

**Understanding Aboriginal Music for the  
Understanding of Aboriginal Cultures**

by

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### **Abstract**

How do Aboriginal musicians and music professionals make connections between their music and their cultures? This qualitative study explores the interconnections between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal cultures and considers the implications for teaching music. Scholars contend that Aboriginal cultures and their music are related and holistic, offering an understanding of each other (Kennedy, 2009; Makinlay, 2008; Whidden, 2007). Canadian scholars mostly explore traditional Aboriginal music. Fewer scholars explore the connections between contemporary Aboriginal music and culture from across a range of Nations within the Canadian context. Even fewer scholars study connections between contemporary Aboriginal music and culture and how these linkages inform teaching music. To address this gap, Hovorka designed a study employing Indigenous methodologies with portraiture methodology. She combined arts-based methods and ethnomusicology to create textual portraits of participants. She purposely selected five participants, including traditional and contemporary Aboriginal musicians, as well as music industry professionals from a variety of Nations across Canada, to explore the connections they make between their music and their cultures and how it might inform music curricula in schools. Data collection methods included videotaped individual semi-structured interviews followed by two focus groups. The data were transcribed and then coded and analyzed using descriptive, interpretive and pattern coding methods. Three themes emerged, Aboriginal music: (1) heals the effects of assimilation and colonization; (2) expresses connections between Aboriginal traditions and music through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth with an emphasis on the drum; and (3) serves as an essential tool to disseminate knowledge from generation to generation.

**Keywords:** Aboriginal musics, Aboriginal cultures, Aboriginal education, colonialism.

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**Chapter 1: Understanding Aboriginal Culture through Understanding Aboriginal Music**

My journey begins with a will to honour the music of my Aboriginal lineage from both traditional and contemporary music standpoints. My purpose is to explore the connections between music and cultures from the perspectives of Aboriginal participants who are involved in the Aboriginal music scene and maintain connections to Aboriginal communities. My goal is to add to the growing body of academic literature that explores the music and cultures of Aboriginal peoples from within Canada and to inform music educators about the connections Aboriginal musicians and other music professionals (i.e. agents and educators) make to their culture with music. As a First Nations researcher, musician, and educator I bring an insider's understanding (called emic perspective) to this work.

In public education, educators are to teach their students about Aboriginal culture (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Currently, the Ontario curriculum for The Arts (Grades 1 to 8) mandates that, "Students will further their understanding of the music of various cultures by studying a wide range of music and musicians from different time periods and cultures, including Aboriginal, local, national, and global societies" (p. 17). Throughout the document, the expectations refer to teaching students about Aboriginal cultural production through contributions to music, Aboriginal art, Aboriginal dance, and Aboriginal story telling. During the process of writing this thesis, the TRC completed the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Act (2015)* report. This report provides 94 recommendations to federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government to make changes to existing legislation. Related directly to this study, for example, recommendation 62. i reads, "Make age-appropriate curriculum on Residential Schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary



contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students” (p. 7). Including Aboriginal music in the curriculum is one means to foster stronger understandings of Aboriginal peoples and cultures within Canada and to include Aboriginal peoples and their histories in the curricula. To effectively teach culture, one must understand it. One approach to understanding a culture is through examining the music of that culture – when, where, how, and from whom it arises, and its meaning. Music and culture are inexorably connected and thus a deeper understanding of music will foster a deeper understanding of its culture. In this study, I set out to explore these connections. My research questions are:

- 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures?
- 2) How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels?

In asking the first question, I appreciate that one cannot understand a culture solely by understanding its music. Music is a piece of the vast puzzle for a holistic understanding of Aboriginal culture. Here, I use holistic to mean that culture has many aspects and all of these are intimately connected and only explained or understood by considering the whole. Lane, Bopp, & Brown (2004) explain that wholeness is symbolized by a sacred tree of the Sun Dance pole, and one of the meanings of the sacred tree is “wholeness...the unity and centring of the four directions...” (p. 23). While these complex relationships and teachings may take a lifetime to understand, Aboriginal music offers an entry point for educators into the curriculum and to begin to understand and teach about Aboriginal cultures. This claim is supported by the literature previewed in the next section, and discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

### **Background from the Literature**

Cultural elements are infused throughout the arts, including music, and as such, they inform music education and affect how knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. Brown and Dissanayake (2009) discuss how education is typically viewed within education systems from a Western perspective and argue that it needs to incorporate more diverse cultural perspectives to gain a more nuanced understanding of the arts. Scholars such as Cross (2001) and Burton and Dunbar-Hall (2002) assert that the inclusion of cultural music in cultural education is integral to education to gain a more accurate understanding of the culture under study. These scholars use the term ‘cultural music’ to describe music that derives from a specific culture. Many cultural groups have attributes and content in their music that clarify particular aspects of their culture or provide insights that are evident through the music. Within the contexts of North America, Burton (2002) recommends that teachers connect music from a particular culture to history as well as its culture, stating: “As in many other countries, in the teaching of music this relies on diversity of musical content, and requires that teachers lead students to an understanding of music in relation to history and culture" (p. 58). These scholars show the importance of studying/teaching music within its cultural context.

Dissanayake (2000) addresses how knowledge is passed through the arts from generation to generation. Castellano explains that many traditional teachings and histories are passed on through songs from generation to generation (Castellano, 2014). For example, the Lakota *Little Big Horn Victory* traditional song portrays the story of the battle at Little Big Horn from the Lakota perspective (Library and Archives Canada, 2009). A contemporary example of a song carrying forward a historical event is by Aboriginal pop singer, Inez Jasper, with her song, which

tells the story of the banning of the Potlatch ceremony (I. Jasper, personal communication, 02-15-14). Teaching songs like these, which are often carried forward from generation to generation, can offer insights into Aboriginal cultural belief systems (Library and Archives, 2009). When teachers understand these connections between music and culture, they can offer a more holistic picture for their students: by teaching music and culture together, music can be understood in the context of culture, and provides a vivid reflection of that culture.

There are, however, several gaps in the literature. Much of the earlier literature on Aboriginal music and culture comes from Australia (Dunbar-Hall, 2004; Ellis, 1985; Mackinlay, 2008; Neuenfeldt, 1998), showing the universality of connections between music and culture. Canadian scholarship focuses predominantly on traditional Canadian Aboriginal music and culture and provides a more localized context with which to frame this study (Lehr, Bartlett, and Tabvahtah, 2006, Hoefnagels, 2012; Piercey, 2012; Whidden, 2007). Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012) provide an invaluable resource with their anthology, *Aboriginal music in contemporary Canada*, which offers scholarship on traditional as well as contemporary contexts of Aboriginal music. Within this wide body of literature, few scholars address how the connections between Aboriginal music and culture relate to educational contexts, particularly how these connections can be used to meet the need to address Aboriginal music within curriculum (see, for example, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, Arts curriculum). I draw from scholars from outside of Canada (Campbell 2003; Cross 2001; Dissanayake 2000; Dunbar-Hall 2004; Ellis 1985; Gay 2002; Mackinlay 2003; Moore 2004; Reimer, 1993), who offer insights into the music and culture nexus and connections to education.

For connections to education, I also draw from Canadian scholarship such as Archibald's (2011) study of the inclusion First Nations, specifically Haudenosaunee/Iroquoian perspectives in mainstream classrooms. Two other scholars that write about the music of specific Nations are Chretien (2012), who writes from a Metis perspective about her website that presents Metis histories and perspectives and Piercey (2012), who writes as a non-Aboriginal educator within an Inuit community and presents more about the historical and socio-cultural contexts than music. My intent is to contribute to these scholars' call for more research and resources from within the Canadian context, address the topic of connections to education more broadly from a variety of First Nations' perspectives (from both researcher's and participants' perspectives), and highlight how participants themselves make connections between Aboriginal music and their cultures in a way that is accessible and useful for educators to meet curricular requirements in Ontario, and to honour the recommendations of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission that recommends a mandatory education requirement for elementary and secondary school students on "Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada" (p. 7).

### **Research and Methodology**

In this thesis I follow qualitative and Aboriginal methodologies. Smith (2012) and Castellano (2014) offer guidance for Aboriginal research that is by and with Aboriginal peoples as a central approach to researching and telling our stories. As well, I follow protocols that come from within community—those I have learned and follow, which is another important element of Aboriginal research. I chose a qualitative research methodology called portraiture; a method that blends art (the potraits) and science (rigour in research) to create word potraits of each of the participanta. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) has been credited with developing portraiture as

methodology with her award winning book, *The Good High School* (1983). Portraiture also allowed me to tell the story of the participants with their input and in a way that allows the reader to understand their experiences more fully through rich descriptions.

Researchers such as English (2000) have critiqued portraiture as a methodology saying: “While much qualitative research engages in activities that erode the traditional notion of the researcher's *stance*, portraiture boldly punctures such pretences” (p. 22). However, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) highlights the complexity and value of individual stories: “The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, [by] conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating these experiences” (p. 3). Aboriginal cultures and their music are complex and holistic. Portraiture as a method has the potential to honour that complexity. Specifically, I blend arts-based methods (Barone & Eisner, 1997; McNiff, 2007) with ethnomusicology to explore my research questions.

Ethnomusicology is the study of the music *within its own cultural context* (Rice, 1987, emphasis added). It is designed to explore both music and cultural aspects together and is related to ethnographic research with its focus on cultural exploration (Diamond & Witmer, 1999, p. 5). Ethnomusicology connects to the method of ethnography. Creswell (2013) states, “The intent of ethnographic research is to obtain a holistic picture of the subject of study with emphasis on portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others” (p. 207). I use ethnomusicology to explore music within ethnographic methods. McNiff (2007) explains the arts-based approach that I followed:

Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of

understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. These inquiries are distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data for investigations that take place within academic disciplines that utilize more traditional scientific, verbal, and mathematic descriptions and analyses of phenomena (p. 29).

For arts-based approaches, Barone and Eisner (1997) include design elements from short stories, essays, theatre, poetry, and music as social human experiences used with inquiry to answer research questions.

I purposefully selected five participants to interview. I videotaped their interviews and transcribed the data. I coded the data using three types of coding: descriptive, interpretive and pattern (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). These are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. I then identified the themes that emerged by carefully finding the commonalities that came out of the individual and the focus group interviews. Next, I analyzed the focus group interviews, using the same three coding types to triangulate the data. Three themes emerged from the data, that Aboriginal music:

1. Heals the effects of assimilation and colonization;
2. Expresses connections between Aboriginal traditions and music through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth, with an emphasis on the drum; and it
3. Serves as as an essential tool to disseminate knowledge from one generation to the next.

Chapter 3 contains more specific information on portraiture methodology and the methods I used in this study. In the next section, I introduce the study participants and myself.

**About the Researcher and the Participants**

I, the researcher, am of Ojibwe descent from Matachewan First Nations, Ontario. I am a musician. I am a multi-award winning singer/songwriter/performer and a contemporary Aboriginal artist. To date, I have won 14 music awards, and have put out four full-length albums, and nine music videos. As well, I have toured extensively across Canada and internationally, playing low-key venues and high-profile shows, and have been a featured soloist with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, using my own material as well as material of other composers. I have also performed with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. My material tends to be eclectic and my messages vary from simple love songs, heart break songs and songs about life, to songs that speak directly to Aboriginal content, such as prophecy or social issues. Just like my Aboriginal musician colleagues, I have many reasons for which I write and perform.

I am an educator. Over the past 20 years, I have taught choir and private lessons in voice, piano, guitar, theory, songwriting, and performance in both Western Classical and Modern Contemporary styles. I have my credentials as a Royal Conservatory of Canada music teacher and Canadian Conservatory of Music teacher. I have an honours degree in Music, Bachelor of Education with a teaching specialist credential in Music and am now enrolled in a Masters of Education program with a focus on Indigenous education. I have also taught Ojibwe language at elementary, secondary and adult education levels; oral language, early literacy, and reading recovery at the elementary levels; and a variety of Aboriginal-focused education courses at the postsecondary level. This thesis combines my passions for music and education, allowing me to share my study with a variety of audiences, academics, musicians, teachers and others.

All participants in this study are of Aboriginal descent. Each of them waived their right to anonymity. They were given the choice to use pseudonyms (names other than their given name); however, they all preferred to share their identities. The five participants are: Terry Bouchard who is an Elder from Red Rock Indian Band, Ontario; Leanne Goose, a singer/songwriter/producer from Nunavik; Dallas Arcand, a musician from Alexander, Alberta; Brandi Dueck, an elementary school educator at a school north of Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Kim Wheeler, a music industry professional and journalist from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Further information on the participants is provided in Chapters 3 and 4.

All five participants are considered respected leaders in their fields and within their communities. Leanne Goose, Dallas Arcand, and Kim Wheeler are also well known and respected in the Aboriginal music scene of North America. They are well positioned to share their understandings of Aboriginal music: through this study: they offer their constructions of the interconnections between Aboriginal traditional and contemporary musics and cultures.

### **Traditional and Contemporary Music**

My connections to both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal music inspired many questions about the interconnections between music and culture for this study. Is it possible to understand Aboriginal music or cultures independently? By this I mean, without knowledge of a culture, would its music make sense; without the music, would the culture make sense? I could not imagine any of the Aboriginal ceremonies without the music. I wondered how scholars address these connections between music and culture and shared through education.

Before I continue, I should clarify the difference between traditional and contemporary music, as scholars differentiate them. According to Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012), the phrase



“traditional music” is frequently used to describe music that is created and performed by someone that follows Aboriginal spirituality and protocol (p. 27). Each traditional song is specific to a ceremony or cultural event. When I speak of traditional songs, I am speaking of songs that are performed with Aboriginal traditional instruments, such as, but not limited to, the Grandfather Drum, Water Drum, Rattles, and Hand Drum. Some of the songs are highly sacred and under no circumstance can they be shared outside of the ceremony (D. Courchene, personal communication, 03-01-13). Thus, for highly sacred songs, I will not share them in this thesis, out of respect; yet, other traditional songs may be shared. Some are meant to honour and some are for pure enjoyment and celebration. The songs can and will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Contemporary Aboriginal music refers to Aboriginal music that “draws from mainstream music” (Diamond & Hoefnagels, 2012, p. 27). Mainstream music can be rap, hip-hop, country, folk, rock, blues, jazz and many more genres, and Aboriginal contemporary music exhibits diverse elements of these mainstream genres. Today, a plethora of contemporary Aboriginal artists use music to create cultural awareness: for example Buffy Saint-Marie, Crystal Shawanda, Eagle & Hawk, Keith Secola, and Supaman. I have had the chance to speak with many of these artists about music and culture. I reference these Aboriginal musicians above to highlight the value of examining both contemporary and traditional Aboriginal songs and music. In this thesis, I honour contemporary artists’ contributions by including them alongside traditional Aboriginal artists, and thus expanding the literature on Aboriginal music and its connections to culture and the use within education.

## Summary

As an educator and Aboriginal musician, I see the importance of teaching music and culture hand-in-hand, and recognize the connections between Aboriginal music and the cultures from which the music emerges. To fully understand both, one needs to understand them together. This study aids in filling the gaps in the academic literature for contemporary Aboriginal music in Canada and participants' musical connections to their Aboriginal cultures. Here, I use culture holistically. It is connected to ancestral, historical and contemporary tribal perspectives rather than an unchanging and homogenous notion of culture (Henderson, 2000). It is intimately connected to identity: how one self-identifies and connects to one's culture as it is perceived, lived, and performed through music. Using this notion of culture, this study also examines the connections of Aboriginal music and Aboriginal cultures to contribute to a deeper understanding of the benefits of teaching music and culture together. Within this thesis, I use the term 'culture' in two ways. At times, I use it as a single set of shared practices, which can mean things such as common musical instruments used for traditional songs among different groups (i.e., rattles and drums) or a shared response to common experiences of colonization among Aboriginal peoples of Canada (in this case contemporary Aboriginal musicians). Other times, I assert that music emerges from distinct tribal perspectives, emerging through traditional ceremonies as well as within contemporary contexts. This tension of using 'culture' and 'cultures' shows the interplay between these terms.

Five chapters follow. Chapter 2 explores the literature on Aboriginal (often referred to as Indigenous) music and culture, which has been done from various places around the globe,

including the limited studies with North American Aboriginal peoples' contemporary music, particularly within classrooms. Notably, I use the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Canada, following its use in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). The term Indigenous is used most often to "encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context" (Indigenous Foundations, 2009, n/p). In Chapter 4 where I present the participants' portraits, I use the terms that they choose to reference themselves. Within quotations, I use the writer's preferred terms, in all cases. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology that I used for this study. Chapter 4 provides portraits of each of the five participants, which were created from their responses to the interview questions (shown in the Appendices) in the individual and focus group interviews, and refined with their input. Chapter 5 discusses the three themes that emerged from the data. Finally, Chapter 6 offers conclusions for the study and considers further research needed. Appendix A gives definitions of various terms used throughout the thesis.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review explores the literature that connects Aboriginal music and cultures within Canada to music education in elementary and secondary schools within Ontario. The Ministry of Education mandates in its Arts curriculum that all learners study Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). In this study, I explore one way in which this broad curricular mandate might be achieved for teachers and learners by learning from First Nations musicians from a variety of Nations, musical genres and/or roles (performers, agents, educators) and who are contributing to the Aboriginal music scene today. In this chapter I review literature that I consider relevant to understanding the connections between Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal music and to inform my two research questions:

- 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures?
- 2) How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels?

To ground this study, I reviewed the extant literature starting from broad scholarship on music and its connections to culture, and narrowing to Aboriginal music and its connections to cultures within Canada, and the links to education. I explored five areas: 1) the connections between music and culture; 2) Aboriginal music production within Canada; 3) impacts of colonization on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada; and, 4) music and healing, as it relates to Aboriginal peoples; and, 5) Aboriginal music and education in Canada.

Notably, this review includes literature predominantly from within Canada, and where possible, within Ontario, where I frame my study. In some sections I venture beyond a national or regional scope, particularly with scholarship from Australia where and when it is applicable

for two reasons, to: show that the research on the links between music and culture for Aboriginal peoples extend beyond geo-political borders, and supplement the rich and growing body of research in Canada. To begin, I review the scholarly literature showing the connections between music and culture.

### **Music and Culture Nexus**

How does music connect to culture? Van der Schyff (2014) argues that music reflects the needs and the attributes of the culture from which it arises, and looks beyond the human world into the relationship between music and culture in the animal world, where musical expression “. . . has primordial roots in the communication of emotional states of being, a necessity we share with many other animals” (p. 1). He adds,

This notion of musicality as rooted deep in the primordial areas of the brain implies strong connections between the emotional communications of animals, human infant musicality, and the manifold musical activities we engage in as the cultural creatures we are (2014, p. 8).

He suggests that music contributes significantly to brain development, cultural development, and emotional development from a young age onwards throughout a person’s life and that this has been the case throughout the history of mankind. Within the human realm, Blacking (1973), conducted a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach, to explore how humans engage with music. He asserts that music has multiple meanings beyond hedonistic ones, such as emotional responses, communication, and enjoyment. He explains, “My approach was much like that of a social anthropologist who wanted to make a special study of the music of a people and to understand its significance in their society” (p. 6). Importantly, Blacking found that music

gives insight into three different cultural aspects: the people who wrote it, the community in which they live or come from, and their lifestyles and underlying belief systems.

