

INDIGENOUS MUSIC INSTRUCTION WITH YOUTH

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Date of Defence: October 30, 2025

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DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to my family who are the reason I chose to pursue my research.

I also dedicate this thesis to the Indigenous musicians who are the centre of this work:

Chris Wainwright, Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells, Elder Shirley Hill, Natasha Goodman,

Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh'bahk'bhook'siiks, and Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the musicians, researchers, and community members who have chosen to love musics as kin in the past, who choose to love musics in the now, and who will choose to love musics in the future.

ABSTRACT

This is a sharing from six Indigenous musicians about their own musical journeys and how they would ideally like to see youth learn musics going forward. Three Cree musicians and three Blackfoot musicians share their personal experiences, their cautions, and their hopes for how musics can be instructed with youth. An *approach of excellence* is expressed in different ways by each musician. This means a focus on preparing oneself before, during, and after musicking instead of focusing on mastery or perfection of a particular song or instrument for one performance. Prominent learnings that came from the visits with these musicians are the importance of relationality, experiential learning, and choice. Intertwined within the musicians' sharings are also stories about deceit, disrespect, elitism, and jealousies. These musicians have learned musics from family, from classical music instructors, from schoolteachers, and from Elders. They have each chosen to instruct youth in musics in various ways including—but not limited to—within Ceremony, within school or community settings, within their work, and within their own homes. This thesis shares their recommendations and points to next steps. Above all, the most important sharing that every musician expressed was the role of *respect* in both learning and instructing of musics, and that music learning begins before birth and carries on after death. They share that musics are kin and need to be cared for as family; this is our sacred responsibility.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The work described in this thesis received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board.

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USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

My use of generative AI included assistance with punctuation and spacing reminders. If I had extra spaces or not enough spaces in the text, or AI recommended a comma or similar punctuation, I would revisit those sentences and make corrections as needed. AI offered grammar suggestions which I sometimes utilized.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

University of Lethbridge: Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University of Lethbridge acknowledges and deeply appreciates the Siksikaitsitapii people's connection to their traditional territory. We, as people living and benefiting from the Blackfoot Confederacy traditional territory, honour the traditions of people who have cared for this land since time immemorial. We recognize the diverse population of Indigenous Peoples who attend the University of Lethbridge and the contributions these Indigenous Peoples have made in shaping and strengthening the University community in the past, present, and in the future.

PERSONAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I recognize that I was born on the traditional lands in what is now known as Victoria, British Columbia (BC). I grew up on the ancestral lands of the Nadleh Whut'en Nation in northern BC, the Tsqescen Nation in central BC, and the Tla'amin Nation on the west coast of BC. Now, I am grateful to live and raise my own children on the traditional territories of all the peoples who live with, on, and for the land which is now most often referred to as Alberta. I acknowledge the importance of the teachings shared with me by this land and peoples—especially from my Cree and Blackfoot friends and collaborators. I respect their stewardship of the lands and peoples here, and how my Cree and Blackfoot friends and collaborators generously share their wisdom. That is guiding and inspiring my life—and this research. I offer this thesis project with gratitude and respect to these peoples, to their communities, and towards our ongoing relationships—with each other and with musics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people and groups have contributed to the development and completion of this thesis project. They helped me in ways they may not be aware of during my journey to learn how Indigenous musicians would ideally want to see musics instructed with youth and how they would ideally want youth to learn musics in a Good Way.¹

Thank you to:

Creator for reminding me that I am a worthy human being, and I am not alone in this journey.

Elder John Louie for setting me on the path to seek teachings from Cree and Blackfoot Elders.

Elders Patrick and Patricia Daigneault for patiently guiding me from hurt to healing and beyond. You have been a cornerstone in my own and my family's healing journey, and I truly am grateful for every correcting and joking moment we have had these last few years.

Chris Wainwright and your family for being present in my walk and lifting my arms spiritually when I was tired. Your kindnesses have kept me stepping forward on many a hard day.

Natasha Goodman and your family for laughing and crying with me as we chatted through what is most important as people, women, parents, children, friends, and for calling me higher with a smile.

Elder Dr. Francis First Charger who listened and heard my heart. You reached out to me regularly to check how I was *really* doing. Your care for my well-being helps me to breathe easy.

¹ "Good Way" is capitalized here because it is a phrase which carries weight when I have heard it within conversations with Cree and Blackfoot peoples. The explanation my friends have given me on this phrase is that it means making every effort to live the teachings of the Elders, Grandfathers, and Grandmothers in heart, mind, and action every moment of every day.

Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe who openly welcomed me into your life and shared your love for your family and community with me. You care deeply and are passionate about the youth in your life and I admire you for how you give and are patient with them as you instruct them gently.

Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells for being willing to invite me into your world, to hear your stories, to listen to your musics, to learn from your experiences, to share some common trials, and to enjoy a peaceful moment roasting hotdogs by a lake. I treasure our times together.

Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh 'bahk 'bhook 'siiks for reminding me that there are good people who have been through hard times who still have heart enough to *stand up for and with* those who are having a hard time and assist them to walk in a Good Way. I respect you and I am grateful for your reminder for me to go to the River.

Elder Shirley Hill for welcoming my children into your dance class and remembering their names. Your way of being drew them to you, and they (and I) learned how to dance, how to listen, how to respect the stories and regalia with and from you. We look forward to dancing at Pow Wow with you soon.

My family: Gramma Dorothy Reed, my mom, Brenda and her husband, Carl Trowsdale, my brother, Matthew Higgins, my sister, Michelle Rusnak, my children—Elethia Brooks, Alex Brooks, Hektor Cartwright, Glen Brooks, Daniel Brooks, and my father, Paul Higgins and his wife Patti. There is not room here to recount all the ways how and why you have given me reasons, motivation, and support to start on this thesis project...and continue...and finish. Please know that I am proud to be your granddaughter, daughter, sister, and mother. I also want you to

be proud of me. This is a more public accomplishment than I have ever done. So, publicly, I want to say, “Thank you!”

My friends who checked in with me to ask questions about this project, who chatted through some of my ideas and what I was learning (or more accurately, struggling to learn). I am grateful for your curiosity, and for your honesty when we discussed this thesis project. I look forward to celebrating with you and properly thanking you for *your* contributions.

My initial readers of the final draft, and of the approved thesis after my defence, are listed below. Your time is valuable, and I honour you for your willingness to dive into this thesis and give me candid feedback and edits for this to become a better and more clear expression of what has been shared and learned. My readers are:

- Elder John Louis (Tla’amin)
- Elder Dr. Francis First Charger (Blackfoot)
- Elders Patrick and Patricia Daigneault (Plains Cree-Métis)
- Indigenous musicians who shared their experiences with me for this thesis project:
 - Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe (Blackfoot)
 - Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bahk’bhook’siiks (Blackfoot)
 - Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells M.FArts (Contemporary Art) (Cree)
 - Chris Wainwright (Cree)
 - Natasha Goodman (Cree)
 - Elder Shirley Hill (Blackfoot)

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- Dr. Marlene Atleo PhD
 - Elder within Nuuchah-nulth (Ahousaht) nation and PhD in Education
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 - Lead Teacher for Mount Royal University's Early Childhood Music programs

And, Dr. MONIQUE GIROUX, my supervising professor. You are a mentor, and a friend whom I deeply respect because you stand up for the truth and bring perspective to my thoughts and writing. I trust this thesis reflects the relationality, accountability, and reciprocity you live by.

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WORD USE GUIDE

I am including a word use guide because it became clear after spending time with the six musicians who are part of this research and reading Indigenous scholars' works that I have heard, learned, and begun to use certain phrases or words that many not be familiar to every reader. This word guide is intended to provide some definitions and explain why I chose to use the terms in my thesis. Although I provide definitions and references throughout the thesis, this guide will give readers a heads up on some vocabulary choices. My thesis also uses colonial placenames of provinces and cities. I have chosen to say, "in what is now known as..." prior to the *first mention* of these place names.

- Capitalization of certain words reflects the importance either the Indigenous musicians or an Indigenous scholar has placed on that word. Most often it refers to the spiritual Power involved. The most prominent use of a capitalized word I made is for "Songs" instead of "songs." I debated whether to use a small "s," but upon reflection and upon learning more from the musicians, I realized that all Songs can potentially be considered ceremony depending upon the approach and intent of the composer or performer. Therefore, I have gone through and capitalized all the instances where "Song" is used in this thesis. At times, I also have capitalized words like Lodge, Respect, Power, Love, River, and Tobacco to emphasize their power or importance—such as emphasizing the more-than-human kinship relationship which gives the topic or word mentioned a proper noun status in this thesis.
- Humans and more-than-humans refers to the living beings in this world. This term more-than-humans comes from speaking with the six musicians who shared in various terms about the spiritual realm, the spirit of beings in nature such as Wind, Trees, River, and the spirits of those who have passed on. I chose to use the term "more-than-human" to refer to either physical or spiritual beings who are not human in the physical, present-day form instead of using different terms every time that concept or topic came up. Alternative terms for more-than-humans I have heard or read include "nonhuman" (Robinson 2020, 79; Gaudet 2019, 48), otherworld, "other sentient beings", "spirit" (Kovach 2021, 187), and the like.
- Music and Musics: the singular word "music" refers to a single kind of music, or a single piece of music, whereas the plural term "musics" refers to a plethora of kinds of music, or multiple pieces of music—Songs—which are not necessarily from the same genre or composer. In this thesis, I most often use musics when discussing the many kinds of Indigenous musics that these musicians learn, perform, and instruct. I use the singular term music to refer to a single song or a single kind (or genre) of music or when discussing it as a school subject.
- Musicking is a term coined by Christopher Small (1998) which encompasses the preparation of self, the skill development of the musician, the conditions of the performance area, the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual state of the performer and

audience and more. All together these considerations are part of the whole—hence musicking instead of just playing a piece of music or making music.

- Indigenous or Indigenous peoples in this thesis refers to Indigenous peoples of what is known as Canada. The United Nations shares further: “Indigenous Peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, Indigenous Peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. Indigenous Peoples have sought recognition of their identities, way of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources for years, yet throughout history, their rights have always been violated. Indigenous Peoples today are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now recognizes that special measures are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life” (United Nations, n.p.).
- The words Native, and Alaska Native are found in Chapter Two: Reading and Writing (Literature Review). These are the terms utilized by the authors from what is now known as Alaska and by Dawn Avery. Please see Senungetuk (2019), Avery (2014), and Bissett-Perea (2021) for their definitions of these terms.
- Alberta (AB) is where Treaty 6, 7, 8, and 10 are located. It is also where Métis Regions 1 – 5, twenty-two districts, and five territories are located. These are not the sole treaties or unceded territories in Alberta.
- British Columbia (BC) is where Treaty 8 and the Douglas Treaties are located. These are not the sole treaties or unceded territories in British Columbia.
- Oskapewis is Cree for Worthy Helper. In this thesis, it refers to the land-based Elder’s helpers who assist with or conduct ceremony (like Pipe Ceremony, Oral Truthing, Sweat Lodge, and other tasks).
- Visiting Way terms are discussed in Chapter Three: Designing and Doing, and Chapter Four: Learning and Sharings:
 - Wahkohotowin is a Cree word that repeatedly comes up in the writings on Visiting Way. Gaudet defines it as “shared responsibility to kinship relations, both human and non-human,” and notes that it means “every living thing is then a keeper of wahkohotowin” (Gaudet 2019, 48)
 - Milo pimatisiwin means living the good life in Cree, and is directly linked to a peoples’ connection to the land (Gaudet 2019, 49)
 - Keeoukaywin is a word for Visiting Way that was gifted to Gaudet (Gaudet 2019, 50). Essentially, I understand it to mean belonging; knowing who we are as individuals and how we belong within our family and the world around us. This

also includes how we make choices to be responsible for ourselves, and those with whom we are in relation.

- Belongings is the word I selected to use instead of “items,” “artifacts,” “objects,” or “things.” In the context of my thesis, I selected the word belonging to demonstrate *kinship* instead of treating belongings like drums and rattles as inanimate objects. From what I learned from these musicians, these instruments are alive. There are a couple quotes from musicians which use the other terms for belongings, so I have kept their words. However, the word “belongings” also has the connotation of an item belonging to only one person or to only one nation. That is *not* my meaning in this thesis. As with the term “more-than-human” I made a choice to use one word instead of multiple words which seemed to be used interchangeably or in similar circumstances.

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PROLOGUE: LISTENING

Winter 2019 – “Go cut a new splasher,” Elder Patrick says to Chris, and I ask if I can go with him. Chris and I walk through the brush until he spots a fir tree with branches that he feels are suitable to make a splasher for today’s Sweat Lodge. He unrolls a cigarette and prays silently as he sprinkles Tobacco at the tree site and then shows me how he selects and trims the branches and how they will be bundled to form the splasher. We walk back through the snow to the site of the winter Sweat Lodge. That was over five years, and many, many Sweat Lodges ago.

Winter 2023 – Today, Chris and I are visiting at the Miskanawah Sweat Lodge. Chris is a Land-based Knowledge Keeper. The Lodge is led by Elders Patrick and Patricia Daigneault and is a healing and family Lodge. We are visiting about music and Song. Chris said that he felt it was appropriate to be sharing about the way Song is present in Ceremony—like during a Sweat Lodge—while we are visiting at the Lodge before it begins today (versus visiting in an office or in a coffee shop).

The exterior of the Lodge is made up of press board and two-by-four walls, a combined plywood and tin roof, and a thicker press board door on hinges to keep the warmth in and the wind and cold out. Inside, wooden benches made from old two-by-fours are placed against three of the walls. Each bench area is enough room for about six large adults to sit side by side. This is where people gather to share with each other, give offerings, say their prayers, and place their extra clothes and towels before entering the Sweat Lodge. There is a two-foot square wood stove with a pipe to the outside that sits in the centre area of the structure. This warms the visitors and is also a place for warming up pots of soup for the feast after the Sweat Lodge is finished. There is a mound in the centre which I will not describe out of respect for its meaning and the

belongings there, and a willow-tree Sweat Lodge is at the far end of the structure. The Sweat Lodge stands about five feet high and is dome shaped—the trees were lashed together to form it. Canvas and blankets cover it to keep the warmth inside.² It is here, in this wood stove heated structure with Smudge burning in an abalone shell, where we are having our conversation. My younger sons are with me and come in and out during our visit to ask questions of the other Oskepawis, to tell me about the elk they see in the distance, and to warm up by the woodstove.

Prior to our visit, I had asked Chris to consider his experiences with music and learning music. After I gifted him with Tobacco, this is what he shared:

Well, I think, for me, I love the saying “if you can talk, you can sing; if you can walk, you can dance.” So, from the time that we are in our mother’s womb where we come to be is the first time where we are exposed to music. We are exposed to the heartbeat of our mother; the continuous beat that sometimes speeds up, sometimes slows down. So, we are born into rhythm. But music is everywhere you look. You hear Songs; you hear your mother’s voice. Most people in the womb come out having heard many different types of music, different genres, but mostly, the heartbeat of the womb—bu boom, bu boom, bu boom—of your mother’s heartbeat. [Chris takes a deep breath] And then, when you come into this world, we are exposed to wind and all the senses. The wind brings us music, and you hear the trees blow. There’s a rhythm. You hear the birds sing; there’s rhythm there. So, really, we were taught by everything in our surroundings; even listening to the water—when you go down and you listen to the river—or the birds, or certain animals will make sounds. A grouse will beat its chest in a real kinda boom boom boom boom boom boom boom and will get progressively faster almost like you are listening to electronic music.

Yeah, I think for me, learning music was listening to my mom play old records back in the day, and just kinda mimicking those Songs. As I got older, it turned into going to ceremony and participating. Every ceremony, especially in Indigenous culture, involves music, whether it’s the rattles rattling, or the drums playing, or the Songs that we sing, the traditional Songs. So, when I started going to sweat lodges as a young man, maybe ten years old, I just started humming along with the Songs; and the first drum I ever made, I just started playing on it with a regular beat, not singing or anything, just hitting the drum. Yeah, just years and years of listening to the old guys and old ladies—[I would] play their drums and use their rattles. And you also form a spiritual connection to the Songs ’cause that animal had to be hunted; those offerings had to be put down—the Tobacco—those prayers had to be said for that animal giving itself to you, so you can

² I will not describe the interior and how the Sweat Lodge Ceremony is prepared out of respect.

make your drum or your rattle. So, there's already that connection, that spiritual connection, with that animal there.

And Songs are also used as validation. In school, we graduate grade six or kindergarten [and] eventually you go on to graduate high school, and you're given a diploma. Well, in Indigenous culture, your diploma would be a Song. So, if you had acquired a certain amount of knowledge or were part of a certain clan, or you had been given rights to Medicines or to do or hold ceremony, many times you would be gifted a Song or you would trade for that Song. Sometimes, they would trade with rifles, horses, blankets—sometimes, even children might have been gifted for Songs. So, there's a long tradition of music as long as anyone can remember; even before written word or speech there was probably Song. And so, we kinda just evolved from that. The Songs we sing today, they haven't changed for a thousand years. They are still the same Songs. When we sing in the Sweat Lodge, a lot of our Songs are an expression of gratitude for teachings and we're showing appreciation for Mother Earth, for the Four Directions, for the Grandmothers, for the Grandfathers that came before us and sacrificed themselves and their ways and went into hiding so they could carry the Songs and continue to practice in a Good Way.³ And there's similar experiences for everybody all over the planet; every background, every tribe, every culture, all came up with a Song and use Song in various ways for healing, for expression, and the arts.

And anything you pick up can be a potential instrument! A stick can be an instrument, a fan can be an instrument, a jingle dress, attaching jingles to a dress, stomping your feet on the ground, your hands, everything! Every sound that we make with our mouth. There's no limits to what music can be! We've [as humans] kind of defined what rhythm should be, or verses and that, but that's changing too. If you listen to music, [rhythm and verses are] evolving. A lot of music is off beat nowadays, and that's on purpose. And things are constantly evolving and changing. Even when our Elders talk about vibration. There's a sound of energy that Earth vibrates to, and, if you hone in on those vibrations, you can often find yourself in a state of meditation or relaxation. You go on YouTube and often you can find things that say 482Hz sound to help heal, those kinds of things. Vibration exists all around us. Even if we take off our shoes and walk on the earth barefoot, you're picking up vibration from the earth. You just don't even know it because our senses are so limited. We're picking up different sounds and senses and vibrations that we don't even know that we are picking up.

So that's how I kind of came into thinking about Song and music and how we can use it, and I think about the Power of the Round Dance and how that can be used as Medicine and healing. People in the community coming together in circle to the sound of the drum, holding hands, tapping into that vibration, and using it to heal communities and to celebrate, and to honour those traditions.⁴ (Wainwright 2023)

³ Here it is vital to note that Indigenous cultural practices were banned through what is popularly known as the Potlatch ban, which became law in 1884 and was not rescinded until 1951 (Joseph 2018, 47–49).

⁴ Superfluous and repeated words have been removed from above visit transcription for clarity and ease of reading.

After Chris shared these initial thoughts, our conversation turned to the classic rock and alternative music records that his mom and dad used to collect and listen to. We discussed his experiences with the pow wow trail as a young man with his family, and then as a young adult leading youth along the pow wow trail. Chris also shared how eye-opening it was that the combined voices and big drums (referring to the large pow wow drums) made such incredible sounds without any artificial amplification. He commented about how impactful it was to hear the big drums being played by a circle of drummers for the first time himself, and then again as he observed the youth he was leading (from his work role) be awed by the intensity of the singing and drumming at the Gathering of Nations pow wow in what is now known as Kamloops, BC. Shortly after he shared this, the Elders leading the Sweat Lodge arrived to prepare and, out of respect for the Elders and the ceremony, we ended our conversation and made plans to continue another day.

I begin this thesis with this long quote from my first visit with Chris because, in all the visits that I have had for this research, each musician has emphasised relationality between people and the more-than-human world around us. Chris's words briefly articulate how music is involved with story, healing, ceremony, sacred power, relationality, accountability, and respect. I also include this quote because Chris took the time to choose his words carefully as we spoke.

I want to respect the thought and care that he took to prepare for our conversation and the ideas that he shared and place them at the forefront of this thesis. I want to begin with *sustained listening*. There were times when Chris paused because he was particular about selecting certain words or experiences to share to be clear and succinct in our conversation. In the five years that I have known Chris, whenever he is sharing teachings, it is with a deliberateness and with the

thought in mind that a listener will need to hear things multiple times, from multiple people, in multiple contexts before a learning really begins to shift to an understanding, and then to a doing. He did precisely that with me when we continued our conversation about a month later. The topics in our second visit about music turned towards approaches to teaching and learning music for and with youth.

The first chapter of this thesis begins by explaining what sparked my interest in pursuing research on teaching and learning Indigenous musics.⁵ At the start of the first chapter, I clarify my intentions with my thesis. I then introduce the six musicians at the centre of this research and discuss my own background. As with this prologue, which centred story and the full context of a visit with Chris, I will do provide some background on my relationship with each of the musicians and the context of our visits.

In the appendices, I include full transcripts of the musicians' words. Although I have had many visits and conversations with each musician, I have only included transcripts of the conversations which I specifically obtained permission to record. Each musician has reviewed the transcript and made any requests for edits or deletions according to their own needs and conscience. I have included transcripts for a few reasons: to respect their sharing as a whole; to ensure that any quotes from our conversation used in this thesis can be placed back into the context from which they were shared; and to reflect the Indigenous research methodology of storytelling. Their stories are not my stories, and so I make space in this thesis for them to share their stories as they wish for them to be shared.

⁵ The word "musics" in this thesis—and in many Indigenous musicians and scholars works I have read—refers to multiple kinds of musics, or multiple Songs, whereas the singular word, "music" is more a Western art music term that refers to one specific type of music, or one specific Song or piece. In this thesis, I employ the word musics unless it is specifically addressing Western art music or a specific Song.

The steps I have taken along the way were sometimes clumsy, and sometimes repetitive. There were, furthermore, sometimes places where protocol would not allow me to go—for questions about ceremony, specific Songs, or teachings. I have included some of these moments here in this thesis to be transparent about my process of learning. At times, there will be content from each visit where a concept is shared which at first may seem to not directly relate to learning musics and instruction of musics with youth, and yet it is still included within this thesis. I do this because sometimes connections between ideas or concepts are not immediately obvious; a learning can take time to take hold.

If someone is interested in learning more about specific points which are too briefly addressed in this research, I encourage them to reach out to local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers for guidance and to learn the teachings that are relevant to their location. In this way, the respect required for musics, Songs, instruments, belongings, and those who compose, perform, and teach musics will be upheld. If there is one learning and teaching to take from this research about Indigenous musics instruction with youth, it may be encapsulated in one word: respect.

CHAPTER ONE: OBSERVING AND DECIDING

This chapter begins by clarifying my intent with this thesis. I started this research with the hope of improving learning conditions and approaches for music instruction in general, but more specifically, improving Indigenous music instruction within the K–12 education system. However, I quickly saw that an approach of comparing what educators are doing now with what the six Indigenous musicians who agreed to be part of this research wanted for the K–12 system would not meet that goal. Instead, I set aside my Western art (i.e., Classical) music training and made the effort to wholeheartedly understand where and how Indigenous musicians had learned their skills, and why and how they instruct youth about musics in the ways they choose—inside and outside the educational system. My research questions were: *How do Indigenous musicians ideally want to see youth learn musics going forward? And how would these musicians ideally want to see musics instructed?* By asking these questions and taking this approach, I have come to better understand that music is kin—music is alive—and that we need to approach the learning and instructing of Indigenous musics with a focus on excellence of approach.

Communicating these ideas was not as straightforward as I anticipated. As some of the readers of a draft of this thesis shared, there were times in my thesis where it was unclear which youth (e.g., Indigenous or non-Indigenous) the Indigenous musicians are speaking about or instructing, and which protocols they expect youth to follow. To be clear, each musician spoke about both Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth—but not in every instance. These musicians have a lifetime of experiences learning and instructing and in our recorded conversations those multiple experiences overlapped.

Each musician shared that there are times when Indigenous musics are taught to Indigenous youth, with the Indigenous musician carrying and explaining protocols and Indigenous teachings explicitly; times when Indigenous musics are shared with youth from all backgrounds, wherein the musician upholds their own protocols and teachings—either privately or in front of the youth—but the youth are not taught to imitate or learn those protocols or teachings (such as in some school settings); and times when Indigenous musicians instruct musics that are not exclusive to Indigenous peoples (e.g., popular or classical musics). However, regardless of context, the musicians emphasized developing intrinsic respect—an *approach of excellence*—in the context of understanding music instruction and learning as a wholistic practice.

Indigenous musics, as this thesis will explore further, encompasses not only “traditional” musics like drum song, but every kind of music that an Indigenous person learns, creates, composes, instructs, or performs (Derksen et al. 2019). It is not necessarily the sound of the musics that define them as Indigenous, but more-so the density of context and lived experience within the musics (Bissett-Perea 2021, and Senungetuk 2019). The musicians who took part in this research have varied musical experiences. While all have listened to popular musics, each has unique experience learning, instructing, or performing ceremonial musics, classical musics, traditional musics, folk musics, popular musics, and/or country musics. The transcripts from our visits (included in full in the appendix) expand further on their personal experiences with musics, and Chapter Four also shares more about their varied experiences with musicking. Selection of Indigenous musicians to share their experiences for this research was not based on what *kind of*

musics they were involved with. Instead, it was because they are Indigenous and because they are in relation with music—period.

In the next few paragraphs, I share my research journey to situate myself as a researcher. This sharing is essential when building reciprocal relationships. I share these details with my readers just as I shared these details with each musician prior to our visits (Kovach 2021, and Wilson 2008).

In Fall 2016, I was working as an educational assistant in an elementary school supporting students during their music class. At one point, the music teacher was teaching what she called an “Indigenous Song” for the upcoming school concert. They were using plastic covered round hand drums and singing an Iroquois lullaby.⁶ I watched as she instructed the students to all beat their hand drums in a 2/4 time, listened as they struggled to repeat the (supposedly) Iroquois words, and cringed as they clunked the drums back into the basket after they were all done.

Growing up, I had lived near Nadleh Whut’en, Tsqescen, and Tla’amin Nations and had spent time with peoples from each nation. I had never seen Indigenous hand drums played or treated that way.

After class, I asked her why she was singing that Song with her students. She replied that she is required to have a certain percentage of Indigenous content in her teaching and the concerts she presents. She was referring to the Alberta Teacher’s Association’s Teacher Quality Standard (TQS) #5 which addresses Indigenous content, although it does not speak of

⁶ The teacher referred to the Song as an Iroquois lullaby. I have not confirmed that the song had an actual connection to the Haudenosaunee people.

percentages.⁷ I asked her why she chose an Iroquois Song from what is now known as Ontario instead of a Cree, Métis, or Blackfoot Song from Alberta. She told me she had searched on the internet and found this Song. It was a slow tempo, so she thought her students could learn it easily. I asked her who had been helping her to learn the pronunciation of the Iroquois language and how she knew what the words meant. She told me that no one was helping her—she was just sounding them out the best she could and had found an English translation of the Song. While I was asking questions, I also learned that she was not aware of the importance of teaching drum protocols. In sharing this story, I do not intend to specifically critique that teacher. I am grateful for her willingness to answer my many questions, and I believe that she was trying her best. Rather, I am using this story to point to a systemic issue of expecting teachers to instruct Indigenous teachings when they do not necessarily have that personal lived experience. Indeed, this was not an isolated incident.

My professional background is primarily as a teacher. I was a piano teacher in the Western art (i.e., “classical”) tradition for twenty-four years. Then, while I was in school for my Bachelor of Education, I worked as an educational assistant within the public school system for seven years. Once I graduated with my Bachelor of Education in 2021, I worked as a substitute and contract teacher within both public and charter schools. It was this time working in schools

⁷ TQS #5, “Applying Foundational Knowledge of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit” states: “A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: (a) understanding the historical, social, economic, and political implications of: treaties and agreements with First Nations; legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis; and residential schools and their legacy; (b) supporting student achievement by engaging in collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education; (c) using the programs of study to provide opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit; and (d) supporting the learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (Alberta Education 2023, 5).

where I observed what was termed “Indigenous music” being taught by well-educated and well-intentioned teachers in various ways to their students. During the period starting in 2015 when I was present in central Alberta schools—in the music classrooms or present during school music performances—I did not see any Indigenous Elders or Indigenous musicians come in to teach the students music. This seemed like a rather important aspect of instructing Indigenous musics which was poignantly lacking. I became determined to seek better ways to respect Indigenous music learning within classroom settings.

During this time, I also observed how Indigenous ways of learning and instructing musics and Song were missing—or how teachers attempted to teach Indigenous musics but without context, or (in most cases) without relationality with local nations. This is not intended to suggest that there are no school boards in Alberta, or no individual schools or teachers within the central Alberta school boards that are seeking guidance from Elders or Indigenous musicians. I am sharing my *personal lived experience*, and some of the reasons why I sought to do this research project. My above-listed observations as an education professional, along with my personal reasons (which I will explain shortly), led me to seek to understand how Indigenous musicians truly want to see musics and Song *instructed*, and how these musicians would want to see youth *learn* musics.

One key learning so far from the musicians and scholars has been that there are significant foundational differences between western approaches to music and music *education* and Indigenous approaches to musics and music *learning*. Crucially, these differences are not primarily about content (that is, which Songs are sung, although that is of course important); rather, these differences are about *approaches* and ontologies (Robinson 2020). My research

focuses on Indigenous people sharing their personal views and experiences with musics and their desires for how youth need to be brought towards learning musics in a Good Way⁸ going forward. My aim in doing this research is to better understand how Indigenous peoples—specifically Cree and Blackfoot peoples—approach learning and instructing musics.

Although it might seem early, I have chosen to introduce some of my key learnings from the musicians in this first chapter. The main themes that emerged are introduced below and will be further explored in Chapter Four: Learning and Sharings. They will then be revisited in Chapter Five: Leaving Thoughts and Leading Questions. This spaced repetition—as well as repeatedly referring to the musicians’ transcripts—will assist the reader to recognize the intent behind each musician’s sharings in this thesis.

Based on my conversations and visits with Indigenous musicians Chris Wainwright, Natasha Goodman, Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bakh’bhook’siiks, Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe, Elder Shirley Hill, and Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells (all of whom I introduce in more detail below), I have learned that *music learning and teaching with youth needs to be wholistic—beginning before birth and continuing after death—and be present and alive within every context of a person’s life*. Each of these musicians shared how music comes from Creator, and all sounds from Earth, and how both humans and more-than-humans contribute to music-making.

As part of the instructing and learning of musics then, *youth need to be aware of their relationality with their surroundings, so they can fully appreciate music in all its forms and be*

⁸ “Good Way” is capitalized here because it is a phrase that carries weight when I have heard it within conversations with Cree and Blackfoot peoples. My understanding is that this phrase means to emphasize making every effort to live the teachings of the Elders, Grandfathers, and Grandmothers in heart, mind, and action every moment of every day.

creative with making and performing it. This greatly expands the possibilities of what it means to bring Indigenous musics into schools and what can be done with youth to assist them to be creative and exploratory in their music making and music learning journeys.

Indigenous musics are embedded in all aspects of life, so I also propose from what I have learned during my visits with these musicians that *Indigenous musics should be instructed by Indigenous musicians who are best situated to respect Indigenous Ways of Knowing musics and Song within instructing and learning contexts.*

All the musicians valued excellence in musicking, but I noticed that their interpretation of excellence decentred a primary focus on mastery of an instrument in preference of an excellence in *their approach* to musicking. *This approach of excellence included making the time to prepare their hearts, spirits, minds, and bodies for musicking.* An example of this is when Spakoo-Igitstaan shared about laying down Tobacco on the drum and praying to Creator before drumming.

This *approach of excellence* included being respectful in their attitudes and behaviours towards their own selves, and to the community they were learning and performing with. An example of this is when Shirley shared about wearing the appropriate attire or regalia for the dance practice as well as when dancing at the pow wow. This *approach of excellence* included preparation and practice of the Songs, dances, and musics in advance of performing them with others or in front of others. An example of this is when Natasha spoke about her daughter practicing her clarinet before band concerts, and when Virginia spoke about preparing for the live jazz ensembles.

This *approach of excellence* included acknowledging and including ancestors, along with the human and more-than-human worlds into learning, sharing, and instructing musics. When Chris shared how Songs have been the same from time immemorial, and how Songs are used in Ceremony when communicating with the Grandfathers and Grandmothers, he demonstrated how this is applied.

Further, this *approach of excellence* included accountability to hereditary rights and to uphold the teachings passed down through generations. One example is when Randy shared about the Drum being passed down to him from his father, his uncle, and originally from Sitting Bull. Randy also explained the accountability they had as musicians to the belongings themselves—to care for them—as he cares for that Drum by keeping it safe inside the cab of his truck in an insulated cover.

Introducing the Musicians

Each musician that I visited with has a different background in learning musics, making musics, and instruction of musics. By introducing the musicians below, I draw attention to some of these contexts. In their introductions, I also include why I consider them an Indigenous musician who can inform my research. These musicians are my teachers, and I therefore want to centre them and their words in this thesis. It is for this reason that I introduce them early on. Each of these musicians gave me permission to share their names. Below, I introduce them as they asked to be introduced, and I have added my own observations of work they do with their family and their communities.

Chris Wainwright (Cree) is a Land-based Knowledge Keeper. He has been learning Songs to heal the heart for many years and is Oskapewis (Cree word for Worthy Helper) at the Sweat Lodge and in the youth land-based programs with an Indigenous community service agency called Miskanawah Community Services in Central Alberta. Chris has invested years in learning these ceremonial Songs, and he has effectively instructed other Oskapewis to sing these Songs as well. He also encourages his own children to learn to make sounds and music in their own ways with whatever materials are available to them. He is approachable, kind, and shepherds the youth within his influence to like themselves more, to trust themselves more, to respect themselves more, and to genuinely seek out Indigenous Ways of Knowing to strengthen their hearts.

Natasha Goodman (Cree) is foremost a formidable, confident woman and mother. She has worked to help other moms be grounded and healthy enough to pursue cultural practices with their children, so their family relationships can be strengthened. Natasha utilizes music daily to enhance her and her family's quality of life, and she encourages others to do the same. She also provides the means for her own children to pursue their interests in music which include listening to wide genres and generations worth of music, participating in school band, performing with the school band, and composing pieces on their own at home. She brings joy to those around her with her jubilant heart that finds something to laugh about with each person with whom she spends time.

