020). She specifically draws attention to his book, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983), in which Schön introduced the concept of "technical rationality." According to Schön, the conventional belief that professional knowledge originates solely from scientific theory and technique is a misrepresentation of the actual methods professionals use during practice to acquire knowledge. He proposed a new epistemology of practice that more accurately reflected practitioners' natural and implicit artistic processes, which he called *reflective practice*. Reflective practice involves the combination of thought and action within a specific context, and Schön hoped to establish it as a credible approach to professional knowledge. He defined a reflective practitioner as someone whose practice requires continuous reflection daily. Schön's insights into practice and knowledge acquisition have significantly impacted academia. My research on practice as a means of reconciliation can expand research-creation and other reflective research methods, such as autoethnography. While research-creation and autoethnography share similar features, significant differences must be acknowledged to understand the intentions of my research creation project.

**Research-Creation versus Autoethnography**

Research-creation and autoethnography require individuals to immerse themselves in their research, but the two methodologies differ in purpose.

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Autoethnography, like ethnography, is a research method that involves the study of a culture’s values and customs for the purpose of helping others understand the culture. However, in autoethnography, the researcher studies a particular culture and contributes their opinions, and epiphanies, to provide further insight into that culture. The purpose of their thoughts is to offer additional explanations about their subject. Thus, the nature of the study at its core is still an analysis of culture and not of the researcher. This is the difference between research-creation and autoethnography. In research-creation, studies are about researchers and their thoughts and responses to the parameters established in their project on how to study themselves and their process.

A research-creation project aims to gain new knowledge about practice and the outcomes of practice. The role of researchers is crucial as their viewpoint is the initial source of knowledge. Compared to traditional research methods that analyze tangible artifacts or existing ideologies, research-creation centres on the researcher’s experiences as the subject of the study. Therefore, my research-creation project is not an analysis of any culture, community, or its values. Rather, the written portion of the project is an account of my creative process while developing an artifact. Producing new knowledge through a research-creation project is inherently subjective because it stems from the researcher's personal experiences and discoveries. Be that as it may, this does not mean it cannot lead to objective truth.


In contrast, autoethnography may still involve subjective experiences as a researcher observes and offers their perspective, but the subject of the study remains objective and can be observed and analyzed. For example, researchers study culture by attending events, interviewing members, and analyze artifacts like clothing, architecture, books, photographs, and numerous other elements about one's culture.49 Two individuals undertaking autoethnographic studies on Indigenous culture may arrive at similar conclusions and findings about the culture, though they may offer different reactions to their observations. However, two individuals participating in a research-creation project focused on their interactions with Indigenous culture and how it affects their practice and art will yield distinct and unique outcomes. Therefore, research-creation's worth is not only in generating new knowledge but also in the researcher's reflective and creative processes that contribute to the project’s outcomes.

*My Research-Creation Process*

As my thesis falls more in line with practice-based/practice-as research methodologies, and since a practice-based dissertation yields a work of art, my album on its own is the contribution to knowledge. Furthermore, because the originality of my thesis is showcased through the artifact, a comprehensive grasp of my project’s significance is attained only through experiencing the artifact. Essentially, the artifact is not just a representation of the methodologies used—it embodies the research itself.

Research-creation projects incorporate a written text, which elucidates the thought process underlying the artistic practice, even if this explanation differs from established viewpoints held by others. The exegesis serves to offer context and a methodological framework for the project. Yet, its primary purpose is to shed light on the rationale behind the artifact's creation—it does not function as a conventional "research" document.

Although, I find it challenging to pinpoint the exact reason behind creating this album. In actuality, my initial motivation was to make music because I love making music. Everything else unfolded organically from there. This illustrates the power of research-creation, where allowing people to engage in music and reflect on their process opens up unlimited possibilities. The significance of personal reflection in research-creation enables the paradigm to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing.

Research-Creation versus Indigenous Ways of Knowing

The gradual acceptance of autoethnography and research-creation as legitimate methodologies in academic pursuits reflects a growing recognition of the value of subjective knowledge in academia. Autoethnography and research-creation share similarities with Indigenous methodologies as they emphasize the importance of self-reflection as a source of knowledge. Although, Indigenous ways of knowing place introspection on an equal footing with empirical observation of the external world because Indigenous people understand that knowledge can come from dreams, visions, and other subjective experiences.

Another important aspect of Indigenous ways of knowing is that learning is a continuous process without an endpoint or definitive answer. From an Indigenous
perspective, everything in this world is cyclical, including knowledge. This outlook acknowledges that our understanding of the world constantly evolves and that we must remain open to new knowledge. When people engage with my artifact, I hope they will not arrive at a definitive conclusion but rather uncover subjective truths that will allow the project to evolve and grow with each new experience.

Through my journey with this album and exploring Indigenous perspectives, I have come to understand the value of subjective truths. Everyone is entitled to their truth, which resonates with them personally, even if it differs from another's perspective. For instance, if two individuals listen to the same song, one may feel joy and perceive it as a happy song, while the other may not connect with it and deem it forgettable. Both truths coexist, neither outweighing the other. Enabling individuals to derive their own meaning from my project supports reconciliation as it facilitates the pursuit of subjective truth.

In her essay, *Indigenous Resurgence and Co-resistance*, Leanne Simpson discusses how an intricate network of relationships shape individuals. She references Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard's theory of "grounded normativity," which describes the systems of ethics involved with the relationships of specific places and the connections to the processes and knowledges involved with each place. Simpson explains that Indigenous people ethically relate to the relationships with plant and animal nations, their families, communities, nations, and the sky and waters, constituting reality. She explains how decolonization involves centering grounded normativity in her

life while critically analyzing and critiquing how she replicates white supremacy, antiblackness, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism.⁵²

Grounded normativity views nations as complex networks, each consisting of multidimensional relationships with human and nonhuman beings. Society functions best when these relationships are balanced.⁵³ Indigenous knowledge structures comprise spiritual, emotional, and social systems of intelligence that foster an individual's independence, community, and self-determination.⁵⁴ As individuals, our actions resonate throughout our families, communities, and nations. The well-being of a person intricately connects to the well-being of the collective.⁵⁵ When someone is struggling, the impact ripples through the larger system, necessitating a response from the community. In times of conflict, we have processes to ensure everyone shares an account of what happened. These processes enable the community to understand the context of individuals' actions and hold them accountable.⁵⁶ They emphasize repairing and regenerating relationships, and individuals must always look to their relationships, interactions with plants and animals, and familial and communal ties.⁵⁷

Therefore, while we hold our subjective truths, we must remember the broader communal truth in our spaces. My album embodies my truth with the story it narrates, alongside the truths from my community and my relationships with family, culture, and history. I ensure my subjective truths do not disrupt my larger relationships to maintain a

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harmonious balance with my communities. For example, in my “Decisions, Decisions” reflection, I discuss how I approached a dilemma regarding a drum project for my class. My Indigenous community encouraged me to create the drum, seeing it as a way to spread and share our culture. Conversely, the Western Indigenous community advised against it stating it may be considered an act of cultural appropriation. Faced with these conflicting perspectives, I had to find a balanced compromise. I chose to respect both viewpoints by discussing the significance of the drum and sharing cultural stories in my class instead of actually making a drum. This approach allowed me to honour my community’s traditions while respecting the concerns of the Western Indigenous community.

*Research-Creation and Reconciliation*

Incorporating Indigenous methodologies within the research-creation paradigm highlights the adaptability of research-creation to various forms of reflexive practice and contributes to reconciliation efforts. Acknowledging and valuing Indigenous ways of knowing in my project promotes decolonization and healing. When academic institutions accept projects rooted in methodologies outside their traditional knowledge structures, they support decolonized education. This acceptance helps researchers and participants engage in unlearning and relearning, leading to a deeper appreciation of diverse perspectives and the creation of innovative and culturally relevant works. Academic institutions play a crucial role in reconciliation as self-proclaimed gatekeepers of knowledge. Thus, institutions must set an example and promote their houses of learning as spaces inclusive of all forms of knowledge.

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58 Page 100.
I discovered that the recording studio that exists within my university was an inclusive place that accepted all forms of knowledge. As the studio space, and the knowledge it produces, and how it is used, is shaped by the one using the space. Indigenous artists have used studios before, as at the heart of it, these spaces are essential for us to share our narratives. My foray into using a studio for my research-creation project was a transformative experience, a masterclass in recording various genres—folk, rock, funk, ballads, and experimental music. Each genre demanded a unique musical process, each process was a blend of Indigenous and colonial influences. This project was a revelation, a testament to the celebration and fusion of all my identities.

Music reflects all our identities, and colonialism is an inescapable part of many identities and experiences that exist in Canada. Even the use of microphones and speakers by powwow singers I have now noticed is a stark example of how recording practices have been infused with cultural elements. Initially, I grappled with the urge to resist typical recording practices, but I soon realized that the key was to transcend this struggle and focus on the musical process that resonated with me the most.

By embracing this approach, I learned more about recording practices, such as how far to sing from the microphone, how loud to sing for specific songs, and the desired level of distortion on instruments during recording. I remember putting my late grandfather’s bandana inside my hand drum to help dampen some of the frequencies interfering with the bass. I imagined it as my grandfather helping my drum sing a little quieter to fit the song better. This act symbolized my culture, family, and personal history coming together in the recording studio. Throughout the recording process, there was a constant collaboration between my Indigeneity and commercial recording practices.
Chapter Three: Reconciliation

What is Reconciliation?

*Reconciliation* is a word that holds various connotations and meanings for different individuals, making it difficult to provide a conclusive definition. An individual’s diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds, especially regarding their relationship with colonization, will influence their understanding of reconciliation. Nonetheless, society generally agrees that reconciliation involves repairing damaged relationships. However, the bonds that need mending are also specific to an individual's geographic location. The non-Indigenous residents of Canada have a responsibility to reconcile with the Indigenous peoples of this country. Since they live on stolen land, they all have a role in restoring relationships with the original caretakers of the land.

Speaking of land, reconciliation also involves mending the relationship with the environment. Indigenous people deeply value the land as a source of survival and a repository of knowledge and spiritual enrichment. Colonization has done irreversible damage to the land, just as it has to the Indigenous people. The Canadian government must fix their relationship with the land, as any attempts to reconcile with the Indigenous people will ring hollow if they continue to disrespect the earth. In addition to (most of) society being increasingly alarmed by the mistreatment of the planet and its connection to climate change, there is widespread acknowledgment of the necessity for reconciliation. Significant debate remains, however, on the ways of achieving this, both at the individual

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and societal levels. Despite this, I firmly believe that the path to reconciliation is more straightforward than many perceive.

That being said, reconciliation is a multifaceted process and encompasses various issues, including cultural revitalization, legal and policy reforms, and recognizing Indigenous self-determination. My research-creation project does not reflect on every aspect of reconciliation, but I hope it will encourage readers to undertake further research on their own. I do believe that a common goal of reconciliation is addressing and healing the historical and ongoing harms inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples by colonial policies and practices. Reconciliation involves both acknowledging past injustices and committing to systemic changes that foster equality, respect, and mutual understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In his book, *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes*, Kyle Mays states, "white men have systematically created the idea for society at large that Native people have disappeared." This context frames my research-creation project, which addresses reconciliation by emphasizing the importance of non-Indigenous people recognizing the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. I think listening to music by Indigenous artists is one of the best ways to achieve this, which is why I created a musical album sharing my Indigenous history and culture, as I believe reconciliation is rooted in listening.

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By actively listening to the stories of others, we build relationships and foster empathy. Furthermore, by listening to stories of those outside of our dominant society, we can build stronger connections and understanding between diverse cultures and backgrounds, leading to a more complex and empathetic worldview. Accepting the stories of Indigenous peoples in colonial spaces is crucial to allowing their culture to survive and an action we can all take to normalize Indigenous knowledge and promote their values in mainstream consciousness. This means reconciliation is also about action.

But one must understand that listening should always come before action. Listening in this sense means engaging with Indigenous knowledge and culture: for instance, listening to Indigenous music, watching Indigenous media (such as movies, television, and videos on social media), listening to an Indigenous person at an event, and listening in the non-literal sense like reading Indigenous stories and research. After listening, one should act. The idea of reconciliation can seem overwhelming and unattainable for many people, especially the notion of how to begin. However, even small steps can make a difference. Listening to Indigenous voices is an individual's most accessible and critical action, and it will help non-Indigenous people better understand the issues facing Indigenous peoples. Bob Joseph explains in his book, *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips and Suggestions to make Reconciliation a Reality* (2019), that staying up to date with Indigenous issues is important before communicating with Indigenous communities and crucial to achieving reconciliation.\(^6^3\)

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Participating in Indigenous culture transforms an individual's identity by shaping their values and ways of knowing. As members of society champion Indigenous perspectives, their identity will subconsciously or consciously begin to reflect this change. I was conscious of my changing values throughout my research project, because I constantly reflected. For example, I discovered that my identity was becoming more spiritual and empathetic toward the environment. Without this project, I might never have consciously realized the fundamental changes to my mind and spirit. For that reason, though I believe individuals will gain value from engaging with Indigenous knowledge, more value can be found in their reflections on learning. Nevertheless, I believe if more people adopt Indigenous values, society will manifest this and, over time, change for the better as more non-Indigenous individuals learn to give back.

All action involving reconciliation requires giving back to the Indigenous peoples in Canada. However, giving back can manifest itself in different ways: buying from Indigenous businesses, supporting Indigenous organizations, attending Indigenous events, creating opportunities for Indigenous voices, and, once again, listening to Indigenous voices. Listening to Indigenous voices is a way of giving back as it shows they are heard and supported.

Our society often dismisses the significance of listening to Indigenous voices and the impact this can have on both individuals and the community. Although the execution of reconciliation may seem more complicated on a societal level, I believe the same process applies. After all, corporations and governments consist of individuals. Thus, while everyone may have a unique role in reconciliation, listening is a shared
responsibility. Listening to Indigenous voices will guide individuals on what to do and how to help further.

**Music as Reconciliation**

When individuals specifically listen to and participate in Indigenous music, learning from it, music can become reconciliation. Music is a powerful tool in aiding reconciliation because it connects with all aspects of life. Listening to Indigenous music teaches listeners about Indigenous culture, history, and values. Additionally, the listening process can teach people more about themselves. Music research as a form of reconciliation involves uncovering and uplifting music that was once censored.