### **Music and Culture Nexus within Indigenous Contexts**

Neuenfeldt (1998) and van der Schyff (2014) complement Blacking's (1973) findings. Neuenfeldt states, "Music has the purported power not only to entertain, uplift and heal but also to manufacture, mirror, and *remake the social order*" (p. 2, emphasis added). He shows the relationships between Australian Aboriginal peoples and their didgeridoo music on emotional, spiritual and social levels. As well, the music and the instruments used have the potential to offer nuanced insights and a deeper understanding of the culture. Dissanayake (2000), states:

Music and the arts are an integral part of human existence. They have been used by our ancestors and by people in diverse societies including infants and young children before they acquire a significant degree of socialization, or the process of learning to become a member of society. (p. 203).

Thus, these scholars (van der Schyff, Neuenfeldt, Blacking, and Dissanayake) show that music is both influenced by, and then informs the culture it emerges from, universally: it is a cultural phenomenon. This leads to questions about what features of the music are most important and relevant.

Baumann (2000) contends that Indigenous cultures share commonalities, weaving together three aspects of music: instruments, voice, and forms of music together in unique ways, with particular tendencies and characteristics that differ greatly from typical Western music (also Baumann and Ilari et al., 2013). North American musicians and scholars also write about the features of Aboriginal musics and the connections to cultures of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

groups, which are collectively called ‘Aboriginal’ peoples. Bierhorst (1979) shows these connections in his liner notes in *A Cry from the Earth* CD:

. . . this music should also be approached with the idea of gaining a better understanding of the people who use it. It must be kept in mind that Indian people do not sing merely for enjoyment but to achieve a purpose. Songs are used to make children sleep, to win a lover, to mourn the dead, to gain power over game animals, or to bring victory in war. In short, there is virtually no aspect of Indian culture that is not in some way connected with music (p. 2).

While Bierhorst conveys the ubiquity of the purposes of Aboriginal music within various Indigenous cultures from within North America, more recent scholarship makes these connections explicit. I explore these connections with Aboriginal music and culture within Canada further in the next section.

### **Aboriginal music production within Canada**

Scholars write about Aboriginal music and its connections to Aboriginal cultures within Canada from a variety of perspectives, two of which are relevant for this thesis: through studying the music of specific Aboriginal groups, and through examining the connections between music and the realms of the physical world, tradition, culture, and the spiritual world. In the following section, I explore these connections.

One way that scholars narrow their study of Aboriginal music is to focus upon particular Aboriginal groups from specific geographical areas. Chretien (2012), Piercey (2012), and Whidden (2007) provide recent Canadian examples of this scholarship. Chretien (2012) studies the music of Metis peoples, with focus on Metis from eastern areas, which extends beyond the more typical “Red River Metis.” Piercey (2012) studies the Inuit of Arviat, Nunavut and their music.

Whidden (2007) studies the place of hunting songs within the culture of the Cree people of the sub-Arctic. These authors offer an understanding of various forms of Aboriginal music that is produced by musicians from different Nations (Metis, Inuit, and Cree). These scholars provide windows into specific Nations, their music, and their cultures.

To understand global connections between Aboriginal music and the spiritual realm, I turn to Elder Dave Courchene, who tells us that spiritual aspects of culture are central to Aboriginal music:

Music is what we know coming into the world from our Mother's heartbeat. We hear her beat, which was given to her from Mother Earth. This is the drum beat in our ceremonies. The sound of the drum helps us connect to land and spirit. Even the wind and waters sing to us. There are messages in the music the natural world sings to us that will guide us in life (personal communication, 03-01-13).

Courchene explains the connection between spirit and music, and brings in the importance of instrumentation, particularly through the drum within the Aboriginal contexts of Canada. Other scholars contend that Aboriginal music also connects to socio-cultural and political standpoints.

Diamond (2002), Christie (1998), and Hunter, Logan, Goulet, and Barton (2006) provide examples of Aboriginal music that connects to socio-cultural and political standpoints. Diamond (2002) focuses on Aboriginal women and music. She contends that both traditional and contemporary music can be used for expressive cultural activities such as storytelling, music and dance. Diamond (2002) asserts that the connection between music and culture is evident and essential, and that music is a necessary element to develop an understanding of the social dynamics of



Aboriginal cultures. Christie (1998) focuses on Aboriginal rights and cultural protection and provides examples of cultural connections to music:

If we were to try to locate direct manifestations of Aboriginal culture we would do much better to look at such expressive activities as storytelling, music and dance, visual arts, dramatic presentations, rituals, ceremonies, and—more recently for indigenous cultures of the world—writing. (p. 449)

Thus, a holistic understanding of Aboriginal music within Canada necessarily includes music that engages social and political standpoints along with the spiritual aspects. This holistic approach will provide a deeper and more representative understanding of the Aboriginal cultures and their world-views (Christie, 1998; Diamond, 2002).

Hunter et al. (2006) propose that a holistic understanding of Aboriginal cultures requires one to examine all the various aspects of a culture: the arts, traditions, and historical events, including the long process of assimilation. Offering insight on Aboriginal cultures through the arts, including the music, allows someone from outside of the culture to have a more accurate understanding and perspective of Aboriginal cultures, along with the struggles and agency that they may experience and have.

Thus far, scholars have supported the connection between music and culture with a focus on traditional Aboriginal music (Bierhorst, 1979; Christie, 1998; Diamond, 2002; Hunter et al., 2006). Furthermore, studies of contemporary Aboriginal musicians from Aboriginal communities and their music have become a recent focus of interest to many scholars, with an increasing contribution from Canadian scholars (Beaudry, 1988; Diamond, 2012; Marsh, 2012; Ridington, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Wallace, 2012).

Aboriginal contemporary music in Canada is on the rise with message-based and culturally based music set within mainstream genres (such as pop, hip hop and rock) and merits further discussion. For instance, Music Television (MTV) recently released the first show in a series entitled *Rebel Music* which focuses on North American Aboriginal artists using music to create change, to bring awareness to social injustices of the Aboriginal peoples, and to create a sense of pride and strength in the younger generation in their own culture (Rebel Music, 2014). In this, and other forums, emerging Aboriginal musicians are using mainstream music to create social awareness of Aboriginal issues, traditions and values (Diamond, 2002; Marsh, 2012; Ridington, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Wallace, 2012).

Beaudry (1988) studied Inuit singing, laughing and playing. She found that music functioned as a social indicator in communities, and that the songs brought together women from the entire community, as members participate in singing. “The song is all about finding community for these women....regardless of race or age it has to be all of us singing” (p. 279). In cases where an individual is not involved in the singing group, it may indicate that they have been excluded for reasons of social misconduct, based on the community’s reactions to their behaviour (Beaudry, 1988).

Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012) compiled and edited an anthology of research essays by scholars with interviews and personal reflections from Aboriginal musicians. Hoefnagels and Diamond focus on a range of Aboriginal music genres, from Powwow to Rock’N’Roll to Rap and other mainstream genres. They show how music provides an avenue for Aboriginal peoples to situate and express themselves in society. Importantly, “music continues to be a powerful tool for articulating the social challenges faced by [Aboriginal] communities” (Hoefnagels and Diamond,

2012, p. 4). Scholars within the collection provide evidence of how Aboriginal musicians use music to show who they are, share elements of their culture, recount historical events from perspectives within their communities, and share their stories from their perspectives (Hoefnagels and Diamond, 2012). Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012) use their own scholarship as well as works by Canadian scholars to understand Aboriginal musics of Aboriginal cultures from scholarly perspectives within Canadian.

Desrosiers and Scales' (2012) interview addresses how Powwow music is connected to culture, but with the loss of language and context, the modern representation of this music can lose its meaning. Desrosiers, a teacher, singer and composer of Powwow music in Northern Ontario, expresses his concerns with youth learning Powwow songs outside of the contexts of the teachings, and thus misrepresenting the music and its meanings from a deeper cultural perspective. This article highlights the importance of taking a holistic approach, which includes the cultural and spiritual aspects, when teaching and/or learning a cultural group's music within an educational setting.

Both Ridington (2012) and Piercey (2012) conducted research with Aboriginal peoples: Ridington with the Dane-zaa of British Columbia and Piercey with the Inuit peoples of Arviat, Nunavut. They found that although the Aboriginal groups that they studied are still actively rooted in their cultural practices — including cultural music — “cultural erosion” was still a struggle with regards to aspects such as education (p.33; p. 158 respectively). Their separate studies with common findings supports the thesis that music and culture are best taught interdependently and in a holistic manner so as not to “erode” values, teachings, and cultural aspects held within the music.

Toynbee and Dueck (2011) study intercultural music, which they describe as Aboriginal music that includes European aspects. They note the use of European instruments within the creation of new works by Aboriginal artists “may have stemmed from a need to accommodate strange new people and ways within existing indigenous cultural categories and practices.” (p. 8). This implies Aboriginal musics, and intercultural musics created by Aboriginal musicians may have been a way of the Aboriginal peoples to keep their musics while understanding and learning to adapt to new ways of living and expressing. This further demonstrates the links between music and culture, and their influences on each other, while evolving and changing.

Through their studies, all the scholars above show music and culture go hand in hand, and that to truly understand the music, one must have an understanding of the culture from which that the music comes (Bierhorst, 1997; Christie, 1998; Hoefnagels and Diamond, 2012; Hunter et al., 2006; Piercey, 2012; Ridington, 2012). To further understand this nexus, the next section of this review will focus on understanding Aboriginal music that acknowledges the common experiences of Aboriginal peoples; the colonial impact on Aboriginal peoples and their cultures.

### **Impacts of Colonization on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada**

Colonization is a prominent part of all Aboriginal peoples' histories within North America and this includes the process of assimilation. In North America, colonizers sought to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into European ways of knowing, being, and doing, with little or no regard for Aboriginal life ways that had been developed over millennia (Dickason & Newbiggin, 2010). Hart and Rowe (2014) discuss sources of colonization, such as Residential Schools, the '60s Scoop, and the creation of reservations. The 60s Scoop refers to the processes and practices of child welfare agencies removing children from their homes and placing them with White

guardians and adoptive parents, during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s. Residential Schools and the 60s scoop were intended to assimilate Aboriginal peoples and their children to European cultural norms and practices. As well, while reserves were set up as concessions to Aboriginal peoples for ceding land, colonizers imposed laws for those living on reserves to control their lives and land use.

Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun (1997) contend that the colonial government devised calculated policies of cultural and physical genocide in their relations with Aboriginal peoples, specifically, the residential school system. Colonial and then Canadian governments ran Residential Schools from the mid-1800s until 1996. These schools affected 150,000 Aboriginal children, from First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities (CBC, 2014; Fournier & Crey, 1997). Sinclair (2007) explains the ideology behind the residential school system: "...was to civilize Aboriginal people and to assimilate them into the mainstream body politic" (p. 68). Sinclair also names the atrocities that were documented in some of the schools, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, harsh living and working conditions, strict limitations on self and cultural expression, and long term disruptions to family and community life. As Residential Schools were starting to be phased out, governments introduced the '60s Scoop as another way to take and assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream societies (Sinclair, 2007).

Johnson (1983) coined the term "'60s Scoop'", to describe how Aboriginal children were 'scooped' from their homes by child welfare workers. The federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development reveals that a total of 11,132 status Indian children were adopted into non-Aboriginal homes during the '60s Scoop (Sinclair, 2007).

Within the contexts of the federal government's use of Residential Schools and the '60s Scoop as regimes of cultural genocide (About the Commission, 2015), the next section will focus on music that reflects the colonial impacts on Aboriginal peoples and cultures, with specific attention to the effects of Residential Schools and the '60s Scoop. There is a plethora of music created by Aboriginal musicians today that reflect the colonial impact on the Aboriginal communities in Canada, and some scholarship that acknowledges this music.

In her review of studies of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis music in Canada, Diamond (2012) noted scholars explore a cross-cultural use of both traditional Aboriginal and western-based music that play a "role among the complex responses to colonialism and its potential as a tool for decolonization. . ." (p. 15). In her work with Aboriginal hip hop artists in Saskatchewan, Charity Marsh (2012) found that their hip-hop music would reflect the colonial impacts of assimilation tactics and their ongoing legacies for Aboriginal youth. She states:

And yet many Indigenous youth living in Saskatchewan are turning toward the arts practices of hip hop culture. . . as a way to express and make sense of present-day lived experiences, including the ongoing legacies of state enforced residential school programs and other practices of colonization, the current climate of contentious government initiated truth and reconciliation process, and systemic issues of racism, poverty, and violence faced by young people today. (p. 347)

Marsh (2012) notes there are many messages within the words, lyrics, and music of the youth, and of contemporary music in general; and although it has not previously been common practice to use the words of Aboriginal youth or Aboriginal contemporary musicians for

academic purposes, they are valuable cultural artifacts, which hold an untapped potential for deepening understanding.

Contemporary music offers Aboriginal musicians a medium for storytelling and self-expression, to recount and retell the cultural and historical record of Aboriginal peoples. Lehr et al. (2006) examine how contemporary Aboriginal music in the province of Manitoba reflects Aboriginal peoples in the province. These authors assert that very little attention has been given to contemporary Aboriginal music. They consider why, stating:

This is partly a reflection of the marginalized nature of Aboriginal society in North America, a lack of appreciation of, or interest in, Aboriginal culture, and partly a result of the exclusionary nature of the music industry that is driven by economic rather than cultural concerns. (p. 80)

Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012) create space for Aboriginal music within social contexts through contemporary and western music by Aboriginal artists. Many of the contributing scholars to the anthology address the impact of colonialism on music by Aboriginal peoples and the strength of voice in their music: “They [Aboriginal musicians] demonstrate that music continues to be a powerful tool for articulating the social challenges by communities and an effective mode of affirming Indigenous strength and pride” (Hoefnagels & Diamond, 2012, p. 4).

From her perspective as a non-Aboriginal teacher teaching music to Inuit students, Piercey (2012) felt perhaps she “contributed to the ongoing act of colonialism” (p. 161) by teaching Christian based music as a way to bridge a gap between herself and her new students, seemingly not showing an interest in shamanism or the belief systems of the Inuit community in which she worked. Piercey (2008) also states in regards to Inuit education, “many institutions are

organized in ‘the southern way’ and western influences are strong.” (p. 199). Piercey indicates that teaching music from a western perspective may further colonial perspectives and ways of teaching, thus giving strength to the process of colonization.

As noted previously, some Aboriginal artists today address the colonial impact, and reveal and express the pain and challenges it has created for Aboriginal peoples. This response to the colonial influence through music can facilitate healing and provide a deeper understanding of colonialism, creating a pathway forward. The following section will address music and healing.

### **Music and Healing**

Music has been used as a method of healing around the world for centuries and has been associated with healing through instrumentation, song, and lyrics. Baumann (2000) and Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford (2013) show how the instruments used by a particular culture offer the power to heal, similar to how Neuenfeldt (1998) finds the power of the didgeridoo to heal for Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

Cross (2001) investigates the spiritual aspects of music. He suggests the sounds of sacred music in ritual and ceremony “are not considered as independent sonic events but rather are thought to be the sounds of the supernatural itself” (p. 32). Aboriginal peoples of North America use music within healing practices, including traditional songs, nature sounds, drums, rattles and the traditional flute within ceremonial contexts (Portman, 2006). Lavallee (2010) notes the ubiquity of the drum as a healing instrument for Aboriginal people. Other scholars see the drum for healing from colonial impacts (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Hoefnagels & Souliere, 2012; Piercey, 2012).



Ridington (2012) interviews Oker, a Dane-zaa singer and producer. He contends that songs have several purposes: to heal, to help in the healing process, and that some songs needed to be recreated to assist in healing practices for the individual (p. 63). Hoefnagels (2012) addresses women and playing the drum, observing that there are many reasons for women to want to play the drum or drum songs, "...usually for the sole purpose of self-expression, healing, and the experience of good feelings." (p. 125). Hoefnagels writes on women's and community healing:

Aboriginal writers, researchers, and musicians contend that women should drum and make Powwow music as a means of reclaiming their historical positions of power in their communities and as a gesture towards the individual and community healing that needs to occur on reserves and in Aboriginal communities generally. (p. 129)

Marsh (2012) noted hip-hop artists used music as a form of healing. In her interview with Aboriginal hip-hop artist Eekwol, she speaks to how her songs and lyrics "tell complicated stories concerning renewed spirituality, community crisis, sickness, healing. . ." (p. 365). Many of these healing processes help Aboriginal peoples to return to their roots, traditions, and Elders. They do this to find a place in this new world and to deal with the histories of their pasts and their future lives (Audet, 2012).

Music can be seen as one way of healing from the Aboriginal peoples' perspectives, and as shown above is used to heal for variety of purposes. Music also "contributes dynamically to movements of identity and cultural assertion as well as to healing in Aboriginal circles" (Audet, 2012). Thus, when studying or teaching Aboriginal musics, it is important to know the context of the song to fully understand its meaning and purpose. As well, the purpose of my study is to

understand the connections between music and cultures to enhance educational practice, particularly how it relates to curriculum requirements of the Arts curriculum about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels. This next section will delve into these links to education.

### **Aboriginal music and its connections to cultures as it relates to education**

This section will explore the need to have an understanding of where culture music comes from when teaching cultural music to give a more accurate and comprehensive learning experience, and to understand more deeply how the music represents the culture it comes from. Campbell (2003) contends music is an integral part of the learning experience. She asserts that ethnomusicology, as a sub discipline of music, is necessary to explore within teacher education; if teachers practice either cultural education or music education pedagogies without including cultural music, they are missing key pieces of teachable curriculum. Campbell also found that while music education is most often focused on Western methodology, it should lead “K-12 students to the meta-view of the phenomenon of music in the larger world” (p. 27).

Mackinlay (2003) states, “. . . Music education can act as a means of fostering closer community ties” (p. 32). Relatedly, Reimer (1993) refers to American education and the diversity of cultures within each community. He argues that with the many different cultures in America, one must try to address all the music of all the cultures, not just Western music or Western perspectives on cultural music, which often is the focus in the current education system. With such diverse communities, Reimer (1993) says that educators need to find a way to effectively and equally teach all music within the community to gain a full, holistic understanding of the

community. Southcott and Joseph (2010) support this idea and further state, “Music education is a powerful medium to rethink cultural diversity, where difference can be celebrated” (p. 9).

Both Reimer (1993) and Southcott and Joseph (2010) show the importance of learning cultural music when teaching cultural curriculum and further state that cultural music is an important aspect of all music education, due to diverse communities. By offering students exposure to diverse types and forms of cultural music, the educator can help foster a stronger, more understanding community. Both scholars also suggest that the current music education model is Western in its approach, with a focus on Western music and structure: Reimer (1993) from an American view, and Southcott and Joseph (2010) from an Australian view.

Gay (2002) addresses how educators are often required to teach about culture with a lack of holistic knowledge, thus leaving the education on that culture “superficial” or “distorted” (p. 107). Further, Gay (2002) asserts that educators with culturally diverse classrooms need to learn about their students’ cultural backgrounds to effectively satisfy their needs. Gay (2002) states, “*Explicit knowledge* about cultural diversity is imperative to meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students. . . . Part of this knowledge includes understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different ethnic groups” (p. 107). Gay shows how educators can use music as a vehicle to teach culture while demonstrating that if the teacher is not comfortable or not knowledgeable enough, expert guests can be invited to the classroom. By doing this, and by including the teaching of music with the culture, the students gain a clearer understanding of the culture. In addition, the classroom environment may become more inclusive due to the understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Scholars of cultural education support the importance of having cultural education for diverse classrooms, suggesting there is a need for cultural understandings on a global level, and address the importance of having music as part of cultural education to teach a fuller, more accurate perspective of the culture they are teaching (Campbell 2003; Cross 2001; Dissanayake 2000; Dunbar-Hall 2004; Ellis 1985; Gay 2002; Mackinlay 2003; Moore 2004; Reimer, 1993).