Spakoo-Igitstaan_Ahkookh'bahk'bhook'siiks (Blackfoot) is a thoughtful young man of Siksika and Tsuut'ina heritage who shares the wisdom of the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings through drumming and singing. Spakoo-Igitstaan is a fifth-generation drummer of the Turning Robe drum (which is discussed more in Chapter Four). He carries those teachings and

Songs with honour. He and his father, Randy, lead men in healing drum circles. Spakoo-Igitstaan is also a mentor to educators when he and his father conduct drum making and drumming workshops with various secondary schools in the Central Alberta region. The workshop program honours his mother who passed a few years ago. She had created a program for youth to learn the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings in connection with music, and she named the program Grandmother Turtle. He shared with me the difference he sees in youth's lives when they apply those teachings not only in their music, but also in their daily lives.

Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe (Blackfoot) is a Blackfoot Elder with close family ties to both Siksika and Tsuut'ina. He drums every week and everywhere with his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, and shares that the drum and drumming are sacred and powerful. Randy grew up with the Songs and drumming of the Turning Robe drum. He composes new Blackfoot Songs, and he still plays guitar for his late wife's church. He has a lovely sense of humour and gives of himself to his local and larger communities in every way that he is able. Further, he is humble enough to seek guidance from his Elders and friends to keep walking in a Good Way himself, so he can be a patient example to others.

Elder Shirley Hill (Blackfoot) is from Siksika Nation. She is a proud mother and grandmother. She has been dancing Fancy Dance for over forty-one years and has been teaching Hoop Dance for ten years. Shirley has a phenomenal repertoire of dances and demonstrates the beats for the various dances in detail. She has dedicated years to designing and creating her own gorgeous regalia. She instructs others how to create their own regalia, she teaches the stories to youth about the regalia, and she instructs them about the dances and Songs that are heard at pow

wows. She speaks fondly of going into schools to listen and share stories with youth and to encourage them to dance and sing for their hearts to be expressed.

Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells (formerly Jessica McMann) (Cree) is an accomplished and sought out musician and composer. She has a Masters in Fine Arts (Contemporary Art), was a composer-in-residence in Nova Scotia, and during her university years, made the proud move to create and found her own dance, art, and music company to educate youth in the arts. Virginia is trained in the Western art music tradition, specializing in flute, and she also composes works of art (both two-dimensional and musical) which express her story and the stories she has heard as an Indigenous person reclaiming her identity. She strives to lead by example to youth in seeking out and living Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Her heart to pursue ways for youth to express themselves through the arts displays itself in an enthusiasm and exuberant laugh when she shares the positive impacts she has seen in youths so far.

Each visit with each musician introduced above began with stories shared about where we grew up, family relationships and dynamics, and how that shaped where our journey with musics took us. Throughout the visits, each musician shared lengthy and detailed stories about their experiences with learning and instructing musics. My visits with these six musicians revealed several common themes. For example, each musician shared the stories about how music has affected their lives and how they are doing their best to use musics to positively affect others' lives—especially youth. They shared that they want youth to have access to musics of all kinds, in all forms, throughout their entire lives. Each musician also expressed that they want youth to be taught that it is okay to create their own musics—in their own way—as well as how to truly

hear musics around them in all of Creation instead of just the formal music lessons from within a music class at school.

Another theme that came out in many visits was how *the way* these musicians were approaching learning, performing, or teaching musics or Songs was often discouraged, dismissed as invalid, or outright stopped (or attempted to be stopped) by people within the Western tradition of music or by people within their own communities. Ultimately, each musician expressed their gratitude for music and Song in their own lives, and for the ability to share it with others. They spoke of how respect for self, others (both human and more-than-human), Songs, instruments, drummers, Drum Keepers, Song Keepers, and for the Medicine of the Songs—all of which bring healing and strength to people—was of utmost importance. And they shared about the power of choices.

Sharing of Myself

As above, where I shared about my professional experiences within education, I now share my family background and experiences with the reader in keeping with the teachings from Indigenous scholars who lead by example in this area of explaining their positionality (Kovach 2021, Robinson 2020, Wilson 2008).

My name is Angela Dawn Brooks. I was born as Angela Dawn Higgins. I am the fifth generation of British settler-women born in what is now known as Victoria, in the province of British Columbia (BC), in the country now called Canada.⁹ Proudly, I am the biological mother of five

⁹ See the Appendix for a photo of my family taken in 1978 showing five of our female generations; each of us was born in the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, BC. And see also, *The Magic Box: The Eccentric Genius of Hannah Maynard* which documents the history of Hannah Maynard, a photographer in one of the first generations of British settlers in Victoria (Weissman-Wilks 1980). She is my great, great, great, great Gramma on my maternal side of my

children: my older three are of Scottish-English-settler ancestry, and my younger two are Coast Salish-English from the Tla'amin Nation, of the Bear Clan.

To be very clear, I am non-Indigenous. My maternal side of the family traces their British roots back to the 1500s to Northumberland, England. I was raised mainly in small towns in British Columbia, Canada, and my first experience learning Indigenous Ways of Knowing was in grade one when Carrier Elders regularly came into school in Fraser Lake, BC, and taught us how to speak Carrier (an Interior Salish language) and showed us how to bake bannock. Young girls—who were five to seven years old—also joined the Elders to share their dancing and teach us how to dance in the traditional way. My in-school education in Carrier Ways of Knowing was frequent enough that by around six years old I could converse in Carrier at a basic conversational level, although I cannot recall the language now as an adult. As a teenager, I participated as the sole non-Indigenous person in the Tla'amin (Coast Salish) youth group, and it was there where my determination to learn and protect local Indigenous Ways of Knowing was strengthened as much as is permitted by protocols. When I was older, my second spousal partner was from the Tla'amin Nation. We have two sons together.

All my children—and particularly my youngest two who are being raised away from their home nation—are my motivation to learn from Indigenous musicians their views on learning and instructing musics with youth. Back in 2018, John Louie, a Tla'amin Elder, advised me to have my family learn Cree and Blackfoot Ways of Knowing while we are living in Alberta. Hence, my journey with local Indigenous communities began and has continued from my youngest years on to this current day—and will continue in the years to come.

family. My Gramma Dorothy Reed and my Great Gramma Grace Croft are mentioned on the last page in the acknowledgements for their assistance in the research for that book.

One other sensitive point which is relevant to this thesis is that my children and I are healing from intergenerational residential school trauma. My second partner—the father of my two youngest sons—has a mother, aunties, uncles, granny and other relatives who endured residential schools. Many of his family were abused, some of them abused him, and he then abused us in horrific ways. As a result, he has been incarcerated for his actions. This information is relevant to this research project because it demonstrates the current generation of Indigenous youth are either first or second generation away from residential school attendance.¹⁰ The traumatic effects are still present in my family, and in many families, and musics—particularly Indigenous musics for Indigenous youth—are medicine (as discussed by Chris during our visit—see his transcript in the appendix).

Music has power to heal, and educators need to understand the importance of honouring the protocols in place to protect music and allow it to do its healing work where such work is needed. Healing is also needed among non-Indigenous youth as they are not exempt from trauma, distress, fatigue, anxiety, or other stressors. It is my belief and experience that music can calm a troubled heart, and that is invaluable for youth today.

That traumatic dimension of my family's lived experience has directly influenced my view of Indigenous musics. Part of our healing journey has been to participate in ceremony. When my children and I have attended Pipe Ceremonies, Sweat Lodges, women's meetings, Round Dances, and other events in Central Alberta, music is always present. Music, in those

¹⁰ An oft quoted reference for residential school experiences is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report (2015). In addition to reading this report, I put forward to the reader of this thesis the suggestion to spend genuinely reciprocal time with people within Indigenous communities over a lengthy period—years at least. The truths of the neglect, deliberate abuses, forced assimilation to English and French languages and pseudo-Christian culture and the ongoing after-effects of residential schools are real. These experiences are best heard firsthand instead of learning and reading about them solely on paper.

spaces, is functional in a plethora of ways. These can include—but are not limited to—its ability to heal; to call on ancestors for wisdom; to assist people to let go of their multitude of hurts; to bring joy and peace to those who need stronger community; to bond family and friends together; to provide a space for vulnerable sharing; to transfer ownership of a Song or teaching; to give energy and power to the Elders who are conducting ceremony; to instruct younger generations in Indigenous Ways of Knowing through Song; to bring those present closer to Creator and all Creation in a gentle way; to protect the listeners from harm, and many more ways of being that I am slowly learning (Urion 2022, Robinson 2020, Knight 2015).

Currently, I continue to learn Indigenous Ways of Knowing remotely from Elder John Louie (Tla'amin), and in-person from Elder Patrick and Patricia Daigneault (Plains Cree-Métis), Elder Randy Turning Robe (Blackfoot), and from Elder Dr. Francis First Charger (Blackfoot and Elder in residence at the University of Lethbridge). I also continuously learn from and with my Indigenous friends and collaborators as we spend time together with our families in our daily lives.

Reading This Thesis

Each chapter is titled with present-tense verbs because knowledge is active and on-going (Williams 2019). In Chapter Two: Reading and Writing, I describe and share some of the current literature by Indigenous academics, Indigenous musicians, and Indigenous educators (as well as a few articles by non-Indigenous scholars) on the topics of Indigenous musics and Indigenous music education. Chapter Three: Designing and Doing then explains how and why I selected Indigenous methods and Indigenous research methodologies for this research project. It goes over some of the foundational aspects of research by and for Indigenous peoples and provides an

in-depth look at Visiting Way methodology. I position chapters two and three as sharing resources—ways to learn and ways to research—which were valuable in this research journey.

After some reflection and after attempting to join all my academic writings together in one chapter, I chose to separate the Indigenous research methodology scholarly literature from the literature about Indigenous musics and Indigenous music education. This was because the Indigenous research methodology literature laid the foundation for why I chose my Indigenous research methods. This may not be traditionally how academic literature within a thesis is distributed, but it will make sense in the whole of how this thesis is formed.

Chapter Four will focus on the sharings from each musician and bring deliberate awareness to what they bring forward about music learning, music making, and music instruction. Elders leave stories with a question (or more) for the listener to consider and to learn from. Drawing on this approach, Chapter Five brings this thesis to a close with some overview thoughts of the learning and sharings as well as ideas and questions for further thinking on instructing and learning Indigenous musics. “References: Respecting and Researching” are my chosen monikers for the bibliography. My bibliography includes a reminder of the responsibility we have to be respectful in our research and how that applies to the topic of Indigenous music instruction.

CHAPTER TWO: READING AND WRITING

My research emerges from current research in Indigenous musics as well as research in learning and educational practices for Indigenous education. As such, in this chapter, I will draw on literature in two key areas. First, I will provide an overview of current research about, on, or with Indigenous musics done for, by, or with Indigenous peoples. As I will discuss, current research addresses a few key areas. Areas include the impact of music on communities and individuals (Prest et al. 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021; Bissett-Perea 2021; Senungetuk 2019; Locke and Prentice 2016; Gilbert and Phillipson 2015; and Kennedy 2009). They also include the creation, performance, and marketing of Indigenous musics (Bissett-Perea 2021; Robinson 2020; Derksen et al. 2021, 2019; Williams 2019; Gilbert and Phillipson 2015; Knight 2015; Avery 2014; and Hanna et al. 2009). And finally, current research includes discussion of the epistemological and ontological aspects of Indigenous musics, and what this means for Indigenous music learning and instruction. (Young 2024, 2023a; Urion 2022; Bissett-Perea 2021; Robinson 2020; Senungetuk 2019; Williams 2019; Gilbert and Phillipson 2015).

Second, I will provide an overview of current research about ways of learning and teaching Indigenous musics both within and outside of institutionalized educational settings (Prest et al. 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021; Young 2024, 2023a; Williams 2019; Locke and Prentice 2016; Knight 2015; and Hanna et al. 2009). This will include the importance of approaches of excellence towards music learning and music instruction such as understanding that 1) musics are alive and need to be cared for as kin, 2) knowledge is active, 3) musics are wholistic and not just contained in a classroom, 4) best intentions of instructors are not adequate—there must be respect and honouring of the spiritual protocols involved with ownership, learning, and

performing of musics, and 5) preparation for non-Indigenous instructors and learners of musics needs to be led by Indigenous musicians who are living the teachings about musics.

A note about how my literature review is expressed: I have opted to discuss the authors' works individually. This is done for a few reasons. Although they are mostly Indigenous authors, and have similar worldviews in many ways, they are each from different nations or communities. There are ways of knowing uniquely inherent to those individual nations or communities and nuances in the meanings of their expressions that I may not understand as a non-Indigenous person. I have chosen to respect their space for expression and not presume to group their ideas and conclusions with other authors in a way that may not accurately reflect the meaning or intent of their messages. Each of these author's lived experiences and academic journeys has differed. I choose to honour these journeys by keeping space for their individual messages. Words are powerful, and these authors have chosen their words carefully. Often, I have selected quotes from their works to maintain the integrity of their own words.

In his article "Traditional Knowledge and Humanities: A Perspective by a Blackfoot," Leroy Little Bear (Blackfoot) shares several examples of how Indigenous and Western worldviews differ (Little Bear 2012). There is no judgement placed on either worldview; instead, he brings attention to the need for awareness in how a person approaches a situation, topic, or task, as the *way* we approach a matter—the process—will affect the results. With that in mind, I am aware that the way I view things and approach this research project as a non-Indigenous person differs from the viewpoints of the authors cited in this thesis and the musicians' viewpoints.

I have done my best to select portions or topics from each article that pertains to Indigenous musics in general and Indigenous music education in general. I invite the authors cited in this thesis to give me further instruction if I have misunderstood or misrepresented their messages unintentionally in any way, so I may correct my understandings and my work accordingly.

Scholarship about and with Indigenous Musics

Much of the scholarship focused on Indigenous musics centres the importance of firsthand, lived experience in both learning and teaching Indigenous ways (Prest et al. 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021; Young 2024, 2023a; Bissett-Perea 2021; Derksen et al. 2021, 2019; Robinson 2020; Locke and Prentice 2016). Some of the authors argue that non-Indigenous educators and researchers cannot rightfully instruct Indigenous teachings—including all aspects of musicking¹¹—because they are not connected in the same way (as Indigenous peoples) to land, relations, and spirituality (Young 2024, 2023a; Urion 2022; Kovach 2021; Locke and Prentice 2016; Gilbert and Phillipson 2015; Wilson 2008). Some authors included here consider ways in which ownership of Songs, instruments, and stories has often been dismissed or neglected by non-Indigenous educators and researchers as unimportant or unnecessary (Young 2024, 2023a; Bissett-Perea 2021; Derksen et al. 2021, 2019; Robinson 2020; Senungetuk 2019). Further, some authors specifically challenge the dominant cultural mindset of transcribing Indigenous musics into Western notation or applying Western ways of learning to Indigenous musics, showing how these practices nullify the wholistic nature of listening, creating, and sharing Indigenous musics (Young 2024, 2023a; Bissett-Perea 2021; Robinson 2020; Knight 2015; Avery 2014). Overall, the work of these

¹¹ See Christopher Small's work *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998). He discusses the process of making musics in a broader sense than using the words, "making music", or "writing music", or "playing music" separately. Instead, he writes about how they are all incorporated together within "musicking."

Indigenous music scholars highlights the importance of Indigenous musics being learned, taught, and performed by Indigenous musicians in their own way, and in their own time. I will begin with Dylan Robinson, an author whose work is cited often in reference to Indigenous musicking.

The work of Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō) has moved to the forefront of discussions around, about, and with Indigenous musics. His book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Robinson 2020) emphasizes the importance of authenticity, respect, ownership, and care, drawing attention to the epistemological and ontological roots of, and ways to ethically learn and present, Indigenous musics. Robinson presents and engages with four key ideas in his book: 1) listening positionality, 2) music ontology, 3) refusal, and 4) the taxonomy of encounter. Robinson argues that we listen from our unique listening positionalities, and that it is the responsibility of both settler listeners and Indigenous listeners to be aware of this for them to truly hear intentions and meanings (62–73). The ontology segment that Robinson returns to often is that the origins of the musics and musicking are essential to the listening experience and that without knowing the full contexts we are listening with “tin-ears” to merely the aesthetics of the sounds instead of the sounds as “more-than-song” (44–5).

Robinson speaks to the need for respect of and with Indigenous musics—considering its power and sacred role within Indigenous communities. Not only is music for entertainment, but in the enactment of the singing, it *is in fact* history, story, law, medicine, and lineage, and not just a representation or interpretation of those things (46). He contends that non-Indigenous people—and I agree with him that this may include those who are Indigenous and were raised away from their nations like my sons—cannot fully hear those messages within the context of the connection to land and family which is essential to the positionality of hearing the messages and

understanding the meanings in full (9–11). His book also contains a section that is addressed only to those readers who are Indigenous (27–36). Robinson requests that those who are not Indigenous refrain from reading that section. This is an example of the refusal to share knowledges which are not intended for non-Indigenous people (21–25).

Throughout his book, Robinson includes critical analyses of music performances that bring Western music and Indigenous musics together. Chapter three is especially important for understanding encounters between Western and Indigenous musics and ways of thinking about musics. Specifically, he builds a taxonomy of encounter that describes four models of encounter: integration, nation-to-nation music trading and reciprocal presentation, extended musical trading that leads to integration, and coexistence that refuses integration (Robinson 2020, 122–23). Robinson uses Christos Hatzis’s composition *Viderunt Omnes* as an example of integration. Hatzis’s composition uses a recording of the Toronto Consort’s performance of Pérotin’s organum, combining it through electronic manipulation with recordings of Inuit throat games (*katajjaq*) and an Inuit Song (*pisiit*) (Robinson 2020, 128). Inuit music becomes a kind of “building block” for the composition, reflecting a postmodern practice of pastiche, essentially integrating Inuit music within western forms, rather than respecting Inuit ontologies of Song and views of ownership (Robinson 2020, 128–33). In other words, Indigenous music is “put” into Western music as an “object of aesthetic contemplation” instead of being considered as functional in the way the Indigenous creators and peoples intended (Robinson 2020, 8).

Addressing the concept of nation-to-nation music trading, Robinson describes a performance of the Vancouver-based Pacific Baroque Orchestra and the Spakwus Slolem dance group (133–6). This performance was a collaboration between the groups as equal partners that

had “sharing traditions as its aim” because both traditions of music existed at the same time, yet in different parts of the world (Robinson 2020, 134). The performance did not meld their musics but instead presented them separately within the same space.

Robinson’s description of the third model of encounter combines the two just described, beginning with sustained exchange with the intention of creating an integrated work. The example he uses is Tafelmusik’s performance of Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, adapted by Mychael Danna for early music ensemble, Chinese pipa, Indian sarangi, and Inuit throat singers (Robinson 2020, 136–43).

Rounding out the taxonomy, Robinson describes a performance, titled “Two Worlds,” by Dawn Avery, a Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) cellist. For this performance, Avery played a Bach Sarabande on cello, alongside an improvised vocal line performed by traditional Indigenous musician, Steven Alvarez (Mescalero Apache, Yaqui, Upper Tanana Athabascan). The purpose was explicitly *not* to make the piece and Song fit together (Robinson 2020, 143). Rather, as Robinson suggests, “Avery’s work does not aim to fully integrate the rough edges of difference and instead sets out a model for the listener to herself experience the push and pull of musical alterity, while foregrounding irreducible difference that enacts Indigenous sovereignty” (Robinson 2020, 143–44). In other words, it explicitly *refuses* integration—and draws attention to this refusal.

While Robinson critically analyzes many works of encounter, he also discusses the creative practice of several Indigenous musicians, including Peter Morin, who are working towards the revitalization of their cultural practices. Peter Morin (Tahltan) is known for activating his resistance, resurgence, and healing for Indigenous nations by singing with, to and

for places, people(s), and more-than-humans who have been impacted by colonial intrusions and harms. This work is described by Robinson, with more detailed analysis by Gilbert and Phillipson (2015).

In a coordinated research project and outreach to ancestors, Peter Morin made a journey to England to visit relatives who had been displaced. While there, he sang to Pocahontas at her memorial (Gilbert and Phillipson 2015, 13–14). He sang to stone both in London and elsewhere, because stone was present during historical decisions to explore and conquer; stone is present now as witness; and stone will continue to be present in the future. Therefore, his “sonic interventions” (32) are held in those stones. He shares his thinking throughout his experience and states his understanding of Indigenous worldviews on the power and sacredness of Songs, places, ancestors and story. Drawing on discussion and email correspondence with Morin, Gilbert and Phillipson explain,

for First Peoples in the Pacific Northwest region of Canada, the act of singing is ‘not solely a form of entertainment, or an aesthetic experience. Songs have the power to do things in the world.’ They ‘convey knowledge about the natural and spirit worlds, they are oral records of family and community history, and they reproach leaders for not upholding their responsibilities,’ or as modes and markers of belonging to specific places. In other cases, ‘songs are used to heal.’ As affective, and often interactive, performances, they also foster sociality in ways that help to build a distinctive indigenous public sphere (Gilbert and Phillipson 2015, 9–10).

Describing his work, scholars Gilbert and Phillipson note that “Morin envisioned these performances not as musical entertainment for audiences, but as a form of communication with historical figures, both colonial and indigenous” (Gilbert and Phillipson 2015, 10). Morin emphasized that we cannot always see the power and spirit within belongings, or places, or Songs, and Gilbert and Phillipson add that, “According to many indigenous epistemologies apparently inanimate objects are alive in some way and artworks are imbued with a spiritual

existence during their creation” (13). This understanding of power and spirit being present within belongings, places, and Songs is also recognized by the musicians in this research. My understanding of Morin, Gilbert, and Phillipson’s writings is that Morin—by his actions—demonstrates the respect, responsibility, patience, and care that must be given towards these more-than-human belongings who are kin and that musics are one way to make those connections and give that care.¹²

Dawn Avery (Kanien’kehá:ka [Mohawk]), a classical cellist, composer and full professor in ethnomusicology, wrote her dissertation focused on two questions: “*How can the topic of classical Native¹³ music best be served by using Indigenous methodologies in fieldwork, research, and representation?*” and “*What is classical Native Music and is it different from other contemporary classical music styles?*” (Avery 2014, 1, emphasis in original). Her research examines three Native composers (including herself) and their works through her own firsthand Native lens as a Kanien’kehá:ka woman, together with—not separate from—her approach to viewing and hearing music as a classical musician and ethnomusicologist. She applies Indigenous research methodologies to her work and to her sharing of the results. Avery shares that the purpose of her doing this work is to demonstrate in a tangible way that Indigenous research methodologies can be ethically and effectively used to analyse and instruct about and upon classical musical forms. She emphasizes that Indigenous musicians make Indigenous musics, and Indigenous researchers can and should engage with Indigenous research methodologies when working within ethnomusicology research. Avery leads by example, and she shares,

¹² See also the chapter in this thesis titled, “Learning and Sharings” for further details about caring for kin.

¹³ Avery uses the term Native as that is an appropriate term for Indigenous peoples where she is from.

my Indigenous research techniques have included 1) relationships that were fostered in the gathering of fieldwork with composers and their works, teachers, books and orature; 2) analysis in which I used cultural metaphor and language; 3) accountability through which I checked and rechecked facts and Indigenous knowledge; and 4) reciprocity through dissemination of this material through the distribution of copies of this dissertation, publication, website, Internet, and CD access and by giving back through a variety of projects with elders Longboat, Jock, and John in which we consciously give and take with a generosity of spirit and a commitment to cultural education (Avery 2014, 263).

Avery's explanation of what was important to her as a musician, and what was important to her as an Indigenous ethnomusicologist also aligned with the values of respect, relationality, accountability and spiritual connections which I heard about from musicians, Randy, Shirley, Spakoo-Igitstaan, Chris, Virginia, and Natasha.

While Morin and Robinson's work has focused largely on the ontology of Indigenous musics and types of encounters, and Avery's on the specific use of Indigenous research methodologies applied to musics, Heidi Senungetuk (Inupiaq) considers what can and should be considered "Indigenous musics." In her prologue to the anthology, *Music and Modernity among First Peoples of North America* (edited by Victoria Levine and Dylan Robinson), she shares her perspective, based on lived experience, as an Inupiaq musician and scholar, focusing on what she refers to as "sound quantum" within music studies—particularly within Indigenous sound studies (Senungetuk 2019, xv). Drawing on the problematic concept of blood quantum whereby settler governments make a claim on who counts as Indigenous, Senungetuk argues that there is not a certain amount of sound—or certain kind of sound—within a piece that makes it Native.¹⁴ She shares an example about how she interprets a composition written by a non-Indigenous composer through her lens as a Native musician. The *way* she thinks about the piece, approaches the piece

¹⁴ Senungetuk uses the term Native as that is appropriate for referring to an Indigenous person from Alaska where she is from.

in her practicing, the visuals she has in her mind when she plays certain passages of music, the Inupiaq language she utilizes when interpreting the dynamic markings, and the stories she shares in both written and oral formats with her audience during the performance are all ways she says she is “revealing [her] Nateness to the audience” (xv). Senungetuk also reminds readers that Indigenous peoples are always modern because “[Indigenous peoples] exist in the present while invoking past and future generations” (xiv). In a comparison of Indigenous music compositions and visual arts compositions, she points out that “Indigenous musicians employ multiple processes and technologies in their compositions, and their works are Native because the artists reflect their Indigenous worldviews” (xiv). In addition, she gives examples of Native symbols, colours, and designs found in contemporary Indigenous visual art (including the work of her father) which connect culture, stories, and sense of place while utilizing modern mediums and materials now available to artists. Senungetuk furthermore shares an interesting example about the effects of dance and musics on community. She describes how the Russian community of Chukotkan, and the Alaska community of Kotzebue, came together as musicians, dancers and artists and *communicated* via these mediums in 2013. This event reconnected the communities who had historical trade and familial relationships and has created new friendships through the sharing of cultural arts (Senungetuk 2019, xvi). Ultimately, Senungetuk argues that there is no specific sound that can be classified as Native because it is the Native person composing and performing the music that qualifies music as Native.

Lindsay Knight (Muskoday Nation, known by the stage name Eekwol) emphasizes the Indigeneity of a music genre that is perhaps outside of what is most associated with Indigenous music practices. She points to the connections between traditional Cree music and Indigenous

hip hop and describes how she uses hip hop to communicate and activate cultural reclamation. As an emcee, she has first-hand experience both creating and performing hip hop and shares its history and benefits with Indigenous youth. In her academic scholarship, Knight has written about hip hop, and specifically the role of emcee, as analogous to the Cree “town crier” prior to colonization. She writes, “Among Plains Cree, oral tradition is the foremost means of sharing knowledge and teachings... [the crier’s] way of delivering the words was in a song-like fashion, to attract an audience” (Knight 2015, n.p.). Knight argues that rap and hip hop can be an alternate avenue for ceremony and expression for urban-placed Indigenous young people who may not have easy access to land-based ceremony.

Knight also compares the drum beat of hip hop to the drum beat of Indigenous Songs and likens the language reclamation of many Indigenous rap artists (that is, rapping in their Indigenous languages) as a form of resistance and resurgence while providing space to re-form their identities. She acknowledges that mainstream media (and some rap musicians) has taken up the rap genre and twisted it “into a negative and destructive form of music related to gangs, money, drugs and misogyny” (Knight 2015, n.p.). These messages are counter-productive to the healing from intergenerational traumas—either known or unknown—by Indigenous youth accessing this mode of musicking. She concludes by recommending a greater understanding of how “Indigenous hip hop relates to worldview, resistance and decolonization [and how] recognition of intercultural adaptations of Indigenous music may be valued as integral to understanding Indigenous worldview” (n.p.). My understanding is that Knight is pointing to ways in which a music form not considered “traditional” within an Indigenous community may

nonetheless connect people with traditional worldviews and approaches to culture and musicking.

In her book *Sound Relations: Native Ways of Doing Music History in Alaska*, Jessica Bissett-Perea, a Dena'ina musician and scholar, addresses questions about what makes music Native, and how autonomy and self-determination factor in for any genre of music to be considered Native when an Indigenous person composes or performs it (2021). She uses the documentation of Western ethnomusicologists, historians of both Native¹⁵ and Western backgrounds, community stories, and public records to gather familial, photo, and manuscript proof of the development and transformation of various music styles within Alaska since before the 1800s. Although similar in some respects to the questions surrounding sound quantum, Bissett-Perea focuses on the *density* within Indigenous musics which arises from generations of knowledge keeping and sharing. She argues that when an Indigenous person creates or performs musics, it is a matter of the density within musics versus the differences within musics that demonstrates their Indigeneity (Bissett-Perea 2021, 31). She gives detailed examples of how this density comes from the generations of story, teachings, lived experiences, dreams, relationships, medicine, language, more-than-human relations, and self-determination.

Throughout her book, Bissett-Perea centres relationality and positionality within the genres of gospel, hip hop, country/western, Drum Song (which ethnomusicologists have referred to as “traditional”), and other kinds of musics performed by Alaska Natives. She emphasizes that some researchers have chronicled Alaska Natives writing or performing in some of the above-listed genres (like gospel) as being assimilation, or part of the salvation/salvage model that

¹⁵ Bissett-Perea uses the term Native as that is appropriate for referring to Indigenous peoples from Alaska where she is from.

occurred during and after missionaries converted communities (Bissett-Perea 2021, 86–91). However, those same researchers have not necessarily acknowledged free agency in the participation of Alaska Natives singing and playing and creating musics within those genres (Bissett-Perea 2021, 80). Bissett-Perea explains that while some of those musical styles would not have come into the Indigenous communities without colonization, the Alaska Natives who explored those musics both adopted and adapted them while still retaining their own culture, language, histories, and current contexts. Hence, the explanation of Indigenous density that is present within musics of any genre and any generation of performers when created or performed by an Indigenous person. The musics were transformed from the original context of “white” music (i.e., folk, gospel, country) into Native music simply by being created or performed by a Native person. Bissett-Perea gives specific examples of gospel Songs or country music Songs being transposed into something like the original but adapted—either intentionally or unintentionally—into a piece with slightly different chording patterns, or in a different key, or with new lyrics that reflected the Indigenous person’s contexts (78–81). She refers to these occurrences as examples of free-agency and self-determination (80).

The previously discussed authors have shared their views on aspects of Indigenous musics and musicking with attention to the roots of musics and purposes of specific Songs as well as to the responsibilities we have as listeners and learners to respect the spirit of Songs. Carl Union (Métis) shares how there is not—and must not be—an “either/or” mentality about whether music is to be classed as Western or Indigenous music. Indigenous composers have used both ways of musicking, and both are now legitimate aspects of Indigenous musical practice. The addition of new musics into Indigenous communities does not necessarily erase traditional

musics. Instead, as Urion points out, colonization attempted to erase and destroy these musics, but that was unsuccessful. The Elders that Urion worked with emphasized that Indigenous musicians make the musics their own—with the density of stories, traditions, and spirituality—no matter the origin. Thus, to rephrase “either/or” as Urion states, “An Indigenous outlook isn’t zero-sum” (Urion 2022, 24).

Urion shares the teachings he received from two concerned Elders who were dissatisfied with how Cree musics were being portrayed in ethnomusicology. In his article “Some Precepts Taught by Two Cree Elders and Their Implications For Talking About Music,” Urion describes how he was mentored by two Cree Elders (Elder Walter Lightening of Samson Cree First Nation, and Elder Gordon Rain of Louis Bull Tribe) who wanted to compose a response to past and current ethnomusicological research about Plains Cree singing (Urion 2022). They emphasized the need for Urion to observe music wholistically with the natural environment in real situations, while keeping “both the elders’ teaching and Western musicological traditions in mind” (Urion 2022, 23). The point of doing this over time in various venues and mediums was to better comprehend the unity that *already exists* in nature versus the viewpoint that musicking brings together the various parts of the natural world. As Urion shares, “That means, for example, that when considering such differently focused aspects of singing as embodiment, audition, acoustics, meaning, prayer, place, and so forth, even repertoire, the experiential phenomenon of the resonance among the domains is ‘feeling’” (Urion 2022, 24).

Urion points out that the physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of the musics are inseparable (when approached with the Elders’ precepts in mind) and can not be separated out from the others for examination. One of the precepts is the concept of cycles and

how life, nature—and therefore musics—are also cyclical (Urion 2022, 26–29). Once Urion recognized these cyclical patterns in the gospel music that he had previously only noticed in the drumming music, it was quite clear that the reciprocity of musics had been occurring for generations between various cultures. Urion says, “the music of the newcomers became involved [in Indigenous communities] through a process of musical reciprocity and exchange that had been going on since time immemorial” (25). The exchange of musics, stories, ceremonies, languages and more had the effect of solidifying the original traditions that each culture shared, and the creation of new forms of the musics while still referencing the original forms and building of reciprocal relationships between the groups which led to continuity rather than acculturation (25).

The Elders taught Urion that spirituality is innate, ongoing, and inseparable from the qualities identified and valued through musicological terms and techniques which have historically been studied by musicologists. The Elders and Urion insist that the quality of innate spirituality applies when making commentary about Plains Cree singing and musicking. Considering this and the complications involved in observing musicking within a research context, Urion emphasizes that “*Respect begins with the recognition of our connection with others and proceeds to the recognition of others’ autonomy in the dynamics of balance*” (Urion 2022, 31, emphasis in original). My understanding of this is that we must not only approach musics from a Western musicology perspective, but also with a wholistic view that musicking is living with and relating with those around it (both human and more-than-human). Importantly, the Elders shared that the *process* of making, learning and instructing music is essential because the purposes of music are *real* (alive). Urion closes by emphasizing the importance of music,

stating “People depended on [the Elders] for healing, and as a central part of the process of healing, they sang” (Urion 2022, 32).

An important aspect of Indigenous music research and scholarship is that artist-creators are very much involved in, engaging with, and contributing to, discussions. In 2019, a group of Indigenous classical musicians and composers came together at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity “to further discuss, collaborate, and create as a group of Indigenous musicians, vocalists, and composers working within Western art music frameworks” (Derksen et al. 2019, 69). While at their inaugural gathering, they collectively wrote and were signatories to a “Statement on Indigenous Musical Sovereignty” which included the following definition of an Indigenous work: “Simply, a work is Indigenous when it is created by an Indigenous artist, regardless of theme or topic. A story is Indigenous whether it comes from ancestral knowledge, lived experience or imagination” (Derksen et al. 2019, 69). The authors go on to share how they value collaboration with non-Indigenous professionals but insist that Indigenous stories and art be curated by the Indigenous peoples from whom those stories came to ensure the most ethical, accountable and authoritative account of those stories (Derksen et al. 2019, 69).¹⁶

Derksen et al. are professional, classically trained, Indigenous musicians who address the dishonesty of people who choose to tell or make “Indigenous inspired” works instead of leaving the telling to Indigenous artists who have lived experience with the subject material. These musicians say that Indigenous artists have the sensitivity and insight to convey the intended meanings which those without lived experiences cannot do. Their follow-up letter goes into more specifics such as noting that there is continued racism within the classical music industry. They

¹⁶ Both the 2019 and 2021 letters from the Canadian Indigenous Classical Musicians gatherings are included in their entirety as appendices to this thesis.

speaking about the ongoing occurrence of so-called “collaborators” who are non-Indigenous persons seeking and obtaining funding for artistic works which is effectively stealing from Indigenous artists. They also address how Two-Spirit, trans and queer communities are criticized for their ways of presenting themselves when performing. These observations are from lived experience of both these musicians and their peer classical Indigenous musicians (Derksen et al. 2021). Derksen et al. were not making a plea; they put forward this open letter as a standard in the arts that is expected to *be* respected with the trust that it will raise the bar within the arts, within educational institutions, within government bodies, within community service organizations, and within the world.