But, to enable individuals to engage in reconciliation, one must first understand why the Indigenous people require reconciliation, and the answer is often found in Indigenous music. In a 2019 study on the impact of Indigenous music, Indigenous artists noted various reasons for music-making:

- making connections
- music as a form of medicine
- sharing culture and educating Canadians
- inspiring other Indigenous artists
- providing a platform for political views and messages.\(^{64}\)

People must take note of what Indigenous musicians themselves want from their musical practice, whether offered as part of or independent from Canada's broader reconciliation activities.

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That being said, Indigenous music will always remain a crucial component of reconciliation despite the artist's intentions, as it provides opportunities for individuals to learn about and alter their colonial thinking. If a music scholar is meant to have a written document, they can participate in ways to decolonize their written work, such as including their emotions in their writing.

When an individual includes their emotions in writing, they reject the normative scholarly form and exemplify how there is no one proper form of writing. Refusing normative scholarly form and function is central in Indigenous methodologies. Content refusal in an Indigenous context means going against the Western notion that knowledge should be available at all times. In Indigenous structures of knowledge, there are contextual practices of knowledge sharing, as well as knowledge is valued as a gift and should not be approached with entitlement. Structural refusal goes against normative writing by favouring Indigenous techniques in writing, such as Indigenous language and syntactical rhythm. Although, this does not mean Indigenous people should refuse to work with settlers altogether, as this can prolong the decolonization of society. Engaging in scholarship to decolonize society means that Indigenous researchers and scholars draw on and use all the tools available.

Reconciliation and the Government of Canada

The federal government of Canada still creates many obstacles for Indigenous peoples in Canada achieving reconciliation. One of these obstacles involves creating a narrative of Canadian history that ignores what Indigenous peoples have gone through.

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66 Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, 21
For example, the government had refused to share millions of residential school documents despite their commitment to do so in 2007 under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The government creates many different narratives of Canadian history, making it difficult for society to know which narrative is the most accurate. Many Indigenous artists sing to raise awareness of the true history of Canada, and musicologists need to listen.

The government views reconciliation as a way to achieve closure on Indigenous problems. But reconciliation does not represent closure and moving on from the past. It involves broadening discourse on the topic. Indigenous people want to engage in public discussions about Indigenous injustices in society and to create awareness about the past, not forget about it. Reconciliation represents the recognition and respect for Indigenous culture. Reconciliation means self-governance and sovereignty for Indigenous people within the Canadian government's existing jurisdictions. Indigenous people should be able to control their land and resources and recover their political, educational, and knowledge systems.

Reconciliation also means the downfall of capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. Individuals should be antiracist when they hear someone being racist towards Indigenous people. They should support Indigenous people and believe their narrative of history and not the governments. Lastly, they should raise awareness on Indigenous issues and respect Indigenous culture and values. Music research can do all of

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these things and must do these things to contribute to reconciliation. Music research should discredit racist accounts of music history, be unbiased, and raise awareness of Indigenous history, culture, and music.

Indigenous music and practices were once legally prohibited in Canada, and so many Indigenous artists now make music to *reclaim* their outlawed culture. In order to provide proper context for Indigenous music, academia must embrace a historicization of Indigenous peoples. This entails recognizing the historical backdrop of the Canadian landscape and its profound influence on the Indigenous people’s way of life. By acknowledging the historical backdrop of Canada and its relationship to Indigenous communities, academia can shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of Indigenous music and the cultural significance, evolution, and resilience embedded within Indigenous musical traditions.
Chapter Four: Historical Perspective

The Historical Research Process

A foundational understanding of Indigenous history in this country is crucial for acknowledging Indigenous people, fostering reconciliation, and comprehending my creative artifact. While this document may not be a fully-fledged recount of Indigenous history and culture, a fundamental explanation can serve as a starting point, even in a condensed form. Many people lack knowledge about Indigenous issues or history, and offering a brief overview can provide context for Indigenous experiences they may encounter, such as the ever more common land acknowledgments at public events. It might also spark curiosity, encouraging individuals to dive deeper into their research or music.

Furthermore, as a research-creation project, this document reflects on my creative artifact and process and is not meant to serve as an encyclopedia. I was careful not to turn this project into an autoethnographic examination, as I wanted my culture and community to contribute to my creative process and not be subjects to study under a theoretical microscope. Therefore, everything I researched was related to my creative practice, since a research-creation project aims to undertake a research process influenced by one's creative process. I chose to create an artifact that reflects my Indigenous identity. Thus, my creative process, and consequentially my learning process, involved reflecting on my identity, Indigenous culture, and history.

The following section lists the research on Indigenous history I found when creating my album. Although not everything I researched ended up directly in the album, I believe my artifact manifests everything I learned, which is a goal of research-creation.
Colonization & The Indian Act (1876)

Many people are unaware of the damages Indigenous people have endured and continue to endure because of colonization. The process by which Europeans colonized Indigenous peoples in North America is well documented in settler culture, as it occurred from the settler point-of-view. However, less is known about how colonization took control of every aspect of Indigenous life, including all political, economic, social, and spiritual activities. The settlers' control over the Indigenous people put them into a state of dependency they could not escape. Being in a state of dependency, the Indigenous people had no choice but to accept the government's poor social services, which continued to force the Indigenous population into poverty.73 The misfortune of the Indigenous peoples traces back to the settlers' arrival on Turtle Island,74 but the genocide of the Indigenous peoples begins with the establishment of Canada.

In 1867, the British North American Act gave complete jurisdiction over the Indigenous population and their land to the newly formed nation of Canada.75 The Indigenous peoples had officially become intruders on their ancestral land. After issuing the British North America Act (1867), the government began to rapidly displace the Indigenous peoples to make room for their empire's development. However, it became clear that their "Indian problem" was not going away. Thus, instead of seeking to eradicate the existence of Indigenous peoples, the settlers attempted to assimilate them


into their society, which resulted in the government of Canada creating the *Indian Act* in 1876 to control and assimilate the Indigenous peoples into Canadian society.

The *Indian Act* (1876) still has legal force today, influencing every facet of Indigenous people's lives. According to Canadian legislation, an individual is classified as an "Indian" if they possess "status," and these people are commonly referred to as "status Indians." To acquire status, one must be a male with "Indian blood," the child of an Indigenous person, or a woman (regardless of background) lawfully married to an Indigenous male.\(^76\) But, an Indigenous woman would lose her status if she married a non-Indigenous male.\(^77\) To accelerate assimilation, the government deliberately chose who they recognized as an "Indian" under the act. In 1985, *Bill C-31* amended the *Indian Act* (1876) to include Indigenous women as “Indian,” and to restore the status of those who had lost it due to enfranchisement.\(^78\) *Enfranchisement* in this context refers to Indigenous people who forfeited their “Indian status.” Although this amendment was a positive step, there is still a long way to go in revising the *Indian Act* (1876) and addressing the atrocities that it has caused.

The *Indian Act* (1876) denied Indigenous women status, 1869 to 1985; encouraged voluntary and enforced enfranchisement, 1876 to 1985; renamed individuals with European names, 1880 to an undetermined time; created a permit system to control Indians' ability to sell products from their farms, 1881 to 2014; prohibited sale of ammunition to Indians, 1882 to an undetermined time; prohibited sale of intoxicants to

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\(^77\) Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, 11.

Indians, 1884 to an undetermined time; forbade potlatch and other cultural ceremonies, 1884 to 1951; denied Indians the right to vote, until 1960; and created residential schools, 1886 to 1996. The Indian Act (1876) requires an in-depth exploration to comprehend its complexities and the pervasive dominance it exercises over Indigenous communities. After engaging with my research project, I hope individuals continue their educational journey in uncovering the profound harms inflicted by this legislation. Among the harm caused from the government is the establishment of reserves, which played a significant role in the control of Indigenous peoples.

Reserves and Reserve Life

The reserve system aimed to dismantle Indigenous communities and undermine their cohesion, forcing them to adopt European social norms rooted in individualism. An "Indian Reserve" refers to a tract of land assigned to an Indigenous nation under the Indian Act (1876). However, the origins of the reserve system predate the formation of Canada in 1867 and its subsequent implementation through the Indian Act (1876). The reserve system results from colonizers' fixation on "civilizing" Indigenous peoples by introducing them to agriculture, Christianity, and a sedentary lifestyle centred around private property. This "civilizing" narrative of colonization was echoed and encouraged explicitly by settler religion. As early as 1637, French missionaries were entrusted by their church with land to be set aside for Indigenous peoples, with the hope that they would form settlements and embrace Christianity. These early land allocations would

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81 Harris, “Reserves,” https://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/reserves/.
serve as the foundation for the reserve system and would later be solidified through the endorsement of the prime minister of Canada.

In 1880, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald addressed the House of Commons regarding reserves and referred to the "Indian problem." He stated, "All we can hope to do is to wean them by slow degrees from their nomadic habits, which have almost become an instinct, and by slow degrees absorb them or settle them on the land. Meantime they must be fairly protected." The prevailing belief was that Indigenous peoples needed to unlearn their traditional ways to assimilate into Canadian society as equal citizens with the same rights and responsibilities, taking with them a fair distribution of reserve assets. However, the harsh reality is that Indigenous peoples have not received a fair share of assets from their reserves, and they continue to face marginalization and discriminatory treatment as lesser citizens.

Indigenous peoples do not have ownership rights over the land where their reserves are situated. According to the Indian Act (1876), the land is considered "Crown Land" under the possession of the British Monarchy. This arrangement gives the Canadian government control over the land and the authority to relocate Indigenous communities as they deem necessary, often to facilitate economic development unrelated to the affected reserves. Moreover, reserves were established to create such difficult conditions for "status Indians" that they had no choice but to opt for enfranchisement, thereby losing their status and associated rights. Indigenous peoples were displaced to

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lands unsuitable for agriculture, such as rocky areas with poor soil quality or steep slopes.\textsuperscript{85} When the multiple restrictions placed on reserve agriculture led to a low success rate for Indigenous farmers, Colonizers used this as an excuse to decrease the size of reserves further to ever more untenable pittances of land.\textsuperscript{86}

Reserve acreage differed nationally, and the method for determining the location of a reserve also varied across Canada. Some treaties allowed reserves to be near important waterways, and some bands were consulted about reserve locations. Other reserves were created entirely outside an Indigenous nation’s traditional territory, and some bands were not consulted at all about where their reserve should be located.\textsuperscript{87} Ultimately, many reserves are small and provide their residents with minimal resources and economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{88} I will reiterate that the deliberate intention was to create such inhospitable conditions on reserves that "status Indians" would be compelled to choose enfranchisement, due to the lack of necessities promised to them in treaties subsequently violated by colonizers. Many of these treaties were flawed from the start.

\textit{Treaty Talk}

Before reserves were enforced by the \textit{Indian Act} (1876), many treaties forged between the Indigenous peoples and settlers included provisions for the creation of reserves.\textsuperscript{89} These treaties varied in purpose depending on the objectives of the parties involved. Throughout Canadian history there have been five distinct phases of treaty making between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples: the \textit{Peace and Friendship

\textsuperscript{87} Harris, “Reserves.”
\textsuperscript{88} Harris, “Reserves.”
\textsuperscript{89} Harris, “Reserves.”
Treaties (1725 to 1779), the Robinson Treaties of 1850, the Douglas Treaties (1850 to 1854), the Numbered Treaties (1871 to 1921), and the Modern Treaties (1975 onward).\textsuperscript{90}

Fair exchange and mutual benefit were fundamental during the early stages of treaty-making. Treaties in this stage represented substantive agreements that established trust and an economic partnership between parties.\textsuperscript{91} Throughout the infancy of treaty talk, conceptual and language barriers were difficult to overcome, so parties mainly had to rely on good intentions.\textsuperscript{92} Indigenous peoples insisted on including explicit protections and preservation of their way of life in treaty negotiations.\textsuperscript{93} Correspondingly with these requests, the treaties signed by the Canadian government promised non-interference with the practices of those residing on reserve lands. In addition, Indigenous peoples were entitled to compensation through social and economic benefits.\textsuperscript{94} In the period of "first contacts," when Europeans were a minority presence on Turtle Island, treaty relationships were carefully cultivated and maintained as settlers depended on the Indigenous people for survival.

As European settlers grew to dominate, the goal of treaty making changed to a slow process of securing Indigenous lands as Crown property.\textsuperscript{95} As a result, treaty negotiations became complex, fraught with difficulties. In many cases, Indigenous parties did not understand the legal and political implications of the land conveyance documents they were asked to sign, due to the obvious language and cultural differences between the

\textsuperscript{90} “Trick or Treaty,” Coursera online lecture at University of Alberta, 5, cited in J.R Miller, Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
\textsuperscript{92} Harris, “Reserves.”
\textsuperscript{93} Harris, “Reserves.”
\textsuperscript{94} Harris, “Reserves.”
\textsuperscript{95} Harris, “Reserves.”
parties. Terms such as “cede,” “surrender,” “extinguish,” “yield,” and “forever” appear in the written text of these treaties, but discussion of the meaning of these concepts is not found anywhere in the records of treaty negotiations. Furthermore, at the time of treaty making, the Indigenous peoples would not have been informed about British laws and perspectives, and only the Crown's version of treaty negotiations and agreements were kept for records. Moreover, many Indigenous delegates remained unaware that the written texts they signed were different than the oral agreements they had previously arranged. There is no record of written law, in concept or practice, existing on Turtle Island before European settlers arrived.

The colonizers, who documented the outcomes of oral agreements and prepared written texts for Indigenous peoples to sign, took advantage of the disparity in cultural practices regarding literacy and legal systems. European colonizers valued written documents, which held little relevance in Indigenous cultures that relied on oral traditions. While treaty commissioners promised non-interference with Indigenous lands and ways of life, the written treaty documents referred to Indigenous nations as "subjects of the Crown." As "subjects of the Crown" the government felt it could do whatever it wanted with its “subjects,” and this hunger for control and power contributed to one of

97 Harris, “Reserves.”
98 Harris, “Reserves.”
99 Harris, “Reserves.”
101 Harris, “Reserves.”
102 Harris, “Reserves.”
the darkest chapters in Canadian history—the largest genocide perpetrated against Indigenous peoples.