Researchers and educators in Canada consider the limitations that exist in educational resources linking Aboriginal musics directly to the cultures from which the music emanates, within the education framework (Chretien, 2012; Piercey, 2012; Whidden, 2007). Chretien (2012) connects Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) histories and cultures to the 2007 Ontario policies that explicitly require the teacher to bring these histories and cultures to their learners in classrooms in Ontario. She writes of a “lack of awareness among teachers of the particular learning styles of Aboriginal students, and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, cited in Chretien, 2012, p. 174). She acknowledges it is difficult to teach “Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning styles in an educational system steeped in western European traditions, especially with regards to music education.” (p. 180). She continues, narrowing her focus to the Metis: “Today, there are still many gaps in available information, ranging from demographic content to educational materials, about Canadian Metis” (p. 176). Piercey (2012) echoes Chretien’s concerns, although she focuses on her experiences as a classroom music teacher who did not have local Inuit curriculum for her music teaching: “I was uncomfortable with the fact that there was no Nunavut music curriculum and little Inuit music published in the ‘Western-style’ music classroom in which I was accustomed to

teaching” (p. 154). Archibald (2011) echoes the challenges teaching Haudenosaunee/Iroquoian music in mainstream classrooms. Chretien, Piercey, and Archibald relate similar gaps for Metis, Inuit, and Haudenosaunee/Iroquoian music respectively from the perspective of Canadian classrooms.

Relatedly, Whidden (2007) researched Cree music and sought ways to get it into the mainstream. She found that the Indian Residential Schools taught limited music education, and the participants she interviewed recalled fewer than ten songs. Almost half of these songs were Christian based songs. Whidden looks to solutions to this gap for educators. She writes, “To remedy this situation [of a gap in available resources], efforts have been made to train local people to research their history and language, and turn this information into teaching material” (p. 44). A resource that Whidden mentions to enhance the small but growing list of resources is the “Creeways” project assisted by John and Gertie Murdoch along with Richard Preston, who is an anthologist at McMaster University. I was unable to find or access information on the “Creeways” project, showing problems with accessing available information as well. Thus, while Chretien, Piercey, Archibald, and Whidden directly address Aboriginal musics as they connect to distinct Aboriginal groups (Metis, Inuit, Haudenosaunee/Iroquois and Cree Nations respectively), all concur that there is a dearth of available research and resources for teachers in schools. This lack of research and resources creates problems as Ellis shows.

Ellis (1985) indicates the public school system is teaching music apart from its connectedness to spiritual and cultural realms. Ellis (1985) believes music and culture should be taught together, and it needs to be done respectfully by honouring the intentions of the music within the culture it comes from. Scholars (Bequette and Ness, 2012; Boyea, 1999; Ilari et al.,

2013; and Mackinlay, 2008) suggest Aboriginal music education is often presented in a Western format, leaving out important connections to its culture, thus representing music in a disconnected and decontextualized way. These scholars assert that the cultural understanding that can be found in music is vast; that music reflects cultural attributes of the people the music comes from and is inseparable from the culture. Boyea (1999) further states:

For the Original Peoples of the Americas, music was of the earth and the sky, the body and the spirit, the permeating throb of time and being, of feeling and meaning-beyond-feeling, the link between the daily and the eternal, between the self and the community, between the human and the divine -- as common as speaking, yet as sacred as the earth, as mysterious as the stars. (p. 107)

### **Summary**

This literature review has revealed the interconnections between music and culture, and has shown that it is impossible to fully understand one without the other. Scholars advocate for teaching music and culture together to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of both.

Furthermore, the literature revealed the connections between Aboriginal cultures and music, and showed how Aboriginal music, taught within its socio-cultural and political contexts, can provide a deeper understanding of both music and culture. Specifically, with respect to Aboriginal music and culture in the Canadian context, as well as other international contexts, music was revealed a tool for cultural revival, healing, and change. Teaching music and culture together enables a deeper understanding of colonization, and creates spaces for healing the social, cultural, and spiritual wounds that came through this process.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design**

For this study I used a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2012) defines qualitative research as an

Inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

As well, I followed Indigenous research approaches: an approach that respects and honours research by and with Aboriginal peoples, for this study (Castellano, 2014; Smith, 2012), for personal and methodological reasons.

Aboriginal, or Indigenous populations, are some of the most studied people in the world (Smith, 2012). As stated early in Chapter 1, I took extra care to follow the protocols that I have learned, and used Indigenous approaches for data collection and analysis, particularly a holistic and storied approach. Following protocols, it was important not to share some of the traditional songs outside of the tradition or cultural activity or ceremony to which it belongs.

As an Aboriginal person, I carry knowledge of protocol from Aboriginal communities and I am familiar with traditional knowledge. To supplement my knowledge, I sought the guidance of Elders in this research process. Writing about Aboriginal communities and research, Smith (2012) states, “Its members position themselves quite clearly as indigenous researchers who are informed academically by critical and often feminist approaches to research, and who are grounded politically in specific indigenous contexts and histories, struggles and ideals” (p. 4).

I consider myself to be well informed to write this thesis, while understanding that it is acceptable to ask for guidance from community members such as Elders and community leaders.

Castellano (2014) also reminds researchers (those who undertake Aboriginal topics or those who work with Aboriginal peoples) to consider how Aboriginal peoples position themselves within the natural, physical and spiritual environment. Science and research often dismiss spiritual and emotional connections to the earth. However, Castellano (2014) reminds us:

Scientific research conflicts with Aboriginal sensibilities when it sets ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, but assumes that the earth and the waters are inanimate or lifeless, and that mice, monkeys or fish can be treated as objects of research rather than co-inhabitants with humans of a living biosphere....Ethical regimes for Aboriginal research must therefore extend beyond current definitions of research involving human subjects to include research that affects Aboriginal wellbeing. (p. 103-104)

I follow Smith and Castellano and the Elders in my approach for this qualitative research study.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore the connections between music and cultures from the perspectives of Aboriginal community members from the music industry. My goal is to add to the small but growing academic literature that explores the music and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and to inform music educators about Aboriginal music and its connection to culture. To explore this topic, I ask two questions: 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures of North America? 2) How might these connections



inform the elementary and secondary Arts curricula on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels, i.e. within Canada?

To answer these research questions, I used portraiture methodology. Portraiture is a methodology that relies on interviewing over an extended period of time for the researcher to understand the participants and their stories in enough detail to create a “portrait”, using descriptive words. Within portraiture I used arts-based methods to study the relationships between music and culture from my First Nations participants’ perspectives and to then apply these insider cultural perspectives (from different genders, community roles of Elder, musician, educator, and industry professional, traditional and contemporary styles, diverse musical genres, and distinct Nations) to teaching the music curriculum in elementary and secondary school contexts using Ontario curricula and using Aboriginal music from across Canada. The methodology and methods fit my study as all of my participants are Aboriginal and are involved in music in some manner. Portraiture allows the researcher to “listen for a story” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 12). This approach honours the participants by inviting them to participate in the creation of their own portraits and enabling me to share their stories more thoroughly. Portraiture provides a detailed textural approach for uncovering the richness of the participants’ lived experiences.

In portraiture, the writing style allows for the inclusion of more-than-written elements, such as sensory perceptions. It allows the researcher to portray the participants in a way that allows their stories to breathe into the reader, and it allows the writer to paint the research with words in a very organic way so that all the underlying human contributions of a story come alive vividly. For example, perhaps a participant may have hung his or her head down and looked

teary, or he or she laughed and showed a vibrant spirit: all the while, the researcher is examining the data through a scientific lens and producing research that is both factual and full of living attributes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Through the portrait, the reader has the opportunity to develop a mental picture of the participants' authentic identities, providing the participants are aware and have revealed enough information to give the reader a sense of who they are.

### **Sample Selection**

Five participants were purposefully selected for this study, drawing from people knowledgeable about music and Aboriginal cultures; I selected traditional musicians, contemporary musicians, a music industry worker, an Elder, and an educator.

I also wanted the participants to reach out to me to be involved in the production of the research, without any sense of obligation. To do this, I asked the director of the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards (APCMAs) to send an email to all committee members (see Appendix D), Elders, and musicians on the APCMA roster. The email was sent with a synopsis of the study, the purpose of it, and how they would participate in the study. The timing was also crucial. The APCMAs are held in Winnipeg every fall. Literally thousands of people, particularly Aboriginal peoples, congregate for the awards every year from all over the continent. Thus, I timed my data collection with the awards, as many potential participants would be there.

After the email was sent out, I received forty-eight responses within 24 hours. All prospective participants indicated their interest. I connected with each of them and explained the process and timeframes. In portraiture, participants usually choose the time and place; however, due to the time constraints, the participants had to give their initial interview during the

APCMAs. The participants were selected based on whether they fit the criteria (type of musician, Elder, or industry professional) and were Aboriginal. However, I did not have any Elders step forward at the APCMAs. I approached four Elders in the community in which I live and chose the first Elder who came forward.

### **The Participants**

All five participants were offered full anonymity, which they all declined. In Chapter 1 I named the participants, and I will introduce them again here with greater detail.

Terry Bouchard is a 64-year old Aboriginal male of Ojibway descent from Red Rock First Nation. He is a respected Elder in his community. As an Elder, he provides insight as well as historical knowledge to the band and the band members. Terry has also been part of a contemporary rock band in his early years and currently enjoys singing contemporary and traditional music on casual and semi-professional levels. Leanne Goose is a 40-year old Aboriginal female of Inuvialuit and North Slavey Metis (otherwise known as Dene) descent from Inuvik, Northwest Territories. She is a contemporary singer/songwriter, a multi-award nominee, and a music producer. Dallas Arcand is a 36-year old Aboriginal male of Cree descent from the Alexander (Kipohtakaw) Indian Cree Nation, located near Edmonton, Alberta. He is widely recognized as both a traditional and a contemporary musician and songwriter and is also well known as a three-time World Championship winner of Hoop Dancing. Brandi Dueck is a 31-year old Aboriginal female of Ojibway descent from Riverton, Manitoba. She works in the field of education, is an avid music lover, and is an activist for Aboriginal rights. Kim Wheeler is a 45-year old Aboriginal female of Ojibway and Mohawk descent from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is a journalist, producer, and music manager who has worked in the music industry for over 20 years,

including as a music programmer for CBC radio 3. Thus, the five participants in this study offer a broad understanding of the connections between music and culture as professionals from within the Aboriginal music scene in Canada today. Further, Terry, as the Anishinaabe Elder provides his understandings from his respected cultural position.

Here, I use the term Anishinaabe to respect how Terry refers to himself in his portrait. Anishinaabe means “from where man was lowered (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 3), and is a term used as a synonym for Ojibway in the language. As well, to clarify, the term Ojibway refers to the Anishnaabe people, and the term Ojibwe refers to the Anishinaabe language.

### **Research Process**

I informed my participants that I would require each of them to participate in a videotaped interview, based on six questions (see Appendix B). All the participants waived the right to anonymity: they offered their full names, their communities, their gender, age and cultural background. None of my questions asked them to share this personal information.

The research methods used were open-ended individual interviews and focus groups. The research instruments were an interview and a discussion guide composed of the same open-ended questions that were worded to avoid guiding participants' responses. These questions were crafted to open spaces for responses related to Aboriginal music and culture that would give me a sense of how music and culture were connected for each of the participants (see Appendix B). For the interviews, I gave participants the choice as to where the interviews would take place. Each chose the same location--a hotel located in downtown Winnipeg, close to where all of us were staying for the awards ceremony.

Following the interviews, I conducted two focus groups with the same six participants and using the same questions used in the individual interviews, asked in the same order. I used the follow-up focus groups to triangulate the data from the interviews.

### **Data Collection**

To collect interview data, I videotaped each interview. I strategically set up three video cameras set up at three different angles: one on me, one on the participant, and one on both of us. The camera on the participant was to watch him or her individually to view his or her reactions, physical responses, movements and expressions. I wanted one camera on myself to ensure after that I did not interfere with the data with a strange look, or reaction, or somehow skew the response from the participant. I had the third camera set up just in case one of the others failed. Creswell (2013) reminds researchers to pay attention to participants' physical responses for consideration at the data analysis phase, which I was able to do by videotaping each participant.

Kim, Brandi, and Dallas participated in the first focus group. Terry, Leanne, and Dallas participated in the second focus group. Dallas attended both. I set up three cameras at the first focus group and only one at the second focus group, as the other two were not available.

### **Data Analysis**

The videotaped interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were then analyzed, and as themes and patterns emerged through the analysis, a portrait was written for each participant. For analysis, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step guidelines: 1) Familiarize yourself with your data; 2) Generate initial codes; 3) Read through each transcript a variety of times to immerse in the data; 4) Review the themes; 5) Define and name the themes; and 6) Produce the portraits.

To follow this process, I created several tables. One table indicated the actual responses that were directly related to each question by each participant. Each response was side by side, so I could easily identify the similarities or lack of similarities. The next chart was set up in the same way but with surprising or interesting data that came out of the interview for each question. I then made the same two charts for each focus group. Following this, I reread the interviews, watched the footage again, and read all the charted responses. Next, I colour-coded the data. I gave one colour to all the descriptive data, or the data that were directly linked to the questions. I then went through all the data again and found the interpretive data, where I had to pick up on cues, or cultural practices (such as the drum being related to a heartbeat), or data that emerged between the lines. For example, in Kim's interview, I found her emotional responses to questions added texture to her responses as a music industry professional.

After the descriptive and interpretive data were identified, I searched for patterns that were consistent in all interviews. I moved these data into another chart and grouped them. Three themes emerged: the power of Aboriginal music to heal the effects of assimilation and colonization; music expresses connections between Aboriginal traditions and music through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth with an emphasis on the drum; and participants' view of music as an essential tool for disseminating knowledge from generation to generation.

After the portraits were drafted, I sent the portraits to the participants for their review through email, social media, and telephone conversations to clarify any questions I had. Once I had completed the portraits, I sent each participant his or her portrait and each determined if the findings and themes were accurate (Creswell, 2013). I reviewed their comments and sent back the revisions to the participants with changes and additional questions. Through an interactive

process, the final portraits were written and sent to the participants. Because the participants were co-creators (Lightfoot, 1997) in the process, the portraits were complete when both the participants and researcher agreed with the final textual portrait. The participants were excited to read their portraits and, like me, surprised at some of the emerging themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There are several ethical considerations for this study. Please see the letter to participants and the consent forms in the appendices (see Appendix E). As mentioned previously, participants were offered complete anonymity throughout the individual interviews. They were informed that their anonymity would be compromised by their participation in the focus group(s). All participants were informed they could leave the study at any time and without any information from their interviews being used or revealed. All participants waived their right to anonymity in both the individual interview as well as the focus group interviews. The Research Ethics Board at Lakehead University approved this study.

### **Benefits to the Participants**

The participants accrued several benefits. First, participating in this study offered them four experiences, to: (a) Participate in a portraiture research project; (b) Contribute to the growing academic literature on Aboriginal music in Canada; (c) Share their musical knowledge and experiences within Aboriginal cultures with the academic world; and, (d) Obtain a narrative portrait, which may help the participants make further meaning from their lives.

A second, unexpected benefit emerged during the focus groups. All participants felt a sense of validation of their thoughts and feelings as other participants shared similar feelings and thoughts on social, emotional and political standpoints across from different nations and

communities. These groups provided a profound and emotional experience for everyone involved, including myself.

### **Summary of Methodology and Research Design**

This thesis draws on an arts-based methodology called portraiture with an ethnomusicology framework. The research explored participants' experiences of Aboriginal music production and its connections to their cultures. In the next chapter I provide portraits of the participants. In this upcoming chapter, my writing style shifts from the traditional academic form of writing that I have used in the previous three chapters to a more expressive and narrative style, in keeping with the guidelines of portraiture methodology (Lightfoot, 1997).



## Chapter 4: The Portraits

### Relationships to the Participants

The Elder in this study, Terry Bouchard, became a friend of mine in 2013. He became a fan of my music and had contacted me through mutual friends. Terry was also a former musician in his younger years, and was hoping to “jam” with me around a campfire. I was never able to “jam” with Terry, but I spent some time with him and learned that he was fighting cancer for a second time. Terry came very close to death during his first battle with cancer. He said his “goodbyes” to his family and friends, but made a miraculous recovery. The cancer first affected his kidneys and then spread to his lungs in three different locations. He was sure the cancer would win as he had been fighting it for years. One of his wishes before death was to record a full-length album. I could not help him with that, but I did ask him if he wanted to sing on a duet that I had written for my fourth album, which he agreed to with pleasure. As of today, Terry suffers a great deal of pain but somehow manages to wear a welcoming smile everywhere he goes. No one would know by looking at him that Terry is living on borrowed time.

I first met Leanne Goose at the Aboriginal Music Program (commonly referred to as AMP Camp). AMP Camp was created to assist emerging musicians of Aboriginal descent to understand the music industry on various levels. In 2009, I was lucky enough to get one of 20 sought after spots as a participant at AMP Camp where Leanne was one of the facilitators. I did not spend much time speaking with her at AMP Camp as I was a little star-struck and was unable to convince myself that I could have a conversation with her without sounding like a silly fan. We did connect on social media after AMP Camp, and we have had a professional relationship and a friendly acquaintance relationship since 2009.

I learned of Dallas Arcand in 2008 when searching out Aboriginal artists around Canada. At that point, he had no idea who I was. I became a fan of his, followed him on social media, and he accepted my friend request on Facebook in 2011, but we did not have any conversations on social media. In 2012, he came up to me and introduced himself at the APCMAs. We had both been nominated for a couple of the same awards. Since then, we have had a professional and friendly acquaintanceship, much like my relationship with Leanne.

Brandi Dueck and I have known each other since January 2013. We met through the Idle No More movement (see Appendix A) over social media. She is not a musician but a music lover. She also valued the importance of using music to help propel the Idle No More movement. We stayed in contact on a limited basis until the 2014 APCMAs where she attended the awards as my guest, and has been a participant in this study.

I met Kim Wheeler at AMP Camp the same year I met Leanne. I had been a participant at AMP Camps in 2009 and again in 2014. Kim served as a facilitator at both of the AMP Camp sessions that I attended and we started a professional relationship while I was there. I was interested in her role in the music industry, and, at the time, her work at CBC Radio 3. Due to her level of respect and knowledge within the Aboriginal music community, it was essential for me to include her in my networking circle of musicians and music professionals. Kim was always quick to respond to any questions I had. Due to the many communications we had over the years, our professional relationship blossomed into a friendship that continues today. Although I have known all of the participants prior to this study, they were not chosen because I knew them.

In the portraits of participants below, I begin with Terry, as I have been taught to always let the Elders speak first. Next, I present the portraits of the musicians, Leanne and Dallas. Then I present Brandi and Kim's portraits, from their perspectives as industry professionals.

I interviewed Terry in his home at his request, and the remaining four participants in Winnipeg in my hotel room as it was easier than for me to contact them in their various hotel rooms and locations. My hotel room was in a 4-star hotel in downtown Winnipeg. It had a very retro look to it, but was newly built. There were a couple of chairs in the room and a small table. I set up the interview location by the window, overlooking a rail tracks. This description sets the scene for the following portraits with Dallas, Leanne, Brandi, and Kim.