Derksen et al. pressed for a standard that insisted on potential collaborators being considerate, honest, humble (towards the artists), and filled with care when attempting to attend to or to address Indigenous histories, stories, arts and traumas. After the first letter was published, Derksen et al. saw a rise in potential collaborators seeking guidance from the musicians who signed the letter about how to redress acts of unethical and disrespectful treatment of Indigenous arts and the artists and how to better approach collaborations going forward (Derksen et al. 2021). These musicians continue to work together and support each other’s works and efforts to charter Indigenous-led artistic opportunities (Sparvier-Wells 2024, personal communication).

Together, this Indigenous music-centred literature highlights the importance of understanding *approaches* to musicking as foundational to understanding Indigenous musics—including what counts as Indigenous musics. In other words, the work of these scholars insists on understanding Indigenous music as more than sound and more than aesthetics. They furthermore

demonstrate the importance of understanding kinship—including more-than-human relations—in musicking, while prioritizing the lived experiences of Indigenous musicians and creatives. They also critically assess the kinds of encounters that occur when Indigenous and Western musics are brought together, including how these encounters can turn Indigenous musics into content integrated into Western structures of music, rather than respecting Indigenous musics as functional and relational.

Literature on Indigenous Musics in Education

Indigenous music is an area of growing interest within the field of music education. Scholars working in this area argue that Indigenous musics cannot and should not be contained to an isolated subject within four walls of a classroom but rather should be part of youths' entire life experience—at home, in sport, school, extracurricular activities, and community. They further argue that musics should be taught by Indigenous people with lived experience learning, teaching and performing Indigenous musics; that music teachers within schools need better preparation, authentic resources, and support along with direction from local Indigenous nations; and that Indigenous musics cannot be taught in the same way as other musics, nor should they be analyzed or broken down through musicological or theory practices like other musics (Young 2024, 2023a, 2023b; Prest et al. 2021; Williams 2019; Locke and Prentice 2016; Kennedy 2009; Hanna et al. 2009). However, the literature also demonstrates that even well-intentioned music scholars find it challenging to move beyond the expectations of Western art music centred ways of understanding and teaching music.

J. Alex. Young is a Cree composer, musician, and educator who expresses his passion for Indigenous Ways of Knowing by emphasizing the importance of respecting how firsthand lived

experiences are essential for authentic knowledge transfer and connection to land and relations. In several of his articles, he writes about the impossibility for a non-Indigenous educator to properly convey the spirituality integral to Indigenous Songs, musics, and musical instruments because that is engrained within the connection of ceremony and musical practices. He shares,

without firsthand Indigenous representation, it is difficult, if not impossible, for non-Indigenous music educators to incorporate our knowledge and practices into their classrooms without further hindering Indigenous spirituality, voices, and cultural reclamation. Thus, the Indigenization of music classrooms guided and shared by an Indigenous person protects the ceremonial practices, spirituality and wholistic worldviews of our people and songs. (Young 2024, 34)

Later in the same articles he notes, “non-Indigenous educators are therefore obligated to ask, ‘How can I incorporate Indigenous knowledge into my classes when Indigenous perceptions of self are engrained so deeply within their spirituality?’ The answer to this question may be that you cannot” (Young 2024, 36).

Young also addresses the fact that educators and scholars trained in Western musics have transcribed Indigenous Songs into Western notation to accommodate their own ways of learning and understanding music (Young 2023b, 31).¹⁷ By transcribing and learning or instructing from these transcriptions, Young argues, educators have lost the wholistic approach requisite of Indigenous Songs, instruments, and musicking and have failed to recognize that “song are passed down from generation to generation and are considered living beings with inherent spirits and hold the same ties as a familial ancestor” (2024, 34). Thus, the truths, the stories, the meanings, the histories, the spirituality, the relationality, the connection with land, and the lived experience that is within Indigenous musics is removed—even unintentionally—by neglecting to

¹⁷ Young is referring to Lynn Whidden’s book *Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music* (2007), when he is discussing how the Western music and language filter has been applied to those Songs (Young 2023b, 31).

have the teaching be done by an Indigenous person who has the ownership or rights to share those teachings.

Likewise, education scholars Terry Locke and Lauren Prentice (from New Zealand) discuss who should or could be instructing youth in musics in their article, “Facing the Indigenous ‘Other’: Culturally Responsive Research and Pedagogy in Music Education” (2016). Locke and Prentice conducted a thorough review of “61 documents, mostly articles, of which 37 were peer-reviewed, including research studies, reviews, conceptual research and narratives of practice” (2016, 139). Locke and Prentice state that their goals were 1) to investigate how to create a policy about Indigenous music education design and 2) to educate music teachers to implement Indigenous music education with the direction from Indigenous culture bearers (Locke and Prentice 2016, 139).

Locke and Prentice identify and discuss four main themes in the article, namely, “the need for a greater emphasis on more culturally nuanced music teacher education in relation to indigenous musics; the critical importance of teaching indigenous music/arts contexts; song ownership; and the need for music educators and researchers to develop a critical stance towards their subject and discipline” (Locke and Prentice 2016, 139). Locke and Prentice first discuss curriculum creation, changes, and implementation in New Zealand and Australia and go on to briefly walk through the politics of the curriculum changes to “include” Indigenous education within the mainstream school systems.

They note that in some instances the curriculum changes seem to be undertaken with a seemingly tokenistic tone (Locke and Prentice 2016, 143). They explore how the policies and the implementation have gaps of both intent and equipping educators to implement these concepts in

ethical ways. The method of *inclusion* falls short of the ideal result of learning Indigenous concepts within an Indigenous framework of learning from Indigenous educators. Locke and Prentice point out that Indigenous musics are still often treated as foreign and as cultural studies with a distinct lack of consistent consultation and direct involvement from the local Indigenous communities in the creation of curriculum or actual implementation of the programming (143).

Locke and Prentice also share the recommendations from Indigenous culture bearers about integrating musics and arts across multiple subject areas. Their writing suggests music educators and education policy designers consider how music is not an isolated concept within Indigenous communities, but instead it is used within every area of their lives. It is more culturally responsive and appropriate to have music and arts (and story) included within social studies, writing, politics, science, and the fine arts. For example, New Zealand has in recent years given academic credit to students participating in kapa haka¹⁸ (group dance) and other Māori teachings (Locke and Prentice 2016, 142–143).

Overall, Locke and Prentice emphasize the essential need for culture bearers—or Knowledge Keepers—to be present in the classrooms of both in-service teachers at the post-secondary institutions level, and in the classrooms of mainstream K–12 schools (Locke and Prentice 2016, 141–48). They also note that educators need to understand Indigenous concepts of Song ownership and the importance of respecting the use of any Indigenous music. This needs to be done by educators seeking permission from Elders or culture bearers *before* learning or teaching Indigenous musics within any contexts (Locke and Prentice 2016, 145–46).

¹⁸ As outlined on a Government of New Zealand website, “The Māori word “kapa” means to stand in a row or rank, and “haka” is a dance. The term “kapa haka” means a group or groups standing in rows to perform traditional Māori dances, accompanied by sung or chanted words. Kapa haka is a living art form” (Government of New Zealand n.d.).

In 2007, Lorna Williams, Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Education at the University of Victoria designed and facilitated a thirteen-week course where pre-service educators, in-service educators, university students, university faculty, and community members could engage with Elders about Indigenous musics. Called “Earthsongs: Indigenous Ways of Teaching and Learning,” this course was the third in a series of courses by Williams (Kennedy 2009, 170). First, I will share Mary Kennedy’s writing about her experience as a music educator and university faculty member taking this course. Then, I will share Lorna Williams’s writing about the course and her explanation of the *Earth Songs Curriculum Guide: Student’s Guide* (Hanna et al. 2009), intended for use afterwards by both the participants and future students.

Kennedy is open about being a music educator trained in Western art music, and her writing reflects the real struggle that music educators with this type of prior training experience when trying to comprehend, learn, and enact the teachings of Elders about learning musics (Kennedy 2009, 177). In what follows, I critically engage with her writing because I believe it points to how difficult it is to enact the protocols and teachings of Elders, even by those teachers who hold good intentions towards instructing Indigenous musics. As I share her writing, notice the Western art music terms that crop up to label the experiences Kennedy and her cohort have with aspects of listening and learning Indigenous musics within the course. This includes terms such as call-and-response, quarter or eighth notes, pentatonic melodies, two-part form, notate, tempo, timbres, low-pitched singing, falsetto, and tenor. These are not terms that the Indigenous music instructors used to explain their music. Another notable difference that emerges in the article is the ways the Elders sought to instruct, using Oral Tradition, and how they understood the creation and performance of musics, compared to the demonstrated reliance the course

participants had on notated and explicitly explained learning and instruction (Kennedy 2009, 176–77). When first describing the Songs she heard the Elders sing, Kennedy said,

Although Aboriginal folk resist generalizations, I observed that there are some recurring characteristics in many of the songs we sang. Call and response occurs frequently, as do the drum beats of a steady quarter or eighth note pulse, or a ‘three-beat,’ known in Western music as a quarter followed by two eighths. Pentatonic melodies are common, as is two-part form. A fondness for increasing the tempo is apparent in certain types of songs. (Kennedy 2009, 172)

Kennedy placed the music unfamiliar to her into a Western music framework of analysis. She went on to mention how she asked one of her group members, who was a music education student, to notate the fragments as an aide-memoire instead of doing it aurally as Elders expected it to be done (73).

Kennedy also described the way her and her colleagues struggled with the concept that “spirituality” was mixed in with their music learning. Some of the participants expressed to Kennedy that the protocols and ceremony went against some of their biblical beliefs. Others were uncomfortable bringing any kind of spiritual aspect of teaching into the school experience. Still some other students accepted spirituality as part of the Indigenous music learning experience, and Kennedy described one colleague’s point of view saying, “She liked the concept that singing and drumming were ‘good medicine’ and felt that ritualistic practices, like the smudge, are valuable tools for enacting beliefs” (Kennedy 2009, 174). Kennedy continued with her own views indicating that “The rituals of smudge, prayer, giving thanks for Mother Earth and all her creatures, and acknowledging the good work of the community were things that touched me. The fact that a deer gave its life for my drum made an impact. So did the thought that approaching my drumming and singing with good thoughts and feelings (*emhaka*⁷) [the Lil’wat word for feelings] was crucial to the outcome” (174). Kennedy revealed what kind of

expectations and pre-conceived notions existed among the instructors and participants for the Indigenous musics class:

As far as expectations go, Glen [an Elder] began with none. My music education colleague hoped “to gain more confidence to present First Nations music in an authentic way in the music classroom.” I [Kennedy] had a similar goal. [...]

As far as these expectations being met, views were mixed. My colleague had wished for more written information and discussion that would assist her in teaching First Nations music. She explained: “Just to try to make some generalizations about the music from a Western perspective, that’s something I’d like to be able to do. I know that’s not necessarily a good thing because you’re couching another culture’s music in Western terms.” In my conversation with Glen we talked about this very thing and his preference is to resist making generalizations. [...]

With regards to cultural learnings, informants pointed to the sense of time as we all learned to settle into the slower pace and find stillness (*kat’il’a*). It was frustrating at first. I found myself impatient when we didn’t start or end on time, a view that was shared by my colleague and one of the students. But I grew accustomed to the rhythm and found it to be a soothing antidote to the busyness and pressures of academic life. [...]

I knew that it wasn’t culturally appropriate for me to take notes, but both my colleague and I did so in order to capture the unique quotes, terms, and stories. [...]

The lack of explicit instructions caused frustration to my colleague who ended up making her drum with the rough side on the outside. She said that she “learned the correct method [through her mistake] but there was a cost to learning it that way. (Kennedy 2009, 175–76)

Kennedy was not the only one who had preconceived notions about how a music class should be run, or what the content of the class would be like. As she shared,

One music student felt that she had learned to “differentiate between the songs whereas before, [when] you hear one Native song, you think you’ve heard them all essentially.” My colleague and I held a similar view. I was appreciative of the variety of songs we heard and the variety of vocal timbres. There was a preference for low-pitched singing, but we did hear falsetto used, and one singer was definitely a tenor. [...]

All four of us [Kennedy plus the other three music faculty or education faculty members] were impacted by the approach to performing. Drum beats weren’t always together, intonation wasn’t always steady, melodies varied from strophe to strophe so that one was never quite sure of the nuances, but it didn’t seem to matter. What was important was participation, not perfection – at least not note and rhythm perfection as Westerners understand it. (Kennedy 2009, 176)

Kennedy explained the difference between the music background of the participants versus the Elder who was instructing: “All of us [Kennedy and the other forty-nine students in the class] except Glen are Western trained, and are used to relying on notation of some sort. However, the majority of the class participants were able to learn the Songs with repeated rehearsals and the aid of taped versions” (Kennedy 2009, 177). Again, the use of rehearsals, and taped versions, shows the difference in the prior Western art music-centred training these students had for learning musics, and their inability or discomfort to attempt learning the Songs *solely* by listening and memorization.

In her conclusion, Kennedy appears to place Indigenous musicking and learning musics as solely as an informal practice for enjoyment which negates the academic and intrinsic value and difficulty of learning the musics that were presented to them—along with the broader social value. Kennedy concludes,

Reflecting on the learnings of my informants, it seems clear that we were all reminded of the value of oral/rote learning and the importance of developing our aural skills. We were also reminded of the dissonance that can occur between music learning in academic settings where the emphasis is on note perfect renditions, often at the expense of enjoyment, and music making in more informal contexts, where the focus is on participation and enjoyment. (Kennedy 2009, 178)

Here it is vital to point out that the focus of Indigenous music, as described by many including Robinson, is not on participation and enjoyment as Kennedy concludes, but on function—what it does in the world (Robinson 2020, 8).

Kennedy’s shared experience written in candid detail aligns with Locke and Prentice’s findings in New Zealand as they explored the research done with music educators across Australia and New Zealand. The struggle is real—for both Indigenous musicians sharing teachings, and for educators doing their best to impart them in classrooms. The Elders and

culture bearers struggle to convey their teachings in a safe, appropriate way (with protocols and ownership of Songs being respected), and the educators struggle to unlearn—or at least temporarily set-aside—what they have been doing with their Western music instruction in order to learn a new way of approaching and being with musics and Songs. Both ways to approach music instruction and learning are valid, but they cannot be used interchangeably without compromising the integrity—and potentially the meanings—of the musics.

As mentioned earlier, Lorna Williams created the course in which Kennedy participated. Lorna Williams is an Elder from the Lil'watul Nation. Williams wrote an article describing the course where she begins by explaining her nation's words and viewpoints for "knowledge" which vary depending upon the situation. As she shares,

"zwaten," describes what a person knows, and the closest word that could be translated as "knowledge" is "emham," meaning "to be skilled at doing something or to be good at something." "A7xa7" is the state of wholistic knowing, knowing after a lifetime of training, practice, and study. Like most Indigenous languages, the Lil'wat language focuses on the process, on the action, not on the object. How do we become "emham" or "zwaten" or "a7xa7"? For each individual, it is a process from before birth and continues throughout life. (Williams 2019, 1)

When even the definition of knowledge within Indigenous learning and teaching is so nuanced and verb-oriented versus the noun version that Euro-Western educators are accustomed to, it makes sense why Kennedy and her cohort struggled so much with the ways the class flowed. Also, the guardianship and sharing of knowledge is done with accountability and intense discretion by Indigenous peoples (Kovach 2021, 99–101). As evidence of this contrast, the Oxford Dictionary defines knowledge as, "facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject" (Oxford English Dictionary 2024). Williams goes on to share that, "Indigenous knowledge is connected

to the spirit and to states of sacredness; it is both thinking and feeling, and reveals itself through physical actions. It is oral and transmitted orally” (Williams 2019, 1). When the participants in the course that Williams designed struggled to learn aurally, it demonstrated the difficulty that institutions have in recognizing and implementing teachings from Elders and Indigenous communities. Also, the University of Victoria had to consider how to compensate the instructors and define the responsibilities of the teachers, because “The Indigenous people who are experts in the knowledge that was required for the classes are not recognized as experts in the Euro-Western system’s certification process” (Williams 2019, 6). In a Euro-Western education, the content is largely in written format and conveyed by humans. Inversely, Williams states,

As Indigenous peoples, we learn from everything—all experiences teach us; plants teach us; animals teach us; water teaches us; people, no matter of what age or gender, teach us. We are always learning, feeling, thinking, and doing. We learn from what we hear, see, and feel, and we know that everything we learn must be put to use for everyone and ourselves. It must be purposeful and useful to others. Elders in a community are often called knowledge keepers. As noted above, much of our knowledge is kept and recorded in memory with the use of *stories*, *songs*, *dances* and other memory tools. (Williams 2019, 3, emphasis added)

Williams’s course included Elders from local nations near what is now called Victoria, BC.

Those Elders were Butch Dick (Lekwungen), John Elliot, Glenn Patterson, Bradley Dick, and Fabian Quocksister (Ligwilda’xw). They guided the creation of four songs during that class with the students. Those four songs were then gifted to the University of Victoria and to future educators and students for use—if those who use the songs acknowledge where, how, and who was involved in the making of those Songs whenever the Songs are learned or performed (Hanna et al. 2009).

In the same neighborhood of what is now called Vancouver Island, BC, University of Victoria faculty members, Anita Prest, J. Scott Goble, Hector Vazquez-Cordoba, and Beth

Tuinstra, share their experiences with, and research on, Indigenous music in schools. They address the benefits of Elders being in the classrooms to teach directly from their own lifetime of learning and examine how the guidelines that Williams described can and should be applied to both learning and instructing Indigenous musics with youth (Prest et al. 2021). Prest and her co-researchers have gone into eleven rural and urban areas of Vancouver Island and engaged with local Elders in conjunction with school music educators. They also reached out to in-school music teachers across the province to prepare for their project. Their goal was to converse with music teachers and culture bearers in the province who were already perceived as successful at engaging with and “embedding” Indigenous teachings within the music curriculum (Prest et al. 2021, 712). The premise was that even though BC Education had revised their policies in 2015 to begin including and implementing Indigenous teachings within classrooms teachers were often ill equipped and lacking confidence or resources to do so effectively and respectfully according to local Indigenous protocols and customs (Prest et al. 2021, 711). Prest et al. have since done follow-up studies in specific communities to gather information about how the BC Education mandate was being implemented—specifically in the music classrooms—if at all (Prest et al., 2024, 2023, 2022). This team has also conducted province wide workshops and engagement opportunities about working with Indigenous nations respectfully and with protocols when instructing Indigenous knowledges in the classrooms and has been honest about their stumbles to enact Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous methodologies of research within their projects at the outset. They adjusted their approaches to be more in line with the local nations’ protocols upon the direction of the culture bearers with whom they were in conversation (Prest et al. 2021, 715–16).

Prest et al. describe the gains that students, staff, and families—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—felt they received from the music classes being conducted with Elder-led instruction. Their main finding was that “participants reported that singing and drumming, taught orally and in tandem with related stories were the most prevalent forms of cultural practice, and that establishing relationships and following local Protocols led to greater cross-cultural understanding and respect” (Prest et al. 2021, 711). Prest et al. also highlight the local culture bearers’ recommendations to educators. The culture bearers’ recommendations include “teaching the drumming, dances, and stories traditionally associated with them and teaching them in their original languages,” and “recogniz[ing] and follow[ing] local Protocols, with [Elders’] guidance, in order to foster trust with the Indigenous students and the local Indigenous community” (Prest et al. 2021, 717).

The culture bearers further recommended that music educators seek permission to use a song and only share the associated story if granted permission by the owner or family from which the story came. Prest et al. shares,

They emphasized that each song introduced could be used only with permission from the one who ‘owns’ it, that ownership must be acknowledge whenever the song is used in a class or for other purposes. Accordingly, cultural workers sought permission from relatives to sing a song owned by that relative for a single in-class performance. Further, only if a song’s owner grants permission to do so is it appropriate to tell the story of the song, and then the story *must* be told when the song is introduced, in order that those who are present can understand the song’s context and meaning. According to some traditions, the story of some songs may be told only by one who has permission to tell it, such as the chief or a member of the family to whom the song belongs, so those individuals must then be involved. (Prest et al. 2021, 718, emphasis in original)

Elders from the nations closest to the school communities participating in the research were active in advising the authors on how to improve their relationships with local nations towards future cooperative efforts in educating the youth in music (Prest et al. 2021, 721).

Each of the authors selected for the section about music education has spoken to the benefits of authentic music instruction by Indigenous musicians and Elders who have lived experience with musics and their teachings. Each of the authors has also spoken to—or at least inferred—the harms that can be done and have been done to Songs, instruments, more-than-humans, and humans when the *approach* to instructing musics is lacking respect, permissions, or other essential protocols. There is evidence of efforts made to correct these harms, and to prevent further harms in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia as shared by these authors. However, the disparity between Western music instruction which pervades the institutionalized education systems hinders the genuine care for musics as kin in those contexts.

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGNING AND DOING

Each of the authors discussed in the previous chapter have at least alluded to, if not directly stated, the benefits of Indigenous approaches to learning and instructing musics. With respect for the musicians I have been learning from, I am doing my best to conduct this research with relationality, reciprocity, accountability, and humility. These values led me to choose Visiting Way as my primary Indigenous research methodology—with Storytelling closely intertwined.

I begin this chapter with how I met each musician, and then I introduce Indigenous scholars who write in general terms about Indigenous research methodologies and the positionality that is necessary to ethically engage with research of any kind with, by, and for (and indeed about) Indigenous peoples. The validity and effectiveness of those frameworks and the ways to recognize if someone is doing research “in a Good Way” or not, shows in the results. Kovach shares, “Indicators that this holistic epistemology is present include explicit reference to personal preparations...including motivations, purpose, inward knowing, observation, and the variety of ways that the researcher can relate her own process undertaken in the research. Another way to assess process is to look for the inclusion of story and narrative by both researcher and research participant. In an Indigenous context, story is methodologically congruent with Indigenous knowledges” (2021, 36). I will provide an overview of Indigenous research methodologies, focusing on the importance of building community, being respectful of Indigenous ways of Knowing, and benefiting the participants for the long term by building reciprocal relationships (Charles 2022; Kovach 2021, 35–39; Smith 2021; Gaudet 2019; Little Bear 2012; Wilson 2008). I will invest time and space in this thesis especially on the Visiting Way methodology (Gaudet 2019; Flaminio 2020). Indigenous methodologies are significantly

different in both intent and practice from the extractive methods that have long been a cornerstone of academic work.

Researcher Positionality with the Musicians at the Start of Research

The first musician who agreed to do this research project was Elder Randy Turning Robe. We were introduced to each other via his friend, Elder Dr. Francis First Charger (Elder in Residence at the University of Lethbridge), at the end of 2022. Randy and I spoke over the phone several times and via text before we had our first informal in-person meeting. That meeting took place at a Catholic church where he plays guitar for their service. From there, Randy invited me to bring my kids to the weekly Indigenous Drum and Dance classes at the YMCA where he volunteers his drumming and singing. We met informally several more times, spoke via text and phone, and had many brief conversations at the Indigenous Drum and Dance sessions before we recorded a visit with Randy and his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, about his music journey and about his views for youth learning musics for this project. I also recorded a follow-up visit in early 2024, so I could go over his transcript and correctly record and write down the Blackfoot words he used in our conversation.

During the summer of 2023, my younger two sons and I attended a performance of the Wild Mint Arts company. It turned out that it was Virginia's troupe. We watched and listened while she played her classical flutes, and she and her fellow artists danced several local Indigenous dances. My sons were drawn out of their seats by her music and danced along. Afterwards, when I reached out to her about this project, she invited me to come to another performance of hers to hear more of her own compositions, and some of the stories behind her music. We subsequently arranged to meet for a recorded conversation about her journey with

music, and her views about youth learning. I also recorded a follow-up conversation to discuss more specifics about her ideas for youth learning musics.

In the Fall of 2023, I spoke to Natasha, asking if she would be willing to share her experiences and viewpoints about music for this project. She agreed. We had known each other for more than five years by then, so my children and I visited Natasha and her family in her home and in the community many times before I recorded a conversation with both her and her husband, Dave. We visited over tea at her kitchen table, while Dave was doing the dishes. Their children (and dog and cat) have welcomed my children into their lives as well, for which I am grateful.

As mentioned in the prologue, I have known Chris since 2018. Chris is still a land-based Oskapawis with Miskanawah Community Services. My younger two sons often join me at the Sweat Lodge Chris cares for. Over the years, we have had many conversations about various teachings that my sons and I were learning—or need to learn—and near the end of 2023 we arranged to meet. I recorded our conversation on two separate occasions at the Sweat Lodge. Each Monday evening during 2023 and 2024—as often as possible—my youngest son and I attended the Indigenous Drum and Dance sessions which Randy had invited us to. By this time (end of 2023), I had also attended other pow wows and events at which Randy was drumming—either on my own or with my sons. Randy introduced me to his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, while we were at the Drum and Dance sessions. Spakoo-Igitstaan drums with his father at the Monday evening sessions and in multiple community events and pow wows throughout each year. Spakoo-Igitstaan and I could not speak much while at Drum and Dance because his focus needed to be on the drumming and singing for the youth. I asked him if he would join his father and me

for conversations about music learning and instructing with youth for this research project, and he agreed. I met with both Spakoo-Igitstaan and his father, Randy, at their office in the Niitoyis Family Support Society (formerly Awo Taan Society) for our recorded conversation. During our transcript review afterwards, Spakoo-Igitstaan gently corrected my thinking about and understandings of the sharings that he and his father had spoken about with me.

By Fall 2023, my sons and I had been attending Indigenous Drum and Dance almost a year, so I approached Shirley—who was the dance instructor for those sessions—to see if she would be willing to share her journey with music and youth for this research project. She gladly agreed, and we arranged to meet and record via the telephone, and then we did a follow-up recorded visit with her and her daughter, Amy, to clarify and add on to our initial conversation. Her focus was on dancing as that is her connection with music, and how she connects with youth. Her speciality of dance is a reminder of the interconnectedness of Indigenous music and dance.

Indigenous Scholars' Writings on Methodology

In “Traditional Knowledge and Humanities: A Perspective by a Blackfoot,” Blackfoot Elder, Leroy Little Bear, argues that we need to know and accept our own story before attempting to learn and understand another’s story (Little Bear 2012). I bring this topic up again here because the inherent frame of mind—or positionality—and the way we think based on our own personal story has an impact on the preparation, process, and production of results within a research journey (Wilson 2008, 12–19). To not take this into account would be irresponsible. This speaks to the responsibility I have as a researcher to be accountable to Indigenous scholars—both oral scholars and those with written works—with my research. As my participation and experiential

learning is as a non-Indigenous person, I acknowledge that my lived experience differs from those of Indigenous scholars. I make every effort in this thesis to treat the sharings here wholistically within context, and not as products, objects, or in isolation (Little Bear 2012, 520). Little Bear also speaks about knowledge in the context of Indigenous nations, a theme addressed by each of the Indigenous authors and musicians included in this thesis. He writes,

there is knowledge that the Aboriginal public knows or is expected to know. However, there is knowledge that is unique to clans, bands, societies, and individuals. Some of this knowledge is considered as belonging to the clan, band, society, or tribe but is given to individuals or groups to keep for the benefit of the tribe. The Aboriginal public is not privy to this knowledge but is kept for their benefit by “knowledge keepers.” (Little Bear 2012, 521)

Many of the themes Little Bear addresses are like those addressed by authors in the previous chapter such as the continuity of time, cycles within nature, and how time is viewed within Indigenous ways of knowing (Urion 2022). Little Bear’s writing emphasizes the importance of living in the moment and being fully present in our space. References to time, namely concepts and relationships with past, present, and future, have also been at least inferred to by every author and musician referenced in this thesis. The way time is viewed is important for music learning and instruction because so often only a certain amount of time is allotted to learning musics (like in a school music class or private music lesson). There are also expectations by parents and instructors on how much time it takes for a youth to learn a certain skill or piece of music. There are no such time limitations on learning Indigenous musics because the Indigenous musicians know that learning is a lifelong process (see appendix for transcripts of Goodman, Turning Robe, Wainwright, Hill, Sparvier-Wells, and Ahkookh’bakh’bhook’siiks).

In the previous chapter, Indigenous scholars brought up the importance of language in relation to musicking, musics, and music learning and instruction. Likewise, Little Bear says,

“Aboriginal languages are viewed as forms of spirituality” (Little Bear 2012, 525). And
“...Aboriginal languages, because of their action and process orientations, are complementary to
the participatory role of Aboriginal people in and with the natural world” (525). This carries
forward into views on knowledge as he writes,

Western knowledge operates from a linear, singular view, whereas Western knowledge
views the world from order beneath chaos, whereas Western languages are very noun
oriented, knowledge is about you (first person) in relation to everything else in a
relativistic sense. Aboriginal knowledge has a very different ‘coming to know.’ It is
holistic and cyclical; it views the world from chaos underneath order; its languages are
process and action oriented. Knowledge is about participation in and with the natural
world. (Little Bear 2012, 525)

The importance of understanding ways of learning and what is considered knowledge by
Indigenous musicians and scholars was an important foundational understanding I considered as
I pursued this research.

Shawn Wilson’s (Cree) book, *Research Is Ceremony*, outlines the transition from
thinking, preparing and doing research in a Western paradigm of research methodologies to being
centered in relationality, reciprocity, respect and responsibility to, with, and for community
before even starting any research. He writes from lived experience as an Indigenous academic
striving to complete academic research credentials within a Western tradition of academia.
Wilson shares about the people who engaged in research relationships with him, and who
became integral parts of his learning journey. He situates both his relationships with other
researchers from other countries and nations, and the teachings they and he (Wilson) bring to the
table as unique—and yet unified—in similar worldviews about relationality, cycles, land-based
ceremony, Indigenous-led teachings, and respect for Elders’ wisdom (Wilson 2008).

Specifically, Wilson outlines the following aspects of Indigenous research methodology that must be considered and present when engaging with Indigenous communities:

- **Origin of research** including the researcher's personal story and the research story which are most likely intertwined (Wilson 2008, 71–72);
- **Ontology and epistemology** which require a researcher to recognize what reality they are living in—or perceiving—from their own lived experiences within their relationships and within their value systems. This is an active process—not passive. Wilson shares, “...reality *is* relationships or sets of relationships. Thus, there is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore, reality is not an object but a process of relationships, and an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology” (Wilson 2008, 73, emphasis in original);
- **Axiology** is the set of ethics or values that a researcher brings to their research process. This is again where the accountability to “All my relations” comes in for me because even when I am on my own working through the learning and sharings, I am still present with my ancestors, aware of my larger current community, and conscious of my personal descendants. I need to conduct myself in action and in thought in a way that is worthy of their respect, and which demonstrates respect for them within my thoughts and actions. Wilson defines axiology as “built upon the concept of relational accountability” (Wilson 2008, 77);
- **Methodology** is selecting ways to express the relational accountability held between all involved with research, and within the ethics and values that uphold those

relationships with honour. Wilson specifies, “...an Indigenous methodology must be a process that adheres to relational accountability. *Respect, reciprocity and responsibility* are key features of any healthy relationship and must be included in an Indigenous methodology” (Wilson 2008, 77, emphasis added).

Essentially, Wilson brings every component of research back to relationality and accountability, to a researcher’s relationships with both humans and more-than-humans, and to the researcher’s relations from the past, present and future. In part, the responsibility for reciprocity that a researcher has is that the information gained will be of benefit to the community/ies involved with the research—and there is more to reciprocity than just disseminating results.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou) brings firsthand lived experience to her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which addresses and coaches both non-Indigenous and Indigenous researchers of various nations to pursue ethical, respectful, and reciprocal relationships when endeavoring to engage Indigenous communities within a research project (2021). She outlines examples of how an Indigenous researcher may journey towards obtaining engagement and informed consent of an Elder or group of Elders or a whole community to be involved with research, and emphasizes the patience, time, and unpredictability of pursuing those relationships (Smith 2021, 153–6).

Of particular interest to potential researchers may be her categories of twenty-five Indigenous projects and of twenty further Indigenous projects (Smith 2021, 163–214). While there are some specific examples given of how to implement these project (research) ideas, they are mostly written in active present-tense knowledge descriptors such as “Naming” (179), “Reframing” (175), “Sharing” (183), “Living in Relation” (192–93), and “Re-establishing

vibrant Indigenous food-systems” (199–200). This section enables a potential researcher to reflect on the intent and purposes of their research; consider the most respectful, kind, and community benefitting approaches for long-term relationship building; and take inventory on their own biases towards a particular method or methodology of researching. I believe that, once equipped with the scaffolded approach that Smith takes in her book regarding ethical research with, by, and for Indigenous communities, a researcher then has the potential to be aware, and more considerate, of the unspoken needs, fears, hopes and intents of both themselves, and the communities with whom they would be working with during a research project.

Smith shares examples of the ongoing struggles with education both within and outside of the public education sector in New Zealand due to colonial views of knowledge and the adverse effects it has had on Māori peoples. In all, I think her message for researchers seems to be to be aware and to be wary while they are building their intended research projects to ensure they are being constructed and approached with the sensitivity and care of a family member looking out for their kin (Smith 2021, 285–91).

Storytelling as a Research Methodology

In his article “Oral Traditions of the Woodland Cree (Nihithawak) in Northern Saskatchewan: Cultural Identity, Ways of Knowing, Language Revitalization, and Connections to the Land,” educator Blake Charles (Cree) shares that storytelling shows “how all things—animate and inanimate—are interconnected” (Charles 2022, 28). He notes that the purpose of stories is to record valuable knowledge, and the transmission of these stories is best understood within the original Cree language (versus an English translation). The knowledge is experienced in language learning, sung in a song, or other written pictographs or artistic forms. Charles speaks

from his personal lived experience on how, “the Cree People in Northern Saskatchewan have a highly developed Oral Tradition that has been a mode of transferring knowledge as part of their education system” (31).