Residential Schools

The creation of the residential school system in Canada, along with the genocide perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples, was made possible by the Indian Act (1876). The purpose of residential schools was explicitly stated as being "to kill the Indian within the child." Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and shipped to residential schools where they were prohibited to speak their native languages, wear their own clothing, or engage with any forms of Indigeneity. Separating Indigenous children from their families and consciously destroying their cultures proved the best strategy for the Canadian government to indoctrinate future Indigenous generations into Canadian society. While the stated goal was to promote assimilation into Canada, the residential school system enacted a vicious cultural genocide, as well as a physical one, as was recently clarified by the discovery of thousands of unmarked mass graves.

The Indian Act (1876) authorized the Canadian government to enter Indigenous households and seize children when their parents refused to send them to residential schools. Indigenous children were housed in buildings not designed for education. Many endured untold physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Students were malnourished, and many were forced into child labour. Between 1870 and 1996, more

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103 Bob Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act (Port Coquitlam: Indigenous Relations Press, 2018), 53.
105 Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, 56.
106 Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, 57.
than 150,000 Indigenous residential school students died or disappeared. Many children died from diseases like Tuberculosis, which rapidly spread through the school's inhospitable living conditions, and countless others died attempting to flee the residential schools to return home.

The legacy of residential schools has immensely impacted survivors, and their families, resulting in intergenerational trauma. The forcible removal of children from their families led to perennial psychological damage. Many individuals who endured the trauma of residential schools and its effects, either directly or indirectly, turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism, exacerbating the cycle of pain and suffering.

Notably, Phil Fontaine, a former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, bravely spoke out about the abuse he experienced in residential schools and the lasting effects of abuse manifesting in future generations. The impact of residential schools has left behind a wake of poverty, abuse, and alcoholism, underscoring the urgent need for healing and reconciliation efforts to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and build a brighter future for Indigenous communities.

The story of Chanie Wenjack, a 12-year-old boy who lost his life after being sent to a residential school, has become a poignant symbol of the countless children affected by the residential school system. In 1966, Chanie's attempt to escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, led to his untimely death, as he embarked on a journey of over 600 kilometres to return home to Ogoki Post. His body

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107 Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, 53.
110 Florence, Residential Schools, 90.
111 Florence, Residential School, 94.
was discovered near a railway track a week after he escaped from the school. Chanie's heartbreaking story served as the catalyst for the establishment of the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Foundation and the inspiration for Downie's final album, *Secret Path*, released in 2016.113 Interestingly, Indigenous artist Willie Dunn had already shed light on Chanie's story over fifty years earlier in his song "Charlie," written in 1972.114 These two songs exemplify how Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians can contribute to reconciliation through their music. Moreover, these songs demonstrate how knowledge and narratives can be revitalized for future generations by evoking a deeper connection to the past.

We will never know the exact number of Indigenous children who died while living at residential schools. Indeed, nobody kept records: not the schools, not the churches which managed the schools, not the Indian agents, and certainly not the Canadian government.115 We might say, then, that the residential schools were constructed to assimilate or eradicate the country's Indigenous population — whichever erased "the Indian problem" quickest would be just fine. The more people in this country who know the dark truth about how the Canadian government treated its First Peoples, the closer society can come to decolonizing spaces and reconciling with the Indigenous people.

Orange Shirt Day

Today it seems Canadian society is becoming more aware of its country’s neglected history and are taking steps in the right direction toward reconciliation. Every year on September 30th, Canada honours its residential school victims and survivors during Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day began as a commemoration project and reunion event organized by the survivors of the St. Joseph Mission Residential School (1891-1981) that took place in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in May 2013.116 The Orange Shirt refers to the new shirt that Phyllis Webstad received from her grandmother to wear on the first day of school. When Phyllis got to school, her orange shirt was taken from her and never returned.117 For the first time in 2021, Canada held its first National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30th to align with Orange Shirt Day. A positive act by the country, but there is still much work to be done for Canada to decolonize.

The Musical Research Process

The preceding chapter encompasses a significant portion of the secondary knowledge I gathered while surveying Indigenous history for my album. However, the true strength of research-creation projects lies in their capacity to conduct primary research through creative practice. I gained insights into the musical process and my Indigenous culture and history throughout my music-making journey. Moreover, my musical process unexpectedly led me to acquire new knowledge I had not initially sought. Engaging with music to obtain knowledge opens one up to these enriching experiences.

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For example, while creating the song "The Plan," I intended to focus solely on environmental themes. However, while recording with Glenda for the song, our discussions about the environment unexpectedly led to insights into her personal history. The conversation unveiled new knowledge about history and culture, and this new research directly influenced my creative process. I extended the length of "The Plan" to include all the knowledge I learned, and I later added her teachings to another song. Our conversation also influenced how I composed “The Plan.” In the song, I use the sounds of nature Glenda brought up in the conversation. I also chose to include a clarinet because Glenda had shared with me that her father had played one. “The Plan” illustrates how research and music interconnect as the song is the research. This reciprocal relationship between research and music is emblematic of research-creation projects.

As I created songs and explored ideas, my creative journey often intersected with my learning process. When developing the song "Work for Turtle Island," I initially did not plan to research the Ojibway creation story. I explored the story further after I conceived the idea of incorporating the narrative into my artifact. My creative process influenced my research journey, which again informed my creativity. Thus, researching the Ojibway creation story helped me weave the story into the narrative of my artifact—it was not an arbitrary exploration. Furthermore, I did not immediately research the story after conceiving the song idea; instead, I immersed myself in the research process when it was time to write that particular song, intertwining my learning journey with my songwriting process. Essentially, I was singing my research.

Another example of my research process being guided by my musical process was when I acquired the skill to craft a hand drum, which eventually found its way onto the album. The idea of including the hand drum had not crossed my mind in the initial creative stages. I witnessed my sisters creating a hand drum and passing on their teachings at my cottage. Inspired by their experience, I felt compelled to embark on my own journey of crafting a hand drum and learning its teachings. Only after the drum became an integral part of my life did it become clear that it should play a prominent role on the album, serving as the heartbeat throughout and even opening the album on “Hard” with its resonant note. Following the inclusion of my drum on the album, I sought to deepen my understanding of the drum’s significance by attending a drumming session at the Wampum Learning Lodge at Western University. If I had not incorporated the drum into the album, I may not have been motivated to seek out this experience. Once again, this highlights how creative processes shape the research journey.

In a research-creation project, the primary goal is to glean as much knowledge as possible while crafting the creative artifact, remaining open to the journey guided by the musical process. Thus, research-creation is not about trying to absorb every piece of information available but instead staying authentic to one’s musical journey. Even if no new insights are gained, reflecting on the process remains valuable. Throughout my project, I prioritized my musical process, staying true to the spirit of research-creation. There is still much more to discover, and I am driven to uncover new insights through my music. When individuals honour their unique musical process, regardless of the

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120 Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “Hard,” in Work for Turtle Island, 2023, track two.
outcomes, and have the opportunity to learn directly from it, they take a step toward the decolonization of music education.
Chapter Five: Decolonization

Academia Today

Universities are well versed in Indigenous history and knowledge, as many academic institutions include Indigenous language, history, and culture courses. The problem in the post-secondary sector is that universities share Indigenous culture under colonial paradigms instead of through an Indigenous model, and this leads to misrepresentation and miscommunication of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous courses are not the only areas in universities affected by colonization. The entire education system in Canada is a product of colonization, a system that has focused only on imperial ways of thinking and learning, which includes Western popular music and the European art tradition. Moreover, the system directly benefits those with white skin, myself included as a white-passing Indigenous person, and is unjust to those not of white skin. For academic institutions to represent the various knowledge structures of the world accurately and promote an unbiased and inclusive learning environment, the decolonization of education is necessary to dismantle the current hegemonic system.

Hungry Listening

Within academic institutions, music especially suffers under colonial structures and is treated as a mere commodity, overlooking its deeper purpose as something more-than-song. Indigenous people reject colonial views about music and its commodification, and value music as a tool to call to our spirit and all spirits. By recognizing the Indigenous perspective of music, schools may be decolonized. Dylan Robinson explores this notion in his book, Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies (2020), in relation to his critical positionality theory. His theory invites us to engage in
self-reflection and to examine how factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and cultural background intersect, shaping how we listen. Each individual possesses a unique positionality, accompanied by listening privileges and biases. By developing awareness of our position, we can approach music without superimposing our prejudices onto the listening experience, thereby preserving its integrity. Consequently, understanding and acknowledging our listening positionality becomes a crucial step in the process of decolonizing music education.

For instance, my listening positionality consists of several factors: I am a straight male in my late 20s with white skin. I have German and Indigenous heritage, as my father's ancestors immigrated from Germany to Nova Scotia, and my mother's ancestors are Anishinaabemowin. I grew up in a middle-class environment in Toronto, and my family enjoys all genres of music. These factors and many others have shaped how I create and perceive music. Through this research-creation project I have learned to approach each listening and music-making experience without bias and remain open to emotion. However, I also understand that these factors will always be part of my identity and will always influence my creative process in some way.

Robinson explains that the colonial listening positionality emphasizes the valuation of music as a consumable product to be analyzed. Settlers, driven by a hunger for consumption, approach music to accumulate information. They rely on formal analysis to recognize structural elements, genre characteristics, and specific musical

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representations to reinforce their beliefs and affirm their sense of certainty. Their perception of "correct" listening is rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the music's content and a definitive identification of its features. This "identify x" mindset reinforces the belief that formal ear training, obtainable through institutional practice, is necessary to listen to music perfectly. Hence, this viewpoint disregards alternative listening approaches and rejects knowledge that originates from individuals who do not possess the same training.

The belief that formal training in Western art and popular music is necessary to develop a discerning ear for music implies that individuals without education are incapable of truly understanding and appreciating music. Academic institutions not only cultivate these exclusive techniques for "proper" music listening but also assume the authority to determine who is eligible to acquire them. By positioning themselves as gatekeepers of knowledge, academic institutions control methods of listening and shape the very concept of certainty itself. However, one should recognize that there are multiple ways to engage with and derive meaning from music. The idea that only a particular form of listening can lead to certainty limits the diverse experiences and perspectives that can enrich our understanding and enjoyment of music. True appreciation of music is possible by all, regardless of formal education or training. The misbelief, created by colonial

constructs, that certainty exists is entrenched in our educational systems and has been developed since the settlers’ first contact.

Upon their arrival at Turtle Island, settlers displayed an insatiable hunger for land and resources. As the twentieth century unfolded, this hunger evolved to encompass a craving for Indigenous culture. The term "appropriation" aptly captures the settlers' desire to seize Indigenous artistic practices for their purposes. In their pursuit of assimilation, settlers extracted elements of Indigenous experiences and transplanted them into colonial contexts, thereby defining Indigeneity themselves. Indigenous artifacts are stripped of cultural value and placed in museums to satisfy the settler gaze. Indigenous narratives have been reduced to simplistic stereotypes of trauma and healing, conveniently digestible for settler society.

The colonial positionality defines Indigeneity around Indian stereotypes, and how settlers listen to and define Indigenous music reflects this same behaviour, delegating the Indigenous sound to a box. Thomas King uses the term "Dead Indians" to describe the Indigenous stereotypes perpetuated by North America's collective imagination and fears. Indeed, “Dead Indians” are littered throughout our society as mascots, logos, and characters in commercials, television shows, and movies.

Through my research-creation project, I engaged with my Indigenous culture, seeking to reclaim agency over my Indigenous identity. By exploring and expressing my Indigenous heritage on my terms, I challenged the colonial constructs of Indigeneity as I

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129 Thomas King, The Inconvenient Indian (Canada: Anchor Canada, 2013), 53.
130 King, The Inconvenient Indian, 54.
embarked on my personal journey toward authenticity and self-discovery. During my project, I embraced an Indigenous listening positionality, one which views music as a means of self-reflection. Robinson explains that according to this viewpoint, the musical process is more revered than the artifact produced by the process. Cree Elder Joseph E. Couture has said, “everybody has a song to sing which is no song at all; it is the process of singing, and when you sing you are where you are.”\(^{131}\) The Indigenous listening positionality involves feeling the song, connecting with its historical context, and establishing a deeper connection to culture and identity. In Indigenous traditions, songs serve as a function of memory which produces a feeling inside oneself that brings them back to a time in their lives.\(^{132}\) But an individual cannot simply choose to adopt an Indigenous mindset at will to engage in an Indigenous listening positionality, as such an act can represent appropriation.

Instead, individuals must remember they are always a guest listener when listening to Indigenous music, and to not change their mindset to become one they think is an Indigenous one, but rather change how they listen and perceive music as a whole. To divert from hungry listening, an individual must acknowledge the relationships that exist within a song. These include a song’s relationship to the self, culture, people, and the land. Guest listening is when an individual acknowledges these relationships through the act of listening and, in doing so, enters into an Indigenous sound territory as guests.\(^{133}\) In this sound territory, the listener enters Indigenous territory where they can hear and

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sense the land. Indigenous listening always connects back to land. Many Indigenous cultures believe that as they listen and connect to the land, the land listens back. This belief is known as spatial subjectivity and is the theory that space is not just aesthetic, but can express agency, affect, and character. Many Indigenous knowledge structures acknowledge this sense of intersubjectivity that identifies the trees, rivers, mountains, and other places as kin. Music is one way how Indigenous peoples have and continue to communicate with their kin, and by listening to rivers flow and wind howl, Indigenous people listen to the songs their kin sing back. During my project, I learned to improve my listening positionality by connecting to the land during the musical process.

Product versus Process

Music education today places importance on the musical product, and the only importance placed on the music-making process is its connection with product. For example, how can one alter their creative process to create the best product, or how can one adjust their listening to better analyze product. Many music-making courses in academia provide songwriting paradigms that lay out a process to achieve commercial success, or in other words, a “hit” song (product). The indicators of commercial dominance being topping the charts, critical acclaim, millions of streams, or all of these factors. Commercial songwriting cannot be viewed separate from its cohesive bond with society. Antoine Hennion states in their article, “An intermediary between production and

consumption: The producer of popular music” (1989), that not only is commercial music an expression of society but also the only validation of a pop record is through its sales.¹³⁸

Due to the obsession with audience, commercial songwriting paradigms actively keep the audience’s hypothetical experiences of the product in mind throughout the music-making process. The songwriting experience thus becomes more outward as opposed to the introspective process it should be. For example, commercial songwriting strategies affirm songwriters must maintain a balance between predictability and surprise within their song. If a song is too predictable, it will bore the audience, and if a song is too complex, the audience may not feel comfortable.¹³⁹ A song should be easy for the listener to remember through the use of repetition and memorable lyrics and melody.¹⁴⁰ Most importantly, a song has to hold the attention of its audience to achieve success.¹⁴¹ To make this possible, a commercial songwriting paradigm establishes numerous guidelines for rhyme, rhythm, narrative, and structure, to ensure success with the public.