### **Portrait of Terry Bouchard (Anishinaabe/Ojibway Elder)**

*"I believe, that if you believe, we can be spiritual. It prepares you for the journey*



*in life. [You] are learning from that music, learning the message from those beats, from those that sing and drum, play instruments, which [is] really beautiful."* -- Terry Bouchard (Individual

*Interview, 12-16-14)*

(Photo Credit: Cat Zechner/Busy B's Photography)

It's Tuesday evening after work. I had not been home yet, but this was the time that worked for both Terry and me for our interview. The sun was setting quickly in the late month of November. I drove to Red Rock First Nation and then made my way to Terry's house. I had to

bring my puppy, Abby, as I wouldn't be going home after work to let her out, and my husband was up north for a few days. The air was cool and crisp, and the ground was dusted with fresh snow. Winter was moving in. The streetlights lit up the dark street, and I grabbed my camera, briefcase, and tripod. Abby and I walked up the freshly shoveled sidewalk and steps to Terry's door and knocked.

Terry's spouse opened the door. I stepped in and looked up the staircase in the house, and at the same moment, I saw Terry's stout body peek around the corner at the top of the stairs. He gave me his great, big, welcoming smile that was topped with a grey moustache. His hair was buzz cut as always. He was dressed comfortably in grey sweat pants and a dark grey T-shirt. Terry always looked friendly and comfortable. "Come on up!" he said, cheerily.

I walked up the steps, worked my way into the kitchen, and started setting up the camera. While I set things up, Terry played with Abby and we chattered away about the snow, music, and how he was feeling. When I was almost done setting things up, I moved the conversation to the thesis. I asked him if he understood all the questions in the consent form that I had sent him, the rationale, and exactly what I was doing. He said, "yes," and sat himself at the table in line with the video camera. I turned the camera on to record and joined him at the table.

Terry began, "My Ojibwe name is Minigabo which means 'he who stands straight and walks a straight path. My name from the white people is Terry Bouchard.'" This introduction raised an eyebrow for me. I did not expect him to differentiate his names so concisely. Aboriginal people were often given names that were Western in sound and structure during colonization. I had heard people introduce themselves in the same manner before. I didn't ask him why he introduced himself that way.

I asked him how music played a role in his life. He looked up at me with his piercing blue eyes, and said, “Music is an international language.” He paused again. I waited to see if there was anything else he wanted to add. He sighed deeply. His eyes then glazed over. It looked to me like he was preparing his next thought. He continued.

“It [the music] is in the birds, and the birds sing to us, and the birds were given to us by Creator, and the birds were given their songs by Creator to give to us, and we, in turn, give Creator thanks for the birds and for them sharing their songs.” Terry explained how Creator liked to hear the sounds of the music from all the animals, that all their music was beautiful and that it was a constant circle of acknowledgement: the first music was in the animals, and they would sing for us, as that was Creator’s wish. He described how he offers tobacco when he is praying, and how that tobacco thanks Creator for all the gifts bestowed on us. When Terry said music was an international language, I had assumed that he meant in people, but as he continued, I soon realized that he meant in every living thing that could sing. He was saying that music was in everything, and that it was part of the circle we live in. When he was done, he waved his hand across the table, palm facing down, about an inch off the surface, and awaited my next question.

I asked if he saw connections between music and culture, and if he had, what connections he saw. He immediately started listing a number of ways that he saw connections. He first mentioned the oral tradition of handing information down through music, and described how music was used to teach the youth about various aspects of the culture. He also mentioned that music helped people to understand and take pleasure in their culture. In this way, he said, “Aboriginal music also educates people.” He then spoke to how he would sing and play his drum in his daily prayers to help him deal with his personal experiences with colonial impact. Terry

told me that he would pray every day and offer tobacco every day to help him heal and understand from his experiences with colonial impact. Again, he swept his hand across the table, indicating that he was ready to move on.

I looked at Terry and I noticed that he looked tired. Abby sat up and licked his hand that was now resting on his leg. He gave a slight smile and patted her on the head. He asked Abby if she wanted a treat, got up, walked to the cupboard and grabbed her a dog biscuit. I noticed a grimace on his face at this point. It made me wonder if he had wanted to move around a bit as he was in pain from his cancer. He sat back down, smiled; and I could tell that he was trying to mask his pain. I decided to try to move things along so that I could allow him the rest he needed.

I then asked him about his thoughts on music and youth. He had already alluded to youth and music in my previous question, but I asked him directly so I could follow my research design. He shifted in his chair a bit, and then said, “Aboriginal music learns them [the youth] to understand their culture and feeling comfortable expressing that feeling of understanding of that culture when listening to Aboriginal music. It helps them advance in their education.” He included that he felt music could bring knowledge from generation to generation. Here he combined the emotional and intellectual understanding of music with culture and directly linked it to education. None of my questions referred to education. However, Terry knows that I am an educator, and that this interview was for my thesis for my Masters of Education degree.

I asked him if he wanted to add anything else to the interview. Again, he waived his hand across the table, indicating he was done. I turned the camera off and said to him, “Wow, that was my shortest interview yet!” He laughed and said, “I only say what is important; no need to say more.”

I ended up staying another hour talking with Terry. He spoke a lot about his experience in Residential Schools and how he was hoping to write about it one day. He felt that all the people in Canada should hear these stories and the terrible things that went on in some of the schools. I could see the pain behind his eyes as he spoke, and it wasn't the same as the physical pain from the cancer. Most of the other participants had also referred to Residential Schools, and the schools obviously had a huge effect on Terry and his life. He had shared that while in the Residential Schools, they were not to speak in Ojibwe or sing their songs at the school. He also confirmed my earlier thought that he was feeling pain during the interview. He told me that he felt an immense amount of pain every day but did not want to take the pain medicines that were offered by Western practitioners. The medicines made him feel "funny", and he wanted to enjoy being there with his family. My interpretation was that the medications might have altered his emotional state when he had taken them in the past. I asked Terry if I could include the extra information from our talk after the interview and he agreed. In fact, after reading his portrait, he requested I add that after the Western medicine of chemotherapy stopped working, he started using traditional Ojibway medicines.

The following month, Terry joined the second focus group at the Red Rock Inn in Red Rock, Ontario. It was 20 minutes from his home. The first focus group was in Winnipeg, which was eight hours away. Due to Terry's illness and when he joined the study, he was unable to attend the first focus group. The inn was an older building, which some people claimed was haunted. I personally didn't feel that it was haunted, but it did have a mystique about it with its old, reddish brown wood walls and ceilings; the sweet smell of an older building; the work and detail in the fixtures; and the slightly scuffed up original wood flooring.

Before this second focus group, Dallas Arcand, Leanne Goose, and I, along with a few of my young student performers held a concert. We played to a sold out crowd. The room held just over 70 people comfortably, including a big space at the front of the room to use for the performances that involved a hoop dance along with the musical presentations. After the show, we chatted with audience members as they left and then slowly made our way to the room where we conducted the focus group. Terry and Leanne sat in big, high backed, fluffy chairs. They looked very comfortable. Dallas and I sat in the standard hard chairs that were much like dining chairs in a restaurant. There was an unlit fireplace behind us. The room was lit with a soft orange glow from a variety of different shaped lamps set up around the room. While it had already been a long night with the concert, we had all agreed to do the focus group after the show. Dallas and Leanne had travelled here to be part of the focus group, and I had set up the concert to give them the chance to share their music in my area. We all settled in, enjoying the atmosphere of the building in the growing hours of the evening, and then began the focus group conversations.

Terry introduced himself in the same manner as he had in the individual interview. He also mentioned his analogy of the birds again. This time, he spoke about human performances, and in particular, the ones he had seen earlier that evening. He loved all the performances, but was especially enlightened by the youth performances and how we, as seasoned performers, were teaching them. We not only taught the youth how to sing and play various songs and instruments, but also taught them how to perform music from both contemporary and traditional cultural standpoints, and Terry remarked on how important that was.

He said, "They say it [the music] awakens the spirit and makes a connection, the cultural side to the music side. It wakens the spirits up in the young children. It was part of our culture to



pass culture down through drumming and through singing and through our stories. We sing it; then we hum it; then we drum it; and it becomes our culture and a very important part of our culture. It's *the* connection . . . . I can see the connection with the children. It connects. It creates a balance and harmony in your body, which belongs to the earth, and your soul, which belongs to Creator; and with that, you get that beautiful feeling and get that beautiful entertainment, music. And that's how I feel."

Terry was quiet for the rest of the focus group and then he contributed to the final question: "Is there anything else you would like to add?" After posing the question, the three of them were silent for about 30 seconds. I thought no one would add anything. Then, Terry piped up with a surprising statement, "I think we should never even give a thought to surrender to white culture. I mean it is not even a thought. We have got [to] keep holding and teaching the Anishinaabe to hold themselves. In the music and how they are going to pass it on, and the new stuff, blend them and it makes that connection." At this point, he brought his hands up in front of him and laced them together saying, "You have that bridge. And, like Leanne's singing and she is singing about her journey, part of her journey and the people that were part of her journey. It's amazing, you know? And I think it's an important mission. We must not ever surrender that! We got to make sure that the young ones, like all the ones that you are teaching -- they got to -- We must make every effort to ensure that that's moving ahead all of the time so we don't lose that. The more we can introduce into the education system and have our people relearn their languages will play a major role in their journey and listening to music because then they will turn that music into their cultural music; and, then, they'll be singing that."

In both interviews, Terry had only briefly indicated the colonial impact when he introduced himself, referring to his name “Terry Bouchard” as the name given to him by “white-man.” After the first interview, we talked about things such as residential school, but it wasn’t part of the formal interview. How he ended the focus group really caught me by surprise. It was apparent in this last statement that colonization played a role for him, and, as he said, that music could help to keep Aboriginal peoples from surrendering to the colonial experience. By not surrendering, he meant not giving up on or forgetting what they have left or regained.

### **Portrait of Leanne Goose (Dene contemporary musician)**



*“Everybody wants to survive; everybody wants to be  
happy;  
everybody wants to be healthy and live and do the best  
that they can and share with their common man. That is  
the heart of who we are.”*

*- Leanne Goose (Individual Interview, 09-12-14)*

(Photo Credit: Brad Crawford Photography)

There was a faint knock on the door to the hotel room. I called, “Come in” as I knew that the door lock was set to keep the door open for the participants when they arrived. Leanne pushed the door open, gave me a great big smile and a “Hello!”

“Oh my goodness! It is so good to see you!” I exclaimed. I went and gave her a hug, and then we both went to sit down in the only chairs in the room. Leanne looked tired, but still radiant. The previous evening was the first night of the APCMAs. I had missed it, as I couldn’t

get the time off work. I had flown into Winnipeg early that morning, and she was filling me in on what I had missed and the various people she had hung out with the night before, catching up and, of course, networking.

She looked good, as always. Her mid-length black hair now had a red hue added to it, with her bangs sweeping lightly across her forehead. Her skin always looked glowingly. (I asked her for her secret, and she told me, but I won't share it here.) She also looked more healthy and fit than the last time we had seen each other. She was looking better than ever.

After we were done catching up and chatting about who won what award the night before and who we thought would be the big winners later that evening, we started the interview. I asked her to review the permission sheets and information sheets. I talked to her about the use of her name, and how we could change it, leave it out, or leave it as her real name. The decision was entirely up to her. I explained what I was doing and why. Once we had gone over everything, we began the videotaped interview.

Leanne introduced herself into the camera and then went right into explaining how music played a role in her life. She told me that music was “always a mainstay” in her life. I had known that her family was musically inclined. Her dad, Louie Goose, had won a lifetime achievement award for his musical accomplishments. It was news to me that her grandmother played guitar as a young girl, and that both of her sons were involved in music: the youngest dabbling in hip-hop and the older son an accomplished guitarist and a budding singer/songwriter. Her two sisters were also accomplished singers. One of her sisters won every talent show she had ever entered. Leanne's entire life had always been filled with music and musicians. While she was growing up, she was even an honorary band member for her dad's band during his rehearsals. Leanne

explained that music was a lifeline for her. “It was one piece in my life that was always the constant; it was the one piece in my life that I could always rely on. I could turn to music. It was listening to traditional drum music from the Inuvialuit Region or the fiddle players, you know, at the old time dances, or Dad sitting around learning a new song. It was always around, and it was always that one piece for me that I could go to that was also mine. You know, you could take a song and it becomes your anthem, you know? You write a song and you don’t really know what that song has done for other people. And you, only you, know your experience and your story and once you share it, it belongs to the people.” When Leanne said this, I was struck by the authenticity in her voice and the value in what she was saying, and then she said something that was very powerful. She moved from the connection of music to people, to people and the Earth and how the drum represented Earth’s maternal heartbeat: “We were born and locked into the Earth. That is where we come from.” She further explained this idea of the drum and the beat of the drum locking us into the Earth, and these songs were part of the Earth being shared with and through all people. Her conversation flowed from people, to music, to the drum, to the Earth, and back to people.

What stuck with me most was how she said the song belonged to the people. She did not take ownership of her songs. She considered herself a songwriter, a vessel that songs would come through: “I don’t know where they [songs] come from. I feel more like a vessel or a channel - that’s living pieces of my grandmother’s history, pieces of my aunts, maybe it’s my cousin who is no longer with us – sending me these stories and songs.” Her eyes were focused, intense, and alive with passion as she said this. Each part spoken with full intention and belief in what she was saying.

We moved the conversation over to the connections between Aboriginal music and culture. She started this section by saying, “There are so many different heartbeats from around the world, and being an Indigenous person and able to share your music, it shows that piece of culture. It shows that beautiful oral history that has been passed down from the beginning of time.” I wanted to clarify the term “heartbeat” to be sure I understood the metaphor correctly. The idea of the heartbeat referred to the various Indigenous drums and songs around the world. Just like Terry had said, the idea of the drum was woven into the conversation, and not really spoken about as a separate entity or type of music. It was part of the experience of being Aboriginal or, in Leanne’s terminology, Indigenous. She reiterated this by saying, “One connection that we all have to the pulse of the Earth, [it’s] where we all come from, where we all started, and where we all eventually go back to.” She paused, looked around and then said, “It [music] is a marker of a time and place in history, and it was important to them at that time; and they felt it was important to carry that forward as a part of our oral histories. You know how valuable those stories are. And those old songs carry lots and lots and lots of spirit in them.” It is common to hear the term “pulse of the Earth” related to the pulse of the drum. Elder Dave Courchene as well as scholars such as Gilliard (2007) and Browner (2004) have related the pulse of the Aboriginal drum to the heartbeat of Earth.

She went on to talk about how she would write a song as an adaptation of a traditional song, and how she would write a song as an expression of a story from her own experience as a Northern Indigenous woman; how the music could really centre the listener into who you were, and where you come from as the songwriter, and how the essence and the message of the song is “non-judgemental.”

We then carried the conversation into Aboriginal music and youth. Leanne is also a mother, and it was evident that this part of the conversation was particularly important to her. Her eyes went brighter, even though she was tired from the evening before, and she leaned forward in her seat. Her voice also became a little more pronounced, all of this indicating a strong interest in the topic. “I couldn’t imagine telling my kids about my culture without music or sharing my culture with my children and not explaining the value of our songs.” Leanne sat even further ahead in her seat and continued, “I think the importance of understanding Indigenous music is it is really integral to who you are as an Indigenous person, being able to tell that story and being able to tell who you are and. . .” She paused, looked up and thought for a few seconds: “what makes you tick. It makes you who you are. It’s a way of carrying on who we are as Indigenous people.”

To Leanne, teaching the youth about music that comes from their heritage helps them identify and understand who they are as people within their own communities. I wanted to know if there was anything else she wanted to add, and she did. She said things so eloquently: “I think the only thing that I would like to add, [is] the importance of Indigenous music to this contemporary time. To be able to understand who we are as Indigenous people, to listen to our music, to our stories and our songs, and to be able to tell the...” (she stopped to rethink her phrasing) “...to repeat to others, to carry on legacy and the strength of who we are as a people. It doesn’t matter what walk of life you come from; those stories are universal everywhere.”

I ended the interview with that statement. I thanked her for coming, and she thanked me for the opportunity. She was intending on coming to the focus group in Winnipeg but was unable to attend. I invited her to attend the second focus group in December with Dallas and Terry in Red Rock, ON. Before this focus group, I had organized a show for her and Dallas to perform at

along with some local entertainers. Both artists were hoping for an opportunity to feature their music while in my area.

Leanne had a series of events that almost made her unable to attend the December focus group. Her flight was to leave Inuvik, Northwest Territories the evening before; due to technical difficulties with the plane, she was stuck on the tarmac for nine hours. This made her miss her connecting flight in Edmonton. I called WestJet and was able to switch her flight. This however made her one hour late for the evening show in Red Rock, ON. Poor Leanne again showed up exhausted, this time for the focus group and concert I had arranged for her to perform in. Even though she was tired from traveling all night and literally all across the country, she still put her best smile on and sang at the show with her usual power and beauty. She had a way of winning over the crowd; a true entertainer. Through her actions and professionalism, she modeled the value that the show must go on, and it must go on with a smile, as the audience always deserves the best performance.

She sang a variety of her songs and a couple of covers. She brought members of the audience, including me, to tears with her song *Never Forget*. Leanne also cried while she sang the song. It addresses many themes from the participants. Further, the lyrics speak volumes about Leanne as a person and as a songwriter. Her parents met in residential school and music had been part of what brought them together. Based on her parents' stories as survivors and the stories of others' experiences, Leanne wrote this song.. I include the lyrics here.

*Never Forget*

*We walked by the river, Grandpa held my hand*

*And told me the stories, about our great land*

*He said baby never forget, Who you are  
And when you are lonely, know you are in my heart.  
Then they came, and took me far away.  
Where big black robes tried to wash me away  
They cut my hair; tried to silence my tongue.  
I was so lonely, it broke my heart.  
I heard kids crying in the middle of the night.  
I watched as they changed into ghosts in daylight.  
Told we were dirty, how we'd never be clean  
Then took our bodies to do what they pleased  
We were bathed by those so callus and mean  
I thought they broke the Spirit in Me.  
A day came, and I was set free  
I asked Great Spirit, help me please.  
Forgive those who lied, used your name in vain.  
Hear our story, heal our hearts  
Now love is alive, in the face of a child  
We were down but not broken, each day a new start  
Let forgiveness take over me.*

Leanne gave me permission to share her lyrics in this thesis. This was the last song of the night before the focus group. It set the stage and brought a sense of sincerity to the evening. We took our time getting to the focus group to allow the artists to mingle with the audience.



Eventually, we were all sitting in the old, dimly lit room, cozy in our seats. The room was warm and very comfortable and had a lovely overall feeling to it. Leanne had one of the big, comfy chairs that looked like it was meant for a professional from the 1960s who may be smoking a pipe. She looked regal sitting in it.

The questions were the same questions posed in the individual interview in September in Winnipeg, and Leanne answered most of them in a similar way, adding a few things that struck me as worth noting. When we revisited the question about Aboriginal music relating to Aboriginal culture, Dallas answered first. What Dallas said seemed to draw more out of Leanne, in line with what she said in September, but more detailed: “For me Indigenous music and Indigenous culture are one and the same. It’s an interesting time that we live in right now because we can look back and reflect on all the Indigenous music of the sounds of the drums and the songs and the heartbeat that has carried us through. It’s helped us strive and build up so that we come into this new time with contemporary music and fusion of our Indigenous music of times before, tying our stories throughout the generations. I think for me, it's having watched my grandparents at drum dances, singing songs about hunting and trapping with their friends. . .” She trailed off, looked up towards the ceiling, blinked, looked down at her hands, paused for a few seconds, looked up and finished, “Grief and coming out of grief you know: into beautiful sunshine.” In a follow-up conversation with Leanne, I asked what she had meant by “Grief and coming out of grief.” Her statement had a double meaning; first, being able to survive out on the land, furthermore, “our ability to come out of assimilation processes.”