Charles sums up by stating, “the intent [of storytelling] was for the listener to apply the knowledge contained in the stories for practical use” (Charles 2022, 31). Charles comments about the current day lack of Cree language in younger people, and that many traditional storytellers are passing on. He states that, “there is a need for balance between Oral Traditions and the written word” (Charles 2022, 35), so these teachings can be carried forward to future generations.

As Margaret Kovach (Cree-Saulteaux) explains, Indigenous philosophy “is anchored in story,” and says, “...my purpose for writing this book is best found in story” (Kovach 2021, 13). She also writes that “The Elders say that if our work comes from the heart and if it is done in a good way, it will count” (Kovach 2021, 9). That is the heart she brings to her book, *Indigenous Methodologies*. As she further explains, “This book provides a conceptual and methodological framework for implementing Indigenous methodologies and serves as an entry point for those wishing to learn about Indigenous research” (Kovach 2021, 15). Further, she notes that “the consistent message remains: Indigenous methodologies are founded upon Indigenous knowledge and are guided by Indigenous people” (16). Kovach reminds readers that research is a verb. It is a process—not a noun—and as such, the processes both inwardly within the researcher, and outwardly with partners in the research need to be assessed for their adherence to Elders’ teachings, protocols, reciprocity, responsibility and respect for community (Kovach 2021, 36).

As Kovach notes, “Story nurtures relationship. Story kindles reciprocity. Story compels responsibility. Story thrives where there is respect. Story is a gift. And in research, this changes everything” (Kovach 2021, 156). In similar fashion, Kovach shares her story of being a Cree woman in academia and the struggles she went through to research in a Cree way versus being a Cree person doing research with Western methodologies. This positionality is key and connects the author authentically to her Cree community and her Indigenous academic community. Meanwhile, she maintains connection to Western academic communities through her thorough understanding of Western research methodologies and by being able to express herself using established Western education systems and Western research terminology. She uses her strengths in both areas to demonstrate that “Indigenous epistemologies are not human centric, meaning that all species, not solely the human species, are a source of knowledge. Neither is knowledge limited solely to cognitive reasoning, though holism encompasses this source of knowing. Knowledge arises from the intellectual realm of the mind, the affective domain of the heart, the kinetic domain of the body, and the spiritual domain of the spiritual. Knowledge is cognitive, embodied, instinctual, and spiritual” (Kovach 2021, 68–69).

Kovach further explains that Indigenous scholars understand their own nation’s teachings, and the “*Integration of Indigenous Epistemology (beliefs about knowledge creation)*” (2021, 186, emphasis in original). She says Indigenous scholars understand the philosophies behind “Indigenous theorizing” which includes the laws, teachings and ethical values within an Indigenous belief system (185). This also includes an understanding of the importance of building genuine relationships as the foundations for viewing Indigenous epistemologies within relationships, and an understanding of retelling stories to represent or interpret Indigenous

methodologies (185–88). What that means to me is that I need to share in truth, listen with respect, have the wisdom to change, be okay with being “wrong” and not always doing things “right” (humility), become more receptive to the spiritual aspects of life in this world and beyond, and always strive to walk in a Good Way.

Relationality and storytelling lead directly into the Visiting Way—a methodology that I adopted for my research and that I will discuss in more detail—because both are essential to ethically and effectively engaging with people. Cindy Gaudet’s (Métis) writings have been a guide and reference to me as I have sought to *visit* with each musician versus interview them as subjects or informants. In her article, “Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way—Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology,” she shared her journey to reconnect with her community through visiting and what it meant to build those relationships (Gaudet 2019). Gaudet noted that the visits were often not according to her timeline, agenda, or priorities, yet over time the foundations of relationality, reciprocity, and accountability to community were established (Gaudet 2019, 48–50). She emphasized the need for humility, for listening—even during the silences—and to wait for the questions and meanings to come from Elders as they explained their teachings (50). Gaudet is open about her journey of learning a vocabulary to articulate the Visiting Way methodology which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars can engage with and then employ in a relational, ethical way. In the next section, I offer a more in-depth look at the Visiting Way as a methodology and how I applied this as my primary methodology within my research.

Introduction to the Visiting Way Research Methodology

The Visiting Way is an Indigenous methodology. Visiting is reciprocal. Visiting, unlike interviewing, is not interrogative and is not merely gathering data to be used later. Visiting is creating community. It is a way to create new knowledges and understandings *together*. Visiting is respectful in that there is not one participant who is above, or has more authority than, the other—although there are social hierarchies that do come into play during visits at times. In short, I believe in so many ways, that the visiting way is a kinder and humane way to do research with people. In this research project, I used the visiting way methodology to communicate with musicians about their views for Indigenous music instruction with youth. In this section, I will present academic resources and first-person examples of how visiting can be an effective and valid method of research and describe how I applied the visiting way to my research at various stages.

Indigenous communities have long used visiting to pass down knowledge from generation to generation. There is a teaching sometimes referred to by the Anishinaabe and other nations in eastern Canada as the “Seven Generations Teaching” (personal conversation with Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bakh’bhook’siiks 2024). It says it takes seven generations to heal our families and to correct negative actions (like the traumatic effects of residential schools) through deliberate, consistent efforts. We, in the present, are also living the results of the positive actions and lives of those who came before us seven generations ago. The connection I make from the sacred grandfather teachings to the Visiting Way is that the teachings of Love, Respect, Honesty, Courage/Bravery, Wisdom, Humility and Truth need to be present and encompass all work within research—especially when visiting. Since these teachings are shared by Elders, so people

can “walk in a Good Way,” it would make sense that as a person—especially while researching—we choose to live these qualities in our own lives. As with the Seven Generations teachings and others, learning musics is by *intergenerational visiting* and by living example—ideally both occurring in-person and frequently (Young 2024; Urion 2022; Bissett-Perea 2021; Robinson 2020; Williams 2019; Senungetuk 2019; and personal communications with musicians Turning Robe [2025, 2024, 2023], Ahkookh’bakh’bhook’siiks [2024], Sparvier-Wells [2025, 2024, 2023], Wainwright [2025, 2024, 2023], Goodman [2024, 2023], and Hill [2024, 2023]). Note that nowhere in those teachings, or in the use of the Visiting Way by scholars, is there a requirement to be Indigenous to live the characteristics of love, respect, honesty, courage/bravery, wisdom, humility and truth.

The Visiting Way is only one of many Indigenous methodologies. It is often used in conjunction with Storytelling, Sharing Circles, Ceremony, art, dance, music, sharing food in each other’s homes and sharing our family histories. Although it was not specifically referenced as the Visiting Way, my reading of Shawn Wilson’s work (2008), as well that of other Indigenous scholars, indicates that practices of visiting as described by Gaudet have long been integral to Indigenous research methodologies. As Gaudet notes,

The way of visiting is part of land-based societies’ way of life. It guides the way we conduct ourselves, treat one another, and learn from one another and from the land itself. For Indigenous peoples, visiting creates and fortifies connections that unify and build community from the ground up. It is how humour, silence, news, concerns, pain, knowledge, ideas, and arguments are disseminated at a grassroots/ground level. (Gaudet 2019, 53)

Therefore, in choosing how I envisioned my visits with each musician unfolding, I kept in mind that we are already connected to each other through the land, other relations, and stories.

Visiting orients researchers to reciprocal exchanges because researchers are not (supposed to be) visiting to extract information, but instead to give to each other, create knowledge together which will be disseminated within the community for everyone's use, and create stronger communities together. If there were no agenda to the visits, then visits would happen relatively smoothly. However, Gaudet mentions that sometimes, "Academic pressures come in the form of expectations to publish in prestigious journals, internalized fear of failure, and the desire to transmit knowledge that speaks to both the academy and the community" (Gaudet 2019, 58) which causes a sometimes-unspoken pressure to the progress and timelines of visits instead of leaving them to develop naturally. In response to Gaudet's experience with her "academic persona", she shares that a community member, "then...placed his hand on my shoulder, and advised me to approach everything I do with eyes of innocence, a beginner's mind, and an open heart" (Gaudet 2014, 71).

I felt this same conflict of academic pressure versus allowing visits and sharing to unfold in their own way in their own time when I needed to record the one or two visits. I made the perhaps awkward compromise whereby I recorded a visit after many other visits, so the musicians and I were more comfortable with each other. Although, I most definitely had a more specific topic of conversation focus for this research project during those recorded visits.

Reciprocity in Visiting

Reciprocity is at the heart of Visiting Way. As Gaudet points out,

building relationships requires a form of active participation that must meet Western standards of meaningful researcher-community engagement. But relationality, which is at the centre of Indigenous research, is more complex. It works in conjunction with social values, living practices, relationships, life cycles, and Indigenous self-recognition. (Gaudet 2019, 59)

In recent years, the public has heard and used words like reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonialize alongside words like compensate and reciprocate when residential school abuses became more public (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). People say that they are trying to “give back” to Indigenous communities by doing such-and-such. This does not enact the Visiting Way concept of reciprocity though. A connection I made during this research was that with Visiting Way methodology, we can reciprocate by being willing to “stand with” the person we are visiting but the reciprocity should not end in a one-time gift or action. Reciprocity is an ongoing commitment (Tallbear 2014). Gaudet and her colleagues share,

the emerging research on Métis ways of visiting speaks to its complexity—meaning that visiting, both with the land and with relatives, was also a method of survival, of dialogue and deliberation, of decision-making, of responsibility, of celebration, and of sharing and caring for our relatives. (Flaminio et al. 2020, 56)

The Visting Way is when each participant gives and receives to both humans and more-than-humans because the way which we relate to and are in relation with each other affects all aspects of life.

An associated aspect of the Visiting Way is how the participants share and create knowledge with each other during visits. Kovach summarized the qualities of knowledge under the umbrella, “*Experiential Knowledge (self in relation)*” (Kovach 2021, 187, emphasis in original). She expressed that each person comes to know from their own “personal beliefs and perspectives; lived experience and life history; voice and community participation; self in relation to kin, community, and the larger world; and self in relation to the earth, sky, water, other sentient beings, and spirit” (Kovach 2021, 187). This pertains to the Visiting Way methodology because interconnectivity and interdependency requires relationship with and between both humans and more-than-humans. This requires both knowing and acknowledging your own self in

the ways Kovach mentions above. When she speaks to recognizing self in relation to multiple sources of experiential knowledge—including more-than-human sources—this suggests that a researcher cannot create new knowledge with just one person, but instead the journey needs to include multiple people, from multiple backgrounds. Indeed, the researcher must be willing to learn from the world around them—the more-than-humans—to keep the knowledge-creation in context of what is needed for the community(ies) at that moment.

Visiting also must be flexible and adaptable to unanticipated situations such as interruptions, weather changes, going overtime, changing topics, changing viewpoints, different positionalities, and unexpected halts in conversation (Gaudet 2019, and 2014). Visiting repeatedly over time and in different spaces creates the opportunity to experience a person or community in a holistic way instead of just in parts. For instance, the spaces where the musicians and I visited varied from coffee shops, Sweat Lodges, concerts, churches, pow wows, offices, and each others' homes with our families present.

Ethical Use of the Visiting Way

As Indigenous scholars speak up about the importance of Indigenous research methodologies, there are oftentimes questions from those who are still entrenched in the Western traditions of research about how they can apply Indigenous methodologies to obtain the information they want from Indigenous communities (Kovach 2021, 89–90, 106–107, 120–35; Smith 2021, 134–37). As Flaminio et al. explain, visiting must be done from an Indigenous ethic, where “research responsibilities of ‘relationality’ and ‘relational accountability’” are prioritized (Flaminio et al. 2020, 57). Flaminio also notes that “an Indigenous ‘kinship-visiting’ methodology, based on *whakotowin* and *kiyokewin*, is a relationship-based and community-engaged process that is

deliberative and can be distilled as a process of meeting together over tea, listening to, and talking with, one another, and understanding each other's point of view" (Flaminio et al. 2020, 58).¹⁹

Visiting Way as an Indigenous methodology is a valid, effective way to conduct research with humans in a way that is mutually beneficial over the long term. There is minimal harm that can be done to the participants in the visiting, provided genuine consideration for the other is being enacted by each person involved. As a researcher, Visiting Way methodology is a way to conduct research in an ethical, reciprocal, and relational way.

Method(ology): A Narrative

Here, I provide a narrative overview of my research journey and how I engaged the Visiting Way methodology throughout. In this section, I will share what I did before visits, during and after the recorded visit, and after regular visits, as well as prior to submitting this thesis. I kept a research journal as an informal record, in point form, of conversations with the musicians; thoughts and new understandings I had because of those conversations; and many, many 'to-do' lists. It is only one part of my research journey—a journey that also included initiating relationships; writing thesis and ethics proposals; communicating with authority bodies (i.e., ethics committees, and my supervisory committee); journalling knowledge gains; setting up and engaging in meetings; accurately recording information; following up consistently and compassionately; writing academically and in communication with musicians; editing; seeking advice; keeping confidentiality; and most importantly, seeking and following counsel from local Elders to do this research in a respectful, relational, and ethical way. Visits happened between me and each

¹⁹ Note that the spelling differs between nations, and Gaudet spells kiyokewin as *keeoukaywin* (emphasis mine). Gaudet's spelling is used in the methodology and methods section of my thesis (Chapter Three: Designing and Doing).

musician, and each musician has Elders they seek counsel from, and each has family and adopted family and a professional community with which they are involved. Each musician also has their own relationships with Creator and their ancestors and the more-than-humans in their lives. Therefore, our visits effectively included all those communities as well. The new knowledges created together need to be shared with each of those communities in the ways each of the musicians and the Elders they counsel with agree upon.

Before beginning my application to the Master of Arts program, I sought out advice from Elders John Louie (Tla'amin), and Patrick and Patricia Daigneault (Cree-Métis), about both the content and my heart behind my researching Indigenous Ways of learning and teaching music to youth within Central Alberta. After some conversation, and prayer, they approved of my ideas and of my heart. To me, this was the most important step of the whole process.

I wanted to do this research in a Good Way and did not want to rely on either my or others' preconceived notions but instead trust that the sharing with each musician would lead to the needed learning for this project. Also, as much as I had an idea of which musicians I could approach to do this project with, I needed to ask the Grandfathers and Grandmothers to open or close the doors and trust that it would happen as it was meant to happen. Therefore, I brought cloth and Tobacco to Sweat Lodge to put down offerings for prayers that I would do this research in a Good Way—ethically, with patience, with discernment, with the people who were meant to be involved—and that I would honour the sharing by not interfering with it by putting my own limited understandings on top of it. I share this point to emphasize that if I planned to be researching within Indigenous communities, and engaging with Indigenous methodologies, it is my belief that I need to honour the Grandfathers and Grandmothers by seeking their guidance. I

also sought advice from Elder Francis First Charger and from Chris Wainwright about what would be appropriate gratitude offerings to come with for my visits with each musician. Each said to ask the musician ahead of time what they would like, and then do that. Each musician stated they appreciated my asking them what they would accept and then bringing the gifts—or no gift—as per their request.

Thankfully, the musicians I had approached in 2022 and 2023 were willing to be patient while I did the necessary ethics approvals before beginning our official on-record visits about their experiences and views on learning musics and instructing musics with youth. By this time, there were six musicians who had agreed to visit with me about their own experiences with musics and about their views on how music instruction should or could be done with youth: Chris Wainwright, Natasha Goodman, Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells, Elder Shirley Hill, Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bahk’bhook’siiks, and Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe. Three of these musicians are Cree and three are Blackfoot; one is a male Elder, and one is a female Elder.

As described earlier in this chapter, relationships are extremely important within Indigenous communities. Because I was meeting a few of the musicians for the first time—and meeting them in a research context—we began with some vital non-research time together in a variety of contexts to come to know each other prior to our recorded visit about music. I will share more about this in Chapter Four under the heading, “Relationality.” However, for the purpose of explaining how I applied the Visiting Way methodology to our visits, I will share a general outline of my approach and some examples of what happened before, during, and after our visits. This outline will show how each person’s relationships with the people in their own

lives differs in context, closeness, affection, directness of speech, atmosphere of the visits, language, humour, and more. The intent of sharing this outline and examples of our visits is to clarify, and to be transparent about, my own experience and application of Visiting Way as the musicians and I got to know each other before, during and after the recorded visit. The personal and reciprocal nature of these visits means that I will not be going into detail about specific stories, medicines, or family matters that we discussed. My discretion in this is an important part of building and maintaining trust, and I believe that, even in keeping some details vague, this section will impart some qualities essential to engaging with the Visiting Way methodology.

Before the Recorded Visit

Each musician has a different background, and therefore, the beginnings of our conversations differed. As mentioned, I had known Chris for several years before approaching him about this research project, Natasha is a personal friend of many years, Virginia is a performer whom I first came across when I brought my younger two sons to her Wild Mint Arts performance, and Randy Turning Robe was referred to me by Francis First Charger because they are close friends. Randy and his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, lead the drumming for the Drum and Dance program at the YMCA in Calgary, and that is where I began taking my youngest son to the drum and dance program. Finally, it is there where I met Shirley Hill who was leading the dance instruction at the time.

The beginnings of our interactions with each other differed, as did our ongoing interactions. I continued to visit with Chris during Sweat Lodges, and I visited with Natasha and her family by bringing my kids to their home for food and fun together. Virginia hosted various performances that I attended to show support for her endeavors, and we also visited outside of

these performances. In addition to inviting me to the Drum and Dance group, Randy invited me to his church where we had visits after the service while tidying the church together. I assisted Spakoo-Igitstaan with his and his family's various musical activities when I was able. And, finally, Shirley invited me to her family's home so we could continue our visit outside of the Drum and Dance evenings. Doing activities together directly contributed to getting to know each other better and indirectly contributed to the greater ease needed to have the recorded conversation about music and Indigenous music instruction with youth.

During Our Regular Visits

Our visits together were in many ways like typical visits between friends or family. My description here may at times seem rather odd because it may seem to state the obvious. However, to ensure transparency, I will describe what happened during our visits together, including elements that might seem obvious. Depending upon the closeness of the relationship between myself and the musician, we began our early unrecorded visits by greeting each other with a gentle handshake and perhaps a hug. The first thing we would inquire about was the well-being of each other's family, and the other's personal well-being. This took some time and a lot of listening, sometimes tears, sometimes laughter, and sometimes shared silences.

As the months went by, this sharing became more in depth and more specific about family and self. We demonstrated care for each other by following up on topics and activities that we discussed previously. In between in-person visits, we touched base via text or phone to see how the other was doing. Again, each text and each phone conversation started by enquiring about each other's family and the other's well-being. Some of us had more full schedules than others and the time lapse in-between these connections varied, but it was like no time had passed

when we would reconnect again. Starting each conversation with gentle inquiries about family was not always easy for me when I was in task-mode. I was gently corrected by these musicians to slow down and attend to what was important—family—first before bringing up other questions or topics.

Almost every visit I have had with each of these musicians has had others (kids, adults, animal-friends, and more-than-humans) around and we engaged with those others during our visits. The setting for our conversations did not matter—whether it was a coffee shop, outdoors while going for a walk, preparing for Lodge, in someone’s home or church, or at a public performance venue. No matter the location, there was always the honest sharing of what was really going on in our lives, and the genuinely attentive listening of the other as is evidenced by our mutual recalling of past conversations to see how things have developed or changed since our last visit.

Beyond merely sharing what was happening in our lives, each of the musicians at times called me higher in my character, in my decisions, in my spiritual walk, in my parenting, in my physical well-being, and more. Their willingness to speak the truth to me about what they see in me and my kids has made practical differences in how healthy I am as a person, how I parent, and the increased level of calm and fun in our home. I am grateful for their care. It took me a while to reciprocate those questions with confidence and specificity due to my own upbringing of being told to not make unsolicited suggestions to others and due to my own trauma of being shut down when I spoke up. These parts of our visits are when tougher subjects were listened to, attended to, and plans of action were discussed, often peppered with humour and with reciprocal sharing about similar times in those same areas of their lives. These times of sharing were

invaluable, and not only brought us closer, but also led us to be better able to understand each other as complete human beings. Due to the nature of those conversations, they are not included in this thesis.

Invariably, we would ask each other about our plans for the coming days and weeks. Depending on schedules and locations, often each of us would offer assistance or support of some kind to the other for the coming activity or endeavor. If we could not be there in person, we would often offer prayers for the other, so they would know they were in our hearts. Sometimes, we would refer each other to others who could help in an area of our lives or refer each other to books to increase our understanding in an area of our lives.

Every visit with each musician included some form of food, drink, medicine, or all three. This sharing could be seen as customary good manners, habit, or as ritual, as many of my friends share food and drink when we visit. However, my visits with these Indigenous musicians also included medicine in the form of the words spoken and the silences shared; in the form of the Ceremony we were involved in; in the form of teachings shared; in the form of Smudge or medicine tea; in the form of prayer; in the form of drumming; in the form of dancing; and in forms that I do not know about. Each visit was—and is—refreshing, rejuvenating, renewing, reciprocal, relaxing, engaging, and present-focused.

By present focused I mean that the emphasis was on being grounded in the present, being grateful for the present moment, and not allowing past or future thoughts, worries, hopes or emotions to overtake the present moment. This was something I struggled with, and I was repeatedly brought back to the present by some of the musicians during our visits. The importance of being fully present and engaged in the present moment was a common theme with

each musician. In their own ways, they shared with me that we are powerless to change the past or control the future—all we can do is learn from the past (*not dwell on it*) so that we live our best present as possible which will in turn positively affect our futures.

Over time, I grew to recognize that the musicians were often sharing a story of their own life, or of someone they knew, that was intended to assist my perspective with something I was personally dealing with or thinking about. For example, one of my sons was struggling with being honest, and Chris shared a story about his own childhood that struck a chord about possible reasons why my son might have been struggling. I did not instantly see the connection during that conversation; it was only on reflection on his story that I began to realize why he had shared, and I thanked him for nudging me towards a more compassionate response. Similarly, Randy shared stories about how certain ceremonies, dances or locations where people are living now came to be and gave me the gift of greater understanding of the inter-relationality there is between the Sioux, the Blackfoot and the Cree in the regions now known as Alberta. Stories with intentional meaning versus for entertainment were part of my visits with each musician. Sometimes they would ask me what I saw in their story, and sometimes they would just leave the story hanging in the air for me to reflect on—often with a mischievous smile on their face! We usually concluded our visits with a gentle handshake or hug and a reiteration of our commitment to assist or pray for upcoming family matters or to assist in upcoming activities. Very often, later that day—or within a couple days after our visits—we would exchange a text or phone conversation to first thank the other for our visit, and then to ask about how things went with the other's family or activities since we visited. During that follow-up conversation, more

suggestions or support were sometimes offered, and sometimes only well-wishes were exchanged before finishing the conversation.

During Our Recorded Visits and Review of Visit Transcriptions

Each of the musicians was willing to meet with me about their musical journey and about their views for youth learning musics. I shared with them that I would be writing out the transcript of our visit(s) and we would go over them together to ensure that only what they wanted to be shared would be included in the research. I made it clear that I would do their requested edits, and they would be able to read the final draft again. Even with that willingness to meet about those topics, numerous informal visits happened where we got to know each other before I requested an opportunity to specifically sit down together to record a visit about music and Indigenous ways of music learning. Depending on the personality of the musician or the time constraints we had for our recorded visit or other distractions around us during the visit, we would either start our recorded visit immediately or start after small talk about our families and our personal well-being.

Even though the musicians knew that I needed to record the visit for research, I still asked permission to turn on the recorder. Once they agreed, we began with a visit more focused on their personal life-long experiences with musicking and how they would ideally like youth to learn and to be instructed in music going forward. There were some distinct differences in the recorded visits versus our other visits. First, we both knew that, in general, we would be more focused on the topic of musics and musicking than other topics. Second, we both knew that the conversation would be shorter than our regular visits as I had specifically asked for maximum of one hour of their time. And finally, we understood that some topics might arise that would need

to be deleted from the transcription of the visit due to its personal or sacred nature. The prior visits had built trust that I would respect their wishes about protecting those subjects.

I am aware that sharing personal experiences and teachings requires reflection and often prayer, and to be considerate of this need, I let each musician know ahead of time the main questions that I would be asking—namely, asking them about their own musical journey and how they came to learn musics, and what they believed ideally should or could be done to instruct youth in musics. Two musicians expressed gratitude for that reflection time because it was not something they had specifically thought about in a way they could describe to someone else. Still others did not think their experiences were musical enough to count for this research project, and I reassured them that their experiences were valid and worth sharing because everyone has differing experiences with music and how they would like to see youth learn music. Although the transcripts do not demonstrate as well as I would like the nuances of our visits—the pauses, the raised eyebrows, the hesitations, the laughter, the discomfort at times—each musician shared what they felt able to at that time. When we went over the transcriptions of the visit later, there was the opportunity for them to clarify, request deletion, or nod and agree with what we had chatted about during that recorded visit.

Something that came up with each musician was the hesitation or stiffness that occurred when I inadvertently asked a question that was too specific about ceremony surrounding their musicking, how they created musics, or the instruments involved in musicking. When I noticed the body language and voice-tone change, I responded differently each time. One time, I stopped the recording quickly after this happened and apologized for asking that question—that visit continued un-recorded about musicking in general. Another time, a personal story was shared

that the musician wanted deleted as soon as they shared it—so I asked if they wanted me to stop recording now and they asked me to just delete it afterwards, but they were okay to continue recording. With other musicians, they shared some examples with me that were recorded, but once they had reflected upon the transcripts, they requested that those examples be removed to protect the sacred content and to err on the side of safety to not share too much about certain aspects of musicking or the persons mentioned during the visit.

Within weeks of our recorded visit, I returned printed-out transcriptions of our visit to each musician so we could review what we had discussed in our visit. We verbally discussed the needed clarifications, deletions, or minor edits and wrote them in. With a few musicians, the changes or clarifications were greater than my memory could accurately retain, so I asked if we could record our reviewing conversation to fulfill their requests accurately. They agreed, and I recorded our conversation on my phone as we went through the transcriptions. For example, Randy asked me to record our review so that I could better hear the pronunciation of the Blackfoot words he was using. Each musician retained their printed copy of the transcription to refer to and reflect on if they wanted to change, expand upon, or delete any of the content. Reviewing the visits led me to see some common threads of conversation that most musicians spoke about.

I found the conversations we had while we went over the transcripts held even more meaning than the original visits because the musicians would usually go into more depth about what they meant by a phrase, or why they wanted something deleted, or add details that had not been discussed in our original recorded visit. Sometimes those additional details were added to become part of our research visit, but for the most part those additional details were left out. I am

extremely grateful for the graciousness each musician demonstrated as I fumbled many times with my understandings and with my questions about what they shared. Each musician was asked to review this thesis as a whole draft to ensure that what they shared with me during those recorded visits was accurately expressed within the context of this paper. Their edits and requests are reflected in the final version of the thesis.

After Our Recorded Visits

Since the recorded visits took place, many of the musicians and I have continued to visit on a regular basis. We are now connected in a new way. In addition to our usual topics of conversation, each musician asks me about my progress with this thesis, and in turn, I ask them about the current or upcoming music projects about which we have conversed. We continue to visit and be involved in each other's lives when we are able or as is appropriate. I do my best to attend the musicians' various events. A few of them have been in my home with my children and me, and my children and I have visited most of them in their homes. For those musicians I recently met, I am grateful that during this almost three-year research journey, we can now call each other friends; for those musicians with whom I was already acquainted, I appreciate the greater depth our friendship has grown into, and I look forward to spending time with each musician and with our families, enjoying music together—visiting together.

Before Thesis Defence

Each musician was given a copy of the final draft of the entire thesis to review for accuracy of the words and intents of their visits with me, and how those sharings are reflected in the thesis. This review by the musicians was especially important for “Chapter Four: Learning and Sharings” because it shares more details of their visits, and I wanted to ensure the meanings, and

the intents, and the spirit of their sharings were written here in a way that honours them and accurately reflects their experiences.

Reflections on the Visiting Way Methodology

Upon reflection, and with reference to Gaudet's writings on the Visiting Way, the aspects of the Visiting Way that were most present during this research project and particularly during the visits were, and are, *wahkohotowin*, *milo pimatisiwin*, and *keeoukaywin*. Wahkohotowin is a Cree word that repeatedly came up in the writings on Visiting Way. Gaudet defines it as "shared responsibility to kinship relations, both human and non-human" (Gaudet 2019, 48). I believe this was demonstrated during this research—and continues to be—when we asked each other about our and our family's well-being, when we offered assistance or asked assistance of each other for aspects of our own or of our family's lives, when we gave assistance to each other, and when we respected the more-than-humans and their dwelling places when we visited.

Milo pimatisiwin means living a good life in Cree and is directly linked to a people's connection to the land (Gaudet 2019, 49). Gaudet shares that when she visited a knowledge keeper, "he explained that this included sharing emotion, knowledge, ideas, and food from the land. It was important for him to respect the visitor, and for the visitor to reciprocate, in this space of sharing and being together. He taught his view of relationality as participating in one another's lives and well-being" (50). These qualities were evident when the musicians and I visited together through the questions and responses we gave to each other, and when we prayed either separately or together before our visits. It also was demonstrated when neither of us used our phone for personal communications during our visits but instead were completely present in our conversations.

Something that is harder to explain in words but was also definitely present in our visits was the presence of our ancestors watching over our conversations and our hearts as we shared. During some of the visits, there was Smudge lit, and sometimes other ceremonies happening around us that were either initiated by us, or by the unseen. I choose to believe that in some way I have been part of each musicians' well-being, but I can say for certain that each of them has a tremendous and positive impact on my own personal well-being in all areas of my life—physical, spiritual, family, and social—and I am extremely grateful for their care and continued involvement in my life.

Keeoukaywin, as explained by Gaudet, “provides a living practice that involves respect for the past and present, and a means of its own continuation into the future” (Gaudet 2019, 57). Gaudet attempts to explain the fullness of keeoukaywin by sharing the difference between “building relationships” and “relationality” in the affects it has on a person (59). To summarize, “Keeoukaywin assures that knowledge, teachings, dreams, and stories are mobilized through social and political relations, social values, life cycles, and language; it is therefore a living, creative, and holistic practice” (Gaudet 2019, 60). Throughout this research, and going forward, I believe that the mutual sharings between the musicians and myself have honoured—and will continue to honour—this way of knowing, being, and doing.

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CHAPTER FOUR: LEARNING AND SHARINGS

This findings chapter is titled “Learning and Sharings” because it is an ongoing process, and the findings are not “finished.” The lives of these musicians are ongoing. The understandings I am gaining from their sharings (since often one idea was shared multiple times or over several visits) have developed in layers over time. One knowledge keeper said to me years ago that I can only say “I understand” once I have put knowledge into practice—otherwise it is just knowledge—and not a complete understanding. Thus, I present here my learning because it is in-progress, as I continue to gain new insight and more nuanced understandings, and the musicians are still sharing teachings with me and with others.

I shared in Chapter Three how I came to know each musician. Now, I mention the relationality of the musicians with each other and a bit more about the upbringing of each musician, the generations of drummers and relationships between Cree and Blackfoot nations, relationality to their worlds, accountability to all kin, and challenges that arise within the musicians’ journeys. As the musicians shared with me, music teaching and learning should centre respectful, reciprocal, and accountable relationships, as well as accessible opportunities for creative, lifelong exploration of musics. They also emphasized the importance of gratitude. Notably, while excellence was valued, this excellence was not centred on so-called “mastery” of an instrument, but rather on respect of self and of others—including humans and more-than-humans—and how a person can express respect and gratitude through and with musics.

Relationality Of Musicians With Each Other

Conversations with each musician led me to realize that they had prior and current connections with each other. This is important to note because, although I had separate connections with each

musician, their interconnectedness with each other predated their common involvement with my research. Their relationships with each other, and their connections through kin and community, are evidence of how strong the ties of learning and passing on teachings are within community. Each musician shared something specific that they admired or had learned from one of the other musicians. Specific examples of this interconnectedness are how Randy shared that Shirley is actually his first cousin; Shirley has also been a mentor to Virginia in dancing and regalia-making; Virginia is a dancer at pow wows, and often those same pow wows are where Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan drum, and where Shirley also dances; Spakoo-Igitstaan is Randy's son; Chris and Natasha know each other from working together at Miskanawah Community Services; Chris knows Shirley from her dancing at local events that he has also attended or helped to organize over the years; and Natasha knows of the other musicians through her own connections within both the Cree and Blackfoot communities. These connections and interactions with each other have been going on for years.

How This Chapter Is Written and How To Read It

This chapter is written in a narrative style. As mentioned in the prologue and introduction, as much as possible, I aim to have each musician's messages be in their own words instead of summarizing them in my own words. To accomplish this, I have included full transcripts of our visits as five separate appendices at the end of this thesis which I reference throughout the chapter. For the most part, the questions I asked, or the dialogue I contributed to the conversation has been removed from the transcripts. If needed, I have added context for the musicians' response to my dialogue by adding my dialogue in brief. At times, the transcripts may seem disjointed as the subjects change suddenly. This is due to some sections of our visits being

deleted from the transcript at the musicians' requests. I will reference these transcripts throughout the chapter, including occasionally quoting them.

Due to the nature of an academic paper, the quotes and referenced sections will sometimes be short, sometimes overlap, and sometimes be included in more than one section of the chapter if that same quote or reference is applicable in multiple subject areas. This repetitive and overlapping of sharing is not out of character for storytelling within Indigenous methodology. In my own experience, an Elder will share a phrase one time, then another time will share that same phrase with some background explanation, and yet another time within the context of a much more complete story which leads the listener to ask more questions and to reflect on the meaning of the story. In this paper, a similar effect happens because a single sentence cannot—and should not—be taken out of context.

In each part of this chapter there will be an introduction of the topic brought up by the musicians. Below the introduction, there will be a further explanation of the topic, often with quotes from the visits, and a list of numbers. These numbers refer to the full transcripts of the recorded visits with each musician. The transcripts have been numbered by sentence. Each musician has been assigned their own number series, and for ease of searching for the corresponding transcript, I will include the first name of each musician in front of their number series. By referencing the appendices beneath each section of the chapter, I aim to increase transparency, context, and repetitive reading of the transcripts for the reader to gain understandings directly from the musicians' sharings. However, I trust that through their sharings here in this thesis (see the full transcripts of our visits in the appendix), the meanings of their words will also have significant impact and benefit to those who choose to attend to their words.