Writing songs to achieve commercial rewards objectifies the songwriting experience and supports the belief that a hierarchal system in music exists. In reality, all songs are equally valid, and one person’s act of expression is not better than someone else’s. Individuals must engage in multiple methods of practice and reflection to find the processes that are right for them. If individuals decide to engage in commercial songwriting techniques, that is their choice of practice and their right to make, as long as they are reflecting within their processes and understand why they are making certain

¹⁴⁰ Braheny, The Craft and Business of Songwriting, 81.
¹⁴¹ Braheny, The Craft and Business of Songwriting, 81.
practical decisions. Ultimately, a decolonized music education is one that focuses on the
music-making process. Institutions should fund resources, such as, music equipment,
studio space, and instruments to help students expand their creative processes; create
opportunities for students to interact and perform with other musicians; and most
importantly, they should include the pedagogical practice of self-reflection in their
teaching to allow students to receive the full benefits reflecting on music can offer.

Though I believe music education should focus on process more than product, I
want to be clear that a product derived from music-making still has value, although not
value in the colonial sense of the word, for colonialists primarily determine value through
objective assessment and commercial success. From the Indigenous perspective, the
value of a creative artifact comes from further reflection. New experiences can be added
to products, and artists can continue to learn more about themselves, their talents, and
their music-making process when they continue to reflect. As a result, the product
becomes a part of the creative process once again and represents the cyclical nature of
creativity.

For example, I can listen to my creative artifact and create new experiences from
which I can learn. What I learn depends on what I choose to reflect on while listening. I
can reflect on the time I created the artifact and learn new knowledge from the past; I can
focus on my emotions and the act of listening, therefore learning from the present; I can
reflect on how I could play the song live, thus learning from the future. We never stop
having new experiences from music, which is why the concept of a “completed creative
artifact” is a paradox. Music-making is a fluid process that continuously evolves, for even
after a song has been “completed,” external variables always change the artifact. For
instance, a song will sound different through various kinds of speakers, in different listening environments, and a song even changes when the playback levels differ.

By participating in a hybrid model of practice-based and practice-led research, I will ultimately reflect on both process and product. Moreover, in my research-creation project, a musical artifact must result in order to document the creative process and also to serve as proof that an academic institution allowed Indigenous thinking and creative practice to take place on its grounds, which, in turn, is an act of reconciliation by the institution itself. In creating my product, I will also emulate the experience of a student in a music-making class focused on artifact generation. Since classes involving music creation normally require some sort of an artifact to be completed and submitted, my dissertation will more accurately represent pedagogies for practice, as it will be coming from the perspective of a music student.

In my role as a music student, I have discovered that there is not just one truth, but many. For example, a truth for me, such as how I often become nervous while playing to a metronomic tempo, may not be a truth to someone who enjoys playing to a metronome. Furthermore, my own truths can change. Just because playing to a metronome makes me anxious now does not mean it will be this way forever. In fact, throughout this project I have come to be more comfortable while playing to a metronome, and now this is my new truth. And so perhaps calling them truths is pointless to begin with. In reality, I have had numerous experiences from which I’ve learned. Knowledge is produced by the experiences we choose to learn from. Therefore, music is just a way of manufacturing learning opportunities. Ultimately, what is important is the journey, what we learned about ourselves, the process itself (that’s true for us), and how we apply the knowledge
we’ve gained to the next experiences we have. There is no correct method of experiencing music, and this is the mindset we must promote to decolonize music.

*Decolonizing Music Education*

Decolonization recognizes and values the knowledge contributions of all individuals. Often people mistake decolonization as a process that involves rejection, such as, a rejection of colonial knowledge structures. In actuality, decolonization is rooted in inclusivity, and embracing the diverse pathways to knowledge and their respective outcomes. Every individual has unique stories and cultural backgrounds from which we can learn. Decolonization seeks to create spaces where everyone can engage with and learn from their cultural knowledge structures along with others. Institutions must foster learning environments where scholars feel comfortable employing methodologies that are meaningful to their communities, as this will lead to research that positively impacts their community. When scholars promote subjective truth, cultural knowledge, and create knowledge to benefit the relationships around them, they participate in decolonizing academia.

That being said, to achieve decolonization in education, particularly music education, institutions must take essential steps toward accessibility. Dylan Robinson proposes various structural changes required by academia to decolonize their spaces, including abolishing the current “entrance audition,” supporting all epistemologies of music, connecting with the diverse communities in the area, and implementing a

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143 Robinson, “To All Who Should Be Concerned,” 139.
144 Robinson, “To All Who Should Be Concerned,” 140.
hiring plan that results in at least half of faculty representation comprised of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) scholars, composers, and musicians.\footnote{Robinson, “To All Who Should Be Concerned,” 139.}

Decolonizing education involves ensuring that all students who desire to learn have the opportunity to attend university. Access to knowledge should be available to everyone, regardless of their background. By removing economic, socio-economic, cultural, and racial barriers to entry, institutions will contribute significantly to the process of reconciliation and the betterment of society. The decolonization of music education, in particular, will encourage students to engage in meaningful dialogues, recognize the interconnectedness of music processes, and appreciate the transformative power of music to shape lives. Overall, a decolonized education system that promotes inclusivity and eliminates entry barriers will foster a more equitable and enriched society, allowing individuals to thrive.

To decolonize musicology requires the transformation of the colonial structure of education to include and value Indigenous knowledge and culture.\footnote{Linda Smith, \textit{Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology}, ed. Jo-ann Archibald, Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo (Great Britain: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019), 6.} Musicologists must engage in Indigenous methodologies to decolonize musicology. Although, decolonizing research methodologies does not mean entirely dismissing colonial methodological approaches; instead, it encourages cooperation between the two processes.\footnote{Smith, \textit{Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology}, 6.}

The following story from Jo-ann Archibald's \textit{Indigenous Storywork} (2008), told to her by Eber Hampton of the Chickasaw Nation, illustrates the process of decolonizing
research and education. The story is about an Indigenous trickster and is called “Coyote Searching for the Bone Needle.”

Old Man Coyote had just finished a long hard day of hunting. He decided to set up his camp for the night. After supper, he sat by the fire and rubbed his tired feet from the long day's walk. He took his favourite pair of moccasins out of his bag and noticed a hole in the toe of one of them. He looked for his special bone needle to mend the moccasin but could not find it in his bag.

Old Man Coyote started to crawl on his hands and knees around the fire to see if he could see or feel the needle. Just then, Owl came flying by and landed next to Old Man Coyote. He asked him what he was looking for, and Old Man Coyote told Owl his problem.

Owl said that he would help his friend look for the bone needle. After he made one swoop around the fire area, he told Old Man Coyote that he did not see the needle. Owl said if it were around the fire, then he would have spotted it. He then asked Old Man Coyote where he had last used the needle. Old Man Coyote said that he used it quite far away, over in the bushes, to mend his jacket.

Then Owl asked Old Man Coyote why he was searching for the needle around the campfire. Old Man Coyote replied, “Well, it’s easier to look for the needle here because the fire gives off such good light, and I can see better here.”

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The Indigenous trickster is a figure that shows up in many Indigenous stories. The trickster often neglects Indigenous teachings and is punished in the stories for doing so. In the story, Old Man Coyote is irresponsible with the bone needle and ends up losing it. The bone needle symbolizes Indigenous teachings and how colonial scholars today have neglected and forgotten Indigenous teachings, just as Old Man Coyote forgot about the bone needle. The Owl in the story symbolizes the Elders who guide those attempting to locate and understand Indigenous teachings. Old Man Coyote must stop going around in circles searching for the bone needle in the same place, just as scholars today continue to go in circles using the same colonized research methods to understand Indigenous teachings despite it not working. The story represents the difficulty of changing when we are comfortable. Old Man Coyote will need to step away from the light of the fire of what is already known to search for new knowledge and engage in decolonized research methods.

Indigenous methodologies can be an excellent pathway to knowledge if scholars would only step away from the fire and employ different, yet effective, methodologies to search for them. Indigenous stories are an essential component of Indigenous research methods and academic institutions need to step outside their comfort zone, just like Old Man Coyote, and treat Indigenous stories as creditable pathways to knowledge. That said, institutions will not begin to decolonize education on their own accord. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars also need to step outside their comfort zone and reclaim the use

149 Linda Smith, Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology, ed. Jo-ann Archibald, Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo (Great Britain: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019), 3.
150 Smith, Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology, 3.
151 Smith, Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology, 3.
of Indigenous stories as valid methodologies despite resistance from colonial forces within academia. Music is a form of storytelling, and so music research that involves storytelling is a natural fit. Just as music can serve as a form of protest against society, scholars can use music research as a form of protest. When scholars include stories as methodology, they protest against conventional research methods, and they prove that music research can exist outside colonial constructs such as written documents.

My album, "Work for Turtle Island," embodies story, methodology, and research. People must step outside their comfort zones to understand that my album contributes to the work of reconciliation and produces knowledge. I hope listeners can learn from my album, as I learned from the story above. Scholars must also step outside their familiar comfort zones to and recognize that knowledge can come from music. Academic institutions must begin accepting alternative methods of knowledge creation, such as students creating albums.

In research-creation projects, the aim is for the audience to learn from the album and gain insights about the researcher through the written component, not to extract knowledge separately from both. Nevertheless, profound insights can still surface from reflections and the retelling of experiences. I encourage musicologists to immerse themselves in playing music as a means of self-discovery, cultural exploration, and historical understanding. For music researchers striving to decolonize and become allies, the act of playing music in defiance of the status quo is commendable. However, it is crucial for researchers to uphold cultural boundaries when engaging with cultures beyond their own through music.
Engagement with cultural methodologies cannot be switched on and off at will. Respect and an understanding of relational accountability must always exist when entering these spaces. If research conducted by non-Indigenous individuals follows Indigenous protocols, the work and process can be regarded as advancing existing Indigenous viewpoints. Nor does the process confer Indigenous identity on the researcher. Furthermore, non-Indigenous people themselves cannot create Indigenous works; rather, such individuals can be, instead, regarded as allies in the decolonization process. Gord Downie's "Secret Path,"152 is an excellent example of how non-Indigenous musicians can, through allyship, create works that advance knowledge about Indigenous peoples.

Due to the history of Indigenous culture being exploited and extracted, researchers will need to be careful not to create an imbalance of power when they employ, and not appropriate, an Indigenous methodological approach.153 To engage in Indigenous methodologies correctly, the researcher must follow cultural protocols that establish guidelines for interacting with Indigenous communities.154 Cultural protocols vary depending on the community and its cultural practices. For example, in one of Kovach’s studies involving the Cree nation, it was cultural protocol to approach Elders and research participants with a gift of tobacco which symbolized respect and reciprocity.155 Ethical protocols in research work in tandem with cultural protocols and

address the political side of research which protect Indigenous knowledge from extractive approaches to research.\textsuperscript{156} Indigenous advisory committees for research are helpful here.

Sources of Decolonization

Within Canada, guidance is available to inform the work of decolonization, such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's (RCAP) Ethical Guidelines for Research (1996), Section 6: Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (1998), and the Canadian Institute of Health Research’s Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People (2007).\textsuperscript{157} The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) is the most substantive study to date about the protocols one should follow when researching Indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{158} These protocols require researchers who wish to research Indigenous communities to outline which Indigenous communities would participate, how they would provide consent, and how the community would benefit from the research.\textsuperscript{159} But non-Indigenous researchers must always recognize that these government sources do not confer the right to generate Indigenous knowledge. Instead, researchers should follow these protocols to enhance understanding and awareness of knowledge attributed to Indigenous peoples, acting as supportive allies. These protocols associated with Indigenous knowledge ask researchers to confirm their research and findings are from Indigenous perspectives, demonstrate how their research incorporates protocols on knowledge sharing, and show how they validate their findings that involve Indigenous knowledge.\textsuperscript{160} The RCAP was the first

\textsuperscript{156} Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts, 127.
\textsuperscript{157} Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts, 143.
\textsuperscript{158} Margaret Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 143.
\textsuperscript{159} Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts, 144.
\textsuperscript{160} Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts, 144.
government-funded research project to develop ethical research protocols with the Indigenous community involved.\textsuperscript{161}

The First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey Working Committee created a method that should be followed by researchers to ensure Indigenous data is protected. The committee presents the following: ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP).\textsuperscript{162} The OCAP document outlines protocols that have a goal to offset extractive research practices.\textsuperscript{163} Ownership states that an Indigenous community owns cultural knowledge or data collectively, and the community's consent is needed to use the knowledge.\textsuperscript{164} Control declares that an Indigenous community has the right to control the aspects of the research done on them, such as the formulation of research frameworks, data management, and dissemination.\textsuperscript{165} Access grants Indigenous people the right to retrieve and examine data that concerns them and their communities.\textsuperscript{166} Possession refers to the actual possession of data and allows ownership to be asserted and protected.\textsuperscript{167} The main purpose of cultural and ethical protocols is to decolonize research. These protocols work to ensure the ethical foundation of a research project. To decolonize musicology, universities should enforce cultural and ethical protocols to ensure that all research done on Indigenous people is ethical.