When she was done saying this, everyone went quiet. Terry looked at her with great interest. I would love to have known what he was thinking. Was he just as perplexed and awed as

I was at the depth of that statement? It seemed it had resonated deeply with him as well, but he did not add to her statement.

Adding to her comments about Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture, Leanne also stated, “We [musicians] go into another environment; it’s a whole other spectrum of different people, people from multicultural backgrounds and you are performing Indigenous music; and you watch them listen to your stories; listen to what happened to your people, the perspectives of what you brought, singing about residential school, singing about our missing and murdered women, singing about our times on the land, you know, hunting and fishing and trapping, and having beautiful times with our grandparents, singing about our medicines, and our traditions that we hold so dear, and see the audience change, from before not understanding it, to yearning to want to learn more. Wanting to lend themselves to be a part of your culture, your people and the land and where you come from. It is one of the beautiful things I’ve seen as a live music producer: to be able to present a new perspective, from what they read in books, to how we were portrayed on film and TV and what we see sometimes in mainstream media, and it is a really powerful message that we are bringing in a time of change as Indigenous people. And we really are rising up to become the new teachers, in a way to care for our land and to care for one another, and it’s a pretty powerful thing to see it with your own eyes in your own time.”

Again, she caused the other participants to stop and think. I stopped and thought about it too. As a performer, I have had the same experiences, having people come up to me after a show, asking about the culture, wanting to know more. This is a form of education that happens outside of the walls of schools.

After this, we discussed youth and Aboriginal music. Leanne did not add anything new to the conversation here, however she did have a powerful last statement, which closed up the entire focus group. It was the final statement. She responded to Terry's comments about never surrendering. I end this portrait of Leanne with her final statement:

“Quite honestly our time for complacency is over. For a long time, we were taught and told and carried out to be polite ... say nothing and accept things as they are. That's the way of our people, go back to the land, go back to our prayers and go back to spirit. But we have come into a time and an age where our voice has now been silent for too long. It's time for us to come back. Back together and rise up as if all of the people of the Earth are one. And for us to be able to share openly, our music, our culture and our heritage and to combine them into a time and a space and place that honours our peace; that honours our Earth; that honours our souls. That's coming. We are going to see it more and more in our generation, and I believe solemnly that the generations following us will become stronger. We are seeing things all around the world. And we know that our teachers would help to change a lot of the catastrophes and atrocities that we see. And a lot of that comes back to healing our spirits and our souls. And it comes right back to our music, our sound and our voice, and all those things we kept bottled up tight deep inside. I'm really looking forward to the coming face of Indigenous music. I'm really looking forward to our stories being told honestly, accurately and correctly, by us. For all of human kind.”

**Portrait of Dallas Arcand (Cree traditional and contemporary musician and hoop dancer)**

*“Without music, I think I would go insane. So, music is definitely the medicine to my soul. How else can we make the world go round?”- Dallas Arcand (Individual Interview, 09-12-14)*

(Photo Credit: Red Works/Nadya Kwandibens)

Dallas knocked on the door to the hotel. He was a few hours late as he had issues with his hotel room. He moved to the same hotel where I was staying, and was in the room next door. We gave each other a hug and a hello, and chitchatted about the awards the night before. He congratulated me on my win for Best Album Design, because he had not been able to congratulate me at the awards, as I was not able to attend. I had a friend attend and accept on my behalf. Dallas had brought his son with him to the awards, but not to the interview.

Dallas is a major talent in many different arts, such as dance, playing instruments, singing and being able to hold a conversation. Dallas is also a very attractive man. His practice in traditional hoop dance has given him a strong body in great condition, and he has haunting green eyes that many I've known have said were wolf-like and mysterious. He definitely has an appearance and charisma about him that turns heads.

After we finished chatting about the awards, we moved quickly into the interview, as we only had a couple hours before we had to go to the main night of the awards that evening. As we sat in the two hotel room chairs, Dallas introduced himself and told me where he was from and his role in the community. On top of being a well-established musician and hoop dancer, Dallas also considered himself a warrior for his community.

He looked to the camera: “My role in the community is I’m a leader. I lead by doing. I lead in everything from music, to dance, to cultural activities such as hunting and ceremonies. I just consider myself to be a warrior of my community if you put it that way. I am a modern day warrior because I have all the characteristics of being a warrior. I live this lifestyle. This is my livelihood; this is my job. This is what I do. I’m very cultural. I try my best to live off the land: Everything from growing my own food, to gathering my own food, to performing at Powwows and attending Powwows and festivals. It’s a lifestyle for me. So that is my role in the community. I’m a modern warrior.” Dallas completed his introduction and sat proudly in his chair. He was ready to move on to the next question.

It was important for me to know how music played a role in the lives of all the participants. For Dallas, music “created balance” in his life and allowed him to express himself in a spiritual way. According to Dallas, the drumbeat also brought “harmony to the heart and spirit of the people”, as well, it created a balance of harmony to the land where the music was played. He felt that music was both “healing and an important part of healing” especially from the physical and emotional perspectives. Music added richness to Dallas’s life and enhanced his own relationship to life and the land. He said, “Music is very much a part of my life, and it makes my life go so much better through the song and the dance. It achieves that balance that I need.”

When I asked about relationships between Aboriginal music and culture, Dallas gave a charming smile and very matter-of-factly said, “It [music] weaves everything together. If we didn’t have song, the spirits wouldn’t come, because our songs attract the spirits. To me that song it represents the spirit of our people; it represents the spirit of our land. Nobody knows for sure exactly where those songs and sounds come from.” He spoke about the circle, and how it creates a unity. He described the circle and connected it with the Powwow ceremony. He compared it to throwing a pebble into the water and the water rings that were created from the pebble. He explained how when we first attend a Powwow, we observe from the outside of the circle. “First there is that interest if there is interest from that outer circle, then they come in closer and come into another circle. There’s that outer circle where you initially come in and you watch and learn and if you feel brave enough then you just start dancing and then you just start participating more. And it gets smaller and smaller but you are surrounded by circles and that’s those ripple effects that our music makes, it creates those ripple effects of circles always coming in and out. It’s like when you throw a stone inside the water, it makes those ripples and that’s how I visualize music.” Eventually, he said, we get enough courage to go into the circle as a spectator in the chairs or bleachers. Then, as we gain more confidence, we move further into the circle and become a dancer. As we move through the circles towards the inner circle, we learn more, gain more understanding, and grow confidence in ourselves as an Aboriginal person. According to Dallas, some of the dancers make it to the inner circle, where the drums and drummers sit. The centre is where it all begins, but it may take some people awhile to get into the centre. He then explained how the beat of the drum represented the beat of Mother Earth, and how through the drum the Aboriginal people are representing Mother Earth, “I believe that is important too

because we represent for the heartbeat of mother earth, we represent for the spirit that is involved in there it allows us to express, pray and tell our stories.”

He then started speaking about the purpose of songs. “We have songs that we do for certain ceremonies that we do for sweat lodge ceremonies, or we have Sundance songs, or we have Powwow songs, and every song has a different purpose and a different meaning. And it’s very much part of our culture. Without the song? There wouldn’t be very much of our culture. Because of those songs, our culture has been able to survive this long through thick and thin. With assimilation, and colonization, and what they did to our people. The songs is what probably kept us alive, and kept us going for this long and kept our culture strong and still going.”

At this point he started talking about the beat in Powwow music and the drum. He spoke to how it can connect us all, and how it is one of the defining features of who Aboriginal peoples are. He said, "Before you are even born you hear your mother’s beat; and when you are in your mother’s womb, that is the first song you hear.”

He had spoken a great deal about Aboriginal traditional music. I knew Dallas was also a contemporary musician, so I wanted him to shed some insight on how, or if, he saw connections to culture with the music. At this point in the interview, he was referring to contemporary artists. He responded, “You know our music, it can be a concept as well. It can be concept based. Artists like Buffy Saint-Marie or Robbie Robertson and all those other artists who have portrayed our music and now recently, A Tribe Called Red, they make that connection with the culture. They bring out the culture in a modern way. Those mainstream songs are about capturing a moment in time, and Aboriginal music carries it to the next generation, past the moment.” We carried on our conversation and talked about EDM (electronic dance music). We both agreed that many

contemporary Aboriginal artists (for example, A Tribe Called Red, Supaman, Feenix, Tanya Tagaq, to name a few) were melding traditional and contemporary music to create songs that had messages, teachings and, at times, language embedded into them.

This was a great segue into the next question about Aboriginal music and the youth. This seemed to fire Dallas up. Perhaps it was because he had children of his own; perhaps, it was because of his own passion for music; perhaps it was a combination of both. He sat higher up in his chair and started talking in a voice that was earnest and powerful at the same time: “We just have to keep those communication lines open with our younger people. They are easy to connect with [using] the music. Those songs are what teach our young people. That’s another form of mentorship, and that is how we do things in our culture. That’s our learning. When it comes to our music, it is always about our culture.” He elaborated by speaking about the value of Elders and the revival of Aboriginal language. He said, “The Elders are there to teach the songs and the kids are there to learn, enjoy and play and do their thing and eventually someday they will learn that and carry that with them. So the importance of our music too is to teach people too. Some songs we can teach history, some songs we can teach language.” With this, we ended our individual interview.

The first focus group consisted of Dallas, Kim, and Brandi in Winnipeg, MB. We all agreed to keep it in the same hotel room as the interviews since it was central for everyone, and it was a place where everyone felt comfortable. When we gathered, everyone was very tired, including myself. We had all spent the evening at the music awards. This was followed by many social gatherings in various places around Winnipeg. Aboriginal musicians had come from all over North America, gathering for the APCMAs and the Powwow. I was the only person who



had not gone out to socialize. I wanted to go over the interview data before the participants arrived the next morning. They trickled in around ten in the morning.

When Dallas introduced himself at the first focus group, he also included his spirit name, “Dancing Buffalo Man,” in his introduction. He then elaborated on how music played a role in his life: “Music to me, it starts my day; it starts and ends my day; so for me, it does that complete circle. Just like at the Powwow, that’s how I’m going to start my day. Music is going to make me dance into that Grand Entry; it’s gonna make me dance all day, tired or not. I’m going to be dancing all day. So the music, to me, is basically my heartbeat; it’s my lifeline; it’s gonna make all those others dance, and bring all those people to the Powwow.” Music is a way of life for Dallas.

We got into the questions pertaining to the connections between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture. Having the focus group really seemed to propel the participants’ answers deeper. Dallas had leaned forward in his chair, and gave a perplexed look at Kim. Kim Wheeler had mentioned the awards and how the artists were able to gain national exposure with all the music. Dallas said he had mixed feelings about it and replied to Kim and the group, “When I see these Aboriginal awards and stuff, I feel like they are trying to be a little too mainstream. I feel like we should be using our language more in our songs and stuff because we are losing our language. The next generation might not speak it. I’m sure that other people are probably looking at us and thinking, ‘What are Aboriginal peoples doing singing rock songs?’ I notice that a lot of our culture is being affected by mainstream society, even some of the Cree songs. It’s a decolonization process that we are going through. That’s how I feel about it. We just need to promote more of that – more language, more cultural concept and more teachings with our

music.” Again, Dallas brought up A Tribe Called Red and the use of EDM and traditional Aboriginal music blended together and said they were a good example of Aboriginal music being brought up to date in the mainstream world, while not losing its Aboriginal themes. To further support his argument, he brought up Buffy Saint Marie with her song “Darling, Don’t Cry;” Susan Aglukark, “Hey Nani Ho Ho;” and Keith Secola’s “NDN Kars”.

Dallas then spoke passionately about the drums and Powwow. He talked about the significance of the number four in Powwow and in Aboriginal spirituality. He sang a few examples of songs while using his fist against his hand as a drum and explained how the songs were divided into four sections, and the significance of each section.

The focus group moved into the conversation on Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal music. Dallas really felt that it was important for the youth to learn the values and structure of Powwow and traditional music. He said, “It’s [the music] really important to them. It’s like the language. So it’s important for them to understand our traditional structure. A lot of youth out there are really attracted to our round dance songs. It’s got that element of love in there and that element of saying that, um, like the catchy phrase, like ah, Northern Cree is an example of those round dance songs with those catchy phrases, cause they, ...they, ...they use a traditional song and they’ll talk about, well, they have a round dance song called “No More Facebook Drama.” So it has a little fun with it. They are kinda poking fun at it, ‘cause just because we are Indians, doesn’t mean we can’t be modern and so, you hear that now in our music. . . . It’s got that element of love in there. You know, where boy meets girl and other romance happens or heartbreak happens or whatever. So that’s really important ‘cause a lot of our youth, they are going through that really fragile state where they are falling in love or getting their heart broken

or whatever it may be. So regardless of culture or Creator or whatever culture you come from, a lot of people can relate to that. So I believe it's really important to our young people to know that. To know that," he paused and searched for words in his head, "to know all about that [music]. There is just so much out there: so many different cultures. I'm only talking from a Cree perspective. If you are a good singer you will have lots of girlfriends. If you're a good dancer too, same thing." At this point, he really blushed and seemed embarrassed as he said: "they have lots of girlfriends." Everyone laughed at this, and Kim couldn't help but ask if he was speaking from experience. He answered her with a boyish grin.

The second focus group held in Red Rock, ON, at the Red Rock Inn, was held a of couple months after the first focus group. I shared the individual interviews with the participants to review their words many weeks before this focus group. Dallas was the only participant able to participate in both focus groups.

When we discussed the connection to Aboriginal music and culture in this focus group, Dallas added that Aboriginal music from different Aboriginal territories defines or identifies a group of people. He said, "I feel it's a deep rooted connection to our land and our territories, and different Aboriginal music sounds different from the land. The way I interpret our traditional songs is: If the land had a voice and could sing, that is the anthem of the land. For example, in the Okanagan territory, they always do the Okanagan song." He demonstrated by singing part of that song, and continued: "That song is talking about the Okanagan as a beautiful place that they belong to and we are beautiful because our land is beautiful. [Another] example right now in the winter in the Cree territory [is that] we have the round dance drumming right now and that's a different rhythm. It's almost like a '*Va-va-va-va-va-va-VA-va-va-va-va*' a vibrant rhythm that

resonates in your bones and makes you want to dance. When I travel to the Dene territory [there are] different songs there too; you have the winter songs too. [In] their songs they. . .” He lifts his hands in the air, looks up with a strained look on his face, full of excitement, and not sure how to word his statement, “and you, . . .you, . . .you can TELL that it’s a Dene song from the North. You can just tell, and you go further North, and the Eskimos, the way they drum with their singing and their song. I feel the connection is through the land. In this territory, you have Anishinaabe people, you have the Mohawks in Manitoba area. To the South the Iroquois people and, of course,” he gives us all a sly look and a smile, “behind every tree, you might find a Cree. So, we have Crees everywhere.”

Everyone appreciated the humour in the last comment, especially as it was getting late in the evening, and everyone was tired. He added to this conversation by mentioning that in Aboriginal culture, there is a song for everything. For example, there is a song for the water; songs for the trees; songs for each different ceremony; a song for each different dance. His point was that it would be very difficult to find an aspect of Aboriginal culture that was not tied to song in some way. He ended this by sharing a teaching he had learned regarding the drum, “It was once told to me that if our drums ever stop beating around the world that the world could end.” He then started to shift his conversation to his view on the colonial experience and said, “For us, that [music] is bringing the world together, that’s the world full circle, cause when Europeans first arrived here, they took a lot away from us, including our songs, and people died, and people suffered, and regardless of all that, at the end of the day, Aboriginal people? We still know how to smile.” (I was personally affected by his “still know how to smile” comment as Aboriginal people often laugh and are able to find humour in many situations.)

At the end of the Red Rock Inn focus group, Dallas became very vocal on his views of pop culture and Aboriginal youth and music. He felt that, “too much emphasis was put on pop culture”, and all the youth were trying to fit into that pop culture. He said his son seemed to be more concerned at times with Avicii (a pop culture music band) than with Aboriginal music. Dallas then reiterated that he “really hoped to see more Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal language and Aboriginal teachings being brought into the music” created by Aboriginal peoples. He wanted Aboriginal music with these elements to be the pop culture of our youth. He had many reasons for wanting his, including that the influence of colonization was still affecting Aboriginal music and Aboriginal youth: Dallas felt that music could be an essential tool in carrying forward Aboriginal music, language, culture and teachings.

Dallas ended his contribution to the focus group with a smile and confidence saying, “I want to see our own musical genre someday and be THE popular culture rather than popular culture stealing our youth from their culture. That’s all I got to say.”

### **Portrait of Brandi Dueck ( Ojibwe educator)**



*“Without it [music], I don’t think there would be culture, I mean. The drum is just a huge part of how we identify ourselves. . . you are born with your mother’s heartbeat, and it starts with us, and it ends with us, you know that beat.”*

*- Brandi Dueck (Focus Group, 09-13-14)*

(Photo credit: Nathan Ogden/NOP, Nathan Ogden Photography. Brandi Dueck center; Shy-Anne Hovorka left; Supaman right)

Brandi came into the hotel room, all smiles, and wearing her classic, slightly shy look on her face. Brandi was super-excited to have been part of the awards as someone accepting the award for an absent nominee, and for being my special guest that evening at the main night of the APCMAs. We had been friends for a couple years but rarely did we have the opportunity to visit on any level. We both shared a passion for music, education, and Aboriginal rights.

We caught up on a personal level and talked about Winnipeg and its spiritual location as the centre of Grandmother Turtle (known commonly as North America). Both of us thought it was no coincidence that the APCMAs were held at this sacred site, in the city of Winnipeg.

We sat on the two chairs that each hotel room provided. After our introductions, I asked Brandi how and if music played a role in her life. She cleared her thoughts, looked up at the ceiling, then looked at me with her dark brown eyes: “Music does play a major role in my life. Just from a general aspect of it, anytime I am feeling something, or I wanna listen to something, it relaxes me; emotionally, it can charge me up, or bring me down. From a cultural perspective, I think it’s a huge part of who I am. I identify myself with my music [Aboriginal music], particularly the drum.”

Brandi was an avid Powwow attendee. Along with this she took part in many Aboriginal sacred ceremonies. She also said Powwows and ceremonies were important to the youth for learning cultural elements. She talked about the different songs that were performed at different ceremonies and how each song was linked to that specific ceremony. Brandi understood Aboriginal music as an “international language” that could be shared and understood around the world. She also spoke to how Aboriginal musicians identify with the drum because it is such an integral aspect of many Aboriginal cultures. In her words, “There are a lot of beliefs surrounding

the drum, and um, it's a huge part of the whole concept of Mother Earth, and that's her heartbeat, and um, so it is directly related to our culture and how we identify and how we identify ourselves." She had paused here for a moment, and then finished with, "You know it's that heartbeat, it's where we came from."

We dove deeper into how music and culture was related within Aboriginal cultures. She talked about how much of the culture and traditions were lost through assimilation. She brought up aspects of colonial history that she felt had a direct impact on the loss of the Aboriginal culture. She felt this had an effect on Aboriginal youth and how, as educators, we need to use music to teach the traditions and cultural aspects of Aboriginal peoples to the Aboriginal youth.