The summaries of the quotes and of the visits are from my own perspective. Some topics covered in our recorded visits may not seem to be directly related to music, so I will preface those sections with the reasons they are included. Although I did an extensive amount of reading and research prior to these visits, these visits with the musicians *are* the research for this thesis. Our visits then clarified the meanings within prior reading I had done in the subject area of Indigenous musics, and of youth learning musics, with more depth of understanding, and more insight into the answer to my thesis question: *How do Indigenous musicians ideally want to see youth learn musics going forward? And how would these musicians ideally want to see musics instructed?*

Not every visit went in chronological order of the musician's life because it is human to bounce from thought to thought and from memory to memory. In the transcriptions, I have adjusted wording by adding square brackets [] when an extra word, or a change of word aided the flow, or eliminated superfluous words. Square brackets were also used to describe body language when that was used instead of a phrase, or when clarifying what the speaker was referring to. *Italicized words mean that the speaker emphasized those words when they were speaking.* An important reminder that the Blackfoot language spellings found in the transcripts, and the meanings in brackets after a Blackfoot word, are directly from Elder Randy Turning Robe. He wrote them down along with their definitions when we went through the transcript of our recorded visit together. Here is the list of musicians and their allotted number series:

Elder Shirley Hill:	1.1–1.278
Chris Wainwright:	2.1–2.150
Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells:	3.1–3.377
Natasha Goodman:	4.1–4.190

Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh'bahk'bhook'siiks: 5.1–5.564

Elder Randy Turning Robe: 5.1–5.564

This chapter can be read in a variety of ways. However, I suggest the following approach:

- Read one section of this chapter (indicated by bold headings),
- Read the names and number series underneath that section,
- Go to the appendix,
- Select each referenced musician's transcript,
- Find the portion of the number series that corresponds to the numbers referenced under the section just read,
- Optimally, read a bit before and a bit after the referenced number series to understand the context of the selected quotes, and
- Return to this chapter to continue to read where you left off.

This method will result in multiple readings of each musician's sharings and to multiple readings of certain portions of each musician's sharings. I have included this repetition intentionally.

Most of the time the tone of the sharing from the musicians was reflective, and the speed of the conversation was slow and thoughtful—even cautious at times. There were often pauses between each sentence as they remembered, or as they selected their words, although I have not written 'paused' between every sentence. While reading their words, picture the musicians leaning back against their chair while speaking. They are often closing their eyes, often nodding to themselves, often smiling, or their eyes tearing up at a memory, often sadly shaking their head when they recount the deceit, jealousy, pride, elitism, and disrespect shown to Songs, singers, drummers, dancers, drums and rattles, and regalia, and many times raising their eyebrows and arms in excitement about what they are sharing. They are careful not to share knowledge that they do not have the rights to share. Often, as Elders have explained to me, teachings require a person to seek guidance from their local Elders, knowledge keepers, drum keepers, Song

keepers, and those with the gift of composition for further understanding. I begin the review of the musicians' sharings with discussion of the musicians' early years. The chapter then turns to kinship, relationality, and accountability, and then shares the challenges the musicians have encountered on their musical journeys. I end this chapter with their perspective on *approach of excellence* to learning and instructing musics.

Family and Musical Upbringing

While individuals can choose their own paths upon adulthood, the foundation that a family provides can and often does affect those paths chosen. For this thesis, the role adults played in the lives of these musicians to encourage, model, or provide learning opportunities for musics is relevant. Each musician shared the importance of hands-on learning—experiential learning—while they were younger, and how that shaped their adult choices to pursue the kinds of musics they engage with. Each musician also emphasized that the level of creative freedom and choice of musics they had directly affected how they currently approach both learning and instructing youth in musics.

I start with the musicians' upbringing and how music was included and potentially set the stage for what comes next in their musical journeys. There were many variations in the musicians' experiences. Their experiences cover classically trained music lessons, generational drummers, listening to contemporary music of their own generation and of their parents' generation, watching and participating in pow wow and ceremonial musicking, school music programs, and an introduction to dancing with musics. When the parents, guardians, or significant adults of these musicians were engaged with musics in the form of listening to

musics, playing instruments, singing, or observing others performing musics or *with* musics (like dancing), the musicians—as children—were more able and inclined to also engage with musics.

Secondly, when the musicians, as children, received music instruction—whether it took place in the form of school or private music lessons, or from significant adults in their lives instructing them—the musicians continue to engage or return to engage with making music as adults. Additionally, when the musicians, as children, were either given, or *not given*, the choice to be creative with their musics, the musicians—as adults—showed the results of that level of creative freedom they were permitted in their youth by how they approach their current personal involvement with musics, and how they approach instructing youth in musics.

The role adults play in a child’s life to influence their interests—in this case, music—is evident from the sharings of each musician. Some of the adults in the musicians’ lives were already listening to music or singing along with music which led to the children being passively introduced to music of various kinds. Deliberate exposure to music is when the adults in the musicians’ lives registered them (as children) into music lessons. As Virginia shared:

I started with piano. [I] hated piano! That instrument was *not* my friend. I started [music] in grade three or four because I was playing flute by grade five. I mean, the piano teacher was great. She was amazing. It was me, not them [Virginia laughs]. Now, I have two pianos at home! [Virginia laughs]. Anyways, that aside. I started out with [piano], and I started playing flute [in] grade five, grade six, then band [in grade] seven through twelve.

Another deliberate choice is when older students and their families select either band class or general music class at school. Natasha shared about her own school music class experience and contrasted that with her daughter’s experience:

Natasha: I was never privileged enough to play music [growing up]. That was *not* part of the budget. Music also helps with your cognitive learning. It makes your brain grow.

Dave (Natasha's husband): I listen to tonnes of music—huge playlist! I wasn't a very musical kid. I didn't even consider going into band.

Natasha: It was a choice—either music or band.

Natasha shared about her daughter's band experience:

Playing in a band *and* keeping tune with everyone around you is hard work. To play in a band is a *skill*. The breathing, the counting—I remember with Kiera's first concert. [Natasha laughs] Cute! Super, super cute! Were they really good? No! But that was the same with Stratton's very first concert [referring to her son]. But by the time they were in grade ten [or] eleven, they were amazing! I should have paid to be there! It was *so* good! Kiera *practices*.

Some of the musicians were able to join in with their family to learn music because their family included them as children within drumming circles to watch, listen, and learn to drum. Spakoo-Igitstaan shared, "I guess I was basically thrown into the lions, sitting with my dad, and my grandpa and my uncles. I just wanted to be like them. They were really good singers, [and] Song makers, and that is how we stay connected to our culture. The Blackfoot Ways of Knowing."

Likewise, the adults in Shirley's life when she was a youth influenced her to develop an interest to attend pow wow, *hear* the drumming and singing, learn to dance, and then to participate in pow wow dancing. Randy shared respectfully about Shirley's father:

So, we are related in some way to Shirley's mom, grandfather, and stuff like that. But, she was raised white. Her father is German—Curt Hill. And he Chicken Dances. He's right into the Blackfoot ways. He's a real good dancer. Elder Ska-plug showed him. He's one of the last ones. He's old now. He's probably ninety now. He is German. He's not even Blackfoot, so you don't need to be Blackfoot [to learn Blackfoot ways].

And Shirley shared how she now has the urge to pass on her knowledge to youth:

I feel like I have a lot of important messages to share with the young Indigenous children in need of Native wisdom. You know, I can tell the Indigenous children, "You have an Indian name, what is your background?" And when the Indigenous children are a little older, they know what their Indian name is, and they are proud of who they are. You can't, [Shirley pauses] non-Native children wouldn't have a [Native name]. I mean, some might—have a name given to them—but the Indian name is one of *the most*

important parts of knowing who you are as niitiispii [Blackfoot word for human being] because it sets you on a path, and it is *related* to your *background*, and your *family*, and your *ties with the Nation* and things like that. Yeah—I feel like I have a lot of [wisdom to share with children].

Each musician shared that music was present in multiple areas of their lives. They share about hearing music in the kitchen while cooking, hearing music in the house while cleaning, hearing music in the car while driving to work or to family vacations, hearing music in the community at events, and hearing music at pow wows. Like linguistic languages, which are learned first by hearing and repetitive listening to sounds, music is a language—and listening to it is the first step to learning how to “speak” music.

Hands-on learning—experiential learning—is an effective way to learn new skills. This has been evident and documented since time immemorial as people apprentice for various trades, and as youth learn skills from the adults in their communities. The musicians spoke about how when adults, or more experienced musicians correct the youth as they learn music, youth observe those experienced musicians and then attempt to mimic the musicking taking place in their home, school, or community. The musicians shared in conversations outside of the recorded visit that adults, or more experienced musicians, correct the youth in their manners (respect), their technique, and their sound. When I asked Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan, “How would you teach youth to walk and drum in a Good Way?,” they both responded with, “*Respect*” [both men spoke at almost the same time]. Modeling respectful behaviour is a transferrable skill that youth gain in one area of their life and can transfer to the process of experiential learning of musics, or—as several of the musicians shared—the youth learn respectful behaviour *while learning musics* and transfer that skill to other areas of their lives.

Each musician shared that there was music present to some degree in their upbringing. Each musician shared that as adults they continued with the level of music exposure they had when they were children and then built on that foundation. As adults, each musician deliberately chose to further pursue listening to music, learning to play instruments, learning to sing Songs, learning to dance with music, and along the way learning to pass on those skills to others—oftentimes, youth. With reflection upon how they were exposed to music instruction as a youth, the musicians shared how they have adjusted their approaches to instruction to be more creative, modified the priorities that were placed on them as children to be more accepting of varied levels of musical competence, and have deliberately made music and dance more inclusive to all youth. Chris shared some of his first experiences with music:

Ya, I think for me, learning music was, [Chris pauses] listening to my mom play old records back in the day, and just kinda mimicking those Songs. As I got older, it turned into [going] to ceremony and participating. Every ceremony—especially in Indigenous culture—involves music. Whether it’s the rattles rattling, or the drums playing, or the Songs that we sing—the traditional Songs. So, when I started going to sweat lodges as a young man—maybe ten years old—I just started humming along with the Songs. The first drum I ever made, I just started playing on it [Chris mimes beating a drum with a drumstick] with a regular beat—not singing or anything—just hitting the drum. Ya, just years and years of listening to the old guys and old ladies sing and play their drums and use their rattles. [Chris smiles]

And, as Shirley shared, “The kids didn’t have money, but the kids would show up! It wasn’t like the parents would show up and pay \$10 per class. No! They didn’t care about dancing. But the children who knew that I would be there—they would show up in -45 with the windchill.”

Shirley showed respect to the youth by continuing to show up to instruct them—no matter what.

They in turn showed both themselves and their instructor respect by keeping their commitment to learn dancing—no matter what.

The adults in a youth's world may not be fully supportive of music learning which will affect the frequency and consistency of a youth's attendance to learning opportunities. Natasha shared her desire to learn music—now—as an adult:

I'd like to just read music. [Natasha grins] I think I am going to get my daughter to teach me to read music! I feel like that is something I would like to do. Ok, so [Natasha pauses and laughs] I have been saying this for many years. I always say that I want to learn how to play violin...

Dave (Natasha's husband): [Dave smiles] The fiddle!

Natasha: Dave says fiddle—not the fiddle! The violin! [Natasha laughs] I feel like I could get *good* at the violin. I don't know where that [desire] came from! I would need to *read* music and learn to *play* the violin. Maybe when I am an empty nester. Once they're eighteen, I don't need to worry about [my kids] anymore! [Natasha laughs] I can just make noise! If they don't like it [Natasha smiles and shrugs] It looks extremely hard and challenging.

Additionally, when they were children, the musicians were either given, or *not given*, the choice to be creative with their musics—whether that meant composing their own music, selecting their own music to listen to, or choosing which instruments to engage with. Now, as adults, their current involvement with musics and how they approach instructing youth in musics often reflects counteracting the lack of permission to be creative when they were young by providing more varied opportunities and materials to their own children or youth they instruct.

In my visits with these musicians, creativity and freedom of choice came up as essential for the instruction of music with youth. Chris shared about his band experience as a youth:

I was introduced [to music] at school as a young person, but I didn't really gravitate towards the instruments that they wanted us to learn. They wanted [us] to learn the ukelele and the recorder. Those instruments didn't really call to me like the drum does. Bring people in that play music! I think that was one of the big things I didn't see as a kid—rarely ever did our school have someone come in and play a live instrument for us. [Chris pauses] And so, music class always felt like somebody at the front giving us directions and telling us what to do. We weren't allowed [Chris pauses] we weren't given the freedom to just discover for ourselves, or to play around, or things like that—

it was always very regimented. I don't know what schools are like now—maybe they've changed—but yeah, I just remember growing up it was either you were going to be in the band, or in play in the marching band—that kind of a situation. I think schools are doing a better job of trying to recruit [Indigenous] drummers and bring in different types of people. But it's hard to find people who do that kind of work or share a lot of those teachings.

Natasha shared that her own daughter practices the clarinet diligently and prepares for the concerts and skill tests; however, this is at a cost of using some practicing time to create her own sounds or pieces on the clarinet:

[Referring to band class] With Kiera, yes, they are practicing the spring Songs for a concert. There is no freedom in it. She has to do what is next. So, yeah. If there was a little more freedom and be allowed to be more creative with her music [Natasha shrugs]. When she knows that she has to practice—she practices.

Angela: I asked Natasha if Kiera creates her own music?

Natasha: No, she practices what she is *supposed* to practice. That is what they are playing right now. There is no fun—you know what I mean? She enjoys what she is doing, [but] there is no creative exposure there.

Virginia shared that there were pieces selected *for* her to learn at the university level, versus having the creative freedom to select or create her own repertoire for flute which discouraged her continued engagement with music at the post-secondary level at that time. As she shared, “I was told I wasn't good enough. [University of Manitoba] told me to drop out. The director was really supportive of me. I think it's hilarious now because I look at the list of Songs [that] the second teacher [said]: ‘The Songs Jessica²⁰ needs to know’—thirty-two Songs I needed to memorize for my final exam!”

Virginia also shared other aspects of her post-secondary experience with the music department:

²⁰ At that time Virginia was still going by Jessica McMann. Virginia has reclaimed her birth name and is now Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells.

It was terribly racist. I was told to drop out all the time by my teachers. It's not like its a *surprise* anymore. But [for example], my first-year flute teacher—I was taught one or two studies for my *whole year* and only *half of a piece* because I wasn't "good enough." Most of my [flute] lessons were me doing push ups, and sit ups, and her yelling at me that I don't know what a flute sounded like.

These few examples emphasize that *choice* and *creativity* are important for a youth to want to continue to engage with musicking. In response to their experience with the lack of freedom to be creative and explore music, the musicians I visited with encourage their own children to explore and create their own sounds to make music in their own way. Chris suggested:

Anything you pick up can be a potential instrument! Ya know, like a stick can be an instrument, a fan can be an instrument, a jingle dress—putting [Chris pauses] attaching jingles to a dress, stomping your feet on the ground, [Chris pauses and lifts his hands] your hands—everything! Every sound that we make with our mouth! [Chris smiles] There's no limits to what music can be!

The musicians I visited with also encourage their own children, and other children, to use items from around the home or in nature *to create sounds* instead of just using formal instruments to replicate pre-composed pieces.

Virginia:	3.1–3.16, and 3.25–3.44;
Chris:	2.12–2.18, and 2.81–2.90;
Natasha:	4.2–4.12, and 4.85–4.97;
Spakoo-Igitstaan:	5.16–5.27

Generations of Drummers and Kinship Between Blackfoot and Cree Musicians

This section speaks about the longevity of musics within Indigenous communities, focusing on intergenerational musicking and dancing, and how that has impacted the musicians who shared with me for this project. I largely exclude personal details of each musician's family upbringing at the musicians' request to retain their privacy. These musicians have either experienced—or have family members who have experienced—being taken to live at a residential school, 60s

scoop adoption, fragmented family units, parents who stayed together, and single parent families. This is important to note because if a family unit—or family blood-line—has been interrupted, how can we call this intergenerational musicking? The musicians shared that their family consisted of not only their parents or guardians, but also their uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, adopted siblings, adopted cousins, adopted aunts and uncles, and respected Elders who taught them as if they were their own grandchildren; this is kinship. This kinship also includes the more-than-humans around each musician and their families. This greatly expands the breadth of a ‘generation’ and creates a broader base for intergenerational musicking and instructing.

My visits with these musicians made it clear that each musician made *a deliberate choice* as an adult to seek out music and dance mentors within the Indigenous community, to practice what those mentors taught, and to pass on to the next generation what they are learning. As mentioned above, each of the musicians had some exposure to music as a child. Becoming a musician who knows enough to pass music instruction on to the next generation requires a deliberate choice to learn Songs, train the voice, practice instrument(s), and gain experience instructing youth in the skills needed to create sounds, Songs, and music that has been passed down for generations. A couple musicians allude to how they were immersed in music when they were still in the womb. Chris shared:

So, from the time that we are in our mother’s womb where we come to be is the first time where we are exposed to music. We are exposed to the heartbeat of our mother—the continuous beat that sometimes speeds up, sometimes slows down—so we are born into rhythm. But music is everywhere you look! You hear Songs, you hear your mother’s voice—people in the womb [come] out having heard *many* different types of music—different genres— but mostly, the heartbeat of the womb: Bu boom, bu boom, bu boom of your mother’s heartbeat.

From there, being around music with family, at ceremony, during pow wows, and while attending other school and community events allowed these musicians to understand some of the protocols, some of the Songs, and some of the techniques needed to make music within

Indigenous community settings. As Shirley shared:

The thing is when you don't know how to dance, it is 1-2-1-2 [referring to the basic dance move where one foot taps twice, and then the second foot taps twice while a dancer moves forward]. But how do you get unique moves? You steal their moves or copy someone. That is how you get good at your *own* style. What *you* think looks good, and how *your* body moves with the drum, and then you can either do well [Shirley pauses], or do it for fun. I am older now, and *now* I know—I *know* how I dance!

Not one of the musicians claimed to know all that they need or want to know in their area of musical interest. Each of them emphasized that they still have much to learn, and that humility is what gives them the ability to patiently instruct youth in music, dance, and most of all—respect.

I learned during our visits that despite various family circumstances, the musicians did not speak of the lines of intergenerational music being interrupted, or broken, because passing on the teaching of respect, the protocols, the Songs, the instruments, and the gift of composition was not reliant on any single person—rather it was a community of one generation instructing the next generation's community. Randy shared:

It is strange because it is a *ceremonial* [drum]. It was *initiated* to my *dad* from *his* Uncle. And my *Uncle* got it from *his* father—the Old Man Turning Robe. His real name is Ah-Koh-Bup-Poo-Kshii, [which is Blackfoot for] Many Turning Robes. He got it right from Sitting Bull—that first drum.

Randy shared in conversations outside of our recorded visit that Song ownership is still respected *by those who respect the Blackfoot ways*. Likewise, being a Drum Keeper—like Randy Turning Robe—is still respected by those who respect the Blackfoot ways. The gift of composition is still respected. The protocols for sharing, learning, or being gifted a Song are still respected. As Spakoo-Igitstaan shared:

The drum is part of Sweetgrass, or Sage. The Smoke. They're all interconnected. And it circles. Like, you do healing circles. Even our tipis are circles. Our Lodges. Start with Bison/Buffalo—Respect. Respect the drum; the Songs; the Song keepers; the Song makers; the drum keepers. It's *not* just a word. Being a drum keeper is a *way of life*. And *respecting* these items. You don't just finish the drum and put it in the corner. Blackfoot way [is] we *cover* our drums.

That baseline of respect for musics is also intergenerational. Chris shared:

So, there's a long tradition of music—as long as anyone can remember! Even before written word or speech there was probably Song. So, we kinda just evolved from that. [Chris pauses] The Songs we sing today, they haven't changed for thousands of years. They are still the same Song. When we sing in the Lodge, a lot of our Songs are an expression of gratitude for teachings, and we're showing appreciation for Mother Earth, for the Four Directions, of the Grandmothers [and] Grandfathers that came before us and sacrificed themselves and their ways and went into hiding so they could carry the Songs, and continue to practice in a Good Way.

Randy shared about the intergenerational heredity of belongings and teachings with an example from his own family:

I have a headdress. But I don't wear it all the time. I don't go to pow wow with it. Too busy with the drumming—to haul that big heavy drum in. I am too wasted—my knees—can't even stand up to dance. But, I *could* dance. *Because I deserve that*. I *deserve* that. Because my brother, and my nephews, they *honoured* me, because I am the *drum keeper*. I just didn't go through the ceremony. My dad and uncle got sick. They were both *veterans*. You have to get [the drum through ceremony only] from *veterans*. So, I just left it alone. I didn't want to be too pushy. My dad said it's kind of a taboo. There's a lot of bad things that went through... [Randy pauses] My dad... [Randy pauses] Our family... [Randy pauses] I thought about it. [My dad said], "It's up to you son. I am passing it on to you." So, I *think* about it. I didn't have to go through [the ceremony]. He *gave* it to me. I didn't have to go through it. I didn't want to push them—[My dad and] Uncle Mark. They both got sick. [Randy shares that they both passed on before the transfer ceremony of the drum to Randy could take place, but that it was still a valid transfer because it was given to him by his dad, a veteran.]

These examples of kinship demonstrate the interconnectedness of these communities and how music, and ceremony, are often ways those ties are strengthened. These examples speak volumes to the longevity of musics within Indigenous communities.

Randy: 5.52–5.85, and 5.41–5.59;

Chris: 2.26–2.31

Relationality

Like kinship, relationality involves all living things—human and more-than-human. The musicians shared with me that music is alive, and that music is intrinsic to the spiritual connection people have with this world. As the musicians shared with me during our visits, this is integral to music because if music is alive, then instruments are alive, Songs are alive, and, therefore, a musician is “in-relation” with music as kin. This is a difficult concept to put into words because it is a lived experience which differs from person to person and challenges Western ways of understanding music. The musicians emphasized two main ideas related to music and relationality which are 1) music is living, and 2) the animals who gave their lives for the instruments to be made are still alive—and therefore the instruments are kin, like the animals are kin.

Each musician taught me that music is living. Music is within every living being—including water, wind, animals, birds, trees, humans, and land. Both human and more-than-human beings express themselves with music. The musicians gave numerous examples during our visits. Natasha gave the example of water being alive with music, “It’s anything! [Natasha laughs] You can go sit down by the river and hear the water trickle over the rocks, and that can be *music* to your ears. Or the wings of a bird flying. Anything can be music!” Chris gave the example of wind and animals being alive with music:

You also form a *spiritual* connection to the Songs cuz that animal had to be hunted, that those offerings had to be put down—the Tobacco—those prayers had to be said for that animal giving itself to you so that you can make your drum or your rattle. So, there's already that connection—*that spiritual connection*—with that animal there.

And Spakoo-Igitstaan gave the example of the instruments being alive which therefore require respect and care. Emphasizing what has been brought up in prior chapters, he noted that to

approach musics, one needs to, “Respect the drum, the Songs; the Song keepers; the Song makers; the drum keepers. It’s *not* just a word. Being a drum keeper is a *way of life*. And *respecting* these items. You don’t just finish the drum and put it in the corner. Blackfoot way [is] we *cover* our drums.” Songs, instruments, and those who compose, do so with the utmost respect—treating them as family because they are in-relation to all the other musics in the human and more-than-human worlds.

Shirley shared how important her community of dancers are to her for her growth as a Blackfoot woman and as a dancer:

I started dancing pow wow at eighteen years old. I didn’t have anyone to mentor me at that time, so I would watch other dancers to learn, and would steal their moves. [For example], Lisa Ewack—1986—I told her that “I stole your move!” and she said, “Bust a move now! Show me!” She is world-famous! She was Miss Indian World [1986]. That is why I say, ‘steal her moves’!

She gave examples of travelling to familiar pow wows in the USA and Canada, seeing old friends, learning new dances, and having the privilege of judging some of the competitions:

I love the thrill of the competition! At first, I wasn’t good enough. I designed my own regalia. I danced at competitions and was asked to be the head Northern Dance judge for Gathering of Nations. So, that is a big job on the world class level. 3000 dancers! And I had to find the judges for the contests, and I felt like I was in service [Shirley smiles]. To be *on* working as this—the head Northern Dance judge—you *have* to know what you’re doing, and you have to be able to go and approach people, and not be afraid, and assert yourself, and [Shirley pauses], yeah, get out there—and I *did* it! I got’er done, and yeah! Sometimes, I feel I brag about that, but it was something that at the time...[Shirley smiles]. It was the gathering at 2015—I was the head Northern Dance judge—at San Diego—before the 2015 on, and then I was at the big pow wow, so I *knew* what to do!

Shirley is in relation with the Songs and dances as well as with the singers and dancers. She cares for them and protects them by instructing youth and others in their stories, their protocols, and their meanings.

With the understanding that music is alive, and all human and more-than-human beings are alive, the next topic several musicians shared is how the animal who gifted its life to make the instrument (usually rattles or drums) is *still alive* while in the form of a rattle or drum. They shared animals are kin, and therefore, we do not hang up our kin on a wall-hanger and put them on display for all to see. For example, we cover our drums when not in use, we care for them, keep them oiled, keep them warm, keep them in good repair, and handle them gently—respectfully. Teachings differ slightly between the Cree and Blackfoot musicians, but the bottom line is that instruments need to be kept in a safe place and protected from harm. This includes keeping them from emotional harm if the person drumming is not in a good place in their heart. While at Sweat Lodge, Chris taught me to smudge the drum, the drumstick, and ourselves before drumming. Spakoo-Igitstaan and Randy taught me to also place Tobacco on the drum and pray to Creator and the Grandfathers in gratitude for the drum, for the Songs, for our voices—and for our hearts to be in a Good Way when making music:

That's part of *respect*. Our ways. The Tobacco. It's not just an item or an object. We *talk* to our drum. We call it *Grandpa*—in Blackfoot it's Na'as. We say, "Grandpa, we offer Tobacco", and to the animal, we say, "Thank you for your time, and for your sacrifice, for teaching, for allowing us to still sing, allowing us to pass it on to children." That's what I do, and that's what I say. That's *respect*. That's respecting the Ways of the Drum.

As mentioned earlier, Chris shared how a youth can begin to learn musics and learn about the spiritual connection with musics and the animals, how music—or Songs—keep records of life.

He also shared how Songs are sometimes gifted as validation for accomplishments:

Songs are also used as validation. In school, we graduate grade six or kindergarten, eventually you go on to graduate high school, and you're given a diploma. Well, in Indigenous culture, your diploma would be a Song. So, if you had acquired a certain amount of knowledge or were part of a certain clan, or you had been given Rights to Medicines, or to do or hold ceremony, many times you would be gifted a Song—or you would trade for that Song. Sometimes they would trade with rifles, horses, blankets—sometimes, even children might have been gifted for Songs!

He emphasized how precious Songs are and that trading something precious for them is important. Both Chris and Spakoo-Igitstaan expressed how respectfully singing or playing music shows our gratitude to our teachers—our Elders, and how we need to express our gratitude to our Elders for the gift of music.

Relationality was described by each musician in different ways. Natasha focused more on her immediate family relations; Chris talked about relationality with the spiritual and the physical worlds. Spakoo-Igitstaan and Randy spoke about the longevity of relationships. I have included number series references to the musicians sharing their responses to my questions of, ‘What is the definition of music?’, or rather, ‘What *is* music?’. The unanimous response in various phrasing was, Music can be anything! It is in everything! It is everywhere! Music is alive!

Natasha: 4.39–4.44;

Chris: 2.3–2.11, and 2.19–2.20;

Spakoo-Igitstaan: 5.163–5.170, and 5.205–5.226

Accountability

Just as the many scholars included in this thesis emphasize that we, as humans, are in-relation with the human and more-than-human world, the musicians shared the importance of being accountable to the more-than-human word; this includes being accountable to music, and with music. According to Indigenous scholars like Kovach and Wilson, we are each accountable for our values, thoughts, emotions, actions—or lack thereof—and the results of each of those especially when they are in-relation with another living entity (Kovach 2021; Wilson 2008). The accountability each musician spoke about varied. Chris, Randy, and Spakoo-Igitstaan spoke of

accountability to those who came before us (like Grandfathers). Natasha and Shirley talked about those who will come after us (our descendants). Virginia and Natasha referred to school students being accountable to their schoolteachers for their learning (and therefore their grades). Chris spoke about the importance of parents being accountable to their own children to guide them towards a variety of maturity-appropriate music:

For me it all started with my parents. I think you have to be almost conditioned to appreciate music in some ways. But [with] our kids [referring to his own children], we always encourage them to pick up an instrument. With Kiya, [Chris's daughter] whatever you can grab, and bang on something, [or] pick up a rattle and shake it! [Chris pauses] Using Song at nighttime before bed is a really good one to get kids into the thought of rhythm and sounds and acknowledging what is all around us—whether it is the creaking of the door, and the wind blowing through. [Chris smiles] There is music all around us!

Shirley and Randy spoke about being accountable to the mentors they learned their musicking or dancing skills from. Randy and Chris have taught me in personal conversations that this knowledge of who we are accountable to calls us higher in our choices—even when it is not obvious anyone is watching us.

For Randy, accountability is also tied into hereditary rights, like heredity of the drum that was passed down to him from Sitting Bull through his Uncles and his Father. Randy also shares an example of how even Elders have accountability to their Elders: “Even *Francis*—he has to go through the Elders. His sister knows a lot. She’s older. Same age as my sister. Nobody knows everything.” Randy also has accountability *directly* to the drum and to his headdress—to care for those belongings and to respect their power—because *they are alive*. Randy went into more detail about the ceremony and protocols involved with him inheriting the drum to care for:

That’s how I [show] respect. It’s not a ceremonial drum. It didn’t go through initiation. It’s just a made drum. I *take care* of the drum. My folks—the old folks—said ‘You take care of things; they will take care of you.’ So, I really take care of that drum. I don’t

throw it around. I handle it like a child—like a baby. I don't put it in the back of the truck, I put it in my backseat—got a big truck.

Another piece of accountability which both Randy and Shirley spoke about is for women—and the power women have—to be respected in association with ceremony, musics, and instruments like the drum. Those teachings about women are beyond the scope of this thesis, and I will not be expanding on that topic. Chris mentioned that Songs are unchanged from time immemorial, and he emphasized to me in conversations outside of the recorded visit the importance of the words, original language, beats, rhythm, tempo, and melody being the same as what the Grandfathers originally taught. In this way, the current generation of singers and drummers are accountable to those who came before to keep the Songs accurate in meaning and in expression.

While the musicians spoke directly about accountability and music, they also discussed accountability more generally. The terms “Indian,” “Native,” “Indigenous,” “First Nations,” among other terms are used by each musician in this chapter, and by each of the authors in the Literature Review chapter in reference to Indigenous peoples in Canada. The term used by the authors, or the musicians, depends upon their personal upbringing, their home Nation, their ancestry, their age, the context of using the term, and their positionality with the terms. In the context of accountability, Shirley shares that the term “Indian” has value because of the accountability to the treaty:

Let's go with Indian name. That name has been getting a [bad usage these] past number of years. I was confused too, but let's say for the treaty purposes—the signing of the treaty—you have to use the word Indian, or the treaty is obsolete. They didn't sign it with First Nations people. That was the term—Aboriginal? Native? No! It was Indian. I am saying it in a way that from the Treaty process way [it makes sense].

Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan speak about being accountable to the peace that the treaty established between nations:

Randy: A lot of stories. He was a very powerful man—Chief Crowfoot. He says, ‘Compassion.’ He was known for his compassion. They were going to hang Chief Poundmaker because him and his people joined Riel rebellion. But Chief Crowfoot told them, ‘No, that’s my son. Bring him here.’ That’s how he saved [Poundmaker’s] life.

Spakoo-Igitstaan: Because the government respected Crowfoot for banding all the bands together and signing the treaty.

Randy: We *respect* the treaty.

Spakoo-Igitstaan: *Peace*. [Spakoo-Igitstaan nods] [Randy nods also]

These musicians demonstrated attitudes of gratitude and respect for the treaty and the peace it brought between nations—the accountability these nations then had for each other through treaty.

From my personal experiences working within educational institutions, I know that the music teachers are accountable to their school administration, to the students and to their families to instruct students in the basics of music and music making skills. Music students are accountable to their teachers and to their own selves to practice the music skills and gain competency with their instrument or voice. The students are also held accountable to play their instruments well during ensemble work in class with their classmates because they need to be able to play their part well in the ensemble. Virginia shared about these kinds of experiences within her post-secondary journey:

Then, in jazz [at University of Manitoba]—they are New York jazz musicians—so the bar was *so* high in that school! You know one Song, you better know it in *all* the keys because at our Monday night jams—which were] public performances—[our teacher] would get up and say, ‘We are going to play this Song in this key’—and *no music*. He [would say], “This is how New York is!” I got *really good* with my ears. [Virginia grins] I listened to the recordings I made back then, and I was actually pretty good!

As mentioned earlier, Natasha shared about her own children's requirements to demonstrate their competence in both their practicing and in the resulting performance of the skills to their band or music teachers. She noted:

For her homework she has to take a video of herself playing and then send it in to Google classroom 'cause the teacher can't do [the assessments] during the class. So, she wants to make sure everyone is understanding and doing the breathing and fingering. So, [instead of assessing in class,] she can see it on the video.

Ultimately, in educational institution atmospheres, it is a school or public performance which reveals to the students the benefits of diligent practice or exposes them to the consequences of lackadaisical efforts. In the pow wow arena, Shirley shared how she held herself accountable to one of her mentors, Miss Ewack, by displaying her accomplishment of duplicating one of Miss Ewack's dance moves. She was accountable to perform those dance moves well in front of her mentor when Miss Ewack asked.

One concern about music learning Chris shared is that he feels artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used in school and community settings. He and I discussed briefly how we thought AI might be involved in musicking in the future. He expressed concern about the pendulum swing going so far towards utilizing AI to create music that we would eventually have to make efforts as a society to reclaim human-generated music:

It will definitely be. I think everything is a pendulum, so it's going to go *so far* AI that people are going [to] be [saying], "This doesn't have a human element anymore, this is too [Chris pauses] everything is *too perfect*, the sound is too *generated*. You don't get the fluctuations in frets, or breath taking, or different things that make music imperfect. [Chris raises his arms with enthusiasm] Which is *good music* when [it] has that imperfection to it. I think its going to go so far one way, and then there will be a movement of people [saying] "We've got to bring it back to the grassroots of what music *used* to be and the *human element*!" [Chris laughs]. I think about it, and there's still a large contingent of people that collect vinyl and just love the sound of vinyl, and there's always going to be movements like that. I think, [Chris pauses] [it's important to be] appreciating the art and the imperfections of sound.