In the article, “Paved with Good Intentions,” by Adam Gaudry in\textit{Beyond the Lecture: Innovations in Teaching Canadian History}, he discusses the importance of

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\item Margaret Kovach,\textit{Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 145.
\end{thebibliography}
making education relevant to Indigenous students within academia. He argues that improperly designed educational initiatives that focus on non-Indigenous students can disadvantage Indigenous learners.\textsuperscript{168} Educational content must normalize Indigenous experiences and create spaces where Indigenous student voices are both heard and respected. Many universities acknowledge the necessity of incorporating Indigenous content requirements. To do so effectively and in alignment with broader societal goals of reconciliation and restitution requires robust administrative infrastructure, expanded Indigenous programming, and increased representation of Indigenous faculty.\textsuperscript{169} Without a strong commitment and careful implementation supported by adequate funding, there is a risk of reinforcing the colonial knowledge structures that institutions claim to be transforming.\textsuperscript{170} This is why I believe undertaking a musical process is an excellent tool for music education, as it relates to each individual separately. Also, by not being confined to written documents, students can explore how their music contributes to reconciliation and decolonizes spaces.

When I began this research project, I believed it was my duty to uncover a definite method of teaching decolonized pedagogy in academia. Now that I have embraced and learned more about an Indigenous worldview, I have realized my role in decolonization is not to develop absolute truth, nor could I ever achieve this. Just as I have realized reconciliation is a subjective process, with each individual having their own role to play, so too is the process an individual takes to decolonize spaces around them.

\textsuperscript{168} Adam Gaudry, “Paved with Good Intentions: Simply Requiring Indigenous Content is Not Enough”, 212, Cited in Beyond the Lecture: Innovations in Teaching Canadian History, Andrea Eidinger and Krista Mcracken (Creative Commons Attribution, 2012), 0-286.

\textsuperscript{169} Gaudry, “Paved with Good Intentions: Simply Requiring Indigenous Content is Not Enough”, 213.

\textsuperscript{170} Gaudry, “Paved with Good Intentions: Simply Requiring Indigenous Content is Not Enough”, 213.
Everyone will go about the process differently in their own unique ways, and as long as there is communication with one’s spirit, community, and a deep understanding of reconciliation, there is no wrong way to go about decolonization. Although, one must not forget there is a greater decolonization process that exists outside of musical spaces.

*Decolonization and the Government of Canada*

In Tuck and Yang’s article, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” they discuss the challenges intertwined with decolonization. They explain how decolonization is literally about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. They assert that decolonization in a settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land and the recognition of how land and relationships to it have always been differently understood and enacted; this means all of the land, not just symbolically.\(^{171}\) While working to decolonize spaces, individuals must remember the broader context of the world and the tangible changes Indigenous peoples seek from decolonization processes. Though many may feel they cannot address these larger issues, reflecting on these greater contexts and Indigenous knowledge is a crucial step in decolonizing society.

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Chapter Six: Methodology

Indigenous Worldview

Throughout my research-creation project, I learned how to engage in practice in an Indigenous way, and I discovered that the Indigenous way is unique to each person. I learned about Indigenous methodologies from Indigenous voices, interpreted them my way, and self-reflected on them. By using Indigenous methodologies in a personal way, one will contribute to reconciliation by acknowledging and embracing Indigenous ways of thinking.

Relationality

Relationality is fundamental to Indigenous methodologies, because honouring the interconnectedness of life is at the centre of what it means to be Indigenous. For Indigenous research to be considered Indigenous, researchers cannot separate themselves from their relationship with research. Indigenous people believe relationships exist between everyone on earth, between people and the land, and between the spirits and ancestors, and these relationships shape an individual’s identity. Family significantly influences who we are and builds the connection between community.\(^\text{172}\) In Indigenous research methods, working with people for whom there is already an established relationship is encouraged. In Indigenous methodology, the strength of pre-existing relationships in the research process uplifts the research and leads to solid results.\(^\text{173}\) This is why I chose to involve my family in my creative process.

\(^\text{173}\) Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 86.
My family played a significant role at various stages of my project. Engaging in music-making with my cousin deeply influenced my creative practice, while my mother provided invaluable insights into Indigenous beliefs and helped me foster connections within my community. A collaboration with my twin sister on the album art breathed additional life into the music. She also taught me how to make a hand drum which I then used throughout the album, and my older sister's recommendations of Indigenous scholars greatly informed my research approach. Moreover, my father's musical influence shaped my musical style, which led to the album I have created today. Through this research-creation project, I have grown closer to my family and forged connections with other individuals who have become like family.

Knowledge acquisition is not limited to interpersonal relationships, however, for it extends to our connection with the land and all our relations.\textsuperscript{174} Acknowledging and honouring the land strengthens our research endeavours and personal identities. Research itself is considered a ceremony, as it encompasses spiritual elements that enhance the research experience.\textsuperscript{175} Ceremonies aim to foster deeper connections among all the relationships we share. Thus, by embodying our relationships into the research and music-making processes is how music research becomes ceremony and contributes to the decolonization of musicology.

\textsuperscript{175} Wilson, \textit{Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods}, 87.
Relational Accountability

Indigenous research aims to maintain authenticity within the Indigenous community.\footnote{Shawn Wilson, \textit{Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods} (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 102.} Therefore, Indigenous research must faithfully capture the ideas and perspectives of the participants while upholding the integrity of the relationships established, a concept known as \textit{relational accountability}.\footnote{Wilson, \textit{Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods}, 102.} The principles of respect and reciprocity guide Indigenous research, as one's research should serve and honour the community involved, while at the same time not compromising the researcher’s own beliefs and morals.\footnote{Wilson, \textit{Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods}, 102.} Researchers can contribute to the community by actively listening to Indigenous stories as a form of Indigenous methodology. By engaging in this practice, researchers contribute to preserving Indigenous culture and traditional teaching methods.

The preservation of culture aligns with the decolonizing aspirations of many Indigenous paradigms. Margaret Kovach highlights this in her work, \textit{Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts} (2009), stating “the purpose of decolonization is to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected.”\footnote{Margaret Kovach, \textit{Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 85.} An individual’s research, when associated with Indigeneity, must avoid actions that could negatively affect the Indigenous community. Unlike Western knowledge structures, Indigenous research does not necessarily validate truthfulness through empirical evidence. The acceptance of research within the Indigenous community comes from the ability of
community members to represent their experiences accurately. The research should be something that can be shared, passed on, and taught to others within the community, just as with stories.

Indigenous methodologies, to be adopted ethically, must be implemented according to respect, responsibility, and reciprocity and reflect on the relationships between these values throughout the research process. A scholar throughout their research should ask themselves: How do their methods help build respectful relationships between the research topic and themselves? How do their methods help to build respectful relationships between themselves and research participants? How can they relate respectfully to the other participants involved in the research? What are their responsibilities in the research relationship? Are they being responsible while completing their research goal? What are they contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth, and learning reciprocal?

Throughout my research, I made sure my methods were designed to honour the cultural and spiritual foundations of my research-creation project, while also making sure when engaging with Indigenous knowledge that I maintained my own integrity. As a researcher, interpreting stories in my own way and staying true to myself was essential. I had learned from my community that interpreting stories in our own way is how we stay true to ourselves throughout the research process.

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181 Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 102.
183 Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 77.
To ensure respectful relationships with those involved, I treated collaborators with dignity and respect, seeking informed consent, respecting privacy, and valuing their perspectives. I was transparent about my goal of creating an album representing my Indigeneity and approached collaborators with cultural sensitivity, open communication, and a genuine willingness to learn.

I consistently reminded myself of my responsibilities in the research relationship: ensuring ethical conduct, protecting participants' well-being, and accurately representing their contributions. Being accountable meant conducting thorough, honest, and unbiased research with transparency and integrity. To give back, researchers should provide tangible benefits to the community, such as sharing findings, supporting community goals, or contributing resources. My album now serves as a living body of work that shares my community’s stories and values with a broader audience, offering wisdom and Indigenous knowledge to a broader community once out of reach from my community.

Ensuring reciprocal sharing, growth, and learning involves mutual exchange where both researchers and participants benefit. This can include co-creating knowledge, providing educational opportunities, and fostering long-term partnerships. I was very fortunate that my Elder co-wrote songs with me on my album, and I am grateful to have a collaborative creative partner who will always support me.

Relationality is fundamental in Indigenous methodologies as the Indigenous people believe everything in the world is interconnected. The belief in the interconnectedness of life is at the centre of what it means to be Indigenous. Indigenous people believe relationships exist between everyone on earth, between people and the land, and between the spirits and ancestors.
Storytelling

Narrative is the primary means for passing on knowledge within Indigenous communities.¹⁸⁴ Through Indigenous stories, individuals are encouraged to engage in profound contemplation and introspection regarding their thoughts, actions, and responses.¹⁸⁵ In her book, *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (2019), Linda Smith outlines principles crucial to effectively utilizing Indigenous stories as a methodological approach to the generation of meaning and the acquisition of knowledge. Some principles include respect, responsibility, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy.¹⁸⁶ By adhering to these principles, researchers can engage with Indigenous stories in a manner that is aware of stories profound significance.

Respect refers to the attitude towards the content researchers experience. They must treat others with kindness and value the holistic relationships made throughout the research process.¹⁸⁷ When listening to Indigenous stories, a researcher will respect the cultural knowledge embedded in the stories and respect the people who own and share the stories.¹⁸⁸ Establishing a well-mannered relationship with an Indigenous community is crucial before initiating any research collaboration.¹⁸⁹ This involves approaching the community with humility, recognizing their autonomy, and seeking their permission and guidance.

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To listen responsibly to Indigenous stories requires not only being an active listener but also listening with an open heart and mind. Researchers are responsible for any errors or misrepresentations that may occur during the research process and for their portrayal of the stories shared with them. They must ensure that the information is shared at the correct time and place with the appropriate individuals, and communicated accurately, respecting the cultural protocols and sensitivities surrounding the stories. Furthermore, researchers are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the shared stories. However, they do not necessarily have to adhere to the original narrative but should preserve its essence. They must be mindful of their interpretation and understanding of the story, avoiding distortions or misinterpretations that could compromise its authenticity. By assuming these responsibilities, researchers demonstrate their commitment to ethical research practices, while upholding the trust of the community and the individuals who have shared their stories.

An Indigenous story holds a sacred place and should be approached with reverence. The researcher must engage in active and attentive listening, allowing for moments of silence to honour the depth of the story and reflect. Similarly, as individuals prepare mentally and physically to partake in a ceremonial practice that aims to elevate their consciousness, the researcher should also prepare personally before listening to an Indigenous story. This preparation involves creating a space within oneself for deep reflection and openness, cultivating an attitude of respect and understanding. By adopting

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193 Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 69.
this mindful and intentional approach, researchers acknowledge the spiritual and cultural importance of the Indigenous story and ensure that they are fully present and receptive to its teachings and insights.

To take meaning from Indigenous stories, the researcher should understand storytelling and research as a holistic process. Embracing the principles of holism, interrelatedness, and synergy allows for a comprehensive and interconnected understanding of stories, which promotes a more meaningful and impactful research process. In her book, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (2008), Jo-ann Archibald explains the concept of holism. She writes,

“An Indigenous philosophical concept of holism refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of holism extends to and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, band, and nation.”

While crafting my songs, I felt deeply connected to these various realms. Intellectually, I reflected on the history I researched, allowing it to inform my lyrics and concepts. Spiritually, I found expression for my inner self, while emotionally, I channelled my feelings into the music and had to put myself in the headspace of certain emotions while writing. Even physically, I had to manage my energy levels as my mind would fatigue and my hand would tire while playing the guitar during extended songwriting sessions. All of this influenced my songwriting and my overall story.

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When I recorded Glenda for "The Plan,"195 my mother accompanied me. As I immersed myself in stories that my Elder shared, I experienced a profound interconnectedness between the various realms that led to the creation of the song. The relationships between my family, community, band, and nation all played pivotal roles in shaping my creative process during these moments of listening and ideation. Collaborating closely with my family and community, their influence was woven into the fabric of the album, breathing life into its creation.

When listening to an Indigenous story, the researcher should constantly examine existing relationships and reflect upon them. When researchers honour the story and the experience, they can generate meaning from the story through their perspective and learn more about themselves. Listeners should be aware of how their own life and experiences shape their understanding of the story.196 Indigenous stories are meant for listeners to interpret their own lessons based on all their relations; therefore, listeners must be aware of the interconnectedness of their relationships, so they can be open to the new knowledge that will come from reflecting on stories.

Archibald also talks about synergy in reference to the connection formed when receiving a story. The interactions between the storyteller and listener create synergy with emotional, healing, and spiritual aspects that help bring the story to life.197 An Indigenous story not only communicates information to the listener, but it also communicates

196 Linda Smith, Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology, ed. Jo-ann Archibald, Q’um Q’um Xiixem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo (Great Britain: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019), 35.
strength and energy. Archibald further explains, “Energy is a source of power that feeds and revitalizes the mind, heart, body, and spirit in a holistic manner.” The individual absorbs this energy while listening, and in doing so, goes through a transformative process leading to an enriched and enlightened spirit.

While immersing myself in music by Indigenous artists to draw inspiration for my album, I experienced the profound healing power inherent in these songs. I sincerely hope my music can evoke a similar sense of healing in listeners. Furthermore, listening to the wisdom shared by my Elder Glenda while creating "The Plan" infused me with a revitalizing energy. I remember being excited about the song I was going to make as Glenda had shared such amazing stories with me and I was thrilled to be able to put them to music. This feeling mirrored the euphoria I often experience after a successful music-making session. Such moments show that the music making process can remarkably energize the spirit and instill a deep sense of joy. Therefore, I aspire for my music to enlighten and inspire listeners to share in this uplifting experience through their musical endeavours.

*Conversation as Methodology*

To obtain stories, researchers should allow unstructured meetings to occur so Indigenous people can share stories and control the information they reveal. Indigenous methodologies use conversations to gain knowledge instead of structured interviews with prepared questions. Conversations are open-ended, flexible, and better support

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Indigenous ways of sharing knowledge. Without prepared questions, participants are able to control their narrative, and this prevents the researcher from directing stories in a particular way. Researchers should inform the participants of their research and the goal of that research, so participants can decide if they would like to contribute. Researchers should be comfortable with storytelling's fluid and stream-of-consciousness nature, avoiding interruptions that redirect the narrative back to predefined questions. This conversational approach grants participants the agency to reclaim their voices, share their stories, and contribute new knowledge on their terms, a freedom often denied to Indigenous people in society. Although this method challenges the rigid "just the facts" style of colonial constructs, researchers who embrace it become much more committed to decolonizing their scholarly practices.