As she spoke about these issues, Brandi's shy demeanour went away, and with passion igniting her voice she said, "So much [of the culture] was lost through assimilation. Some of the things that happened in the '60s' scoop and the residential school system. . ." she stopped, looked to the side, took a deep breath, and continued, "a lot of things were lost, and there were a lot of songs and stories in those songs that were lost that we will never get back. I think teaching them [youth] today is so important because even just some of the songs that have held on to and the stories and the lessons that are taught through them need to be taught again to revive part of what has been lost and to keep it going."

Her comments regarding colonial impact, and about the drum and the youth seemed to echo other participants. I had been careful not to ask questions that would guide the participants' responses, but these issues of colonialism — such as assimilation and residential school — surfaced in all the interviews.

Interviewing an Aboriginal participant in the field of education was not what I had planned. Brandi's participation was a great fit. It was helpful to see the perspective of an Aboriginal person in education who was not tied to music for this thesis. Her most interesting contribution occurred when I asked her to add any final thoughts. She said, "As I work in a mainstream school system, I see -- I see a very huge gap in the education system pertaining to the history and how a lot of it is not being told in today's education." She then very quietly added, "Especially accurately. So this lack of education, for lack of words, is really damaging to all of our young people and to all the people of Canada because it's just creating this huge divide between our people and Canada, and it's creating a lot of ... its feeding, um, it's feeding this fire that has been ignited – this negative fire. So the education piece, I think, is huge, and without music, or should I say, the music helps build the bridge in that gap in a positive way."

She shared a story with me regarding a special needs student she worked with that explained how she saw the connection to music and culture from a physical aspect. "I have to say I work with a mute/deaf student and even though she is deaf, she still feels music through the vibrations and through residual hearing that she may have left. So when she feels the vibration, she picks up and she used to be a Powwow dancer and it is so amazing when I see her listening to her old Powwow music but yet she is profoundly deaf, but she still listens to it, and that connection is still there and it blows me away." This ended our individual interview.

The next day, Brandi returned for the focus group. All the participants were fairly tired, but happy, as the APCMAs, as always, were a good time. Brandi seemed the most rested although maybe she was still riding an emotional wave of happiness after the awards. We got our coffees and snacks and all sat down for the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to



triangulate the data that came from the individual interviews. This was my opportunity to see what themes came out in both the individual and focus groups, and to check these against the themes that came out consistently in all the interviews.

After Brandi introduced herself as an educator and mother, she looked at me and said, “What more should I say?” Her shy personality was coming through. I told her to say whatever she wanted to. She added to her introduction, with as much confidence as she could muster: “I’m an activist; I’m very passionate about Indigenous rights and honouring the treaties and decolonization, and all that lovely stuff.” We got into the focus group with the first question pertaining to how music plays a role in their lives. Dallas had spoken about music starting and ending his day, and Brandi felt like she had related to that. She wanted to add the connection to the drum and everyday life: “I just wanted to add, when we are in our mother’s womb, we hear our mother’s heartbeat. Even after you have your child, you hold your child close to you and that connection that you feel with your child, and they can still hear your heartbeat and when you start patting their back, already that rhythm is there and when you hear that drum.” This seemed to resonate with the group, and all the heads nodded in agreement. Other participants noted the connection to the womb and the drum too.

Throughout the next part of the group interview, Dallas and Kim dominated the conversation. Brandi sat and listened. We had wrapped up the discussion of music and culture when Brandi asked if she could add to it before we moved on. She added that music evolved over time, and that musicians had to find a way to stay connected to the time we were in, but also to the music they played, while still finding ways to incorporate the traditional values into the music. She cited ‘A Tribe Called Red’ as a current group that did this well. She noted that she

wished that traditional language was used more in Aboriginal music to help it survive, and how music would be a great tool to teach language. She said, “Like the remnants of what they have left to the music....we need to try to revive some of this language that we are losing, and relearn it and bring it back.” Here Brandi’s educational perspective came shining through.

Brandi sat, watched and listened but did not interject over the next 20 minutes as the others discussed what kind of music should be the focus of the APCMAs. To close the focus group, I asked if there was anything else that anyone wanted to add. Brandi reflected: “I just have to say, I think I see a theme through here, and it’s language and reclamation.”

### **Portrait of Kim Wheeler (Mohawk and Ojibway industry professional)**



*“It’s music that is based upon who we are inherently” - Kim  
Wheeler (Focus Group, 09-13-14)*

(Photo Credit: Red Works/Nadya Kwandibens)

Kim and I gave each other a hug and gave the usual “good to see you” greeting. She was fairly tired from the first night of the APCMAs. One of the artists that she represented as manager, Ices Rain, was in town with a busy schedule of interviews, rehearsals and other appearances, which meant Kim also had a busy schedule. I was very thankful that she made time for me.

We chatted for a few minutes to catch up. Just like Dallas and Leanne had done, Kim filled me in on what I had missed at the awards the night before. I really wish I had been there.

I went over the project with her. We completed the paper work, signed the forms, and ensured she had a full understanding of the ethical aspects. We got ourselves comfortable in the hotel room chairs and started the interview. Whenever she lightly shook her head, her jet black, mid-length hair moved over her shoulders onto her back. Kim was shorter like me, but had a vibrant personality that could not be missed. Her eyes were also jet black and always seemed to have a deep sparkle to them. Kim always seemed to wear a smile. She introduced herself as being from “Red Hollywood” aka “Indian Vegas,” more commonly known as Winnipeg.

I asked her how music played a role in her life. As a music industry participant, I was anticipating her interview to be very different. She told me that she had worked in the media for 20 years with a goal to bring positive Aboriginal stories to the mainstream media. She had run an all-Aboriginal podcast for CBC radio as well as launched an Aboriginal website for CBC. She left CBC for personal reasons, put out a Facebook post saying she had quit, and thanked all the musicians for their support over the years. She changed direction, working for Aboriginal artists. Her new goal was to ensure that mainstream media wrote positive stories about the Aboriginal entertainment community. In addition, she worked on the Aboriginal Music Week board for five years and then moved over to sit on the advisory committee for the APCMAs.

We were both feeling relaxed; I was starting to feel more confident as an interviewer, and she was feeling more at ease with being there. She even relaxed into her chair a little more deeply, allowing her body to rest while she talked. I felt it was a good time to get into the questions that I felt were more challenging. Her response to the question relating to the

connection between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture was, “[Aboriginal music] is not musically based; it’s culturally based. It doesn’t matter whether it’s country or rock or hip-hop or classical; it’s how we define Aboriginal music right now. Like, it’s not a specific focus on one type of music; it’s music that is based upon who we are inherently.”

She then got a bit emotional and teary and said, “In the bigger picture Aboriginal music is instilling pride in who we are as a people and, you know, to use that tired old quote by Louis Riel, ‘My people will sleep for 100 years, and it will be the artists that wake us.’ I really think we got it.” She paused. I let her regroup herself. She then looked right at me with confidence and pride and talked more about how our “Aboriginal music stars were shining and leading the way by instilling pride in the larger community”. Kim told me she did not have role models other than Buffy Saint-Marie who instilled that kind of pride. Next, she said, all the Aboriginal artists out there “are making our young people really proud to be *Indians*.”

I moved the conversation to the question pertaining to youth and Aboriginal music. She had a different perspective than the other participants, but it seemed to be pointing in the same direction. Kim said the youth “gained a sense of pride watching successful Aboriginal artists”. Watching them gave them the feeling that if the artists could do it, so could they, regardless of where and what they came from. She also thought that it was important for the youth to “see themselves” in the media. “It’s really important for the younger generation to see our community reflected back to us so when they turn on something, such as APTN, and they can tune into the APCMAs where they see people who understand where they are coming from, and understand who they are, how they have grown up, and when you can turn on the TV and see people the

same colour as you doing fabulous things. . .” She trailed off on this sentence and swallowed deeply. She looked up to the ceiling and blinked a few times before looking back at me.

I asked if there was anything she had wanted to add. She started speaking about how she hears from the communities outside of the Aboriginal communities asking, “Why do [Aboriginals] have their own awards?” Her response was, “Well, why does country music have to have their own awards? Why are there teen choice awards? Why are these awards? Well, you know, it goes back to ‘Why not?’ It’s a genre right now and that’s ok. We do have to support our own people.” With her addition about awards, our individual interview ended.

The next morning Kim came back to the hotel for the focus group. We all got comfortable and started the focus group discussion. As Dallas spoke about how his day always starts and ends with music and how it was his lifeline of spiritual connection, Kim looked over at Dallas with an interested expression. “That was beautiful,” she said, “I’ve never really thought of music that way before. ‘Cause to me, you know, music is a job. But it’s more than a job; it’s my passion, so I work with artists too, to help publicize them and get their music out to the larger audience.” During our individual interview the day before, Kim had kept her responses more industry related.

I asked the participants about the connection between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture. Kim was quick to jump in with how the music industry had grown so much over last 15 years, especially in the contemporary music of Aboriginal artists. From her perspective, the last 10 years had instilled a sense of pride in the Aboriginal communities. She felt that television shows, such as the APCMAs, which are live on national TV, help to instil a sense of pride to the

greater population of Aboriginal artists. Dallas did not agree. He spoke to how he felt the APCMAs should focus more on traditional music and less on contemporary music.

Kim let Dallas finish up his response to her, and responded, “What you were saying about A Tribe Called Red. They use Powwow music within their music – right? And other artists do that too – where I guess you could say, they sample. You know, they sample the chants or they sample the drum. So, I would see the connection through music and our culture that way. When you take contemporary music and sample in the drums and the chanting, or, you know, if they talk about, in their songs. Um, you know about our history, and sometimes they do use Native words as well.” Dallas had absorbed much of the conversation. I tried to guide the group back and move into the next question on Aboriginal youth and music.

Kim stated, “Well, it’s just an observation that when Dallas was mentioning Northern Cree and their Facebook drama song, it never really occurred to me until that moment, but it’s interesting how the contemporary music and the contemporary musicians have elements of traditional music and language in their music; and it’s really interesting that the traditional musicians are bringing in contemporary issues into theirs as well. I know that Powwow groups do that. It is like the little light bulb went off.” She also went on to speak about what experiences of Aboriginal people show up in song in contemporary and traditional music. Kim had mentioned very little pertaining to the colonial impact until this statement; “30 years ago, growing up, there was only a handful of native artists. And most people probably didn’t think that it was possible for them to grow up and be musicians and be part of that world. We were still feeling the effects of residential school, right? It was something that wasn’t for us [as Aboriginal peoples] but now, now it is.”

The previous 10 minutes of back and forth between Dallas and Kim, on the subject contemporary and traditional approaches, seemed like an eloquent dance of words being used to find balance and understand each other. In the end they seemed to understand each other's perspective and perhaps even agree that they both shared a similar perspective.

I asked if anyone wanted to add anything: all declined. Kim gave me a hug, all the participants said their goodbyes, and off they went to the Powwow. I packed my bags and headed back to the airport to go home.

Thus, these five participants discussed Aboriginal music from their cultural connections. While they represent a variety of First Nations—Ojibway, Cree, Dene, Mohawk—they each bring unique perspectives from their home communities and their experiences within the Aboriginal music scene in Canada. Chapter 5 illuminates the themes that emerged from these participants' data, as shown through their portraits.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

*“Without the song? There wouldn’t be very much of our culture. ... Songs is what probably kept us alive, and kept us going for this long and kept our culture strong and still going.”*

— Dallas Arcand (Individual Interview, 09-12-14)

In the following chapters I return to an academic style of writing for the discussion and conclusions for this study. To recap, the purpose of this study was to explore the connections between music and cultures from the perspective of the North American Aboriginal communities. To explore this topic, I ask two research questions:

- 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures?
- 2) How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels?

To answer these research questions I used portraiture methodology (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983) informed by Indigenous methodologies (Castellano, 2014; Smith, 2012) with two methods: ethnographic methods within ethnomusicology (Campbell, 2003; Diamond & Witmer, 1999) as well as arts-based methods (Barone & Eisner, 1997; McNiff, 2007). I collected data through interviews and follow-up focus groups with a sample of five participants. For analysis, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step process.

Three themes emerged from the data, Aboriginal music: 1) heals the effects of assimilation and colonization; 2.) Expresses connections between Aboriginal traditions and music through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth, with an emphasis on the drum; 3) Serves to disseminate knowledge from one generation to the next. Each of these themes is discussed below, integrating participants’ quotes with the scholarly literature.



The effects of colonization, Residential Schools, and assimilation were traumatic and devastating for many Aboriginal communities (Sinclair, 2007). Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012), and Piercey (2008, 2012) examine Aboriginal music and its role in community life. They found that music has dual purposes, it: expresses a colonial impact upon Aboriginal peoples, and is used by Aboriginal people to heal from these impacts. Baumann (2000) and Ilari et al. (2013) contend that instruments provide the same abilities to heal. The participants' responses echo the literature while adding their perspectives and personal connections on the effects of assimilation and colonialism and how music heals. It was a universal theme for participants.

### **The Power of Aboriginal Music to Heal the Effects of Assimilation and Colonization.**

All five participants talked about the effects of colonization, identifying significant aspects of assimilation, Residential Schools, and the '60s Scoop. Recently Canada commissioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to hear Aboriginal peoples stories on the effects of Residential Schools:

Constituted and created by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which settled the class actions, the Commission spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from the Aboriginal people who had been taken from their families as children, forcibly if necessary, and placed for much of their childhoods in Residential Schools (Commissions, 2015, p.v).

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), the colonial practices of assimilation were intended to “kill the Indian in the child” (About the Commission, 2015).

The TRC listened to and recorded stories of the survivors of Residential Schools, and then shared these histories with the public through their final report. Assimilation processes have affected not

only the generations that were part of these practices, but all subsequent generations as well (Sinclair 2007). The following section will discuss how participants saw these practices contributing to the history and legacy of colonialism along with more information about assimilation, Residential Schools, and the '60s Scoop. The '60s Scoop was a process of removing Aboriginal children from their home and placing them in the foster care system, in the care of non-Aboriginal caregivers and/or foster parents.

### **Assimilation.**

Assimilation was a process of imposing a new way of life on Aboriginal peoples by the European settlers (Hart & Rowe, 2014). Brandi, Dallas, and Terry provide further context. During our individual interview, Brandi noted that much of the language, and many traditions, and aspects of culture were lost due to assimilation. She felt that some of these losses could be regained through the music that had survived the assimilation histories: “A huge part of that is so much of it was lost through assimilation. Some of the things that happened in the 60’s Scoop and the residential school system, a lot of things were lost.” Importantly, Brandi thought that teaching the existing songs could help revive the culture and language to keep them alive and functioning today.

Dallas saw assimilation in another way. He credits Aboriginal music for the survival of the Aboriginal culture during the assimilation process. In our individual interview he said that it was the songs that kept “us” (Aboriginal peoples) alive, and “kept the culture going”. During the second focus group Dallas also said music brought the world together. From his perspective, it was the Europeans that took the music and songs from Aboriginal peoples. He also mentioned at

this time that people died and suffered at the hands of the Europeans, but that through it all, "We still know how to smile."

Terry introduced himself in two ways during our individual interview. He first introduced himself with his Ojibwe spirit name, and then the name that the "white-man" gave him. Although his statement did not link to music, it demonstrated the colonial impact that he felt on himself directly as well as his culture. It was common for Aboriginal peoples to be given European names during the assimilation process. Terry's closing comment during the second focus group in Red Rock, ON was equally as powerful, saying that Aboriginal people should never surrender to "white culture". He then went on to say that teaching the youth music would help pass on cultural knowledge. He did not elaborate on how this would be accomplished.

These participants provide concrete examples that show the impacts of Canada's assimilation processes and the multiple connections to music and culture. Participants related to self and music, how music and cultures connect to assimilation processes in Canada through music taken away to break down culture, and that music is a tool and an avenue to recover from and resist assimilation and pass on culture through music to the youth. Thus, music links to culture by remembering the histories of assimilation. Music is a source for keeping cultures alive and remembering, and recur through the themes of Residential Schools and the '60s Scoop that follow.

### **Residential Schools.**

Governments used Residential Schools to assimilate Aboriginal peoples. They were a calculated policy of cultural and physical genocide, administered through government-Aboriginal colonial relations (Chrisjohn et al, 1997; Sinclair 2007). Sinclair (2007) mentions

conditions that were highly unfavourable with accounts of various types of abuse, submission and neglect, as discussed earlier (see Chapter 2). The conditions were widespread and the impacts of these are pervasive. Just as I was writing this paragraph, a colleague of mine texted me a link to an article in *Maclean's*, which focused on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls (MMIWG). In the article, Jon C, of the Winnipeg Boyz, refers to the generation that they belong to as the “bruised generation,” bruised even though it is two generations after Residential Schools were prominent. The Winnipeg Boyz member said the effects of the Residential Schools were still apparent (Macdonald, 2015), and these effects are evident in contemporary issues such as MMIWG, among others. As Residential Schools are such a big part of the Aboriginal histories in Canada, it should come as no surprise that it would come out in the music. Four participants mentioned or referred to Residential Schools.

Terry had shared his residential school experience with me in our conversation after the interview. He had not spoken of Residential Schools during the individual interview; however, after the interview, he told some of his stories and gave me permission to say simply that his experience with residential school was a highly negative experience. Today, he uses the drum and his prayers to help him to understand his experiences and heal from them. In the true fashion of an Elder, Terry did not elaborate on this. He left this for me to ponder and learn from.

During a conversation with Leanne, I had asked what she meant by songs as “Grief and coming out of grief” during the second focus group. She had said it was two-fold: first, being able to survive out on the land; and second “our ability to come out of assimilation processes.” Leanne’s song *Never Forget* gives insight into her family’s memories of these schools.

As mentioned earlier, Leanne sang about residential school in her performance at the Red Rock Inn. She cried while she sang it. On YouTube, I found a video of her performing the song at a 2013 Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) event in Vancouver, BC. Music was used at all the TRC events across Canada to support the need for Canada to acknowledge residential school histories and for the government to apologize for the atrocities caused by forced assimilation tactics (About the Commission, 2015). Leanne also spoke about the reaction of audience members when she sang her message-based songs; how they listened to the stories of what happened to the Aboriginal peoples, such as Residential Schools, and the perspective she brought as an Aboriginal artist. She said that these songs often created a curiosity and yearning for knowledge on histories such as residential school. Leanne uses music to teach her audiences about the Aboriginal histories, including Residential Schools.

When I asked Leanne about music and culture, she spoke about her mother and father's experiences in Residential Schools. Her song *Never Forget* was a reflection of her mother's residential school story. In later conversations with Leanne, I found out that she too had been put into residential school. During this follow up conversation, Leanne informed me that she had been kicked out of school twice for "being a badass." The residential school histories had directly affected two generations in Leanne's family, and she said it also affected her children as she shared her stories with them.

During the first focus group, Kim mentioned that 30 years ago, Aboriginal peoples would not be seen as part of the colonial world, "It was something that wasn't for [Aboriginal peoples]" Kim felt this was because the Aboriginal populations were still feeling the effects of Residential Schools.

Brandi also referenced Residential Schools. She associated Residential Schools with the loss of language and traditions. The participants talked about Residential Schools and using the drum to heal from these experiences, music more generally as survival, and to describe the losses to culture, music, families, and the self. The TRC used music for remembering and healing during their events across Canada to remember and acknowledge state culpability. The commissioners implicitly connected music as a tool to heal cultural, familial, and personal wounds from residential schooling in Canada.

As the government began to close many Indian Residential Schools, the '60s Scoop gained prominence (Sinclair, 2007). Many social workers in Canada understand that the '60s Scoop did considerable harm to Aboriginal families and today the number of First Nations children in foster homes has surpassed the number of children in both the '60s Scoop and Residential Schools combined (Blackstock, 2011). Thus, the removal of Aboriginal children from their homes is still an issue today.