Yes, I couldn't see AI performing jazz in a way that's just created out of thin air and have it actually sound... [Chris puts his hands out and shrugs].

Chris's concern about AI is valid and brings up ethical questions about music production and reproduction and with Indigenous musics, that also impacts meaning and ownership. These are topics that will not be explored further in this thesis.

Accountability goes far beyond ensuring someone does a job and does it well. During our visits, the musicians shared many ways they feel they are personally holding themselves accountable or are held accountable by humans and more-than-humans in their respective communities. The examples they shared reflect being accountable for accurate learning, for respectful learning, for accurate and respectful performance of the learned Songs or dances, and the accountability to pass on their understandings accurately to the next generation of learners.

Randy: 5.52–5.85, and 5.41–5.59,

Chris: 2.26–2.31,

Shirley: 1.6–1.14, and 1.122–1.141

Challenges Experienced During Their Musical Journeys

During our visits, the musicians shared many of the challenges that they faced. The challenges they shared are far more numerous than what one recorded visit with each musician can encapsulate. Naming the challenges—which are often complicated, multi-faceted, and intersectional—almost seems to diminish the immensity of impact these challenges have had on each of the musicians, which is not my intent. It took multiple conversations before and after the recorded visits with the musicians, personal reflection, and consultation with my supervising professor before finally narrowing down the sharings to four primary challenges. These are 1) deceit, 2) jealousy, 3) arrogance and elitism, and 4) disrespect. These challenges are described by

the musicians in narrative form in the transcripts and, like other topics, there is often more than one challenge within a single experience. Randy and I laughed together at the irony of challenges being simultaneously called “opportunities to grow” because certainly they often do not seem to be, or to feel that way, at the time. At the very least, each of these challenges breaks trust, and creates a wariness towards the trustworthiness and authenticity of new acquaintances within and beyond their musicking communities.

Deceit

One of the topics which repeatedly arose was deceit. When I brought this up with Virginia when we were reviewing her transcript, I asked her if she has experienced deceit in her journey as a musician (since she had not specifically mentioned that during our visit). She pointed out to me the part in her transcript where she shares about her professors telling her that she was not good enough for a recital—that she was not good enough to be in a university music degree program—and the efforts some professors made to have her cut from the program following her brief absence due to illness. The lies she was told by her professors were about not being “good enough,” and those have proven to be lies because her expertise has been recognized and sought after repeatedly which is evidence of her competence and high skill level. Those lies—that deceit—was harmful and changed the course of Virginia’s educational and work paths; they took years to recover from. Through her own healing journey, she now validates her own worth and can hear the excellence in her own performances and compositions. This deceit is complicated by elitism within post-secondary institutions, where, usually, only those who have already achieved high levels of competency are granted entrance through an audition process rather than universities being a place of higher learning where an aspiring musician can be trained.

Another example of deceit came at the beginning of my visit with Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan. In our recorded visit, I asked them about the Grandmother Turtle program they had been telling me about during our informal visits, and they shared:

Our ex-director, she was part of a group—Anishinaabe-Ojibway people—and they trademarked—all the Grandfather, [Spakoo-Igitstaan pauses] the sacred Grandfather teachings.

Angela: How can they *do* that? [asked with incredulity]

[Spakoo-Igitstaan shrugged in an ‘I don’t know’ gesture]

This was not their only story involving deceit. As we visited, they also shared about a significant person within [a] Society attempting to sell a sacred Bundle in secret. Randy shared how he sought advice on how to address this act of deceit, and explained what kind of consequences often befall people who do such things:

[Referring to that significant person] He literally tried to sell... [Randy paused and shook his head]. He’s the head—he’s the main [person in the Society]! He’s got the Bundle. My Ex-son-in-law told me there were two of them that almost [sold the bundle]. Pride. [Choosing] to give in to it.

And I told Francis about these things and about these people [wanting to sell the Bundle]. Francis really *honours* that I am part of the Society. He really *honours* the [certain] Society because Blood Indians don’t have [that] Society. I told him that this is what they actually tried to do. But us three youngest ones—me, my cousin, and my little brother—my younger brother—we *opposed* this. We said, “We don’t *agree* with that. We don’t *want* that. We want to keep it *on the Reserve*. It’s our understanding that it’s supposed to *stay on the Reserve*.” He was ready to *sell* it. He probably would’ve have pocketed *thousands of dollars*. And we wouldn’t have known about it! That’s what happens to these things all over the world. Some of them are stolen. They tell them [the people they are selling the item to], “This is not mine; I don’t have no use for it.” They die horrible deaths. They get hit on the railroad track. They get dismembered from their bodies. They die horrible deaths. [Randy pauses]

Randy talked about deceit, jealousy, and arrogance:

We see someone with a nice car, nice horses, nice this, nice that, beautiful woman, and we get envious. That’s jealousy. They are sins in the bible. There are sins. There’s

greed. Pride. Pride is one of the worst. Envy, Lust—what’s the other one? Deceit. Pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth.

This leads into the connection that deceit has with jealousy and arrogance.

Virginia: 3.35–3.60;
Spakoo-Igitstaan: 5.1–5.4;
Randy: 5.227–5.252

Jealousy

Jealousy was brought up by Virginia, Shirley, and Randy when we visited, although it was not always initially labeled as such. In our visits, the musicians spoke of jealousies, and how they handled them at that time. Identifying jealousy within musical experiences can be a bit tricky.

Randy overtly used the word jealous to describe the body language, words, and actions of individuals around him and his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, when running a men’s drumming healing circle. There are tensions in some spaces between Cree and Blackfoot leadership, and as Randy is a Blackfoot Elder, there were some Cree staff and Cree participants in the men’s healing circle who wanted to see a Cree Elder lead the program instead of Randy and his son. As he shared:

They’re envious. There’s a lot of envy. A lot of those young Crees. They envy. And some older ones. But there’s some older ones—they’ll tell the young Crees, “Leave the Blackfoots alone. They have got a lot of *Power!*” But they *don’t like* that—the young ones. So, their envy turns to *hatred*. That’s what happened here, matter of fact. He [referring to Spakoo-Igitstaan] had a colleague. A colleague—Cree—was trying to *shut us down*. Trying to shut us down! “We don’t need [the healing circle].” We *need* that. *We need that!* It’s going so *strong*. Other people are interested. They *want* to have it. It’s that jealousy. He’s jealous of my son. [Of] us—what we do. A lot of that. [Like] the young guy I was talking about. Maybe they tell him, “That Elder Randy, he’s really good!,” and they don’t like that. They want a *Cree* Elder. I am not looking for recognition. I am just telling them what I know. I do belong to a Society. Like my son said—a headdress holder. Steven [referring to a different colleague]—he really honours that. He’s got a headdress. He really honours that – having the headdress. And the drum—it was *given* to me. It didn’t *go* through ceremony. I still *respect* the drum. I still *take care* of it. Just *like* it went through ceremony because *my dad* gave it to me. There’s jealousy. And now there’s a lot of them are part Blackfoot who come now [to the men’s healing circle], and they have Blackfoot blood in them, and they’re *really proud*.

Both Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan spoke about not engaging in conflict—it is not the Blackfoot Way—so they did not directly address the behaviours of those individuals. They shared that Elder Francis taught them, “‘Just watch. Don’t react. Don’t say anything to them. Just leave it alone. That’s them.’ My folks always tell me—‘Just watch. Don’t do anything about it. They’re wrong. What they are doing is wrong. It’s not right.’”

Virginia shared about the jealousies present within the university program she was in as she pursued performance opportunities:

[But] classical music, jazz—it still is as it always has been. Even when I went back to school, where I ended up second flute in symphonic flute at U of C—I battled my way up. It was *stupid*. There was *no reason* I should have been there [in second flute]. And I ended up in finishing in one ensemble as first flute, section leader, [although] they didn’t give me that at the first place. That final concert—I was kind of mad about it—but I still managed to get all the solos for that final concert. The [other students and teachers] were mad about it because they didn’t want me to have the solos. But it’s just that everyone else choked. They *had* to give it to me.

Virginia chooses to continue her approach of excellence in her performance and composition creations. Shirley shared that her skills as a dancer have increased and improved over her forty-one years of dancing, and she is rightly proud of that. At pow wows, she has been often selected for call-backs to the finals for her dancing skills. She shared what she does to combat jealousies from other dancers:

Usually if you have somebody—like for me—if I wear my paint, I always tell the kids it’s good luck [referring to specific paint that Shirley wears on her body when she is dancing or teaching dance]. Because it’s sensible to me to share that information that way [to kids]. But I don’t tell them that I got it for protection through ceremony from a Medicine Man. I didn’t want to be attacked again because of jealousy. That’s why—that is basically why I wear my paint. I know how it feels, and I know how *ooohhh* how *sick* I was because of psychic attacks! [Shirley pauses] But when I share it with the kids, I tell them [it’s for good luck].

It is important to notice that with each of these examples, the musicians maintained their integrity by not lashing out at the person expressing jealousy but instead continuing to do their good works and approach of excellence with composure.

When we went over his transcript, Randy expanded upon this by explaining that deceit goes hand in hand with persons wanting to look like more than they are because they are *jealous* of another's accomplishments, power, or reputation. Outside of the recorded conversations, each musician shared with me that they pray for both the people who are expressing jealousies, deceit, arrogance, or other malice, *and* for their own hearts to be free of anger towards them. Contrast jealousy with an approach of excellence which is more concerned with personal growth, integrity, and respect than with outperforming another person. Next, we explore the musicians experience with arrogance and elitism.

Randy: 5.393–5.450;

Virginia: 3.78–3.92;

Shirley: 1.268–1.275

Arrogance and Elitism

Within the context of Indigenous musics and instructing youth in musics, the musicians shared scenarios they have experienced which demonstrate symptoms of both arrogance and elitism. For the purposes of this academic research, the word arrogance will be utilized in the context of conceitedness—having an excessively high opinion of oneself, or that a person thinks they know better than someone else. Elitism, for this thesis, is when a group of people, or an institution, behave or make decisions in a way that excludes or seeks to exclude others. This is on the basis that this group of people—or an institution—primarily want to include people with certain abilities or characteristics to further the group/institution's own agenda or reputation.

Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan shared about youth who brag about attending Sundances, Sweat Lodges, and other ceremony. This bragging is considered inappropriate because it implies that the person bragging thinks they are better than others because they have been invited to these ceremonies, gone to these ceremonies, participated in these ceremonies, or otherwise feel they are a cut above others who have not attended. Randy compared it to bragging about being a good Catholic—it should not be done. Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan shared:

Randy: This one young Cree was arguing with me. He says, “No, we have our ways.” I says, “Yeah, that’s ok. You’re Cree. We’re Blackfoot.” He was getting angry. He’s young. He’s always talking about Sundance. He’s probably putting curses on me for all I know. But I am protected. Francis and I are protected.

Spakoo-Igitstaan: That’s another thing. We don’t talk about Sundances openly.

Randy: No. [Randy agrees]

Spakoo-Igitstaan: You see a lot of these guys. I go to a lot of events. I don’t argue. My dad and Francis advise me to [not argue]. You see all these guys talking about Sundance, Sweats, bragging. That’s our *church*. That’s like being Catholic, and saying, “I am a good Catholic.”

Randy: [Like saying], “I went to get the whole body—eucharist.” *Don’t boast*.

Spakoo-Igitstaan: You’ll know those kind of people in the community. And there’s a lot. Sadly, these kinds are on boards. They’re on committees.

Music is, of course, involved in ceremony within Indigenous culture. Randy explained to me outside of the recorded visit that this behaviour is negatively affecting the Songs and musicians in those arenas.

Chris talked about how adults are hindered by their own arrogance of wanting to be good at playing musics in advance of going through the necessary learning process. He compared it in contrast to children who are free to express themselves without such hinderances or worries about sounding perfect. As he shared:

And I like that [kids] don't have fear of being offbeat or of singing above or below [the correct note]—they just sing! And they're not [Chris pauses] it's ok if they fall out of line with the other things [referring to rhythm, volume, tempo, words and other aspects of making music]. It is different if you're thirty years old, or forty years old, and you're singing *over* people and all that. Expectations change a little bit—but with *kids*, man? They need that *playfulness* in music, and life, and experience, and not to feel shamed by those things.

Natasha shared that decisions to do general music or band class comes down to budget. From my experience as an educator, a school setting band class becomes an elitist group because those students without financial resources to support the instrument rental, band uniforms, or band trips become excluded. In her own youth, Natasha shared that band class was just not in the budget.²¹

In a further example of arrogance, Spakoo-Igitstaan speaks about how corporations who do not know better have been known to put out the word that they need a Knowledge Keeper or a board member to advise them in matters relating to, and how to relate better with, Indigenous peoples—and arrogant people who believe themselves to be Knowledge Keepers, *or* those who falsely present themselves to be Knowledge Keepers get hired, or receive honorariums for their participation as an Indigenous knowledge keeper. He shared, “And corporations—I give them some grace, because they don't know. They just get the word out that we need an Elder, we need a knowledge keeper, blah blah blah, and they'll find anybody they can—find anybody who calls themselves an Elder and a Knowledge Keeper. So, they did that.” I asked Randy what can be done, or has been done, about these individuals who falsely present themselves, and he said, “Francis says, ‘Just watch. Don't react. Don't say anything to them. Just leave it alone. That's

²¹ My own children have experienced the discomfort of not having the same kinds of pants or shirts that other band members had as I could not afford the higher quality shirts and dress pants at the time. I needed to seek out school assistance to pay for band camp and this inability to pay for their participation eventually led my choice for my own children to not continue in band class.

them.’ My folks always tell me—‘Just watch. Don’t do anything about it. They’re wrong. What they are doing is wrong. It’s not right.’”

Spakoo-Igitstaan and Randy: 5.378–5.393;

Chris: 2.131–2.135;

Natasha: 4.56–4.68

Disrespect

The musicians described many examples of disrespect that they experienced or have seen within their musical journeys. There are examples of purposeful disrespect towards the musicians, and there are examples of ignorant disrespect towards the musicians, towards Songs, towards belongings, towards drummers, and towards dances. Ultimately, my sharing these examples of disrespect is intended to bring awareness to those who may not be aware of the damage and harm they are doing to people, musics, or belongings by their behaviours, or by their inactions, and in turn, encourage people to consider and seek guidance about how to show respect in future situations.

As this thesis is focused on the instruction of youth in musics, it makes sense to include examples here about current educators of music in the public school system. Virginia shares examples of both respect and disrespect in her interactions with school music teachers. She is highly qualified in classical music and various schools of music instruction and has been invited into public schools to present workshops on music instruction, dance instruction, Indigenous culture and more. During our visit, she shared her experience at a specific workshop where teachers got up and left the room when they found out that she was not handing them specific Indigenous Songs to teach their students. Virginia explained:

There's just such an *extractive* community in music education. What can we take? I had this lady come up to me and was like, "Oh! I really like the Song you sang, but can I just replace it with Blackfoot words?" and I was like, "No, you cannot." She's like, "Why?" I'm like, "That's not culturally appropriate." She's like, "Why are you teaching us that then?" So, I am like, "This is not the reason I am here." And so, I left it open to [the teachers to] reach out to me after. Out of sixty teachers, *three* reached out to me.

These types of experiences can and do create hesitation to re-enter the education system environment.

Spakoo-Igitstaan shared a story about ceremonial masks being hung up for display at a museum—which is against protocol because *they are alive*—and shared what happened to those masks and the program that had initiated that display. He also shared a local story which occurred outside of the Glenbow museum—belongings did not want to return to the museum, and it took many men and, finally, an Elder blessing them before they could be moved back into the museum. Spakoo-Igitstaan and Randy indicated that these belongings are alive and do not want to be removed from their home nations and they object to being hung up or put on display instead of being cherished and cared for within ceremony or their intended use in their home nations. Spakoo-Igitstaan shared:

My one professor was part of a board in Quebec, Ottawa. Her people are Anishinaabe. This was before TRC [referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission],²² and they wanted to open a museum. And corporations—I give them some grace, because they don't know. They just get the word out that we need an Elder, we need a Knowledge Keeper, blah blah blah, and they'll find anybody they can—find anybody who calls themselves an Elder and a knowledge keeper. So, they did that. And then they brought in—one of the universities brought in—these masks. Old Ojibway masks. *Ceremonial* masks. They were hanging them up, and [Spakoo-Igitstaan shakes his head sadly] when they went in again, the hair on those masks grew. Almost overnight! Then they just shut it down. They *shut it down*. Because that's the old way. The [Anishinaabe] probably have the same teachings as us. The same protocols. We don't show these masks off. We don't show our stuff off. They are *alive*. Still [have] *life* in them. So, I *know* they shut it down, and those things went back to the [Anishinaabe] people.

²² See also Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report (Government of Canada 2015).

During our visit, he also shared a story about the Glenbow.²³

I heard a story too. The stuff at Glenbow. They were *bringing it back* [to the Glenbow]. It took *four men* to try to lift it up. The blanket and whatever was in there—they used it for a ceremony at Kainai and they were bringing it back to Glenbow—and the item didn't want to be lifted. It took four men. *Still*, it wouldn't move. It was *immoveable*. It *didn't want* to go back downtown. So, they had to get an Elder to bless it.

Angela: Why would they even send it back if the items were making it *so* clear they didn't want to?

Spakoo-Igitstaan: That was the thing. They were parked right outside of Glenbow. Like my dad was saying. We don't want to go there. We—I—don't even want to talk about it either. That is *so* Powerful. As soon as you talk about it, you're *giving* it Power. We don't have the Rights for it. *Some* things we can share. But we can't share the *whole*. That's part of *respect*. Our ways. The Tobacco. It's not just an item or an object. We *talk* to our drum. We call it *Grandpa*—in Blackfoot it's Na'as. We say, “Grandpa, we offer Tobacco,” and to the animal, we say, “Thank you for your time, and for your sacrifice, for teaching, for allowing us to still sing, allowing us to pass it on to children.” That's what I do, and that's what I say. That's *respect*. That's respecting the Ways of the Drum. The ancestors that kept it underground, that kept it alive for us. After the treaties, it was cutoff—it was *outlawed* to drum, pow wow, to do these things.²⁴

Each of the above stories about disrespect demonstrates that disrespectful behaviour and attitudes are not limited to being directed towards humans but also have been extended towards belongings, Songs, dances, drummers, singers, composers, and the process of learning musics. Inversely, these examples were shared with me to emphasize the better way—the Good Way—of going about learning and instructing musics with youth, namely *respectfully*.

Virginia: 3.214–3.359;

Shirley: 1.101–1.114;

Spakoo-Igitstaan: 5.194–5.226, and 5.297–5.317

²³ Referring to the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta

²⁴ This is referencing the Potlatch Ban legislation which made it illegal to conduct potlatch and other ceremonies.

An Approach of Excellence for Instructing Musics with Youth

Respect

All the musicians shared in their visits in one way or another that *respect* is the beginning point of both learning musics and instructing youth in musics. All the musicians shared in their own way that where respect is lacking, all manner of challenges and harm can occur to people, language, belongings, instruments, ceremony, dances, Songs, musics, and kin. Some harms are irreparable. Visiting with these musicians—recorded and not recorded—has helped me understand that it is *imperative* that respect for self and kin—both human and more-than-human—be the foundation of learning and instructing of musics. This foundation of respect honours those who have come before, who are with us now, and who will follow us after we have passed on. Respect strengthens the intergenerational transfer of musics, dances, Songs, belongings, instruments, ceremonies, and more. The transcripts from the visits with each musician hold lengthy examples of how to show respect to drummers, to drums, to belongings, to dancers, to singers, to Elders, to language reclamation, to repatriation of stolen belongings, to Song ownership and transfer, towards the animals who give of themselves, and towards music, dances, and instruments. Each musician shared examples of respect and inversely, the harms of disrespect. They shared how important respect is. Since these musicians—who have generations of teachings behind their sharings—feel that respect is foundational to instructing youth in musics going forward, it is essential to take heed of the recommendations they put forward as ways to improve learning and instructing of musics with youth.

Shirley shared some lessons she learned about protocols—which is a form of respect—and her reaction when she mis-stepped:

Well, there's [Shirley pauses] a few lessons—mostly women don't sit at the drum. [Shirley gasps] And, oh my God! I don't know what I was thinking! I was at a big pow wow in Regina, and I went to see my friend, Boss—he is with Wild Horse—and I have known him from Calgary Stampede, 2004. And the guy in front of me greeted [Boss] and then touched the drum, and then I put my hand, and I touched the drum! [Shirley cringes] And Boss—[Shirley takes a long pause] looked shocked! And I thought, “Oh my gosh! What did I *do*? Oh my gosh, I touched a drum! Oh my gosh! That was *ridiculous*! I will *never* do that again!

Chris and Spakoo-Igitstaan shared about the laying down of Tobacco for the animals who gifted their life for us, and for their spirit which still is alive in the drum:

Chris: You also form a *spiritual* connection to the Songs cuz that animal had to be hunted, that those offerings had to be put down—the Tobacco—those prayers had to be said for that animal giving itself to you so that you can make your drum or your rattle. So, there's already that connection—that *spiritual connection*—with that animal there.

Spakoo-Igitstaan: *Some* things we can share. But we can't share the *whole*. That's part of *respect*. Our ways. The Tobacco. It's not just an item or an object. We *talk* to our drum. We call it *Grandpa*—in Blackfoot it's Na'as. We say, “Grandpa, we offer Tobacco”, and to the animal, we say, “Thank you for your time, and for your sacrifice, for teaching, for allowing us to still sing, allowing us to pass it on to children.” That's what I do, and that's what I say. That's *respect*. That's respecting the Ways of the Drum. The ancestors that kept it underground, that kept it alive for us. After the treaties, it was cutoff—it was *outlawed* to drum, pow wow, to do these things.²⁵

Randy shared multiple times about the spiritual world and the Power that needs to be respected.

One example he gave was about the sacred bundles and how one of his friends, Elder Dr. Francis

First Charger, handles the responsibilities of caring for them. He shared:

Like Francis, he's got Bundles. I am not even allowed to *see* them. That's my *friend*! He is my *best* friend. I am *not allowed*. He won't [show me]. He's not going to open it in front of me! He just says, SKA-KOO-Yin-Ni-MA Oom-Moo-Bis-Taana [Blackfoot word(s) meaning Holy/Sacred Pipe Holder Bundle]. He *has all* those things. He *won't* tell me. He will *never* tell me what's in there and *nothing like that*! He is not *crazy*! These people in the city. [Randy shakes his head sadly] They come from his reserve, and ours—of course ours—they tell the *public* what's in there, and they'll *open it* and *show it up on the stage*! I have *so much respect* for our Ways. [Randy pauses]

²⁵ This is referencing the Potlatch Ban legislation which made it illegal to do potlatch or other ceremonies.

Natasha shared about the respect she has for her children's freedom of choice, and the respect she has for how her children have learned music:

That's how Kiera was with the clarinet [referring to wanting to be good right away]. She still plays. She's gotten really good! In the beginning, when she'd get all frustrated [we would ask to try her instrument, and then we would *hit* the note! [Natasha laughs] Then *that* was a challenge to her! And we'd ask if we could try [again], and she'd say, 'No!', and she would figure it out. [Natasha smiles] They are both into music [referring to her children]. They are both playing music. When [my son is] working out, it's a whole array of music! It's all over the place! Kiera too. Kiera listens to all *kinds* of music. I don't like to push anything on them.

Virginia shared the importance of respecting the ways of learning, instructing, and composing Songs, respecting language reclamation, and respecting how our bodies are involved in learning musics—especially with youth:

So, we made each kid responsible for an action out of the book. Simple five-word sentences. "See spot jump," so the [kids are] jumping. It's very simple, but it's helping them to learn at the same time—even though it was not my purpose in this school [Virginia smiles]. We switched [the books] to Indigenous legends because I was working [at] Indigenous schools on reserve. It made things a bit better. We were reading the physical book, and then doing the actions, and *creating dances* that they shared with each other. Then they move on to *creating* their own stories, and having to *remember* their stories, and *writing* it down, and *performing* those stories.

Chris also shared how Songs, and gifting of Songs, and giving significant gifts *for* Songs, can be a way of showing respect:

Well, in Indigenous culture, your diploma would be a Song. So, if you had a acquired a certain amount of knowledge or were part of a certain clan, or you had been given Rights to Medicines, or to do or hold ceremony, many times you would be gifted a Song—or you would trade for that Song. Sometimes they would trade with rifles, horses, blankets—sometimes, even children might have been gifted for Songs!

Similarly, Natasha shared how music can be present to honour milestones in a person's life. She explained, "So, [for example] my sister had a traditional wedding. My aunties drummed, and we sang her down the aisle. So, that was the Aunties bringing her in [to the circle]. And there wasn't seats or an altar—it was a circle! [My sister and her husband] just came into the circle, and then

we closed the circle.” Shirley and her daughter, Amy, share about respecting the old ways when dancing at pow wow, or learning pow wow dances:

Shirley: I had shared with one of the teachers that the girls—when they are dancing—they need to wear a ribbon skirt. Because they had their shawl and they are flying around, and they had really mini yoga-type short-shorts, and then their bellies showing [Shirley raises her eyebrows] and just a tank top, and they are just jumping around. It’s like...*Noooooo..* that is *not appropriate!* Not when you might be wearing a little feather, and some hair ties. You need a [ribbon or traditional] dress, and you need...[Shirley pauses] I am just thinking...[Shirley pauses] My friend who dances old-style, [she says] you *don’t* show any skin. I have short sleeves most of the time, but in the old way they wouldn’t show any skin.

Amy (Shirley’s daughter): Traditionally, you’re not supposed to show skin. It’s like you’re *showing* your body. I mean *I* show my body. I come to pow wow with short-shorts—not booty shorts—but shorts are, well, *shorts*. My mom is going [to me] like, [Amy gestures imitating her mom pulling up Amy’s own tank top to cover cleavage]. [Shirley and Amy laugh] I am doing a ribbon skirt-making class, and Ruth [an Elder] told me that you don’t show skin. You cover your skin. And [back] then it is right, but we are also in a modern day. I mean if you wear a summer dress, [and] if you have a shawl, it’s okay [to use that to cover]. I think it is how you wear it. Cover your boobs, cover your butt, and if you have a ribbon skirt—wear it! [Amy smiles]

Spakoo-Igitstaan also shared about respecting your teachers—your Elders—and their teachings, and showing that gratitude in tangible ways:

Whenever an Elder tells you a story, you give them some money, or a gift. Something that really means, “What he told me I cherish it forever.” So, I send him [referring to Elder Francis] money for sharing his stories and his prayers, because he says he always prays for me. So, I sparingly send him and his wife some money. I say, “Oki Uncle, I am sending you some money for your prayers, and your knowledge,” and [Francis] says, “Oki, thank you!” He says, “Comes in handy!” That’s all he says! [Spakoo-Igitstaan laughs]

Randy reminded me often of the generations who came before him, and the responsibility to instruct the next generation, and he shared, “Customs are passed down to young ones and they are selected by the Elders. A young one cannot ask [to be taught the ceremonial customs]. The Elders watch their behaviour and character before selecting them.”

This section about respect ultimately refers to the *entire transcript* of each musician. Every visit with each of these musicians refers—either directly or indirectly—to respect, and I believe that by this point in the chapter it is necessary for a reader to go through each musician’s sharings *in their entirety*. My intention with this wholistic reading is to increase the cohesion between each of the topics under the umbrella of respect by reviewing all the topics discussed in this chapter within their original contexts. I suggest that readers review the transcripts in their entirety prior to reading the recommendations that follow. In doing so, the recommendations and the concluding chapter of this thesis will be more thoroughly understood. In preparation for reading the recommendations from the musicians, please reflect upon the transcripts from our visits:

Elder Shirley:	1.1–1.278;
Chris:	2.1–2.150;
Virginia:	3.1–3.377;
Natasha:	4.1–4.190;
Spakoo-Igitstaan:	5.1–5.564;
Elder Randy:	5.1–5.564

Conclusion: Recommendations from the Musicians for Instructing Musics to Youth

This chapter brought forward the musical experiences of six musicians from the Cree and Blackfoot nations. Their stories shared the importance of community, respect, relationships, accountability, and their connection to Creator. They also shared the harms done to themselves by people disrespecting kin, by people being deceitful for personal gain, and by people acting upon their jealous feelings.

The original questions each musician were asked to reflect upon and share about their experiences were: *How do Indigenous musicians ideally want to see youth learn musics going forward? And how would these musicians ideally want to see musics instructed?*

Throughout this thesis, I have shared the musicians' various musical upbringings, and how their current involvement with music still reflects distinct ways they are learning and instructing. Overall, they all shared core values and respect for their culture which is reflected in these recommendations.

As introduced at the beginning of this thesis, their experiences and reflections have shaped what I have come to name an "*approach of excellence*"—a way of thinking about learning and instruction that is informed not by standardized outcomes or curricula, but by the lived knowledge of the musician and their relationships with youth, community, culture, and protocols. In the end, and as mentioned at the beginning, this thesis does not offer a roadmap for education reform—nor should these recommendations become formulaic to a music educator. In other words, "adding" these recommendations will not automatically make instruction of Indigenous musics "okay." Instead, this thesis, and these recommendations from these Indigenous musicians, offer something quieter and more powerful: choosing an *approach of excellence* based on *intrinsic respect* for self and others—including more-than-humans. This powerful choice of approach and respect is found in this collection of experiences and ideas. It is also found from the warnings in the stories about the effects of disrespect, arrogance, elitism, deceit, and jealousies which surround musicking.

Each musician had recommendations for how they believe youth should be instructed in musics. These recommendations were based upon their own lived experiences, and on what they

have observed with youth—and how youth learn—while they have instructed youth over many years. Note that none of the recommendations, which will be outlined in the final chapter of this thesis, include becoming *the best* at a certain instrument, Song, or dance. Instead, the recommendations are centred on:

- Building respectful, reciprocal, and accountable relationships with youth,
- Leading youth to accessible musicking experiences within the community,
- Giving youth opportunities for creative exploration,
- Recognizing that learning musics and instructing musics is a lifelong endeavor that does not end in youth—if it is nurtured,
- Demonstrating gratitude in front of—and with—the youth for the musics, the Songs, the drummers, the drum, other instruments, the human and more-than-human kin, the dances, and the stories,
- Ensuring that Indigenous music is instructed by Indigenous musicians who are best situated to respect Indigenous Ways of Knowing musics and Song in teaching and learning contexts, and
- Decentring a primary focus on mastery of an instrument in preference of an excellence in a person's *approach* to musicking. This *approach of excellence* includes making the time to prepare a person's heart, spirit, mind, and body for musicking.

These recommendations lay a solid foundation for intergenerational music learning and instructing to continue in a Good Way.

CHAPTER FIVE: LEAVING THOUGHTS AND LEADING QUESTIONS

This chapter expands on the six musicians' recommendations. "Leaving Thoughts and Leading Questions" is the phrase I have chosen to describe this final chapter because when I have been around Elders and Knowledge Keepers, they almost always end a learning and sharing time with a question (or two) for the listener to consider. In keeping with the storytelling research methodology, I believe ending this thesis with leaving thoughts and leading questions is appropriate. The leaving thoughts will reiterate what was shared from the beginning and throughout this thesis because spaced repetition is an effective tool for communicating and learning. The purpose of the leading questions is not so much to bring up new questions—or a game plan for addressing the current ones—but more so to emphasize the questions which I imagine a reader may ask themselves after reflecting upon the sharings from these six musicians. By articulating these questions, I encourage readers to engage in deliberate efforts towards developing intrinsic respect for self and others, and towards making the definite choice to *approach with excellence* any learning or instruction of musics with youth. Lastly, Randy, Chris, Virginia, Spakoo-Igitstaan, Natasha, and Shirley each told me in their own way that *it is not up to us to tell others what to do with music. It is their choice.*

Leaving Thoughts

Learning and instructing musics begins before birth and continue after death. Since babies do hear the heartbeat while in the womb, and it has been proven that once a baby is born, they show recognition of familiar voices they heard while in the womb, it is fair to say that various musics

played near an unborn child will be heard.²⁶ Each musician shared how they are still participating with musics as adults. This includes remembering special occasions like lullabies, dancing with parents, graduation celebrations and more where musics were present—and those same musics bring back those memories. During conversations outside of the recorded visits, a few musicians shared that when in ceremony the Songs they sing are intended for the Grandfathers and Grandmothers who have passed on to hear as an invitation to be present in the ceremony. A few musicians also shared in conversations outside of the recorded visits how they celebrate special occasions of a person who has passed by playing or singing that person's favorite Songs because they believe the person can hear the music from beyond death. Whether it can be proven that the person who has passed can hear the Songs or not is not the point. The point is that music is valuable to the person expressing themselves to their loved one. By demonstrating care through and with musics to the person who has passed, the person expressing that love is instructing the next generation, by example, to show respect to those who have passed on; it keeps them alive by keeping them in our hearts.

Freedom to be creative and explore mediums of sound, music, and vibration are essential for engaging younger learners. Instead of having a strict agenda or curriculum for progression in music instruction, build in time and space for creative exploration. This exploration can happen at home by picking up a stick and whacking it against something; it can happen in private music lessons when an instructor gives time for a student to make their own sounds or composition on the instrument; it can happen in music class at school by allowing students to try a variety of instruments instead of requiring them to only play one kind and only play those within certain

²⁶ I experienced this personally with my oldest two daughters who would perk up noticeably when they were babies—and even begin to hum sometimes—when they heard me play certain classical piano pieces I had been practicing for hours a day while they were in my womb.

rhythm patterns or pre-selected Songs; and it can happen while in community events and situations where people are encouraged to sing and clap along (like what happened at Virginia's performances). This takes deliberate planning on the part of the adults in the youths' lives, so there is enough time and materials available for youth to experiment with how to make sounds, musics, and to be aware of sound vibrations.

Bring youth to be present at live music performances in various atmospheres. Listening to musics with a CD, or online media—even if there is video accompanying it—is not as vibrant as listening and watching and feeling the musics performed live. Virginia invited me to her live performance so I could see and hear her musics and stories in person—because of the impact of live performance. Similarly, Spakoo-Igitstaan shared that he learned how to play drum and sing from being in the drumming circle—in person—not just by watching videos of people doing pow wow drumming. Participating in ceremony—and, therefore, the Songs and musics that are involved in ceremony—is most effective when in-person. My sons are learning to drum on their deer-hide hand drums, and to sing traditional Songs—and I see they are learning faster the more often they hear it live and are able to sing live with others. Schools can bring in live musicians (like Shirley who goes in to schools to instruct dance), young people can be taught to be still and listen to the natural sounds around them—or be inspired to move because of what they hear—and music concerts and festivals can provide opportunities for new sounds to be heard.