The researcher should also be aware that asking participants to share stories relies on them recounting memories and may trigger a range of emotions. Margot Kovach explains, “Indigenous research frameworks have a decolonizing agenda that involves healing and transformation. When asking Indigenous people for their stories, a researcher must be aware that the choice of this method opens a door for healing associated with decolonization.” Researchers have a responsibility when choosing these research methods to be respectful of participants and what they are asking from them.

Researchers must approach knowledge acquisition with sensitivity and a commitment to equitable power dynamics to avoid perpetuating the historical

exploitation and extraction of Indigenous culture. When engaging in conversation as an Indigenous methodology, researchers must demonstrate respect for the culture and should be mindful of the appropriate ways of gathering knowledge. For instance, in my culture, a gift of tobacco is customary to give to elders or those sharing cultural knowledge as a gesture of respect, reciprocity, and gratitude. Throughout my creative process, I engaged in numerous conversations with community members and my elder, acquiring new knowledge that profoundly shaped my identity and influenced the creative artifact I produced. These conversations were not independent research studies but active and collaborative engagements in my creative practice.

_Music as Methodology_

Indigenous people possess a wealth of knowledge that they access through music, as listening to music can be a transformative experience which leads to new insights and understanding. When individuals engage with music, they can connect with the story embedded within the song and apply its message to their lives. Moreover, the bond between listeners and artists strengthens when artists share their experiences, for this creates an impactful connection and facilitates learning. Musicologists can gain valuable insights into music by connecting with artists and listening to their stories with respect and appreciation.

Music invites connection. Engaging in objective methodologies and researching music devoid of connections may not be the best way for individuals to learn about music. Indigenous stories teach individuals how to have confidence in their music.

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abilities, value their relationship with music, and learn that music is about expression. In the past, colonizers took control over Indigenous stories and framed Indigenous narratives through colonial paradigms. Indigenous people are now reclaiming their stories and using them as paths to knowledge.

Objectivity versus Subjectivity

The subjectivity of stories is what makes them impactful, whereas many academic institutions rely only on those stories that recount fact. Academia favours methodologies that gather knowledge through intellect, but many Indigenous methodologies obtain knowledge through senses and intuition.\(^{207}\) The colonial notion that knowledge stems from intellectual observation supports the idea that research must be objective rather than subjective. Therefore, to engage in colonial research methods, emotion and motives must be removed to achieve "valid" results.\(^{208}\) Academic institutions have trouble valuing subjective knowledge obtained through spirituality.\(^{209}\) Academia's disregard of spiritual knowledge results because colonial thought paradigms believe empirical evidence is superior to cultural knowledge and inward knowing.\(^{210}\)

Colonial knowledge systems idolize rationalism and secular paradigms, while dismissing knowledge that originates from unexplained phenomena and subjective experiences.\(^{211}\) This exclusionary approach leads colonial institutions to label Indigenous knowledge as mere superstition, disregarding the interconnectedness of reason and spirit.

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in Indigenous ways of knowing.\textsuperscript{212} As a consequence, colonial paradigms perpetuate a narrow understanding of what constitutes as knowledge and excludes valuable perspectives and insights gained from holistic worldviews. An Indigenous methodological approach does not remove subjectivity from the research process. Researchers are part of the process, and their emotions and intuition guide the research process and frame the answers found.

In Shawn Wilson’s, \textit{Research is Ceremony} (2008), he quotes an Indigenous elder, Eber Hampton: “Humans – feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans – do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us.”\textsuperscript{213} Indigenous knowledge cannot be standardized because it relates to place and person.\textsuperscript{214} Music at its core will always be subjective, and because of this, it struggles in academic settings that prize objectivity. When studying music, researchers should not have to separate how they feel about music and how music makes them feel, for if they let themselves feel emotion during the research process, they learn about the subject and themselves.

In Indigenous contexts, the notion of a "good" or "bad" song does not exist, yet colonial institutions have imposed standardized formulas and criteria that dictate what is considered valuable or superior in music. Music education within these constructs emphasizes adherence to prescribed procedures and the evaluation of music based on predetermined standards. Institutions should allow scholars to interpret music from a

\textsuperscript{212} Margaret Kovach, \textit{Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 78.


\textsuperscript{214} Kovach, \textit{Indigenous Methodologies}, 56.
perspective that is their own and not from the standardized perspective offered by academics. Furthermore, scholars should research how music makes them feel, the emotional impact of music, and the relationship music shares with people and society. The subjective process of music-making should be researched instead of standardizing the music-making process. Subjectivity makes music unique for individuals, and the study of music should not be reduced to objective analysis. When listening to music, individuals should learn how to connect to music on a spiritual level and learn to position themselves within a song’s themes and setting.

Self-Location

In Indigenous methodologies, reflecting on culture and identity throughout the creative process is referred to as self-location. Self-location involves individuals situating themselves within their Indigenous community to identify with Indigenous values and ways of thinking.\(^2\) Self-location requires keeping one’s community and culture in mind during all steps of process to better predict how the eventual product will affect the community. Non-Indigenous individuals can partake in self-location by embracing Indigenous values in their process, and in doing so, they are able to see the world through an Indigenous perspective and embrace subjective knowledge.\(^3\)

Although, individuals must remember when engaging with a culture outside their own, it always should be approached with respect. Non-Indigenous people can also self-locate within their own culture and reflect. Moreover, to engage with self-location, regardless of culture, means to situate one’s self within the land. In all cultures, people

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come from the land, and thus everyone is connected in one big culture united by the land.

When we self-locate, we must think of our relationship to the land and embrace the knowledge obtained from the land.

Reflexivity

All our relationships are crucial to consider when using Indigenous methodologies, but the relationship between the self and research is essential. Researchers share a relationship with both their research and their research findings. When individuals are aware of their present state of thinking and feelings during an experience, they learn from it. In an Indigenous construct, this is called reflexivity. Reflexivity highlights the interconnectedness of relationships throughout knowledge creation. In her study *Indigenous Methodologies* (2009), Margaret Kovach states, "Reflexivity is the researcher's own self-reflection in the meaning-making process." When songwriters engage in self-reflection during creation, they learn about themselves and the songwriting process. Decolonizing musicology requires promoting self-growth within the songwriting process as well as building relationships with and around music. Experiencing and learning the value of self-reflection, especially during the creative process, was my greatest reward from this project.

Reflexivity serves as the primary methodology of this research-creation project. All new knowledge contained in this dissertation is rooted in my musical exploration. The objective was not simply to research music, culture, or my identity for the sake of it. Instead, the essence of this dissertation lies in creating music to demonstrate how

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individuals can gain insights about themselves and the world through reflecting on that music. I engaged in music-making to facilitate introspection. The following section outlines some of the newfound knowledge acquired during the music-making process. Every lesson learned stemmed from the act of creating music. Moreover, this project allowed me to acquire insights solely from my music and the music-making process.
Chapter Seven: Reflections

Self-Reflection

In my culture, the word naanaagdawendmowin means self-reflection from within, thinking clearly from within, and thinking things over carefully. Self-reflection is built into our language, culture, and way of life. In addition, because Indigenous peoples recognize that everyone has innate spirituality, self-reflection connects us to our spirit so that we learn from all our relations.

Building upon my Ojibway background, the following section includes the self-reflections I made while creating my musical album. Throughout the process, I was always thinking about the album to such an extent that my art became a part of me, just as my research has become a part of me. Not all of my reflections led to new knowledge, and the knowledge I obtained cannot all be recognized for conscious and subconscious reasons. Therefore, recounting everything I learned about music and music-making in this dissertation is impossible and irrelevant.

Firstly, I will never know how every experience subconsciously affected my growth and identity as a person and as a creative practitioner. Therefore, even if I believed I had included every learning moment, I would still unknowingly be missing some of these moments. Secondly, I cannot note every learning moment that happens throughout the practical work that went into making the album. For example, while audio-engineering, each couple of seconds often led to a new learning moment. Whenever I turned a dial to sculpt the sound closer to my ideal vision, I would learn not only from my previous choices but also a great deal about recording practice.

In fact, there are many ways one can reflect, and I used the notes app on my phone to log reflective entries. This concretized my conceptual thoughts and helped me
subconsciously remain on topic. I have always reflected by writing notes on my phone, and I wanted my research and reflections to be true to myself. Indeed, there is no wrong way to self-reflect. Even thinking about your art is enough; take the time to be still and reflect.

**Journal Entries and Reflections**

I have kept the reflections in their original state for the most part. I have corrected spelling and formatting issues, such as removing slang and remaining on topic, to make my thoughts more comprehensible. Also, I have not included every journal entry, only the reflections I felt were key learning moments, and I further reflect on those entries in this section.

**Music as Medicine**

November 24th, 2021, 1:34pm

*Music is like medicine in that there’s so many great benefits of it, but for instance, those with hearing loss caused from music show the danger that music can have and how everything is equally balanced with both good and bad, just as there are dangers with medicines. I struggle with my own hearing and wonder if I should continue playing music or if my tinnitus will get worse. I find myself still wanting to play music, because it’s worth it, but it’s important to know that there are these dangers and that although music is a saviour and has helped me get my mind off my tinnitus, it’s a balance of using music properly, as it can also lead to worsening my tinnitus.*

As I mentioned in chapter five, throughout my research, I discovered the term *critical listening positionality* while reading Dylan Robinson’s book, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (2020). I learned our identity informs our listening, and every individual has a unique listening positionality. During the creation of
the album, my listening positionality literally changed as I developed tinnitus in my right ear, when a little bone was dislodged within my inner ear. When initially investigating my tinnitus under a medical doctor’s care, I discovered that I was hard of hearing because I was born with Eustachian Tube Dysfunction. Developing tinnitus and learning this about my hearing, changed my listening positionality to one which is now more concerned about hearing loss. I now realize that being able to listen to music is a privilege, and we must honour and respect that privilege.

I now appreciate how delicate hearing is and how we must be kind to our hearing. Music is medicine and can provide many benefits. Still, it also has its dangers, and if misused, for example, by listening too loudly, it can have harmful effects. We must understand the balance in all things, even music.

Another way my listening position has changed is that I now use listening as a distraction from my tinnitus. Listening to music allows me to draw attention away from the physical world and focus on the spiritual world, where my tinnitus no longer exists. Simply put, the music drowns out my tinnitus. I have a gratitude for music that I did not have before. I am thankful music can be used as medicine to relieve me from my tinnitus, but I am cautious of using this medicine too much, so as not to worsen my condition. My listening positionality has come to appreciate the balance involved with music.
How is this indigenous?

People will be expecting an “Indigenous sound” when really it will just sound like music they have heard before. No such thing as good/bad music helped get me out of my comfort zone. But there’s still bad singing, but it’s not like in university where bad singing means a lack of technique from a classical perspective. Just because there’s no good/bad music, there’s still decisions that need to be made. And some decisions may be a better fit than others. Sometimes I went with first idea, sometimes I didn’t. Debunking there is no good or bad music is a starting point that lets people know anyone can be creative.

Throughout this project, I have spent considerable time reflecting on the idea of Indigeneity and what it means for this project to be Indigenous. Indigenous ways of knowing believe there is no such thing as good or bad music. If you express your heart, you can never be wrong in your music. My elder taught me this lesson, a lesson which allowed me to write my album with complete creative freedom. I wrote music for myself, not caring what others would think.

When I began preparing for the recording stage of the project, the Indigenous belief that there is no good or bad music resonated with me again. Although, this time, reflecting on it gave rise to inner conflict. Originally, I wanted to include an Indigenous woman on the album, and I had written songs for her to sing. I began planning how to find a voice that would be right for my album, and the idea of good and bad kept coming up in my mind. If there is no such thing as good or bad singing, then anyone could sing on my album, yet I was hesitant. I knew deep down one person might fit better than another, but holding auditions did not seem Indigenous to me and picking the first
musician I heard did not seem like the right way forward either. Through this sort of reflection, I realized that although there are no bad ways to express oneself in music, people still must make choices during practice that they feel will be better than others. The choices I made throughout the process is what made my project Indigenous.

Moreover, in the project, I grappled with how to embody Indigenous practices authentically. Looking back, I now realize that my initial understanding was somewhat flawed. In the early stages, I convinced myself I should only use full takes when recording and prioritize the first takes or lyrics that came to mind. I interpreted "no good or bad music" as an invitation to embrace whatever I produced first, believing it to be a truer and more honest expression and, therefore, more in line with Indigenous practices.

During my creative journey, I had moments when I worried people who listened to my album would not deem my music as Indigenous, which led to a fixation on really making sure my process was “Indigenous.” I feared deviating too much from what is traditionally considered Indigenous might undermine my project's authenticity. It was as if I were performing an Indian minstrel show, trying to meet settler expectations of what Indigeneity should look and sound like.

However, the reflection above is me recognizing that Indigenous practices encompass a more nuanced understanding. Embracing the Indigenous process does not mean solely relying on the first take or expression without further reflection. It involves engaging in a deeper connection with oneself, the music, and the story. It means seeking truth, authenticity, and a genuine connection to the essence of the music. Embracing the Indigenous process goes beyond mere spontaneity; it involves a mindful and heartfelt engagement with the creative journey.
Furthermore, I realized that my practice's uniqueness lay in my choices and that I should embrace my individuality as an Indigenous artist. As Indigenous individuals we define what is Indigenous, and we honour and respect the diverse manifestations of Indigeneity and encourage each person to find their personal creative process. I should have been looking inward to find my creative process all along. The same way settlers will need to look inward if they are truly going to understand the “Indigenous sound.”

**Sing**
March 8th, 2022, 9:33pm

*Bad forms of singing could mean singing when you are not singing and fully expressing yourself.*

“Good” at singing is like “good” at acting –

*being a good actor is measured by losing yourself in a role.*

*Bad singing is when you are not treating your voice respectfully, staying up late, drinking alcohol.*

*Bad at singing means not a good fit for song. Voices have many different ranges and tones.*

The next day I was still reflecting on the idea of good and bad singing from the conversation my elder and I had. Indigenous people are meant to interpret their elder’s wisdom in their own way, leading them to new knowledge. When I first heard that there is no good or bad music or singing, I viewed it as black or white. There is bad singing, but not in the colonial contexts I originally thought, like out-of-key or off-pitch. There is bad singing if you are not treating your voice with respect or honouring it. Also, when looking for a singer, the spirit of one voice may not connect with the spirit of your song, which is acceptable. Forcing a connection when there is not one would be bad singing.
Influenced
March 21th, 2022, 3:51pm

Mindset should be how can I best express myself. People go into making music and think that they have to be inventive or imaginative and create something new, but really the goal should just be to express yourself. You should be proud of your influencers and what makes you, you. Even if you were alone in a room, you are never removed from your musical influences so you shouldn’t try to be. Listen to music to excite yourself about writing music. Don’t shut yourself off from music because you think you will be subconsciously influenced by it later, because you will no matter what always be subconsciously influenced by it.