### **'60s Scoop.**

To recap from the literature review, the '60s Scoop refers to the state-sanctioned mass removal of Aboriginal children by workers in child welfare systems across Canada over 20 years, from 1960 to 1980. Only Brandi referenced the '60s Scoop explicitly as a form of assimilation during our individual interview. Brandi mentioned the Scoop when she was speaking about the lost culture and how music could help in the regaining of the culture. Leanne mentioned that the children were stolen, which applies to both Residential Schools and the '60s Scoop. Participants talked about these assimilation tactics by government against children and their families, as well as their own and their family's experiences. Leanne sings about these experiences.

**Summary.**

The above discussion shows how music plays a distinct role for the participants in the context of Aboriginal histories of assimilation and colonialism. All participants referred to the histories of Aboriginal peoples in their responses to questions about music. Terry, Leanne and Brandi all mentioned the power and potential of music to heal and understand the processes of assimilation, while Kim and Dallas embedded the histories into their responses, indicating that these histories form part of who they are and their connections to music. Kim did not say that music was used to heal, but she mentioned how Residential Schools served as a block for Aboriginal peoples to see themselves as musicians in the past, referencing that historically music and dances within ceremonies were forbidden by governments for a time and as a way to squelch Aboriginal cultures (Dickason & Newbiggin, 2010, p.199).

These findings add to the existing literature on Aboriginal peoples and their experiences with assimilation and colonialism, and the power of music to heal. Participants' voices contribute to the extant literature on music and its ability to help with healing from the colonial impacts on Aboriginal peoples (Baumann, 2000; Diamond & Hoefnagels, 2012; Ilari et al., 2013).

Participants used music to help themselves heal from their own experiences, used music to educate about assimilation practices, and used music to help themselves understand the impacts. They engaged with music through playing, singing, listening, and/or writing music.

I conclude with Leanne's powerful, final statement of the second focus group: "And a lot of that comes back to healing our spirits and our souls. And it comes right back to our music, our sound and our voice, and all those things we kept bottled up tight deep inside. I'm really looking forward to the coming face of Indigenous music."

### **Connections Between Aboriginal Traditions and Traditional Music**

All of the participants saw and expressed connections between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture. Within this second theme, several sub-themes emerged: the connections through the physical aspects of culture, connections through the spiritual aspects, and connections through the drum. Kim did not make these connections directly; however, she did say that Aboriginal music “is not musically based, but it’s culturally based.” She also said that music “is based upon who [Aboriginal peoples] are inherently.” Kim’s broad statements connect music to culture as the core of one’s identity. Other participants made connections to physical aspects of being and the physical world, spiritual aspects of being, and the drum as central to identity, as I describe below.

#### **Connections through the physical.**

Participants viewed the physical connections between music and culture in two ways: through physical action, such as dancing, and through the physical world such as trees, birds and animals. Dallas, Leanne and Terry all talked about dance and music connecting to Powwow dancing. Dallas explained how the music was connected to the dance and how the dance was connected to the music. He saw them as two halves of a whole: the dance made the music move, while the music made the dance move. They coexisted in Dallas’s interpretation. He also spoke about the relevance of the circle, and how the music was in the centre of the circle. When Dallas spoke about the Powwow, he talked about the cultural elements and how the music was in the centre and the dance surrounded that, while the audience surrounded both. He made the analogy of the Powwow and its circles to ripples in the water after a stone was thrown. The dancers are very much part of that circle and one of the ripples in the Powwow. During our first interview he



talked about the outer circle at a pow wow. The outer circle is the area where spectators, visitors, and people wanting to learn will stand. When people in the outer circle become brave enough, they start to move into the circle, and dance. Dallas viewed pow wow dancing as “medicine” and as a way to connect with culture. As one learns and become more comfortable, they begin to move deeper into the circle, and some people end up sitting at the drums in the middle. He described this as a ripple effect, similar to throwing a rock into water. Dallas sees pow wow music as a ripple that spreads through from the inner circle to the outer circle, drawing people into it as they learn about the music and culture tied to the songs. For many Aboriginal peoples, the circle is a sacred symbol of life, and is woven through their entire philosophy of life (Regnier, 1995). Lane, Bopp, and Brown (2004) explain how the circle represents how life is lived through physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. Lane et al. also show how all aspects of life are included in the circle, including the natural world, and how all things should always be kept in balance to maintain a healthy life physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Thus the circle is a sacred symbol and guide to living a good and balanced life.

Brandi noted the importance of music and dance for her students. During our individual interview she gave an example of one of her students, who she describes as deaf and mute. Brandi described that even without these senses and abilities to communicate in traditional modes, this student still moved and reacted to the vibrations of the pow wow music, showing she was still physically connected to the feel of the music. Brandi felt that students could learn cultural elements by attending Powwows. Terry’s comments during his interview echoed Brandi’s comments, confirming that participating in Aboriginal music helped the youth learn about their culture. Both Terry and Brandi felt that Aboriginal music was important to the

understanding of Aboriginal cultures, and that through the music used in Powwows and dance, one could learn many cultural and traditional elements.

Participants made strong connections between music and the physical world around us. Leanne made the powerful statement about being “locked into the Earth” through music during our individual interview. In both the individual interview and the second focus group, Terry referenced music as being part of the international language, and how this international music included the physical world around us such as the birds. In the second focus group, Dallas said music could be found in the animals, and that there was a song for each animal, and each animal carried a song. He also spoke about how the music helped to create a relationship between him and the land, saying that the music was “rooted” into the land and territories belonging to Aboriginal peoples, and some of the music was nature based sounds. He felt, “if the land had a voice and could sing, that is the anthem of the land.” The participants note that physical connections are aspects of their cultures and being, and they could see physical connections related to material form, landscape, sensation, and movement. They also connected to spiritual aspects of being.

#### **Connection through the spiritual.**

Participants explained spiritual as being part of the spirit: heartbeat (in Mother Earth, in the drum, and in individuals), and Aboriginal peoples practicing ceremonial traditions. They believe spirit elements guide the individual. Dallas, Leanne, Brandi and Terry addressed the importance of the heartbeat. This is closely related to the instrument of the drum, as well as to the land (or physical aspects of culture, as stated above). Specific spiritual teachings or ceremonies they shared are not included here, due to cultural protection and protocols.

Waldram (1997) addresses spirit as being linked to the spirit world and spiritual beliefs. Participants also used the term “spirit” in these ways, and most linked music to the spirit of Aboriginal peoples.

Dallas linked spirit to music through the animals, through the drum, through the music and through ceremony in both his individual interview as well as the first and second focus group. He spoke of the drum as being a connector to spirit, and he referenced music as a connector to the spirit world from the Aboriginal perspective. Dallas said music invited the spirits and that without the music; there would be no spirit. In his interview, he said that it was the songs that brought “the spirits” and without the songs, the spirits would not come. He then said that “the spirits” were like the spirit of the land and of the people, meaning, in his case, Cree people. Terry shared stories with similar underlying beliefs, from his Ojibway perspective. Terry said the music had the power to awaken the spirit in people.

Leanne said the songs themselves carried “lots and lots and lots of spirit in them.” She also said the songs were capable of healing our spirits (as in the spiritual aspect of the person), explaining that music was needed because it could help the people “get back to spirit.” Leanne believes that her songs came from the spirit world and that she is just a “vessel” to receive them, and that after these songs were written, they “belonged to the people” not to her. Brandi considered the spirit to be part of the people, part of the drum, and that spirit could be found in sacred locations, such as areas in and around Winnipeg.

Heartbeat was another theme that emerged out of the interviews. Leanne said there are many “heartbeats” around the world. She referred to the heartbeat as part of the land and of music, observing that it transcends time. This heartbeat is often associated with the drum, and the

connection to the drum is discussed below. In this case, the participants referred to the heartbeat as the drum and also as the spirit of the people and the Earth.

During our individual interview, Brandi spoke about how the heartbeat was in the Earth: she referred to the heartbeat as the beginning and end of life and song. She described how the drumbeats from the Aboriginal peoples drums represented the Earth's heartbeat, and how there were many traditional teachings and beliefs about the drum. The drum was central for most participants to the spirit of Aboriginal peoples and the spiritual aspect of being.

### **Connections to the drum.**

Dallas connected the spiritual belief of the drum to the existence of everything by saying during the second focus group, "It was once told to me that if our drums ever stop beating around the world that the world could end." The image and belief of this connection permeated everything he shared. Dallas said the drum brought harmony to the people and to the spirit. He also said the drum was the centre; comparing its use during the Powwow to the ripples in the water from a stone. Essentially, the drumbeat was what resonated through the circle, causing the ripples. Dallas believed that there was a lot of power carried by the drum. He believed that the drum would bring the people "into culture," just as it "draws them into the circle" at the Powwow. During our interview he said, he identified a pattern as to how people are drawn to the drum: first there is interest, then there is the movement into the circle with dancing, and sometimes, being drawn right to the drum as a drummer. He was referring to pow wow drumming/dancing. The participants all nodded in agreement when he spoke during the second focus group about how if the drums stop the world would stop. Dallas thought it was important

because Aboriginal peoples represent the heartbeat of mother earth, and the spirit of the peoples that allow Aboriginal peoples to express, pray, and tell their stories.

Terry said one could learn messages and teachings from the drum and that much of the culture is passed down through the drum. Leanne remarked that she could turn to the music of the drum when she needed to be in a better spiritual or emotional place and said it was the drum that “locked us to the Earth.” Echoing Brandi’s connections to the spiritual, she often referred to the “heartbeat” in music and in the Earth, and even connected them conceptually as one entity; “You know it’s that heartbeat, it’s where we came from.”

During her individual interview, Brandi said, “The drum is just a huge part of how we identify ourselves.” The drum is significant to the identity of the Aboriginal peoples, and there are many beliefs and sacred teachings about the drum. All of the participants indicated that the drum is significant to their music and offers links to their cultures.

### **Summary.**

Brandi, Dallas, Leanne and Terry made explicit connection between music and culture in various ways. Physical connections to the drum exist through both the drum itself and physical movements (such as dancing) to the drum as well as spiritual connections. When the participants talked about the drum, they often spoke of it as a “heartbeat” that was integral to the survival of the people, and helped to form their identity. These connections offer deep insight into the holistic understanding of the connection between music and their cultures from Aboriginal peoples’ perspectives.

Furthermore, these connections add to the extant literature and Elder knowledge. Burton and Dunbar-Hall (2002) examined the importance of understanding the connections between

Aboriginal music and Aboriginal traditions, while Dave Courchene (personal communication, 03-01-13) spoke of the importance of the drum and the natural music of the world to all people. Participants deepened these understandings through their connections to the spirit, and they also expanded them as shared perspectives from different nations: Cree, Ojibway, and Dene.

### **Music as a Tool for Disseminating Knowledge from Generation to Generation**

All participants viewed music as a tool for educating future generations. The participants' views on cultural education echoed Archibald's (2011) finding that Haudenosaunee/Iroquoian music education is an integral part of education, when it has an underlying cultural lens. This lens is essential for teaching music. Castellano (2014) and Dissanayake (2000) show that knowledge is passed down orally through the arts in Aboriginal culture. Participants talked about disseminating cultural knowledge through music, and that this could strengthen cultural identity, oral history, and language.

#### **Cultural identity.**

All five participants said that music helps in passing down elements of the culture, which, in turn, helps to develop cultural identity. Terry had said music could teach youth to feel comfortable understanding themselves as they would be learning about themselves through the music, especially Aboriginal music. Dallas thought music was a great tool for mentoring the youth, while teaching them about the music and traditions using contemporary Aboriginal music. During our interview he cited Aboriginal artists like Buffy Sainte-Marie, Robbie Robertson, and a more current group, A Tribe Called Red, as artists that linked music and culture as a concept. He felt that this modern music teaches culture to the peoples in a "modern way". During the individual interview, Leanne and I discussed Aboriginal music and cultural connections and she

said songs could be an anthem for the people. She expanded by saying that when writing a song, you "don't really know what that song has done for other [Aboriginal] people" that you only know the experience from your own perspective, and that once you share the song with an audience, the song belongs to the people, not just the song writer. During our interview, Kim said that Aboriginal contemporary musics were culturally based and not so much musically based. She said that regardless of what genre the music was, it was the message in the music and the link to culture that defined the music, not the genre. She said it was "music that is based upon who we are inherently."

During our individual interview, Dallas connected music, culture, and spirit by saying that music wove everything together, and that without song, there would be no dance, and there would be no ceremony, thus there would be no spirit. He and Leanne mentioned that by knowing the different traditional music of tribes across North America, one could identify them by hearing the music or in Leanne's words, "heartbeats from around the world." Leanne said she "couldn't imagine teaching her children" about her Aboriginal culture without teaching them about the music.

During her interview, Brandi mentioned that she felt that the curriculum had large gaps in relation to Aboriginal histories in Canada in that much of the Aboriginal histories since European settlement has not been taught, and what has been taught was not accurate. Leanne also felt this way, and in her final statement she said, "I'm really looking forward to our stories being told honestly, accurately and correctly, by us. For all of human kind." Both Brandi and Leanne felt that accurate histories should be included in education to counter the growing gap in

understanding about Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Both also felt that music would be an effective teaching tool.

### **Oral histories.**

Aboriginal communities across North America are noted as having oral traditions pre-colonization (Castellano, 2014; Dickason & Newbiggin, 2010; Dissanayake, 2000). The main form of disseminating knowledge was through oral traditions. Many of these traditions included stories, legends, and songs (Archibald, 2008; Chamberlin, 2003).

Terry, Leanne, Dallas, and Brandi all mentioned music as being a way of orally passing down cultural information. During our interview, Terry said the drum could be used to pass down messages and music was a way that information had been passed down orally from generation to generation. He also said the youth could learn through the music and that music was a form of oral tradition and a way of passing down knowledge.

Leanne felt that her songs were transmitted to her through a spiritual element, helping her pass the knowledge through songs. She also mentioned that music could be used as a place holder in history, and that the songs from various times helped carry oral histories forward through history. She also remarked that the ability to share music allowed her to share a “piece of culture”, and how the music was a “beautiful oral history that has been passed down from the beginning of time.” During the first focus group and his interview, Dallas made reference to songs being used by the Elders to educate the young and prepare them to pass the knowledge on to the generation that follows them. When Brandi spoke about assimilation, she said that much of what was lost through assimilation could still be found in song, and that songs help to carry forward these histories.



Kim made the connection to past histories. She referred to Louis Riel and his quote: “My people will sleep for 100 years, and it will be the artists that wake us.” Although Kim’s use of this quote was meant to show how music and song could be used to share stories, this quote also serves as an example of an oral history that has been passed down, leaving it most suited to conclude this section.<sup>1</sup>

### **Language.**

Both Brandi and Dallas had a strong sense of the importance of using music as a tool to revive and disseminate language. Aboriginal languages in North America are considered endangered, and at least 10 are extinct (Norris, 2007), due to the effects of assimilation and colonialism outlined above. Only limited Elders still speak their language and generations of speakers do not carry their native language (Crawford, 1995; Norris 2007). To counter language loss and promote language revitalization, Brandi and Dallas were both very passionate about using music to revive the language. Dallas said the APCMAs should not focus so much on contemporary music but on traditional music to help revive the music and hold the language. During our interview, Dallas said he felt that music could be used to help carry languages forward; “So the importance of our music too is to teach people too. Some songs we can teach history, some songs we can teach language. The words are easier to learn when there is a melody associated with it.”

During the first focus group, Brandi supported the role of music to be used to revive the culture. As a native language teacher (Ojibwe), I will explain the link between culture and

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<sup>1</sup> I looked up this quote and found it in many academic papers, and was cited in work as Louis Riel (1885), but I could not find the original document. Others, such as Short (2011), also indicate that they cannot find the original source of this quote.

language. In Ojibwe, the words describe things, as opposed to being one thing. For an easy example, there are many ways of saying the word for “snow” depending on the kind of snow, through culturally significant variables such as the season, temperature, and weather, which all connect back to land as central to culture. The language is built up through the culture, with certain words only belonging to a specific tribe or language group, and difficult to translate to English or other languages, as it is culture and context specific. Thus understanding the language gives insight into culture and vice versa.

Brandi mentioned contemporary Aboriginal artists bringing forward the language through music, and referred to this as "remnants of what they have left to the music" and the need to revive the language that was lost, to relearn it, and teach it. During the second focus group, Terry seemed intrigued with the way Dallas spoke about music being used to teach language. Terry added to this, saying it should be introduced into the educational system. He said that having Aboriginal music included in the education system would have an added benefit of helping Aboriginal learners to relearn their languages.

### **Summary.**

Thus, participants contend that music plays a large role in the dissemination of cultural knowledge from generation to generation. Music carries cultural identity from one generation to another. Music helps to pass down cultural elements as an oral tradition and as a dissemination tool. Participants believe that music could assist with language revival and revitalization for Aboriginal languages within Canada. Their perspectives on music as a tool for disseminating culture knowledge add to the literature by Dissanayake (2000) and Castellano (2014) who both

address how knowledge has been passed down traditionally through the arts from one generation to future generations within Aboriginal cultures.

### **Summary of Themes**

There were strong interconnections between the themes that emerged from the data. Participants showed that assimilation and colonialism had an effect on the Aboriginal peoples, and that music can be used to understand and heal from the ongoing effects of colonialism. They made connections between Aboriginal traditions and traditional music to spiritual and physical connections and to the Earth with an emphasis on the drum, which they often referred to as a “heartbeat.” Finally, the participants noted that music is an essential tool for disseminating cultural knowledge from generation to generation, in several ways. Dallas spoke about the protocols of the songs, and the traditional dances that went with the songs. Brandi referred to songs as a means to help restore lost elements of the culture, such as language, to Aboriginal youth. Leanne considered songs as stories passed through one generation to the next, sometimes coming directly through the spirit world. Terry said that music was a way for the younger generation to learn about themselves and their language from within their cultures. These participants talked about music within culture holistically, and as inexorably linked.

Thus, the perspectives shared by the participants help to deepen an understanding of themes from the extant literature. They offer insight into the connections between music and culture, and they situate their insights within the larger Canadian historical contexts for Aboriginal peoples of assimilation and colonialism, as well as from their distinct Nations—Cree, Ojibway, Dene, and Mohawk. The next chapter will synthesize these insights, and conclude the study by answering my research questions: 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in

understanding Aboriginal cultures? 2) How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels?

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

*“[Music] is a way of carrying on who we are as Indigenous people.”*

*- Leanne Goose (Individual Interview, 09-12-14)*

What connections exist between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture? This thesis is a study intended to understand Aboriginal music as a means to provide a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultures and their interconnections. My goal was to contribute to the growing research on this topic with participants from First Nations communities in Canada, by examining two questions:

- 1) How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures?
- 2) How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels?

As mentioned previously, to begin I examined the extant literature. There is scholarship on: the connections between music and culture from both Australia and Canada that reinforce these connections; traditional Aboriginal music within Canada; and the uses of music within cultural groups and for different socio-cultural and political purposes. These areas are well developed and inform this study. There were fewer studies that looked at contemporary music and culture. These areas also inform this study. However, there are even fewer studies that relate directly to my study, particularly about how these connections might inform and enhance teaching the music curriculum in mainstream schools and meet the needs and demands of curricula and meet the recommendations of the TRC, particularly 62.i, to bring Residential School teachings into the classroom for the benefit of all learners. While several scholars have looked at bringing music

and culture holistically into the curriculum, my hope and intent for this study was for teachers to begin to understand the interconnections between Canadian Aboriginal music and cultures, in a way that might further inform educational practices.