Leverage musics in the instruction of all kinds of literacies within educational institutions. By approaching a subject material with Song, or dance, or both, the physical muscle memory is engaged and that enriches the memorization and integration of the subject

material into a youth's body and mind (like Virginia demonstrated with reading and storytelling). Physical activity also activates endorphins which makes the learning experience a positive memory. When learning various literacies becomes more enjoyable, this increases a youth's desire to continue learning them. Virginia shared how she used this method of muscle memory combined with music and dance at Manitoba schools, and Spakoo-Igitstaan and Randy use drumming and Song to instill character values in youth with their Grandmother Turtle program.

Increase accessibility and decrease elitism, so youth can access (or own) musical instruments and train in various (genres of) musics, and therefore have more opportunities to pursue music-centred careers if they desire. This recommendation is more of a long-term project because institutions—in general—are slow to change their approaches. This is the case for changing the requirements for music auditions for university entrance (Robinson 2019), for decreasing band class costs, for moving away from product-centred music classes in schools, for increasing opportunities for practicum experiences towards music careers and so on. At an individual level, we can support grassroots musical productions and learning opportunities for youth that are focused on experiential learning instead of perfecting performance. Post-secondary institutions could provide opportunities to learn an instrument and to develop skills over the course of a degree (usually two to four years) instead of having to be *excellent* according to stringent classical music criteria *before* arriving at the post-secondary level. From what I understand from the musicians and my own experience as an educator, it is not respectful to expect musicians of all backgrounds, including epistemological backgrounds, to

adhere to solely Western art (i.e., classical) music skills and standards to be “good enough” to participate in a program.

Build relationships with youth based on reciprocal respect because this leads to accountability, and quality learning and instruction. This recommendation is directed towards the adults who are seeking to mentor youth within music learning. Each of the musicians repeatedly demonstrated humility, and that openness to continue to learn is an attitude that will help youth feel safe to be themselves with the instructing adult and feel safe to try new approaches to making music without having to be near-perfect the first try. As Randy shared, “Nobody knows everything” (Turning Robe 2024). One of my understandings from the sharing of each musician is when youth see an adult being willing to learn—and not be perfect as they are learning music and dance—that leads youth to keep trying, and to keep improving as well.

Include demonstrations of gratitude towards all aspects of musicking, so youth learn from that example. Intergenerational transfer of musics, Songs, instruments, ceremony, regalia, and more is something to not take for granted. This gratitude needs to be deliberately taught by demonstrating and speaking gratitude towards mentors, Elders, Grandparents, and Creator, as well as to the community providing opportunities to learn, and to those who provide spaces for musicking. Depending upon the situation, this gratitude can be spoken directly to those involved; it can be gifted through Tobacco or other kinds of gifts like monetary contributions; it can be shown by diligent practicing and performing of a skill learned from a mentor (like Natasha spoke about for her daughter’s band class); or it can be demonstrated through hand writing a simple thank you card. Appreciation goes a long way to helping those who are instructing feel that they are doing something of value for the youth.

Another way to show gratitude and respect for music learning and instructing is to pre-book musicians far in advance and pay them more than they ask for instead of trying to negotiate a minimal rate while asking for extra time and services. This respectful treatment of musicians by people who are requesting their skills is a topic which could be a thesis on its own. Briefly, to properly express respectful treatment towards Indigenous musicians, here are a few suggestions made by the musicians I visited with:

- *Provide adequate monetary compensation* for their skills and for their years of learning languages, music, dances, and protocols.
- *Pay in advance for the necessary supplies* for making drums or rattles, so the Indigenous musician can properly assemble and prepare the supplies for the instruction of youth. Last minute payments for supplies or offers of “reimbursement” for supply costs does not work when it can cost up to \$5000 for one classroom to make deer-hide hand drums (Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bahk’bhook’siiks 2024). Expecting a musician to cover these costs is unacceptable and unrealistic—especially when there are so often groups (including schools) who cancel or change their attendance numbers at the last minute.
- *Prepare the learning environment and the learners* ahead of time to respectfully receive any teachings shared during the event or instructional time.
- *And provide ample preparation time* by requesting Indigenous musicians far in advance of the event. Ample time (as recommended by a few of the musicians I visited with) means six months to a year or more for them to adequately compose,

practice, rehearse with their co-performers, and bring their best selves to the event or instruction opportunity.

All of these are necessary aspects of contracting an Indigenous musician for performances or for instructing youth. Tangible demonstrations of gratitude by respecting musicians' time and expertise will build stronger relationships. When an Indigenous musician is treated well, word will spread, and more Indigenous musicians will want to work with that group or individual who demonstrated respect.

Emphasize respect towards musics, singers, drummers, Songs, instruments, the stories behind the musics, and all aspects of musicking. Everything comes down to respect. Be respectful to self, to youth, to Elders, to spaces provided, to programs created, and to persons performing. Be respectful while in ceremony, during pow wow, with instruments and regalia, towards humans, towards more-than-human kin, and towards musics and Songs directly. As Randy shared, value and treasure them all and they will, in turn, care for you. Insisting on respectful behaviour and respectful attitudes from youth attending sessions to learn music or dance from an Indigenous musician is essential.

Ensure that Indigenous musics are instructed by Indigenous musicians because they are best situated to respect and protect Indigenous Ways of Knowing musics and Song in teaching and learning contexts. When a music instructor is in relation with music as kin, they can convey this relationship—and the importance of the caring accountability within that relationship—to the music learner. Lived experience of being in-relation with the music being taught is also essential for the instructor to be able to protect the music, Songs and instruments from harm—even unintentional harms—by those learning.

Decentre a primary focus on mastery of an instrument in preference of an excellence in a person's approach to musicking. This *approach of excellence* includes making the time to prepare a person's heart, spirit, mind, and body for musicking. As mentioned above, there is way more to instructing and learning musics than just perfecting a specific Song, a specific instrument (including voice), or a specific mode of music making (i.e., a cappella, choral, DJing, electronic, instrument ensemble, or other modes). All a music instructor's values and beliefs, and personal strengths and areas for growth affect their approach of excellence for instruction. Also, the atmosphere a music learner is in at home prior to learning musics, the atmosphere at the place of music instruction, their relationality with their instructor or fellow music learners, and their level of awareness of the more-than-human participants with their musicking affects their approach to learning musics. In essence, the relationality a music learner has with themselves, the humans, and more-than-humans in their world directly affects their ability to prioritize an approach of excellence for learning musics.

Leading Questions

The leading questions that follow are not intended to introduce new lines of inquiry (although they can be used towards that end) or to prescribe specific strategies for either music learners or instructors. Rather, these questions are meant to underscore the reflective questions that may naturally arise from reading the experiences shared by the six musicians. Here are a few of my suggested leading questions:

- 1) What can a music instructor do to develop intrinsic respect for self and others—including more-than-humans—prior to instructing (and inspiring) youth to do the same?

- 2) What are practical ways to develop reciprocal, respectful, and accountable relationships with youth on a consistent, daily level—both in general, and in relation to music learning.
 - a. How can this be done in a wholistic context to include a youth’s whole life instead of just a “music lesson” experience?
- 3) How can an Indigenous music instructor (or performer) establish monetary rates which reflect their lifetime of learning language, music, dance, ceremony, protocols, and the relationships they bring to the instruction or performance experience?
 - a. How can an Indigenous musician set boundaries that demonstrate respect for self and others—including more-than-human—with those who request their expertise?
- 4) How can music instruction be expanded to include other core subjects in an institutionalized education setting instead of limiting music instruction to a specific timeslot or to a specific classroom?
 - a. Similarly, how can post-secondary learning institutions demonstrate tangible respect for varied epistemological ways of approaching music learning and instruction both for admission purposes and in the practical instruction of music?
- 5) How can a young person prepare themselves for learning musics in a way that encompasses their whole life?
 - a. Why should a youth value the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings in relation to music and in relation to how they choose to live their lives daily?

Next Steps

Spaced repetition is helpful during this learning journey about Indigenous music instruction with youth. As mentioned above, Randy, Chris, Virginia, Spakoo-Igitstaan, Natasha, and Shirley each

told me in their own way that *it is not up to us to tell others what to do with music. It is their choice*. In other words, we cannot and should not force people to comply with a certain set of steps, or certain protocols, or certain anything to do with Indigenous music learning or Indigenous music instruction. However, each musician shared in their own way that we can inform, share, suggest, recommend, and model what would be beneficial for Indigenous music learning and instruction with youth.

Epilogue

Elders have shared with me that we need to heal ourselves before we can help others. Music is medicine for my family. Each reader will have their own “next steps” for their journey with learning and instructing musics. I have started my own “next steps” while learning from these musicians. These steps are my way of “approaching with excellence” both learning and instructing musics. First, I am applying the recommendations of the musicians to my own self, and with my own children. Next, I am applying those recommendations—as much as I am able—within my teaching practice with my private piano students and with my students in schools. Further, I registered my youngest two sons and myself in a weekly drumming class during the day with other Indigenous youth.

We still live off-reserve and far away from my sons’ home nation, so we are watching videos of their cultural teachings and looking into participating in Coast Salish festivals in coming years. While in Alberta, my youngest two sons and I are learning to make Grass Dance regalia from Virginia, and they participated in their first registered Grass Dance at a local pow wow in December 2024. Incidentally, we saw Shirley dancing there as well. That helped my sons to make connections from the learning they were doing at the weekly YMCA Drum and Dance

when they saw her dancing. We are continuing to go to ceremony as often as possible with Elder Patrick and Patricia Daigneault and with Chris, as well as continuing personal ceremony at home. Natasha is adopted family, and we see her as often as possible.

Academically, I am gathering feedback from each musician's respective communities about this thesis. I will be printing and binding multiple hard copies of the final approved thesis to gift to each musician, the Tla'amin nation, and other interested community members in Alberta and beyond. Learning and sharings take time to disseminate within a community, and these hard copies will be another way to continue conversations about music learning and instruction.

Each of these musicians is still very active in their musical endeavours, and some of the musicians have expressed interest in continuing to work in this field of research with me for the purposes of improving music instruction and music learning for youth going forward. There are already some bridging relationships between the Cree and Blackfoot musicians involved in this research project with Coast Salish, Interior Salish, Māori, and other nations which could potentially lead to some further visits about music learning and music instruction within other nations' communities.

The intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledges is largely oral tradition, and this thesis is, instead, a written resource. Ideally, the result of this will be that the concept of an *approach of excellence* in musicking will be expanded, moving us further from the more Western philosophy of the pursuit of perfection. Further, I anticipate that when these musicians' recommendations are put into practice, the respect and gratitude demonstrated for musics,

musicians, music protocols, and the more-than-humans involved with musicking will also be noticeably improved.

One of the main messages I learned from the musicians during this research is that music is alive. Therefore, it is essential that music instructors keep developing intrinsic respect before instructing musics with youth, and that youth be encouraged to develop intrinsic respect while they are learning musics. Intrinsic respect for themselves and of music are demonstrated by these six Indigenous musicians. Overall, I have also learned that I can choose to have a healthy kinship relationship with music by acknowledging that music is alive and needs to be cared for as kin.

RESPECTING AND RESEARCHING (CITED REFERENCES)

When I presented my progress in this thesis at a symposium part way through my research, the questions I received from the audience often reflected an equation approach—asking what elements they needed *to add* into their music instruction to make it *equal* “ok.” In other words, these audience members seemed to be asking, “are there specific steps a potential music instructor needs to implement in their music classroom to instruct what they consider Indigenous music, so they select enough content to meet Indigenous content expectations laid out by their governing body or administration?”

I shared the idea of this thesis with colleagues, friends, and family along the way, I often received questions like, “How do you find an Elder or Indigenous musician to teach the music?” “Why can’t you just teach a Song in a respectful way and credit the composer—why must you officially obtain permission?” “How am I supposed to teach the music if there are no notes written down?” “Why must the students be permitted to move around while learning—why can’t they just sit still and listen?” “Why is it so important to you that your sons who are Indigenous, and other Indigenous—and non-Indigenous—students learn musics directly from Elders and Indigenous musicians within schools instead of just ‘finding it elsewhere’?” And a question which hurt—“Why can’t you just raise your kids ‘white’?”

These questions were valuable in guiding how I addressed some of the topics within this thesis. There were some teachings that I have been learning for years which a person unfamiliar with the way Elders instruct, or the environment of a Sweat Lodge, or the effect of stories shared with a purpose would not be able to comprehend at first glance in a research paper or thesis. I have done my best to clarify these areas as I wrote without taking away the opportunity for a person to seek out answers for themselves from their local Elders and Indigenous musicians. In this section, I have included the references from the articles and books I cited in this thesis. There are additional resources I consulted which I did not specifically cite, and they are therefore not included here.

To summarize, please use these cited references as a starting point—not an end point—for your understanding of how to respectfully instruct musics with youth. And if you are required to instruct ‘Indigenous content’ by an employer or have the desire independently to have Indigenous musicians come in to instruct your youth, I urge you to consider the preparation, relationship building, reciprocity, and accountability that will be needed with Indigenous musicians or Elders before undertaking to arrange that opportunity of learning for the youth you are caring for.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Transcripts

Appendix 2: Letter of Musical Sovereignty

Appendix 3: Open Letter

Appendix 4: Five generations photo

Transcripts: How these were written

Each *sentence* equals one count, (versus a line count in each paragraph) and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification or for conversation flow, and most of my [Angela's] contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on each musician's sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians' request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

A note about the punctuation. People don't "speak" their punctuation. For this transcript, I have used periods when a musician has stopped speaking. Often the sentences are short or clipped in an unfinished way. This is partly due to their speaking style, partly due to their way of not sharing too many details about subjects they don't have the rights to, and partly due to the emotion that arises from a topic being shared. When possible, I have added square brackets to clarify what they were referring to because they shared those details when we went over the typed transcripts together. Often, there are pauses and those are shown using em-dashes.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, "Learning and Sharings," each musician went over their own transcripts for clarity and to request edits or deletions before I wrote the draft final thesis. Each musician also was given a copy of the draft final thesis to double check that their message was shared in the way they intended. Any additional edits to wording or punctuation or content were done at that time; therefore, what is included here has been reviewed thoroughly and kept as close to the original visit as possible.

Shirley Hill Visit Transcript

1.1—end. Each sentence equals one count, and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification or for conversation flow, and most of Angela's contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on Shirley's sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians' request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

Present for the visit: Elder Shirley Hill; her daughter, Amy; and researcher, Angela Brooks

1.1—1.4 Shirley: My dad was German, from Frankfurt, and my mom was Siksika [a Blackfoot nation]. I have [an] older brother, [a] younger brother, [an] older sister I have never met, [and a] younger sister. I was with both parents until I was four years old, until my Mom left—probably due to what happened to her at residential school—and then was reunited with her when I was seventeen years old. Then I went to a pow wow with her and that ignited my passion for dancing.

1.5 Angela: How did you meet Randy Turning Robe?

1.6—1.14 Shirley: [I] Started teaching dance eight years ago and have been dancing forty-one years! When I was four years old, I remember dancing around when I was young. I started dancing pow wow at eighteen years old. I didn't have anyone to mentor me at that time, so I would watch other dancers to learn, and would steal their moves. [For example], Lisa Ewack—1986—I told her that “I stole your move!” and she said, “Bust a move now! Show me!” She is world-famous! She was Miss Indian World [1986]. That is why I say ‘steal her moves’.

1.15—1.21 The thing is when you don't know how to dance, it is 1-2-1-2 [referring to the basic dance move where one foot taps twice, and then the second foot taps twice while a dancer moves forward]. But how do you get unique moves? You steal their moves, or copy someone. That is how you get good at your *own* style. What *you* think looks good, and how *your* body moves with the drum, and then you can either do well [Shirley pauses], or do it for fun. I am older now, and *now* I know—I *know* how I dance!

1.22—1.23 Angela: How do you keep dancing for so many years? What motivates you?

1.24—1.38 Shirley: I love the thrill of the competition! At first, I wasn't good enough. I designed my own regalia. I danced at competitions, and was asked to be the head Northern Dance judge for Gathering of Nations. So, that is a big job on the world class level. 3000 dancers! And I had to find the judges for the contests, and I felt like I was in service [Shirley smiles]. To be *on* working as this—the head

Northern Dance judge—you *have* to know what you’re doing, and you have to be able to go and approach people, and not be afraid, and assert yourself, and [Shirley pauses], yeah, get out there—and I *did* it! I gotter done, and yeah! Sometimes, I feel I brag about that, but it was something that at the time...[Shirley smiles]. It was the gathering at 2015—I was the head Northern Dance judge—at San Diego—before the 2015 on, and then I was at the big pow wow, so I *knew* what to do!

- 1.39** Angela: [Is there] anything else you want to say about the dancing motivation?
- 1.40—1.48** Shirley: For the fun of it! For the health! For the teaching aspect! [Shirley pauses] There’s more to it than the competition. The ability to travel to new places—different places. [Shirley smiles] I like creating regalia—and then being able to dance with the regalia. I love the different styles! I dance all styles: Jingle, Fancy, Traditional, Southern Style, Applique, Cloth, and I have a knowledge about all of those styles, so it’s fun to change it up once in a while.
- 1.49—1.57** At the weekend at Erminskin, I was dancing Contemporary Style Fancy in [the] 60+ [years category]. But on Sunday, they had an old-style women’s Fancy Shawl Special, and I thought, “I brought my outfit...I have my hightops from my great grandma” [referring to her hightop moccasins] [Shirley grins]. See, for me to jump into a Special, you have to *look* the part, so if you get chosen you can showcase your style. We had two Songs with just perfect [beats], but then if you get chosen, then you have to dance one or two more Songs. It is a lot of work. I didn’t get chosen. That’s okay. I just had fun.
- 1.58—1.66** The different styles is what’s unique. And the drum tried to trick us! So, if you know the Songs—cuz that first Song was fast—and I was listening to the lead singer, and they made like they were going to stop, and from my peripheral vision I could see women stop...but I *knew*! I kept going! Then the second Song they did it again! On the double-beat! The fancy footwork—and I hesitated because I didn’t expect them to trick again. I think knowing the Songs is important—*really* important—knowing the Songs to dance to [Shirley pauses].
- 1.67—1.83** Always honouring the drum—usually because [Shirley laughs and pauses] because I am in Golden Age now, [and] if they play a nice fast Song for my category, I will go and pay them! I will give them \$40! \$50! And you always ask, “Who is the drum keeper?” And they say, ‘this guy’, or ‘I am’—I will take care of the drum. And they kind of look at me because they probably don’t know who I am, and I just tell them, “Here is a little coffee money,” and the Indian Way is to have the money [Shirley demonstrates curling it] in your hand, and then shake hands, and then release, and then they keep the money. And I say, “Thank you for the nice fast Song.” Being an older dancer, they always [Shirley pauses], alot of

drums sing slow, and it is kind of boring with no motivation. Then I tell the Drum Keeper, “Thank you for singing fast and steady and I really appreciated this Song.” So, by honouring the Drum, you mostly pay them money. [Shirley pauses] Because they don't get a lot. Especially if they are in the drum contest. And there is maybe four or five places, and then they don't even make the place, and then there is *no* drum contest, and they don't have any money. It is a long story, but honouring the drum is important as a dancer.

- 1.84—1.97** You said, what motivates you? The beat of the drum. It really—[Shirley pauses with exasperation] [For example,] when it's, like *really* slow, it's like, [Shirley cringes] I literally closed my eyes, and thought, “Oh *Crap!*” [Shirley laughs] No, really! And I didn't know Crazy Bear were singing—I wasn't familiar with them. The next one would've been—oh, what's their name? Wild Horse! [She grins] They were just just...ooooohhhh! [Laughs and then grunts with oomph at remembering the beats]. It's that *bass*, and *the beat* of the drum... that *really* motivates you as a dancer. It's *powerful!* It's *exciting!* You do different movements—especially if it's Cree—if they're Cree drummers. I think that's it for now. [Shirley pauses]
- 1.98—1.99** [Also, for] the fun of it! The health reasons—keeping active and healthy, the teaching aspect for me for sure, being able to travel, creating new regalia, different styles of dance, and knowing the Songs—like double-beat, crow-hop, shake Song, or a straight Song, or a bullet Song—which would be faster, and then honouring the drum, and then the beat of the drum would motivate me to dance well.
- 1.100** [Angela asked about Shirley's previous experiences teaching dance]
- 1.101—1.114** Shirley: [Fort] McKay was 4 years. Fort McKay was where I worked at the school. I didn't really teach dance there. I was bringing the dance troupe different places. They were already somewhat established. I would take the kids and go [to them]. Now Fort Chippewan was where it was 40 below [means -40 degrees Celsius] and then I would go [teach them dance]. I was teaching there for maybe two...three years...and there was no money in it. The kids didn't have money, but the kids would show up! It wasn't like the parents would show up and pay \$10 per class. No! They didn't care about dancing. But the children who knew that I would be there—they would show up in -45 with the windchill.
- 1.115—1.121** In McKay, [I] worked as a counsellors assistant [in the schools]. In Fort Chippewan, I was homesick for Calgary. I loved the bush life though! People would invite you for tea, and for food, and a visit. [I have] a lot of dedication for the kids who I was teaching there. They liked me, and they remember me—[even] now.

- 1.122—1.129** I feel like I have a lot of important messages to share with the young Indigenous children in need of Native wisdom. You know, I can tell the Indigenous children, "You have an Indian name, what is your background?" And when the Indigenous children are a little older, they know what their Indian name is, and they are proud of who they are. You can't, [Shirley pauses] non-Native children wouldn't have a [Native name]. I mean, some might—have a name given to them—but the Indian name is one of *the most* important parts of knowing who you are. As niitiispīi [Blackfoot word for human being] because it sets you on a path, and it is *related* to your *background*, and your *family*, and your *ties with the Nation* and things like that. Yeah—I feel like I have a lot of [wisdom to share with children].
- 1.130—1.132** Angela: Do you want to use Native? Indigenous? Indian? [referring to how Shirley used three different names to refer to the youth. I asked to ensure accuracy in how she wanted to express her thoughts].
- 1.133—1.141** Shirley: Let's go with Indian name. That name has been getting a [bad usage these] past number of years. I was confused too, but let's say for the treaty purposes—the signing of the treaty—you have to use the word Indian, or the treaty is obsolete. They didn't sign it with First Nations people. That was the term—Aboriginal? Native? No! It was Indian. I am saying it in a way that from the Treaty process way [it makes sense].
- 1.142** Angela: What are all the names of the dances?
- 1.143—1.150** Shirley: I would say... [Shirley pauses]. There are so many Songs! For each style—for each dance style—there are so many Songs for each dance style. [Shirley pauses] Crow hop; straight Song; double-beat; bullet Song; side-step; round-dance Song; women's traditional; chicken dance Songs; fancy dance Songs; grass [dance]; jingle [dance]; thank you Song; [Shirley pauses] honour Song; traditional dance Songs [which includes] men's traditional, women's traditional, southern style, northern style...[Shirley smiles] The list could go on and on...[Shirley pauses] because then in the circle of the Pow wow, these are Songs. But then you have the holy ceremony Songs, and the Sweat Lodge Songs, the good morning sunrise Songs [Shirley laughs]—There is a Song for everything!
- 1.151** Angela: Shared that my youngest sons are Coast Salish, and told them of the Tla'amin Elder who had advised me to learn from Cree and Blackfoot Elders while we are living in this area, and how he had advised to follow the Cree and Blackfoot protocols for ceremony.
- 1.152** Amy: [Nodding in agreement] Different completely.

- 1.153** Angela: Shared my minimal knowledge of protocols for my sons wearing Coast Salish regalia at a plains pow wow, or the protocols on doing a Coast Salish dance at a plains pow wow, or doing plains dances on the west coast.
- 1.154—1.167** Amy: [Your boys need to] go through ceremony to be able to participate in dances. [Amy pauses] Want my opinion? [Angela nods] Blackfoot women don't go in sweats [referring to sweat lodges], but Kaycee [a male Blackfoot Elder] said yes, we can. We took on different roles now—we pay the bills, we work, we take care of our kids, we cook, we clean—so now we have to, [Amy pauses] it is okay to [go in sweats] now. There's regulars. There's pow wow babies. They are born [into the pow wow circuit]. I don't even go to pow wows. [Amy smiles] I pop in, find [my mom's] man's feathers [referring to his regalia], and then I will go see her, and [then I am] gone. I haven't danced [in] forever, but I grew up in it. There's the regulars, then there's the ones that are just coming in—the ones that are just bringing their kids. And then there's pow wows that are open to visitors and then there's others that [Amy pauses and shrugs] you don't belong—and I am Native! [referring to how even she feels she doesn't belong at some pow wows].
- 1.168—1.172** Shirley: The thing is [Shirley pauses] you make friends! Somewhere in there you have to bring your pow wow chair and your pow wow blanket [to save seats]. I have a cousin, and they don't leave their chairs [referring to them staying seated so their spots aren't taken], and they had four or five chairs. [I asked], "Can I leave my chair with you guys?", [and they said], "Oh yeah sure!" Cuz 2022 [referring to a pow wow from that year], I waited for the doors to open, and remember how sick I was Amy?
- 1.173—1.174** Amy: It is different for *you* [referring to her mom, Shirley], [but] no one really knows who *she* is. [referring to Angela]. When I was young, I would sit up front and just watch.
- 1.175** Angela: Asked Shirley about how kids learn to dance at the drum and dance sessions.
- 1.176—1.177** Shirley: A child will *watch*, learn a little bit, *watch*, try a bit, *listen*, and then have that knowledge about how to move—or step in time—to the beats. Each person will come to their own style over time.
- 1.178** Amy: [Amy laughs] Or not!
- 1.179** Shirley: [Shirley smiles and laughs] Or not...
- 1.180** Amy: I am the or not! [Amy laughs]
- 1.181—1.182** Shirley: Sometimes I will see a young girl sitting on her jingles on her jingle dress instead of pulling the jingles up and sitting on the underskirt and wonder her

mother didn't teach her how to sit in her regalia. [Shirley pauses] And then I remember that not everyone knows or grew up with it.

1.183—1.184 Yeah, cuz—and I am not perfect, myself—when I first [went to pow wows] in [the] mid-90s, [Shirley pauses] we were in Kamloops [and it was] plus 36 degrees [Celsius]. You're sweating, and I had a short skirt with a little underneath-shorts-things [on], but I wouldn't do that now because you don't show your legs at the pow wow, I mean!

1.185 Angela: Not even as a little girl?

1.186 Shirley: In BC it is different. It is hot!

1.187 Amy: Hot! [You need] summer dresses.

1.188—1.197 Shirley: Now that I am older, I would never wear shorts—or a short dress—at the pow wow because I am showing my legs! It's not [Shirley pauses]... [For example,] when I went to Creston, I had shared with one of the teachers that the girls—when they are dancing—they need to wear a ribbon skirt. Because they had their shawl and they are flying around, and they had really mini yoga-type short-shorts, and then their bellies showing [Shirley raises her eyebrows] and just a tank top, and they are just jumping around. It's like...*Noooooo..* that is *not appropriate!* Not when you might be wearing a little feather, and some hair ties. You need a [ribbon or traditional] dress, and you need...[Shirley pauses] I am just thinking...[Shirley pauses] My friend who dances old-style, [she says] you *don't* show any skin. I have short sleeves most of the time, but in the old way they wouldn't show any skin.

1.198—1.208 Amy: Traditionally, you're not supposed to show skin. It's like you're *showing* your body. I mean *I* show my body. I come to pow wow with short-shorts—not booty shorts—but shorts are, well, *shorts*. My mom is going [to me] like, [Amy gestures imitating her mom pulling up Amy's own tank top to cover cleavage]. [Shirley and Amy laugh] I am doing a ribbon skirt-making class, and Ruth [an Elder] told me that you don't show skin. You cover your skin. And [back] then it is right, but we are also in a modern day. I mean if you wear a summer dress, [and] if you have a shawl, it's okay [to use that to cover]. I think it is how you wear it. Cover your boobs, cover your butt, and if you have a ribbon skirt—wear it! [Amy smiles.]

1.209 Angela: Asked about protocols surrounding women and drumming, women and the drums, and women singing.

1.210—1.222 Shirley: Well, there's [Shirley pauses] a few lessons—mostly women don't sit at the drum. [Shirley gasps] And, oh my God! I don't know what I was thinking! I was at a big pow wow in Regina, and I went to see my friend, Boss—he is with

Wild Horse—and I have known him from Calgary Stampede, 2004. And the guy in front of me greeted [Boss] and then touched the drum, and then I put my hand, and I touched the drum! [Shirley cringes] And Boss—[Shirley takes a long pause] looked shocked! And I thought, “Oh my *gosh!* What did I *do?* Oh my *gosh*, I *touched a drum!* Oh my *gosh!* That was *ridiculous!* I will *never* do that again!

- 1.223—1.224** Amy: [Amy nods] We are just really powerful, right? We [women] are really *powerful!*
- 1.225—1.232** Shirley: Women—especially on their moontime—don't go *near* the drum. *Zero!* I learned that in Ottawa, in 1991, when the Elder said the women will throw the men out of wack—throw their voices out of wack with the Drum Song. The women stay away from the drum—the Big drum—even the hand drum. So, [Shirley pauses] the women will sit at the drum, [Shirley pauses] but it depends where you are. Any place on this side of the mountains—all the way down to [Shirley pauses] Dakota, North Dakotas and even Ontario and Quebec. And then the one person who might know more protocol is Chantal Chagnon. She sings, and she teaches the Songs to the children, and she knows protocol regarding the drum because she teaches it, and she has [perhaps] 25 drums for the kids.
- 1.233** Shirley: [But] not [at] the pow wow. [referring to women not drumming at the pow wow]
- 1.234—1.240** Amy: It is more accepted—more socially accepted—that the men are around the drum. It's like you don't...[Amy pauses with exasperation] You just don't! I wouldn't even explain—I can't even explain. If somebody asked me why women don't go around the drum, [I would say], “I don't know...we just don't!” We are just too *powerful!* I used to go around [the drum circle] and record, but *not* if I am on my moontime.
- 1.241—1.242** Angela: Randy told me it was okay to be around the drums—just don't touch a painted drum. He said there are not many ceremonial painted drums now.
- 1.243—1.249** Shirley: I painted my drum, and Randy's brother and cousin—Frank and Darcy—helped me. I knew what I wanted—deer tracks. Frank told me the colour: Red, Yellow and Blue and outline in Black. I like my drum. I don't use it—hardly ever. I wouldn't bring it to the pow wow—certainly not! [Shirley pauses] It's just something [Shirley pauses]...it was gifted to me, and I wanted to paint it.
- 1.250** Angela: Shared that I want to be respectful and to walk in a Good Way.
- 1.251—1.253** Shirley: You're asking the right questions. If you don't know, you don't know! You gotta learn somehow!

- 1.254—1.259** Amy: Sometimes, it's not so comfortable just to ask somebody— you don't want to get a wrong answer—a different [answer]. [Amy pauses] Or they're lying! At least my mom—she'll tell you from protocol—and you don't even just go to somebody and just ask them. [For example], we have a language, and I need to learn to write my Blackfoot name, so I can bead it or make it, and I haven't went to [Mom] yet because I don't have anything to offer her. But I also know that she's really busy. [Amy smiles]
- 1.260—1.267** Shirley: So, I have two examples of things that I didn't know. I think it was in the late 90s that I was down south, and I was at the Piikani Gas station—around there—and I seen my friend. I worked with her for a little while, and I hadn't seen her, and we greeted each other. And I looked at her [Shirley pauses], and I said, “You got your face painted!” And she didn't say anything. [Another example], and my girl [Amy] she was with a fellow from down south, [and] he was telling me a little bit of a story. [He was saying], “...and I shot the arrow into the air...” and I asked, “Why did you shoot the arrow?” And he didn't say anything.
- 1.268—1.275** These situations are more sacred. Usually if you have somebody—like for me—if I wear my paint, I always tell the kids it's good luck [referring to specific paint that Shirley wears on her body when she is dancing or teaching dance]. Because it's sensible to me to share that information that way [to kids]. But I don't tell them that I got it for protection through ceremony from a Medicine Man. I didn't want to be attacked again because of jealousy. That's why—that is basically why I wear my paint. I know how it feels, and I know how *ooohhh* how *sick* I was because of psychic attacks! [Shirley pauses] But when I share it with the kids, I tell them [it's for good luck].
- 1.276** Angela: I commented about the wisdom of sharing information according to their maturity levels.
- 1.277** Amy: [Like when you] share it with five-year-olds.
- 1.278** Angela: We wrapped up our visit, and I expressed that I am very grateful for our time and said thank you to both women for sharing.

Chris Wainwright Visit Transcript

2.1 – end. Both visits will be included within the same number series. Each sentence equals one count, and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification or for conversation flow, and most of Angela's contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on Chris's sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians' request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

People present were: Visit one—Chris Wainwright; two of my sons; another Oskapiwis; and researcher, Angela Brooks. Visit two—Chris Wainwright; and researcher, Angela Brooks.

2.1—2.2 Angela: We are at the sweat lodge, and it is Winter Solstice [2023]. Chris, I was just going to ask you about how you learned music growing up, and how it is in your life now?

2.3—2.11 Chris: Yea, well, I think, for me, I love the saying 'if you can talk, you can sing, if you can walk, you can dance'. So, from the time that we are in our mother's womb where we come to be is the first time where we are exposed to music. We are exposed to the heartbeat of our mother—the continuous beat that sometimes speeds up, sometimes slows down—so we are born into rhythm. But music is everywhere you look! You hear Songs, you hear your mother's voice—people in the womb [come] out having heard *many* different types of music—different genres— but mostly, the heartbeat of the womb: Bu boom, bu boom, bu boom of your mother's heartbeat. [Chris takes a breath] And then when you come into this world, we are exposed to Wind, and all the senses. The wind brings us music, and ya hear the trees blow—there's a rhythm—you hear the birds sing, [and] there's rhythm there. So, really we were taught by everything in our surroundings. Even [by] listening to the water—when you go down and you listen to the river or the birds or [Chris pauses] certain animals will make sounds [Chris pauses] like a grouse will beat its chest in a real kinda boom boom boom boom boom boom boom and [it] will get progressively faster—almost like you are listening to electronic music.