In this reflection, I am beginning to understand the holistic nature of practice. Your influences are a part of you and will always come through in your music. Music is about expression, not invention.
I found it hard to write about the reserve.

I didn’t want to disrespect my community in the prison analogy, so I was careful. I didn’t grow up on the reserve, and so I was very careful to not offend my community, as I have been to the reserve many times and have many fond memories of going. The fact of the matter is that some reserves have been reclaimed in a sense and are not the same as they were years ago, with Indian agents, restrictions, and kids missing. My character sings about wondering whether or not to leave the reserve. This is a feeling I’ll truly never understand and can only imagine based upon stories I have been told. For the sake of my own storytelling and passing on stories, I do not list a date in my album for Indigenous people contemplating to leave the reserve, as I feel these times can be in the past, present, or future. Though once again I cannot speak for the Indigenous people on what it’s like to live on a reserve. Indigenous women knew that if they left the reserve to marry they would no longer be Indigenous.

This reflection came while I was writing the lyrics to a song called “Reserve Prison Blues.” Originally, a theme for my album was an Indigenous woman deciding whether or not to leave the reserve. My great, great grandparents, Peter Joe, and Delina Rocky Mountain inspired this plot thread. They left the reserve and gave up their Indian status to find work. I found it hard to write about the reserve system, as I did not want to offend my community, or any community, by comparing the reserve to a prison system. Even though I think many would agree, I have had experiences different from those living on reserves, and I found it hard to speak for Indigenous people on this particular issue.
Although, at the same time, as an Indigenous person, I have the responsibility to inform non-Indigenous people about the history of reserves and the harsh reality many reserves still face today. This is why I wanted to include a reserve plot thread in the original story of my album and why I wrote a song about the issues many Indigenous people faced on reserves.

Self, Located
April 6th, 2022, 1:22pm

In the beginning I didn’t quite understand self-location until I experienced it. When keeping my community in mind, I was careful not to offend them.

Through further contemplation of my songwriting process for "Reserve Prison Blues," I reached a profound realization about self-location, as I genuinely experienced it for the first time. Taking my community's best interests, values, and feelings into account while writing made me pause and reflect on the impact my song would have on them. This, I now understand, is what self-location truly means.

Judgement Day
April 11th, 2022, 5:00pm

The fear of finishing your art. Then it’s closer to the world of judgement. And it may sound different from what’s in my head.

This introspection best encapsulates my fear of the final product, a sentiment that resonates with many individuals. Thinking of the final product hinders people from completing their artistic endeavours and can deter them from even starting in the first place. This is why idolizing the result can prove hazardous, as it may negatively impact the creative process. To overcome this obstacle, people should focus on the creative process, reminding themselves that music is a means of self-expression and learning, instead of being about a preoccupation with societal judgments.
Almost Done…
April 26th, 2022, 1:31am

Following deadlines was really stressful and at times made me hate the creative process, and it was linked to the lowest self-esteem I had at times. And yet, I also feel that if I never set deadlines for myself, then I’d still be writing it at this point in time.

Dates for completion of work offer a practical compromise that can bridge the gap between Westernized and Indigenous knowledge structures. While the Indigenous creative process may be boundless, I believe it can coexist within the framework of colonial deadlines. As educational programs and semesters have defined endings, Indigenous practices must adapt to function within these spaces. Embracing the creative process within set time boundaries is a fair trade-off to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing in academia. It allows for meaningful engagement with one's creativity while respecting the limitations of the institutional setting.

Picture This
April 26th, 2022, 1:13pm

Album cover

A boy and girl, backs turned on top of a cliff watching a flood coming from the distance, along with fires in the distance. Show factories puffing black smoke into the air.

Or

Like the Wall [Pink Floyd] but the cover’s zoomed in on rushing water.

My reflection here shows the visual relationship we have with music and how we use music to take us to a place. Dylan Robinson explains in his book Hungry Listening (2020) that when individuals enter into a sound territory while listening,
listeners enter Indigenous territory where they can hear and sense the land. I believe that at moments during my creative practice, I was hearing and sensing the land, and this is why I was picturing ideas for the album art.

**Fear vs Fear**
June 15th, 2022, 2:52pm

*Fear of never getting a good take*

*versus performing and the fear of messing up and being embarrassed.*

Once again, in this reflection, I found myself grappling with the fear of not creating the perfect product. I could not escape moments of anxiety linked to perfectionism but reminding myself of the Indigenous value of music helped diminish my stress. Certain fears emerged during the process that were solely connected to the desired outcome of a product. For instance, I worried about playing to tempo and was concerned I would create an out-of-time product. I struggled with equipment and recording techniques and worried my song would be recorded improperly, and I feared I would not get that flawless chord strum, so the final product would sound below listeners’ expectations.

These concerns were not significant during the earlier stages of my creative process. However, as I entered the studio, I found myself immersed in creative activities closely related to the final product. Despite my fears, I acknowledge that a studio or specific recording method is essential for sharing my story, and sharing my story is what is most important. While I navigate these fears and uncertainties, I must remember that

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the creative process, with its inherent imperfections, holds the key to expressing my authentic voice.

**Just Passing By**  
August 29th, 2022, 12:52 pm

*Being a white native is different than being a native.*

Talk about pow wow.

This reflection acted more as a mental note to expand upon here. I did not write it down, as I knew the feeling would stay with me. It also demonstrates that new knowledge does not have to be written down or read to be remembered, but it can be felt and kept deep within, waiting for us to access it through self-reflection. The reflection came while I was at my community powwow at the Chippewas of Rama First Nation reserve. I was attempting to record some songs to include on my album. The plan seemed simple in my mind, as I had emailed my community’s cultural advisor to get his thoughts and make sure what I was doing was acceptable.

With his approval and advice, I felt confident in recording material for my album, but when I got there, it felt very awkward for me to record. I felt I would stick out if I recorded with all the equipment I had brought, especially as a white-passing native person. These thoughts were beginning to make me anxious and feel out of place because of my skin colour. When I bumped into my mother, she told me she had spoken with the cultural advisor moments earlier and that he had asked about me and if I had been able to make my recordings. I told my mom I had not yet, but afterwards, I found an empty spot on the bleachers at the top, out of the way, and brought out my equipment and recorded.

Hearing that the cultural advisor asked about me and if I had completed my task reminded me that I was welcome. My anxiety faded, and I was reminded of family, how
they will always help me, and how my community will always help me. These spaces are so welcoming, no matter who you are. At times, going to Indigenous events may seem scary for many reasons, as you may feel you are not welcomed, or you’ll stick out. But I promise you; there is a place for everyone in Indigenous spaces. If you accept these invitations into our spaces, you must honour them.

I have come to find that in Indigenous ways of knowing, we are all equal. We all come from the land. The difference between white-passing Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples only exists in society, as western society favours white people because of Colonization. I am forever grateful for the inherent advantages I have received due to my skin colour and gender and will use my privilege to give back as best I can.

Cutting room floor
September 23rd, 2022, 4:41pm

*I don’t understand how 6 songs is an album.*

After meeting with my supervisors, I quickly reflected on my phone. They told me to cut my 18-song album down to six songs. I was upset and confused. Looking back, I am glad I had the creative freedom to write a massive, elaborate story. I have often heard about artists who had songs that did not make the final cut for their albums, and I suppose I thought I was immune to this. I now see the benefit of getting lost in the writing process, writing as many songs as possible, and then picking the best. The writing process is fluid and always changing. Many new ideas and songs were added to my album late in the process, and they would not have been possible if I had kept all 18 songs from my demo. We should not get too attached to certain ideas while being creative and should allow our art to evolve. That said, we must not compromise our
vision or the integrity of our art, and I feel the many changes I have made to my album demo have stayed true to the original story I was trying to tell.

**Decisions, Decisions**  
November 25th, 2022, 12:17am

*Adding throat singing to my mix has me reflecting in the same way I was worried about the hoo haa in my other song. Is this cultural appropriation? Throat singing has been used in so many cultures across the globe over centuries. My cousin is native. Does that make this okay? Would that matter? Isn’t it the fact that we are being respectful. And he’s just really good at it too.*

This was a reflection I made during a recording practice of “While in the Wild.” At that moment, my cousin and I had both discovered that he could throat sing. I was worried if it would be offensive or cultural appropriation if we included it. In the moment, I made a quick decision to record my cousin’s throat singing, as we felt being musical with our mouths is hard to claim as one's unique culture. One of the ways in which everyone can be musical is by finding different and unique ways to create sounds with their mouths. Thus, maybe singing techniques from other cultures cannot be appropriated. In a way, we are all connected and share one voice.

Later, I had a conversation with my elder about including throat singing, for even after recording the throat singing, I was unsure about using it. I did not want to offend or upset anyone. My elder said it was fine for me to use the throat singing and to use it in their honour. She told me that although throat singing belongs to the Inuit people, our drummers from our own Chippewa of the Ojibway nation also do throat singing. She told

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me most nations closely relate to each other’s cultural activities or singing, as many nations have copied the sounds and singing of the animals.

This conversation with my elder made me reconsider putting the "who, ha" back in my song, "She Said Miigwech." I think I had originally removed the "who, ha" in the song because I felt insecure about my Indigenous identity and constantly questioned what was and was not acceptable for me to engage in as a white-passing Indigenous person. At times, it felt as if I were appropriating my own culture, because that culture seemed so foreign to me. As the process came to an end, I started to become more confident in my expression of Indigeneity. I realize I cannot appropriate my Indigenous culture because I am Indigenous.

I stand behind my choices as an expression of my Indigeneity, and that is all I can hope to do. At the end of the day, after all the guidance, one has to make choices with music and stand behind those decisions. That said, people must still acknowledge how their expression of identity will affect relationships around them. For example, when given the opportunity by Western University to create and teach a class called Music and Indigeneity, I had an idea to lead the class through a drum workshop in which each student would make a hand drum. I consulted with my community and was assured this was a good idea. While further preparing for the class, I consulted with the Indigenous community at Western University and was prompted to reflect on things I had not thought of before.

After further reflection, I decided to revise my class and remove the drum project. What is essential to recognize is that both options, having the drum project or not, would

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221 Northern Lights Warrior Horse, “She Said Miigwech,” in Work for Turtle Island, 2023, track four.
have been valid choices for my class. The knowledge and insights shared by each community were valuable, and neither community was wrong. I was responsible for interpreting the knowledge offered and choosing what I thought would be best. I decided it would be better to respect the advice of the Indigenous community at Western, as this is where the class would be taught. Ultimately, what matters most is being mindful of the relationships around us before acting and making decisions. Acknowledging the significance of these relationships helps guide us in our choices and ensures that our actions are rooted in respect and understanding.
Conclusion

Throughout this research journey, what began as a straightforward research project became a transformative experience for my mind and spirit. Creating my album taught me about my connection to land, culture, and all my relations. Most importantly, I became confident in expressing my Indigeneity.

My creative artifact would not have been possible without the help of relationships new and old. I have learned that collaborating with others and valuing the relationships formed throughout is essential to both research and music. These relationships empowered me to tap into my creativity and access new knowledge from within. I learned about musicianship, music as an act of reconciliation, and how to strengthen music pedagogy. Research-creation allows scholars to grow as individuals and when coupled with Indigenous methodologies, it can create projects that lead to the betterment of education and society.

Decolonized music education allows one to embrace the music-making process as a vital aspect of learning. There is infinite wisdom available to those who reflect on music. When academic institutions recognize the subjective knowledge that can come from music, they will be one step closer to decolonizing their spaces. This project takes us a step closer to discovering a reality in which music takes center stage in our educational journey. I am sure I have become a better musician in many (or some) ways now that I have completed the album, but more importantly, I have become a better person, which is an important goal of creating music under decolonized constructs.
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Appendix

Lyrics to Work for Turtle Island

The Rodeo Show

You never saw such a sight in all your life.

The people were lined up for blocks and blocks trying to get in to see the new rodeo.

Which had come to the city just that day.

Perhaps you wonder why they were so anxious to see this rodeo.

Well, just look at the poster. There right at the bottom was the reason.

They all wanted to see a little Indian boy who was supposed to be able to do magic tricks,

and that’s why his name was Magic Bow.

Inside the arena everybody was waiting, and oh, suddenly there he was.

Riding in in his magic canoe.

Hard

I’ve never been to Vancouver in August, but I’d go there gladly to the beach if I’m honest.

I’ve been burned once badly, but I’ll still work hard for you.

I’ve met someone so different and new.

I’ve met someone who’s entirely true.

I thought I knew love, but nothing was ever this bliss.

Love can be hard.

But I will work hard.

I’ll roll up my sleeves for you and I hope that you’ll roll your sleeves too.

Love can be hard.
But I will work harder.

Lay myself on the line for you and I hope that you’ll lie down for me too.

After Vancouver we’ll drive out the city.

We’ll look out the window view things that are pretty.

But nothing I see will be as pretty as you.

I’d sing forever if darling you’d let me.

I’m not short on words on the ways you uplift me, but I struggle with rhyme because songwriting is hard to do.

Just like love can be hard.

But I will work hard.

I’ll roll up my sleeves for you and I hope that you’ll roll your sleeves too.

Love can hard.

But I will work harder.

Lay myself on the line for you and I hope that you’ll lie down for me too.

I feel something inside me that I haven’t before.

I spend my time in a daydream planning our life by the shore.

I know Vancouver’s expensive but darling it’s what you deserve.

I know that I will love you as hard as I can.

Love can be hard.

But I will work harder.

I’ll roll up my sleeves for you and I hope that you’ll roll your sleeves too.

Love can be hard.

But you make it easy.
I know I’ll love hard for you.
And I hope that you’ll love hard for me too.