The participants for this study were musicians and other music industry professionals from Anishnaabe, Cree, Mohawk, and Dene communities. Their perspectives contribute to the growing literature on contemporary Aboriginal musical connections to culture and the implications for teaching and learning. Participants show that music and culture were deeply imbedded into each other, and understanding one went hand in hand with understanding the other. Kim and Dallas specifically connected music to being part of culture and self, as Kim describes, “inherently who we are”. How does this connect to education?

The Ontario curriculum and the recent TRC recommendations — with specific reference to 62.1 — illuminate why these connections are important as was discussed in the introduction of this thesis. The Ontario curriculum documents mandate that Aboriginal content must be addressed throughout various subject areas, while the TRC recently requested that all students from all grades be informed of the accurate histories of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada with emphasis on Residential Schools.

Participants clearly advocated for understanding Aboriginal music through cultures to provide a more holistic understanding of Aboriginal traditions, spiritual ceremonies, and celebrations such as Powwows as well as historical and contemporary issues expressed by Aboriginal peoples through contemporary Aboriginal music. Their voices express many of the cultural connections that emerge through music, as summarized in the findings that follow, directly after my description of the methodology that follows next.

## **Research and Methodology**

This study was a qualitative, arts-based research approach using portraiture methodology within ethnomusicology, a form of ethnography. The sample consisted of five purposefully selected participants who were individually interviewed using six questions. The participants consisted of traditional musicians, contemporary musicians, someone working in the music industry, an Elder, and someone in the field of education. All of them participated in at least one of two focus groups to triangulate the data from the individual interviews.

The data were analyzed to find the emergent themes, which were used to create portraits of each participant. Each participant reviewed their individual portraits to collaborate in the creation of his or her textual portrait and to ensure the accurate representation of data.

## **Findings**

Through the data analysis, three themes emerged, with sub-themes to illuminate how the participants talked about each of the themes. For each theme I add connections for educators because scholars have shown clearly that to fully engage students with learning Aboriginal music, it would be efficacious to teach it from the perspectives of the Aboriginal peoples it comes from, and within the context of where, when, or how the music is used, as long as the teaching does not break Aboriginal community protocols, such as learning about some sacred musics (Archibald, 2011; Chretien, 2012; Piercey, 2012). As well, the Ontario Ministry of Education and the TRC express the same needs for the curriculum. Thus, this approach of research from Aboriginal peoples and resources for teaching Aboriginal music highlights the importance of this study for academics and educators. Below, I connect the themes from the findings back to my research questions.

The first theme was that participants use music to heal and counter assimilation and colonialism, and the sub-themes included assimilation, Residential Schools, and the '60s Scoop. This thesis shows how the relatively recent histories of colonization in Canada have impacted subsequent generations, and how music has played a part in understanding and healing from these histories. Brandi, Leanne and Terry felt the effects, while Dallas observed these effects. All participants referred to Aboriginal music as a way to deal with their experiences and to move forward as a collective community, healing through the music.

This theme answers my question, “How does understanding Aboriginal music aid in understanding Aboriginal cultures?” in several ways: cultural production of music to heal and understand; the connections between traditional music and Aboriginal cultural traditions through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth, with an emphasis on the drum; and music as an essential tool for disseminating knowledge for identifying, sharing oral histories, and extending language use from one generation to the next generation. Primarily, I found that music was used to heal and understand, and also that it can help to remember and honour the histories of the Aboriginal peoples. This is observed through Leanne’s song *Never Forget*. In addition, participants viewed music as a tool to revitalize culture with Aboriginal youth. Brandi, Dallas, Leanne, and Terry all talked about music as cultural production—carrying teachings, stories and language. Brandi noted that much of the music and the culture was lost due to assimilation practices, but could be regained through the remaining music, thus showing another connection between music and culture. For education, Leanne saw music as a way to educate general audiences on Aboriginal cultures and histories from Aboriginal peoples’ perspectives.



This theme also answers my question, “How might these connections inform the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum on music about Aboriginal music and musicians at local, national, and global levels”? From an educational perspective, this first theme could be used to integrate the educational reforms requested by the TRC document into the arts. For example, Leanne’s song *Never Forget* could be used to introduce or learn more about Residential Schools. As well, many authors in the Hoefnagels and Diamond (2012) anthology provided examples of artists that wrote, sang, and/or performed songs referring to these assimilation practices (see, for example Audet, 2012; Chretien, 2012; Dueck, 2012; Marsh, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Wallace, 2012).

Next, participants expressed connections between Aboriginal cultural traditions and traditional music through spiritual and physical connections to the Earth, with an emphasis on the drum. Here, the sub-themes included connections the physical aspects of culture, connection to the spiritual, and the connection to the drum. These sub-themes were inter-related, offering insights into the holistic understanding and interconnectedness of music within the culture. The sub-themes show that music plays an integrated part of the participants’ connections to Aboriginal cultures in general. The physical and spiritual connections were both aspects of being as well as more generally aligned with the directions of the earth and the spirit world. Dallas understood music to be connected to the physical aspects of culture through dance and physical movement, while Leanne and Terry made connections to the physical world, such as through birds and animals. The spiritual connections were plentiful, with connections to the heartbeat, the inner spirit, the spiritual aspect of being, and the spirit world.

What is the lesson for educators? Ensure that teaching Aboriginal music reflects its original national, cultural and or socio-political contexts (Whidden, 2007). While not always possible, teachers may elect to bring in relevant guests to teach these aspects, or arrange field trips for authentic cultural settings, such as local Powwows, or other cultural events within communities.

Finally, participants view music as an essential tool for disseminating knowledge from generation to generation. The sub-themes of cultural identity, oral histories, and language showed how music is used as a tool for disseminating knowledge from one generation to the next within participants' traditionally oral cultures, as a key element for understanding.

Some participants expressed concern about the loss of language. They believed that music should be used to encourage language revitalization. Brandi and Dallas, in particular, were in favour of using music to revitalize language, with Terry backing up the need to use music as a tool for language teaching and retention. Although language did not become a dominant theme or topic of discussion (especially not in the individual interviews), participants held strong views within the focus group. Brandi identified it as a central theme at the end of the first focus group. For educators teaching songs in the language connects to Aboriginal cultures as well as language revitalization. Teaching songs in the language also affords cross-curricular connections to courses within the Ontario curriculum such as native language and native studies.

Interestingly, all participants cited Aboriginal contemporary artists in their discussions. Only Dallas mentioned the Northern Cree Singers, a traditional drum group from Alberta. Although participants named only one traditional group in the interviews and focus groups, participants expressed a sentiment that there was not sufficient emphasis on traditional Aboriginal music at the music awards, where I conducted most of the interviews. They illustrate

Whidden's (2007) assertion about the influence of contemporary media. Based on participants' discussions, it was evident that they felt strongly about traditional music; yet, they did not cite traditional music groups in their examples.

I find this of value for future consideration and research, as much of the literature focuses upon traditional Aboriginal music (for example, Boyea, 1999; Brown & Dissanayake 2009; Burton, 2002; Campbell, 1989; Castellano, 2014; Diamond, 2004, 2012), and a smaller body of scholars focuses on contemporary Aboriginal music (for example, Diamond & Hoefnagels, 2012; Lehr et al., 2006; and Marsh, 2012). With participants' focus on contemporary artists, further study is recommended for Canadian contemporary Aboriginal music and its socio-political and cultural connections across Nations and different musical genres, as well as connections to education.

### **Implications**

The holistic understanding of music and culture as inexorably linked gives a more accurate picture of Aboriginal culture, and allows for deeper understanding and more nuanced inquiry in several important research areas. Although music and culture are often considered independent of one another (because music is a subset of culture), they cannot be fully understood without understanding them together. These include: examining diversity within the Aboriginal peoples of Canada; understanding how teaching music and culture together is more effective for educators to teach content; and the need to conduct further studies regarding contemporary Aboriginal music and the connections to Aboriginal culture.

Teachers assigned to teach courses in mainstream schools such as native studies, history, arts, or languages could also benefit from using musics from Aboriginal communities. When

educators use Aboriginal music as Aboriginal content materials they reflect Aboriginal practices of holistic education; teaching music and culture together, rather than as two distinct subjects.

With this approach, not only will the information that is passed down be more accurate, but there also will be a stronger understanding of both the culture and the music when taught together.

This study contributes to the growing and diverse scholarship on Aboriginal music and culture. I am pleased for this opportunity to explore Aboriginal cultures and their relationships to music within Aboriginal communities and share Aboriginal musicians' perspectives. It also contributes to the TRC (2015) call for more research from Aboriginal peoples and as a chance to share their stories. Research with Aboriginal participants from other Nations and areas of the country could extend this study to see if these participants refute, echo, or extend the findings.

This ends my journey for now. As a musician and educator, my initial sense of connections between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal culture has been significantly deepened through my study with these five participants who shared their connections to cultures from a variety of First Nations perspectives. My hope is that this study will positively impact future Aboriginal cultural education, particularly in the arts, even on a small level. Miikwich (Thank-you).

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### Appendix A: Definition of Terms

49er: These are newer songs often in round dance form (a traditional Aboriginal music form with a long-short, or heartbeat sounding rhythm), usually containing English lyrics. They have an Aboriginal feel in presentation, often hearing the chanting melodies of traditional music, but melded with modern elements. See: <http://drumhop.com/structure.php>

Aboriginal Descent: An aboriginal person who is Metis, First Nations, Inuit, Status or Non-Status Indian. See: <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643>

Aboriginal Music: Music that is performed, written and/or created by a person of Aboriginal descent.

Aboriginal Contemporary Music: Music that has a mainstream base, such as but not limited to, country, pop, hip-hop, rock or electronica that is blended with aboriginal techniques and or attributes. See A Tribe Called Red “Sisters” for an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbrvwaVXJ48&feature=kp>

Aboriginal Contemporary Musician: A musician and/or performer of Aboriginal descent who performs contemporary music such as, but not limited to, country, pop, hip-hop, rock or electronica. These musics may or may not have Aboriginal techniques or attributes. See Crystal Shawanda “You Can Let Go” for an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhoevrOkaow>

Aboriginal Traditional Music: Music that is created and performed using the techniques, instruments and compositions of that ethnic group. It is not blended with other ethnicities or genres. See Thunder Mountain Singers “Flag Song” for an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I30ZHuXNWOE>

Aboriginal Traditional Musician: A musician and/or performer who performs traditional musics using only traditional instruments, songs and styles that are native to that particular

Aboriginal group. See Carl Swan “Tree Song” for an example: [https://  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaBsmVsKIo8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaBsmVsKIo8)

Idle No More: This is an Aboriginal/Indigenous movement that is a peaceful revolution to honour sovereignty, and protect Aboriginal rights and treaties. See: [http://  
www.idlenomore.ca/vision](http://www.idlenomore.ca/vision)

Portraiture: Sarah Lawrence (1997) developed portraiture as a research approach. The method of portraiture allows researchers to “demonstrate a commitment to the research participants and contextualize the depictions of individuals and events.” (Dixson 2005, p. 17.)

“Portraiture is best described as a blending of qualitative methodologies—life history, naturalist inquiry, and most prominently, that of ethnographic methods. Drawing on the visual artistic metaphor of portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot suggested that portraiture represents the essence of what we endeavour to do in social science research: to (re)present the research participant through the subjective, empathetic, and critical lens of the researcher.” (Dixson 2005)



### **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

Interview Questions for Participants:

- 1.) What is your name and your relationship to your community or the community you live in?
- 2.) How does music play a role in your life?
- 3.) What do you feel is the connection to Aboriginal music and Aboriginal cultures?
- 4.) How do you see the connections between Aboriginal music and Aboriginal cultures?
- 5.) How is understanding Aboriginal music important to the younger generation?
- 6.) Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Appendix C: Links to Artists and Music Events Mentioned in Thesis**

Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards: <http://aboriginalpeopleschoice.com/home/>

A Tribe Called Red: <http://atribecalledred.com>

Avicii: <http://avicii.com>

Buffy Sainte-Marie: <http://buffysainte-marie.com>

Crystal Shawanda: <http://www.crystalshawanda.co>

Dallas Arcand: <http://www.aboriginalentertainment.com>

Eagle and Hawk: <http://www.eagleandhawk.com>

Edger Red Cloud: <http://www.last.fm/music/Edgar+Red+Cloud>

Feenix: <http://www.nativetalent.net/feenix.html>

Iceis Rain: <http://iceisrain.com>

Inez Jasper: <http://inezjasper.com>

John Lennon: <http://www.johnlennon.com>

Joni Mitchell: <http://jonimitchell.com>

Keith Secola: <http://www.secola.com>

Kim Wheeler: <http://music.cbc.ca/#!/profile/Kim-Wheeler>

Leanne Goose: <http://www.leannegoose.com>

Louie Goose: see Leanne Goose website - <http://www.leannegoose.com>

Michael Jackson: <http://www.michaeljackson.com/ca/>

Northern Cree Singers: <http://www.northerncree.com>

Rebel Music: <http://www.rebelmusic.com>

Robbie Robertson: <http://robbie-robertson.com>

Shy-Anne Hovorka: [www.shy-anne.com](http://www.shy-anne.com)

Supaman: <http://www.reverbnation.com/greasyface>

Susan Aglukark: <http://www.susanaglukark.com>

Tanya Tagaq: <http://tanyatagaq.com>

**Appendix D: Email Request for Participants**

Pooshoo fellow Nominees, Elders and Music professionals!

Would anyone be interested in being interviewed for my thesis? I need six people who would be available to meet for one hour individually for a video-taped session with six questions, and then on Saturday morning at 9am all six together, or at times that will work for those involved. This will all hopefully take place over the APCMA weekend.

Text me at [807-727-7238](tel:807-727-7238) if you are interested, or email me at [shyanne.leah@gmail.com](mailto:shyanne.leah@gmail.com) and I will send you the information in regards to my thesis and you can let me know if you are interested. I need 1 male and 1 female contemporary artist, 1 male and 1 female traditional artist, 1 person who works as an industry professional (manager, agent, promoter...etc.) and 1 Elder.

Miikwich!  
Shy-Anne

## Appendix E: Information and Consent Forms for Participants



August 2014

Dear

My name is Shy-Anne Hovorka and I am a Masters of Education student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, which is located in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I am doing a study called: *Understanding Aboriginal Music for the Understanding of Aboriginal Culture*. I am working with a supervisor, Dr. Leisa Desmoulins, who is a professor in the Department of Aboriginal Education at Lakehead University.

For this study I am interested in hearing about how musicians, Elders, and industry members of Aboriginal decent view Aboriginal music and its relationship to Aboriginal culture. I hope to show the holistic connectedness music and culture share, and how we can understand both better when learned together. I want participants to define for themselves Aboriginal music and its relationship to Aboriginal culture. You have been asked to participate because I believe that you have a strong connection to Aboriginal music and culture, and your knowledge would contribute significantly to this study.

If you also feel that your knowledge of Aboriginal music and culture could contribute to this study, I would love to hear from you and I invite you to participate. If you agree to participate, I would like to arrange, at your convenience during the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards, an interview with me, to be conducted face-to-face in a location of your choosing. The session will be video recorded. My intent is to use the video footage to write a thesis based on the interviews and a focus group, described below.

Following the individual interviews, I will be asking all six participants to come together for a focus group videotaped session to discuss the original interview questions from our group perspective.

I will transcribe the data. For the interviews, all identifying information will be disguised in, or removed from, the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name, if you choose to use a pseudonym in place of your real name. You may participate in the interview and not the focus group session. For the focus group session, I can also blur your image to maintain your anonymity, but other participants will see you and know who you are. If you agree to waive your confidentiality and anonymity, I welcome you to participate in a video documentary from the data. For this purpose, I am looking for participants who would consent to revealing their identity, and be willing to allow me to use the video footage for the video documentary. I welcome you to use your chosen



pseudonym name for the footage; however, your physical appearance will appear in the video documentary, unless you choose it to be blurred out. You may use your stage appearance for the interviews and/or focus group session, should you wish to do so if you choose to appear in the documentary.

*In accordance with Lakehead University policy, data collected from this research will be stored on campus for five years, after which video files and electronic and hard-copy transcripts will be deleted and shredded, respectively. Only Leisa and I will have access to the data that I acquire from interviews and the focus group.* More specifically, files will be kept on my laptop, with password protection. I keep my laptop in a secure location at all times. These precautions safeguard your confidentiality.

If you agree to participate, you can change your mind at any time, including at any point during either the interview or the focus group, without consequence. You can decide to not answer any of the questions posed to you, for any reason.

I anticipate that each interview session will last approximately one hour and the group session will last 2-3 hours at most. I appreciate your time commitment to this research study. The benefit of your participation is that you will contribute to a research study that helps to advance knowledge on Aboriginal music and cultural connections.

I do not anticipate any significant risks from your participation. If you agree to participate in this research, please read and sign the Consent Form and return it to me. Please keep this cover letter for your information.

If you have any questions, you can reach me through my personal email account: [shyanne.leah@gmail.com](mailto:shyanne.leah@gmail.com). For further information about me and my music, please visit [www.shy-anne.com](http://www.shy-anne.com). You can reach my supervisor, Leisa Desmoulins, @ [lidesmoul@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:lidesmoul@lakeheadu.ca).

The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board has reviewed and approved this study. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807- 343-8283 or [research@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:research@lakeheadu.ca). Thank you for considering this opportunity to participate in what I anticipate will be a very interesting research project for all involved.

Sincerely,

Shy-Anne Hovorka



August 2014

### Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the cover letter for Shy-Anne Hovorka's research project called *Understanding Aboriginal Music for the Understanding of Aboriginal Culture*.

There are a number of ways that you can participate in this study and the complementary video documentary. Please check all that apply:

I agree to participate in the interviews

(Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

I agree to participate in the focus group session

(Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

I agree not to share information outside of the focus group

(Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

By checking yes above, I understand that the nature of focus groups means that full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

I wish to remain anonymous for the interview and the focus group session

(Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

I agree to participate in the video documentary, with the understanding that I waive confidentiality and anonymity through my participation and the distribution

(Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

Further, I understand that:

There are no foreseeable risks of participation, and the benefits are that I will be contributing to advancing knowledge about an under-researched area of study, namely the benefits of cultural understanding for understanding music.

I can withdraw from the study at any time, and may choose to not answer any particular question or questions, for any reason.



The interview session and focus group session will be video recorded.

Digital video files and electronic and hard-copy transcripts will be kept for five years and then deleted and shredded, respectively. They will not be shared with anyone (except Shy-Anne's academic supervisor, Dr Leisa Desmoulins), or uploaded to the Internet in any way. They will be kept on Shy-Anne's laptop with password protection and in a secure location at all times. These precautions safeguard my confidentiality.

Transcripts from the interview, focus group session and publications from this research will not contain any identifying information without signed consent from me. Any such information will be deleted or disguised (i.e. through the use of pseudonyms rather than real names should I wish to use a pseudonym in place of my real identity and face blurring software).

I will receive notification that the transcript of my interview is ready and I can opt to add, delete, or alter information about me. I can also opt to participate in a follow-up interview to clarify points that I made or to add new information. Being an online participant, I would like to give permission for Shy-Anne Hovorka to use a "grab" image from the video recording for the enhancement of publications. (Please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

I would like to receive a draft of the research report, and here is my email address to receive an electronic version. I understand that Shy-Anne Hovorka will not share my email address with anyone:

(For the draft, please check either Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ or No: \_\_\_\_\_)

If yes, please include participant's email address:

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_