**A Dangerous Place**

Magic Bow was carrying a little lollypop named Louie.
And Louie’s friends in the window all sang, “Goodbye Louie. Goodbye.”
And then Louie started to worry. He thought to himself, I wonder if he knows. It’s his first time in the city and I wonder, I wonder if he knows that we are coming to a light.
We are coming to a corner.
I don’t mind being eaten, but I don’t want to be killed.
And the city is a dangerous place.
Watch out! Watch the light! It’s changing! It’s changed!
It’s red! It’s red! It’s red! It’s red!
No, it wasn’t the car’s fault. It was yours.
You didn’t watch out. I’m dead.

**She Said Miigwech**

She said Miigwech.
To the earth and what she gives.
You better believe it.
She said Miigwech.
To the ocean and the breeze.
And she means it.
She said Miigwech.
To the people, and the animals and trees.
And this harmony and beat.

She said Miigwech.

To the seasons and their changes.

Do you find it strange that she asks for nothing in exchange.

She said Miigwech.

To the stars, sun, moon, and the blue sky.

And all the planets up high.

She said Miigwech.

To the music that we sing and the joy it brings.

And this harmony and beat.

I just want to dance.

She said Miigwech.

**The Plan**

A lot of the Ojibway’ like to live by the water right.

I lived at Christian Island for the early part of my life and first we didn’t have any hydro, we were just living by the coil oil lamps and the heat of the wood stove.

We used to see the aurora borealis, we used to play under them, to us it was so natural.

We weren’t scared of it or nothing, it was so colourful and because we didn’t have no music on the island, you could hear them, you could hear the scratching sound or maybe somebody wiping the sky.

Just listening to a stream or brook is really something to hear as well. You can actually hear the music.
Fire makes music too. Fire seems to draw you. It’s very relaxing. Even watching a storm is really amazing. I remember when we used to hear the thunder coming, dad would say “oh our grandfathers are coming.”

You can hear the boom boom boom coming and all of a sudden bang it’s right underneath you. I used to love that too, being in my parent’s home, being in my own bedroom and just listening to the rain. Just listening to it hitting our home. Our ancestors called the thunder beings our grandfathers too as well. Mishomsanaum.

Creator gave us a lot of music really. Even the trees when they flow back and forth you can hear it. One of our healing things is they tell us to go sit by the water. And just sit there and listen. Yeah, music is a big thing. And there’s people that are gifted without having to go to school, they just grasp it.

Back in the day when they were singing, you know the men, the young drummers, and you know how high some of them can get their voices up so high. They must of picked that up and those songs from off the birds. You don’t know you have that talent inside of you until you start. One day you do something and you go hey I can do this.

I remember when finally hydro came to the island and they started blasting. And how they were cutting down all the trees making path for the hydro poles to go on. And how all of a sudden, we had light, and then the snakes disappeared. So it slowly started to change and one morning us kids we used to go to school in Midland and one morning we came down and there was fish floating on top the water. From the hydro poles, the oil from the hydro poles. And here we were having fun on the hydro poles jumping up and down on them and see who could go underneath and then come out swimming at the
other end you know. We didn’t even understand what was really going on, but we were concerned about the fish though.

Corporations have done a lot of damage to Mother Earth, and to our native reserves too where they just come in and rape it and put all kind of chemicals in our communities. And then they just got up and left. Didn’t even clean it up. Money is very important to some of those people. That’s the only way they see life I think. Makes you think that way anyways. So keep on doing the marches, keep on bringing the awareness.

I remember when we walked for our status rights, for our native status rights, and we walked in Toronto. It was amazing to see that amount of native people show up. Cause we weren’t considered Canadian. We weren’t considered Canadian until the 1980s. And then we became recognized as Canadian. We were just Anishinaabe, living in Canada our country. It’s really crazy when you look at it. The crazy minded thinking of people you know, politicians. I don’t like the name of a reservation, I always hated that. Indian reservation. Never liked that. And I think that’s like being cattle. Ignoring us as human beings with an identity. We have our own rights, our own spiritual laws, and our own rules and regulations, you know regarding the environment, the animals, you know.

When our men could go hunting and how much they could take, and so on. Even fishing, cause fishing was a big thing where I grew up, when the men went fishing they would share. They would share with their neighbours you know.

And I never ever, since I became a young woman, I never ever liked the idea of us carrying status numbers. I dislike that. It’s like we’re animals you know. I don’t like that at all. And our people still have lots of work to do. I think some of them are scared to
move, to move forward. It’s usually the women that will come along and “we’re doing this” in our culture.

**Something’s Coming**

She said there is no time to sleep.
When there’s flooding in the streets.
And fire in the trees.
She said, there is no dream to dream.
Mother Earth she speaks to me.
No time not to believe it.
She said something’s coming.
She feels it coming strong.
Do you see what’s going on?
She said something’s coming.
She feels it coming strong.
Can you see what’s going on?
She said, there is no time to sleep.
When there’s garbage in the streets.
From things we never needed.
She said, there is no dream to dream.
Mother Earth she calls to me.
No time not to believe it.
She said something’s coming.
She feels it coming strong.
Can you see what’s going on?
She said something’s coming.
She feels it won’t be long.
Can you see what’s going on?
She said, something’s coming won’t you listen to me.
Take a look outside and see the world is not what it used to be.
She said something’s coming.
I feel it coming strong.
Can you see what’s going on?
She said something’s coming.
She feels it coming strong.
Do you see what’s going on?

Hide & Seek
A little boy sitting all by himself on the steps.
When he saw Magic Bow, he was very happy and he jumped up
and he said, “will you play with me?”
“Okay” said Magic Bow.
“Then let’s play hide and go seek. I’ll run and hide, you count.”
And then Magic Bow started to count as fast as he could, lickty split in Indian language
because its faster, “ickg doe ching pas tay no da, ickg doe ching pas tay no da, ickg doe
ching pas tay no da, ickg doe ching pas tay no da, coming!”
**Good Medicine**

It was expressed to us yesterday evening is that we were looking for an opportunity to bring healing, bring healing to this community, bring healing to all the communities, and all the people you know. And they wanted to have this special, they wanted these jingle dress dancers to come and honour this circle and honour this community. To bring that good medicine, to bring that good healing here. That good energy. And so, in that good way they wanted to host this special to ensure that that good medicine was brought here. And they want to share that good medicine also with everyone here and all who are visiting. This is our medicine dance, our sacred dance amongst the Anishinaabe people. Yeah, they were very musical. Very musical. They are not like that anymore. We don’t have too many, I say nearly everybody back in the day pretty well played. Back in the day, but there was no radio or tv either though right. Just community members just playing, having a good time. Like the way it used to be back in the day, ya know. I think it’s because radios now and we have TVs, and we have all this stuff now. The city can change you, yeah the city can change you. I think that why periodically we have Indigenous people and other people go into the city and remind the city folks this is what it all about people. You know?

And there stood a policeman called Mr. Law, and he was very crossed.

He said, “you have done the worst thing ever. You were playing on the street. And you got to learn to play in the playground.

And then he pointed to a wonderful place where everybody was playing and singing, “it’s time to play in the playground, it’s time to play in the wonderful place, it’s time to play in the playground…”
Mother Earth is very very sick right now. With the tornados happening, and the change of the environment going on all over the place, the fires, and there’s a huge huge renewal I guess is happening to mother earth right now. but we have to keep praying for her. Our prayers our helping her right. We have to pray for her. You know. And I think our ancestors, and when we pray then you can offer those prayers to Mother earth too and also the oceans and the seas and the lakes and the waters, and the brooks, like you said we’re part of water. Which all humans do carry water, but I guess we are the water people. We just gotta live near the water you know.

We were such a conservative society at one time. Like we didn’t really mingle with each other. Like the natives were over there, and the white people were here. And we all dressed the same pretty well. We all copied one another. Now there’s more versatility now. you know because we’re becoming more liberal. But being liberal means, you still have to look at the spiritual rules of mother earth. you know you don’t just go and start wreaking it.

Off he started with lonesome boy to play in the playground

But uh oh Magic Bow couldn’t go. He had to get back to the Rodeo Show. So he turned around.

**Work for Turtle Island**

Before turtle island.

Before mankind’s arrival.

Mother Earth was free.

And there was peace and harmony.

The creator had a plan and sent a man down to make history.
His name was Anishinaabe, and he roamed the land and followed the plan.

He named the rocks, plants, animals, clouds, stars, sun, and the moon.

Seasons, fruits, and medicines, his organs, limbs, and skeleton too.

He worked hard he worked hard he worked hard for his mother.

He worked hard he worked hard he worked hard for all his sisters and his brothers.

Naming everything he saw until he found it all.

And when he finished creator sent him somewhere new.

to find his grandmother and uncover what she knew.

He grabbed a fallen log and carved along it until he had a boat.

And with a paddle that he made he crossed the waves there was no time to waste.

When he arrived, he saw she needed someone’s help.

He helped her to thrive, helped her carry out her life.

He worked hard he worked hard he worked hard for his grandmother.

He worked hard he worked hard he worked hard to learn all he could.

She answered all that he wanted to know about the mysteries of our earth.

She told him in the beginning of time there was nothing but the sound of a shaker.

After the knowledge he acquired, Creator sent him to look for fire.

When he finally found the firekeepers lodge he saw a beautiful sight.

The firekeeper had a daughter and he knew he had to make her his wife.

He felt something inside himself he hadn’t before.

And the two got married in a wigwam down by the shore.

They had four sons and they passed down the teachings they knew.

They taught them honesty, humility, Love, respect, bravery, truth, and wisdom.
And when each of them turned into men they set off in a different direction.

To meet with the gatekeeper found and to form a sacred connection.

And the daughters of the gatekeepers all chose to marry a son of Anishinaabe.

They worked hard they worked hard they worked hard for their families.

As time went on and on and on all the families grew.

The original man Anishinaabe had completed the plan.

And creator watched down from above at all of his Clans.

But as time passed on.

People they did not get along.

they forgot the original teachings and original songs.

they fought and they killed and so creator had to punish their wrongs.

Here comes the flood.

Anishinaabe was swept up in the flood.

He grabbed hold of a passing log.

stayed awake watched the fall apart.

How could he sleep, without sinking.

The animals that lurked below.

Swam up to offer all they could.

Slick Loon, steady turtle, and muskrat the smallest swam deep down into the darkest.

To gather some earth and he arrived to the surface clutching some dirt.

But muskrat was not alright.

He had given his life for the fight.

Original man took the dirt in his hand and placed on the turtles back.
The turtle then grew and grew and grew and became turtle island.

We must work hard for Turtle Island.

We must hard for our Mother Earth.

Cause if we don’t, we’ll have to watch out for the flood.

**Take Your Choice**

Take your choice.

For up to the minute report stay tuned to this station.

The East Coast is in the throes of a tropical storm.

Each year losing.

Take you choice, these two great gasolines are both extra value for the money.

Summer storm.

Heavy rain, high winds.

Some people are sensitive to changes in the weather.

More state police have arrived.

Plenty of beer and the best of

All I wanna do is get into your head.

There’s gas tanks, tanks, and automobiles, spreading everywhere. About 20 yards to my right.

Yours truly wonderful, WIL with the weather. Weather guy says sunny!

Winner!

**Blue Skies**

So you think you can tell.

Where the world is heading to my friend.
If the sky will be black in 100 years or ten.

Or if you will ever love me in the end.

You say the skies falling down.

But maybe that’s the rain from the clouds.

You say you’ve never heard thunder so loud.

But that’s the way my heart beats for you.

You ask what can I do?

But you see the sky will be blue as long as I’m with you.

So come over to me darling and see they’ll be blue for you too.

Leave it behind.

You only get one life.

Spend it with me.

And look down from the sky.

**Responsibility**

The country of Canada has the responsibility of keeping its good name among the other nations and not only with just the Indians.

Well as far as I can see now the Indians have made their point.

I see no reason why you should block this road any longer.

Otherwise, we’re gonna have to use force to do so.

**She Said Miigwech (Reprise)**

She Said Miigwech

I just wanna dance
While in the Wild

While in the wild she hears the wind blow.
No matter the chance of rain the sky will fall.
And all the while she knew it all along.
She will never say, I told you all.
And while in the wild I’m thinking of her.
Life in the past is one I prefer.
She’s got a plan and we gotta learn quick.
Let’s gather the people the planet deserves it.
I hope she sees.
She belongs with me.
When I’m her you know I have it all.
I will stand with her until I fall.
While in the wild there’s too much to do.
They’re pulling me under she’s pulling me through.
The end is near, and I am nervous.
She shows no fear and gives her service.
And while in the wild the wind it blows.
If trouble around she’s running it down.
She’s got a plan and we gotta learn quick.
Let’s gather the people the planet deserves it.
I hope she sees.
She belongs with me.
When I’m with her you know I have it all.
I will stand with her until I fall.
I know I have a lot to learn.
I know I have a lot to learn.
I know I have a lot to learn.
I know I have a lot to learn.
I know we have a lot to learn.
I know we have a lot to learn.
I know we have a lot to learn.
I know we have a lot to learn.
And while we learn I’m thinking of her.
They’re slowing me down she’s rushing me through.
She’s got a plan and we gotta learn quick.
Let’s gather the people the plant deserves it.

**The Bravest Brave of All**

And the people were so happy that Magic Bow knew how to be safe they shouted “we love Magic Bow! We love Magic Bow!”

But he was a very modest boy and he said, “don’t cheer for me, I want you to cheer for them.”

And everybody was so happy that they all started to shout, “Oh he is the finest he is the best, he is the bestest, brownest, bravest, brave of all!”
Curriculum Vitae

Education

Doctor of Musicology, 2019 – 2024
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

Master of Songwriting, 2018 – 2019
Commercial Music
Bath Spa University, Bath, ENG

Bachelor of Arts, 2014 – 2018
Major in Popular Music Studies
Western University, London, ON

Research Experience

PhD Candidate, 2021 – 2023
Musicology
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

Teaching Experience

Lecturer 2024
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

Graduate Student Appointment (GSA) 2022 – 2023
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) 2019 – 2022
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

Guest Lectures

1020E: Introduction to Indigenous Studies 2023
Indigenous Studies
Western University, London, ON

1102b: Listening to Music 2023
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON

1802a: Music Teaching and Learning Music 2022
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University, London, ON