2.12—2.18 Ya, I think for me, learning music was, [Chris pauses] listening to my mom play old records back in the day, and just kinda mimicking those Songs. As I got older, it turned into [going] to ceremony and participating. Every ceremony—especially in Indigenous culture—involves music. Whether it's the rattles rattling, or the drums playing, or the Songs that we sing—the traditional Songs. So, when I started going to sweat lodges as a young man—maybe ten years old—I just started humming along with the Songs. The first drum I ever made, I just started playing on it [Chris mimes beating a drum with a drumstick] with a regular beat—not singing or anything—just hitting the drum. Ya, just years and years of

listening to the old guys and old ladies sing and play their drums and use their rattles. [Chris smiles]

- 2.19—2.20** You also form a *spiritual* connection to the Songs cuz that animal had to be hunted, that those offerings had to be put down—the Tobacco—those prayers had to be said for that animal giving itself to you so that you can make your drum or your rattle. So, there's already that connection—*that spiritual connection*—with that animal there.
- 2.21—2.25** Songs are also used as validation. In school, we graduate grade six or kindergarten, eventually you go on to graduate high school, and you're given a diploma. Well, in Indigenous culture, your diploma would be a Song. So, if you had acquired a certain amount of knowledge or were part of a certain clan, or you had been given Rights to Medicines, or to do or hold ceremony, many times you would be gifted a Song—or you would trade for that Song. Sometimes they would trade with rifles, horses, blankets—sometimes, even children might have been gifted for Songs!
- 2.26—2.31** So, there's a long tradition of music—as long as long as anyone can remember! Even before written word or speech there was probably Song. So, we kinda just evolved from that. [Chris pauses] The Songs we sing today, they haven't changed for thousands of years. They are still the same Song. When we sing in the Lodge, alot of our Songs are an expression of gratitude for teachings, and we're showing appreciation for Mother Earth, for the Four Directions, of the Grandmothers [and] Grandfathers that came before us and sacrificed themselves and their ways and went into hiding so they could carry the Songs, and continue to practice in a Good Way.
- 2.32—2.33** And there's similar experiences for everybody all over all over the planet. Every background, every tribe, every culture, all came up with a Song and use Song in various ways for healing, for expression, and the arts.
- 2.34—2.40** Anything you pick up can be a potential instrument! Ya know, like a stick can be an instrument, a fan can be an instrument, a jingle dress—putting [Chris pauses] attaching jingles to a dress, stomping your feet on the ground, [Chris pauses and lifts his hands] your hands—everything! Every sound that we make with our mouth! [Chris smiles] There's no limits to what music can be! We've kinda defined what rhythm should be, or [what] verses [should be] and that—but that's changing too. [If you] listen to music—that's evolving. A lot of music is off-beat nowadays, and that's on purpose.
- 2.41—2.48** And, [Chris pauses] things are constantly evolving and changing. Even when our Elders talk about Vibration. There's a sound of Energy that the earth vibrates to and if you hone in on that—those vibrations—you can often find yourself in a

state of meditation or relaxation. [Chris smiles] You go on YouTube, [and] often you can find things that say 482Hz sound for help [to] heal. Those kinds of things. Vibration exists all around us! Even if we take off our shoes and walk on the earth barefoot, you're picking up vibration from the earth—you just don't even know it because our senses are so limited. We're picking up different sounds, and senses, and vibrations that we don't even know that we are picking up—right?

- 2.49** Angela: While we are visiting, another Oskapawiy is in the background ripping cloth for Tobacco to be tied in. Then they will be hung inside the sweat lodge. My sons, Glen and Daniel, enter at this point and ask the Oskapawiy what he is doing. They assist with prepping the Sage by pulling it off the stems.
- 2.50—2.52** Chris: So, that's, [Chris pauses] I mean, that's how I kind of came into thinking about Song, and music, and how we can use it. [Chris smiles] I think about the *Power* of the Round Dance and how that can be used as *Medicine and healing*. People in the community coming together in *Circle* to the sound of the drum, holding hands, *tapping* into that vibration, and using it to *heal communities*, and to celebrate, and to *honour* those traditions.
- 2.53** Angela: Asked Chris if there were other memories he had about music and his family while growing up.
- 2.54—2.63** Chris: mom listened to old records I grew up always listening to Elvis or Madonna. My dad had a massive classic rock collection—he had probably 1000 records! He was always playing classic rock music. And so that's what I grew up listening to. All the classic pop Songs—Michael Jackson—that as well, but also all the classic rock, experimental, psychedelic type music and then [Chris smiles] eventually being introduced to ceremonial Songs. Then going to pow wows as a young man, and hearing the Big drum play with five to eight guys sittin' around or ladies sittin' around a drum—all in sync and singing. To me that was amazing—that *that* many people could be totally in sync drumming while singing at the same time! Then the different sounds that they were making! I didn't even know voices could do that! That was an eye-opening experience for sure.
- 2.64** Angela: I was wondering, [did] your family take you to the pow wows or [did] you [go] on your own with friends?
- 2.65—2.71** Chris: No, my family would take us. We did a lot of travelling and hittin' up different pow wows when I was a kid. Then, [as a young adult] I went on to work at a group home for seven years, and we would take the kids to the pow wow in and around Calgary. Then, we had one [time]—we'd go visit out in Kamloops—the Gathering of Nations pow wow. We'd try to get out there once a year. And so, ya, it was pretty eye opening the first time hearing those drums and how loud they

can be with no amp! It was just amazing that people could generate sound that powerful!

- 2.72—2.73** Angela: At this time, Elders Patrick and Patricia Daigneault arrive, and out of respect, we stopped our conversation and greeted them. We continued our visit another morning before sweat lodge about a month later.

Second visit begins:

- 2.74** Angela: How do you ideally want to see music taught with youth going forward?

- 2.75—2.80** Chris: For me it all started with my parents. I think you have to be almost conditioned to appreciate music in some ways. But [with] our kids [referring to his own children], we always encourage them to pick up an instrument. With Kiya, [Chris's daughter] whatever you can grab, and bang on something, [or] pick up a rattle and shake it! [Chris pauses] Using Song at nighttime before bed is a really good one to get kids into the thought of rhythm and sounds and acknowledging what is all around us—whether it is the creaking of door, and the wind blowing through. [Chris smiles.] There is music all around us!

- 2.81—2.90** I was introduced [to music] at school as a young person, but I didn't really gravitate towards the instruments that they wanted us to learn. They wanted [us] to learn the ukelele and the recorder. Those instruments didn't really call to me like the drum does. Bring people in that play music! I think that was one of the big things I didn't see as a kid—rarely ever did our school have someone come in and play a live instrument for us. [Chris pauses] And so, music class always felt like somebody at the front giving us directions and telling us what to do. We weren't allowed [Chris pauses] we weren't given the freedom to just discover for ourselves, or to play around, or things like that—it was always very regimented. I don't know what schools are like now—maybe they've changed—but yeah, I just remember growing up it was either you were going to be in the band, or in play in the marching band—that kind of a situation. I think schools are doing a better job of trying to recruit [Indigenous] drummers and bring in different types of people. But it's hard to find people who do that kind of work or share a lot of those teachings.

- 2.91—2.99** So, [Chris pauses] I mean, you can find [music] in the community. You can go to any kind of festival. You can go to a Latin festival, you can go to a pow wow, [or] you can go to any kind of East Asian festivals. So, take your kids to festivals during the summer—do a family festival weekend. [Chris smiles] Those kinds of things, [Chris pauses] or just encourage them to pick up little tiny instruments—piano [or] whatever. I think as adults, we get a little bit [Chris pauses]—we don't always have the most patience. So, when kids are jamming out on something really loud—for a long period of time—we tend to suppress it. Ideally, you'd have

a music room, so it would be sound proof, but the kids would want you to hear [them playing]! [Chris laughs] So, it wouldn't really matter if you have the sound proof room, they would still come [out to play the music].

2.100—2.101 Angela: Spoke about music in context of community and sharing it instead of keeping it only within a classroom. Complimented him on his daughter's singing when she was in the sweat lodge, and thanked him for the Song he shared with my sons because they sing it when they are needing some encouragement.

2.102—2.107 Chris: Oh yea, music is therapeutic for sure! [It] doesn't matter how old you are! Most people I know use music—whether you are in your car on your way to work, or sittin' at your desk, or learning Songs. [Chris smiles] Music is everywhere, and we just need to find better outlets for kids for them to get excited about it—it doesn't have to be a competition. We are all so [Chris pauses] we are all so regimented in what's popular music and how it should sound. Who is to decide what music should sound like, ya know?

2.108—2.114 Chris: I don't discourage my kids either when they show me music. Growing up it's always the parents that are like, "That's not music! That's garbage!..blah..blah..blah..." I try not to come from that angle. I [will say], *why* do you like this music? What is it about this music that *you* like—and then try to come at it from *that* angle so you don't come off as being judgemental because of their playlist, or whatever. [Otherwise, kids would say,] "Right, come'on! You're just an old guy who doesn't appreciate music!" [Chris laughs]

2.115 One day, most of our music will be AI [referring to Artificial Intelligence] generated, so [Chris pauses] you can sit and complain about *that* kind of stuff.

2.116 Angela: Asked Chris if he thinks human-created music will be overtaken by AI.

2.117—2.123 Chris: It will definitely be. I think everything is a pendulum, so it's going to go *so far* AI that people are going [to] be [saying], "This doesn't have a human element anymore, this is too [Chris pauses] everything is *too perfect*, the sound is too *generated*. You don't get the fluctuations in frets, or breath taking, or different things that make music imperfect. [Chris raises his arms with enthusiasm] Which is *good music* when [it] has that imperfection to it. I think its going to go so far one way, and then there will be a movement of people [saying] "We've got to bring it back to the grassroots of what music *used* to be and the *human element*!" [Chris laughs]. I think about it, and there's still a large contingent of people that collect vinyl and just love the sound of vinyl, and there's always going to be movements like that. I think, [Chris pauses] [it's important to be] appreciating the art and the imperfections of sound.

- 2.124 Yes, I couldn't see AI performing jazz in a way that's just created out of thin air and have it actually sound [Chris puts his hands out and shrugs].
- 2.125—2.130 I think we need to be more intentional and not put so many parameters up. [Chris pauses] And just try not to discourage it—even if we don't agree with the sound—don't discourage your kids when it comes to music! Even if the lyrics are terrible, there is *usually some* redeeming quality behind the lyrics, or there's a message behind it. So, sometimes, it's better to *be curious* than judgemental when it comes to kids, and music, and those kinds of things. Ya, they're getting something out of it. There is something about it that is connecting with them—just because it is not connecting with me [Chris smiles], that's ok!
- 2.131—2.135 And I like that [kids] don't have fear of being offbeat or of singing above or below [the correct note]—they just sing! And they're not [Chris pauses] it's ok if they fall out of line with the other things [referring to rhythm, volume, tempo, words and other aspects of making music]. It is different if you're thirty years old, or forty years old, and you're singing *over* people and all that. Expectations change a little bit—but with *kids*, man? They need that *playfulness* in music, and life, and experience, and not to feel shamed by those things.
- 2.136 Angela: Asked Chris if he had any further thoughts.
- 2.137—2.146 Chris: No, I think we talked about pretty much everything I wanted to talk about it. As far as ceremonial music, and the differences between that and pow wow, and how we look at Songs traditionally as kind of like a diploma of learning. [Also,] I think your voice changes as you get older too, and a lot of times it becomes more *seasoned*, and it has a different kind of beauty to it—that also can't be replicated [referring to AI]. I think people need to sing as young as they can to as old as they can! As long as you have a voice, just keep pumping it out! And even if you don't have a *good* voice just *practice* at it! And who's to say what a good voice is? In ten years, it could be totally different! Push the boundaries of what the mainstream—of what society—thinks is...[Chris pauses] Cuz that's what music is to me in its rawest form—is pushing boundaries, rebelling, and all those fun things! [Chris smiles]
- 2.147—2.149 Music carries an energy for sure! It's like when you go to a live show there is *totally* a different sound and energy at a live show than there is if you're just listening to something digitally. So, *support live music*! [Chris laughs]
- 2.150 Angela: I thanked Chris again for his sharing and helped him finish tidying the lodge before we left.

Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells Transcript

3.1—end. Each sentence equals one count, and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences. Virginia and I had two recorded visits, and the same number sequence will be used until the end of the second visit's transcript.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification, or for conversation flow, and most of Angela's contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on Virginia's sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians' request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

Present during visit: Virginia Jessica Sparvier-Wells; and researcher, Angela Brooks.

3.1 Angela: Asked Virginia how she started in music.

3.2—3.16 Virginia: I started with piano. [I] hated piano! That instrument was *not* my friend. I started [music] in grade three or four because I was playing flute by grade five. I mean, the piano teacher was great. She was amazing. It was me, not them [Virginia laughs]. Now, I have two pianos at home! [Virginia laughs]. Anyways, that aside. I started out with [piano], and I started playing flute [in] grade five, grade six, then band [in grade] seven through twelve. [I was also in] concert band, honour band, [and] wind ensemble in the above [grade] levels. In grade seven, I was in grade nine music, [so] it was hard to go on band trips! [Virginia raised her eyebrows] [I would think], "What are these kids doing?" [I travelled] with that Alberta Honour Band, [attended] the summer band music camp Alberta. I was [involved in] music—flute— all the way through. I went into university at seventeen years old.

3.17—3.24 [I] chose music because I couldn't go into Biology which [is what] I wanted to. Math was terrible for me. [Also], I missed the high school band trip. We [were supposed to come] back on my audition day and I didn't want to miss my audition day [for university entrance]. I see in hindsight [it] was probably better [that I missed the band trip] because I didn't have a handle on my allergies at that age, and going alone to New Orleans is probably not a good idea with all the foods. So, I am kind of glad I missed it. Even to this day [my high school band teacher] says, 'you should have gone on your band trip'. But I would have died or missed my audition [Virginia shrugs].

3.25—3.34 So, then I went to University of Calgary (U of C) for two years—dropped out. Went into University of Manitoba (U of M) for almost two years. I dropped out of music, went into a different program, and then dropped out. Then I *quit* music. I was playing a few gigs here and there in Winnipeg with different arts-based things, and [I] really got into the art and dance. Then I just started dancing full time, and working in the art field in the field of contemporary Indigenous art. [I]

didn't pick up my flute again until 2016. I mean, here and there, I would do something for a video, [someone would say], 'Oh yeah, Jess plays flute!' So, I would pull it out to do something. [In] 2016 I picked it back up, auditioned, got back into U of C, finished my degree in *one* year, went back and did my Masters in Contemporary Art in 2017-2019.

- 3.35** Angela: Asked Virginia about the reasons for her withdrawing out of the music programs at the universities.
- 3.36—3.40** Virginia: It was terribly racist. I was told to drop out all the time by my teachers. It's not like it's a *surprise* anymore. But, [for example], my first-year flute teacher—I was taught one or two studies for my *whole year* and only *half of a piece* because I wasn't "good enough." Most of my [flute] lessons were me doing push ups, and sit ups, and her yelling me that I don't know what a flute sounded like.
- 3.41—3.44** Second year [at university] I had a really good teacher—Marion. She's brilliant—and I absolutely love her—but I couldn't continue. She was willing to work with me to be up to performance [standards] 'cause I wanted to be in performance, but they told me, 'you're not good at performing, so you should be a teacher'. But I didn't want to be a teacher because I don't have that teaching gift in music.
- 3.45—3.49** So, by that time, I was just done. I had learned a lot of music, and I got quite good in that year. And then my friend—my *dear* friend—convinced me to do an 8am jazz class on a Saturday. So, I did that for her. I ended up auditioning at U of M and trying to go to school there in jazz just to get away—that did *not* work out [Virginia shrugs].
- 3.50—3.60** I wasn't getting support. I was told I wasn't good enough. U of M told me to drop out. The director was really supportive of me. I think it's hilarious now because I look at the list of Songs [that] the second teacher [said]: 'The Songs Jessica needs to know'—thirty-two Songs I needed to memorize for my final exam! Then, in jazz [at U of M]—they are New York jazz musicians—so the bar was *so* high in that school! You know one Song, you better know it in *all* the keys because at our Monday night jams—[which were] public performances—[our teacher] would get up and say, 'We are going to play this Song in this key'—and *no music*. He [would say], 'This is how New York is!'. I got *really good* with my ears. [Virginia grins] I listened to the recordings I made back then, and I was actually pretty good! A lot of it was no confidence and [little] understanding.
- 3.61—3.67** Also, Winnipeg is super racist. No one wanted to be in my ensemble. I had a hard time getting into groups to do group work or ensemble work. I only started getting in when I told them that my family is from a Mennonite town outside of Winnipeg. My mom's cousin happened to marry the superintendent of that whole

district, and as soon as [the other students] found out I was related to [a certain prominent Mennonite family], all of a sudden, they were saying, ‘Oh! Be in our ensemble!’ and play with them. I wasn’t even Mennonite! We married *into* a Mennonite family. It was like, ‘You are okay now,’ because you are linked to this family who was pretty prominent.

3.68—3.77 So, [after that], I switched into English and Native Studies, and *then* I had a [good] professor. I said [to that professor], ‘I can’t do this!’. She was encouraging my art practice, and she said, ‘Well, you can do it *without school* Jess,’ and, so I said, ‘Okay, Chow!’ and I poured *everything* into my dance company! [Virginia laughs] It did really, really well. It got it’s grounding in Winnipeg. I taught dance, I taught art, I taught out of their schools, [and] I worked through their triple A program (Aboriginal Academic Achievement). Their [Manitoba schoolboard] curriculum is amazing, and their schools are amazing, and there was always a place for me in the schools. But not at the university music faculty. The rest of the [university] was amazing. They had an Indigenous engineering program, native students, Elders galore—it was amazing! [Virginia pauses]

3.78—3.92 [But] classical music, jazz—it still is as it always has been. Even when I went back to school, where I ended up 2nd flute in symphonic flute at U of C—I battled my way up. It was *stupid*. There was *no reason* I should have been there [in 2nd flute]. And I ended up in finishing in one ensemble as first flute, section leader, [although] they didn’t give me that at the first place. That final concert—I was kind of mad about it—but I still managed to get all the solos for that final concert. The [other students and teachers] were mad about it because they didn’t want me to have the solos. But it’s just that everyone else choked. They *had* to give it to me. I was happy about that [concert] because my birth mom came to that concert. I didn’t know until later—until Elijah told me about it months later. She was there, and so her seeing me there in that position [1st flute, section leader], I mean, *I did it!* I almost *failed* out of my flute lessons, and I almost got *kicked out* of my performance classes because I was in the *hospital!* I had a near-death thing happen, and the [professors] were [saying], ‘Oh, Jess missed two classes, we need to kick her out of class.’ Even with my *stack* of medical papers they had to concede that they couldn’t fail me out of my performance classes.

3.93—3.103 [At University of Manitoba], jazz was crash piano. Half of the course was reading music—not to the grade six level we were supposed to be at—and the other half was learning how to read jazz charts. Then, I got an interdisciplinary degree, [not a performance degree]. I filled it with performance courses, but they still wouldn’t give me a recital. [Virginia pauses] So, I was denied a recital every single year because I was not good enough to do a recital according to my teachers. And so, you know what? The students they chose [to do the recitals] are not doing well in this world. Their *star* students—performance students who are *not performing*. They are in completely different [fields]. Why don’t you give it [the recital] to the

ones who *wants* it because we will work harder and probably succeed versus the one you *think* should have it but doesn't actually want to do it. So, I finished that and then I did my Masters in Fine Arts - Contemporary Art.

- 3.104—3.112** Graphic Scores—I found out about graphic scores in my last year of university. I had taken two capstone [courses]. So, I did block courses in interdisciplinary studies seminars. There were both absolutely amazing because the teachers were not musicians. They were dancers, and I just learned so much about graphic scores. There was a PhD student who was studying graphic scores at the university, and she had brought in all these books with fur scores, and all these wild things. Part of our classes were performing these scores, and it was meant for people who weren't musicians. So, we did some singing, and some movement, and I fell in love with that, and I wanted to learn more about that. So, I have started incorporating that [into my compositions].
- 3.113—3.120** I have no composition experience. So, when I went to Banff [Centre of Performing Arts]—I think it was when I was doing my Masters—I decided to go to Banff for the Indigenous Classical Gathering. Cris Derkson and Jeremy Dutcher [were there]! We were the first cohort, and I got to be with them! I was so excited! [Virginia laughs] I didn't know who was going to be there. I was so nervous. We all walked into our first session, and we were [wow'd when we saw Jeremy]!
- 3.121—3.131** I went to that—[and] it changed my life! Cris said, 'You need to compose more!' and then she started giving me these gigs for composition. Without Cris's support of my career, I don't know where I would be because she's championed me in all these spaces. I met Cris when I was in Winnipeg in 2008. She has always been supportive of me. I met her as a dancer [referring to herself dancing at an event when her and Cris first met]. She asked, "You do flute and hoops?", and I said, 'Yes, I do!' It's been really nice to have somebody in the industry, but also synch learn and everything she does, and how supportive she is of us [Indigenous musicians]! [Virginia smiles] And so then, after that, I started composing. Then the pandemic hit, and all these commission started pouring in! I guess this is my new path. [Virginia smiles]
- 3.132** Angela: Asked Virginia about her invitation to be artist in residence in Nova Scotia.
- 3.133—3.141** Virginia: That ended up being 'artist in residence—at home,' but going there [only] to perform [due to the pandemic]. That was fun! [Virginia laughs] I met Alan Sillyboy! He is amazing, and a visual artist. He is Mikmaw. He is pretty cool. So, there's a lot of really awesome things that happened during the pandemic—surprisingly! And then I got my city job. I am so grateful for [it]

because all my [music and dancing performance] gigs dried up [during the pandemic and for a while afterwards].

3.142 Angela: Asked Virginia her perspective on composing, and asked Virginia how she approached composition.

3.143—3.156 Virginia: ‘Cause I have no training in composition besides theory 2 in university [referring to Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) Rudiments 2], it does not come easy—[not] at all! Some things come easy, like the ‘For Nikawiy’ [which in Cree means: for mother]. That is a letter to my birth mom. That Song—I sing that—and the melody came out first. [Actually], writing [the letter] came first, then the melody, and then the piano came underneath, and then Conner finished writing the piano [part]. When I write for other people, it doesn't come easy. I rewrote another piece three times and deleted everything! *Now*, I don't delete everything. That one [referring to the piece she deleted three times] came melody lines first with my flute. Like Mountain Prairie, the chords came first—[and were] written for a beginner singer. I rewrote it for Jonathan [referring to the opera singer at her concert who is also on her album, *Prairie Dusk*]. For me, composing is fun! [Virginia smiles] *Practicing* music is fun because I don't think I need to put such a weight on it to *survive* anymore. With the day-job [I have,]—it's very flexible—I'm more free to do things [referring to music and dance gigs].

3.157 ‘I am in a good balance now.’

3.158 Angela: Asked Virginia about her family.

3.159—3.163 Virginia: [My] Gramma passed away. My birth mom and I have had a rocky relationship. It's good, and then its bad, and then its *bad*. That is why I wrote the Song, ‘cause I think there is a lot of layers that I didn't understand around the 60s scoop and adoption until much later. I think [Virginia pauses] watching my friends in some situations [Virginia pauses] I feel like I have more understanding, and I do want to *not* have that relationship be in a bad place anymore.

3.164 Angela: Asked Virginia if she does ceremony before composing or performing, and Virginia shared that each person has their own ceremony that they do, or have been taught, or are learning—each in their own way.

Visit two begins:

3.165 Angela: Asked Virginia about her ideal world of how youth need to be learning music.

3.166—3.182 Virginia: I think just in general music and the arts should be integrated in the [education] system. Like,—in Winnipeg—it is integrated at every level of the curriculum. Music, and visual arts, and theatre—the whole curriculum—is *enveloped* in the arts. It's not like, 'Here, [now] we are going to art class'. [The arts are a] *part* of it, and [part of] those kids. I think you'd have to look it up because there's stats about this school. When they first started the school, it was the roughest school ever. *No one* wanted to teach there. No one wanted to *be* there. Then they started integrating the arts curriculum, and they turned the school around to be one of the best schools in the division! [Virginia smiles] *And* they had outdoor plant things where they were planting plants. And the *scores*, the *academic scores*, flipped from the *worst* scores of math in all of Winnipeg [to some of the best!]. The research is *there*. Most people don't want to fund it, but the research *is* there. These kids that were considered the worst kids ever, [yet] they were successful because the arts curriculum was *imbedded in everything*. And I think that's where it should be at. I think it should be like that—fully integrated—*not* separated out. I think with the level of ADHD and everything else—it becoming more common in schools these days—this [referring to the arts] is what's going to retain their memory. [Virginia pauses]

3.183—3.198 I remember working—I can't remember what Nation it was—[and] they were struggling with literacy, so what we did was integrated easy stories, and then language and spelling into *dance* games. They were learning basic words and how to read by doing these running-dance games. One, they are getting their energy out; two, they are retaining it better because [Virginia laughs] *who* is not going to remember running across the room to the right word? *Or*, they are creating dances based on the book. So, while they are struggling to read, they are *physically* remembering. [It's] called accelerated language learning. It's like you say, and you act. You're going to remember if everything on this side of your body is male and everything on this side is female [Virginia demos on her own body by lifting one arm and then the other] and you're saying Kokum [Cree for grandmother] [Virginia raises her right arm above her head], Moshum [Cree for Grandfather] [Virginia raises her left arm above her head]. So, [Virginia raises her right arm above her head again and at each family word she punctuates the air a little lower towards her waist] Kokum, nikawiy [Cree for mother], nikawis [Cree for aunt], nimis [Cree for sister], and [Virginia puts her right hand in her lap, then raises her left hand above her head and at each family word she punctuates the air a little lower towards her waist] Moshum, nohtawiy [Cree for father], nistes [Cree for brother], niciwam [Cree for cousin], nikosis [Cree for son], [Virginia lowers her left hand to her lap, then raises her right arm again] and nitanis [Cree for daughter]. So, each side of you [is a different gender], and you're having to stand up, and do all these arm actions! [Virginia laughs] Then, you're remembering in terms of *language* learning! So, when it comes to the story [referring to creating dances based on a book], it was [the] same thing—we would read the story together, or each group would have their [own] book. Doing this with teachers

was [different]—they just turn into toddlers! [Virginia laughs] We had *fifty* teachers goofing off! But, with kids, it was *much* more successful. Teachers on [a] Professional Day (PD) day? They lose their brains! [Virginia smiles]

3.199—3.209 So, we made each kid responsible for an action out of the book. Simple five-word sentences. “See spot jump,” so the [kids are] jumping. It’s very simple, but it’s helping them to learn at the same time—even though it was not my purpose in this school [Virginia smiles]. We switched [the books] to Indigenous legends because I was working [at] Indigenous schools on reserve. It made things a bit better. We were reading the physical book, and then doing the actions, and *creating dances* that they shared with each other. Then they move on to *creating* their *own* stories, and having to *remember* their stories, and *writing* it down, and *performing* those stories. I used to love it. Because I don’t teach all students anymore, I don’t have the opportunity to do that as much anymore because I am more focused on ‘We are coming in to teach culture.’ We are not coming in to help the school with their *literacy* problem.

3.210—3.213 I only worked in elementary schools with that one. In high school it was a bit different. We talked about land rights and acquisition in Social Studies classes all the time. I prefer to work with the younger kids, grade two to four—maybe grade five. [Virginia laughs]

3.214 Angela: I asked Virginia: since she recommends using music in every subject, does she experience barriers—if any—when she tries to bring these ideas in.

3.215—3.227 Virginia: No, because teachers hire me to come in. They are open to it. The only barriers that I run into are the teachers that didn’t want it. If the principal brought me into the school, [then] usually about 75% of the teachers thought it was useless, and stupid, and why was I there. And that translated to the kids’ attitudes towards me, and I would be treated really badly. So, I just can’t do it anymore. It is like, ‘why am I doing this? I have another job—I don’t have to do this’. So now, we are more free to do what we want—to work in Indigenous communities instead—which is where we want to be [referring to her husband and her performance troupe Wild Mint Arts]. Instead of forcing people who don’t want to learn it, or [to] be engaged with it. It’s not our place to *make* people want it. *They have free choice*. They don’t *want* to learn it—they don’t *have* to. I am not going to put myself in that situation.

3.328 Angela: Mentioned that the Alberta Teacher’s Association (ATA), and Alberta Education requires teachers to include Indigenous teachings within the classrooms.

3.329—3.335 Virginia: I did an Orff workshop for teachers. [referring to Waldorf—early childhood music education]. I was in Orff when I was a kid. I think it was the

only thing that brought me legitimacy to most of these people. They don't think I understand [music]. No! I took Orff from one of the pillars in the Orff community! Everyone knows [the specific teacher I studied under].

3.336—3.357 When I was teaching [the workshop], about maybe twenty of those teachers left as I was speaking. Because they were [saying], ‘Oh, we are here to learn music to teach our students.’ There was one [teacher] who I got into an argument with in university—we went to university together. Anyways, I don't think she recognized me until we were thirty minutes into the presentation, and I *saw* the moment she recognized me. Then she rolled her eyes, and she was on her phone, and she was so disrespectful until the break, and then she left. I [thought], ‘Why didn’t you just leave like everyone else?’ There's just such an *extractive* community in music education. What can we take? I had this lady come up to me and was like, ‘Oh! I really like the Song you sang, but can I just replace it with Blackfoot words?’ and I was like, ‘No, you cannot.’ She's like, ‘Why?’ I'm like, ‘That's not culturally appropriate.’ She's like, ‘Why are teaching us that then?’ So, I am like, ‘This is not the reason I am here.’ And so, I left it open to [the teachers to] reach out to me after. Out of sixty teachers, three reached out to me. So, [Virginia shrugs] that tracks. One wants me to do a residency—which I won't do. The other one [wanted] to know if they can make graphic scores, and I [said], ‘Of course! *Anybody* can make graphic scores!’ And the other one wants me to come in, and make a Song with them for the school, and I [said], ‘Great! Let's do that!’ Because that's *better*. It's better than taking a Song and changing it.

3.358 Angela: I commented that at least *those* three teachers approached respectfully.

3.359 Virginia: [Virginia nodded] You get what you get.

3.360 Angela: Shared about how one of my sons wants to learn the ‘glow in the dark’ hoops which was part of the dance performance Virginia did when we first went to see her perform.

3.361—3.373 Virginia: They have to [Virginia pauses]—with hoop dance, you *have* to pow wow dance. There's no [Virginia pauses]—if you do [hoop dance] without pow wow dancing, you will not be a good hoop dancer. So, the way that I was taught is you have to learn *all* the styles. So, Alex [referring to her dance mentor] made me learn Fancy, Jingle, Grass, Traditional, Fancy Bustle—so I had to learn *all* of them in order to be a good hoop dancer. And I noticed some of the youth that I teach don't want to dance pow wow. They are not as advanced in their dance moves—the ones that only want to do the hoops—because they are not learning the *footwork*. They're not learning the *history* of the styles. They're not understanding [Virginia pauses] because each pow wow style leads to a different strength in the body. So, one style usually focuses mostly on arms, or [for example] Jingle focuses exactly here [Virginia slaps her calf muscle]. There's

nothing else that Jingle does except here! [Virginia laughs] So, you have to be able to dance *all* those styles if you want to elevate your hoop dancing to performance level. Kids and people do come up to me and say, 'I want to learn to dance hoop, but I don't want to dance pow wow,' and I say, 'Then I am not the teacher for you because I was taught this way by a world champion, and this is how it's going to go.' [Virginia smiles] 'Cause, it's the basic step [referring to the basic pow wow step 1-2-1-2 where one foot taps twice, and then the second foot taps twice as the dancer moves forward, and then beyond to more advanced pow wow dance footwork] is the basis of hoop dance, and you will miss all of that—understanding how your [legs and] arms work together—you'll miss all of that!

3.374—3.375 Virginia: I shocked all my friends when I listened to Country music [Virginia laughs]. I grew up in Southern Alberta!

3.377 Angela: Thanks Virginia for sharing and we make plans for future visits together.

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Natasha Goodman Transcript

4.1 – end. Each sentence equals one count, and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification or for conversation flow, and most of Angela's contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on Natasha's sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians' request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

Present for the visit: Natasha Goodman; her husband, Dave; and researcher, Angela Brooks.

4.1 Angela: Asked about when Natasha first remembers music in her life as a child.

4.2—4.12 Natasha: I have to say, my first memories would be my mom singing when I was little. She would always sing different lullabies. I remember her singing Amazing Grace. That was my Song from her. Yeah! That would be earliest memory for music. And then, dancing with my mom. [Natasha laughs] She made me dance with her—in the kitchen to dance—like the jive dance. So, there was always music playing in the house. There was always a moment like [Natasha pauses] like there was the faster kind of music for cleaning, and then there was the singing kind of music for baking and cooking. [Natasha pauses] And then there's the shower music. [Natasha laughs]

4.13—4.28 I sing in the shower still. [Natasha smiles] When I clean [around the house], I turn on the music. Sometimes, I have a mood for [specific] music, or sometimes I just play random. My dog dances with me when I play music. [Natasha laughs] When I put music on, he looks for me and then he starts dancing. He dances! [Natasha grins]. Both my kids are pretty [Natasha pauses] their taste in music is very broad, and I am very proud of that. My son's playlist is all over *two* generations of music. He goes through all the good [Natasha pauses]. People *generally* stay in their [own] decade. Kiera too [referring to her daughter]. She's probably upstairs with her headphones on right now. She's got her own playlist on her iPad, and I share music with her. I will like a Song—from when I was around her age, or an album or something—and I will say, here, listen to this, girl! I am really broadening their horizons. Music is a *huge* part in our home! [Natasha smiles]

4.29 Angela: I shared about my son's putting on calm music to help *me* be calm [Angela laughs]

4.30—4.33 Natasha: I do that too. I have meditation playlists that I listen to. And then I have all these different kinds of healing musics that I listen to in the bath—just to set the mood or the vibe. Then we have bedtime music that we listen to.

4.34 Dave: There's other stuff you can listen to at night.

- 4.35 Natasha: Yeah—[music has] got that nice tone that brings you down from the day.
- 4.36—4.38 Dave: Megahertz. White noise. Fans are great for that.
- 4.39—4.40 Angela: I commented, ‘Some think [those kinds of sounds are] not music, but it is because it’s sound. What would your definition of music be?’
- 4.41—4.44 Natasha: It’s anything! [Natasha laughs] You can go sit down by the river and hear the water trickle over the rocks, and that can be *music* to your ears. Or the wings of a bird flying. Anything can be music!
- 4.45 Angela: I commented that I wondered if the enjoyment of a sound makes people equate it to *music*, and if they don’t enjoy the sound, then people call it *noise*.
- 4.46—4.50 Natasha: Yes! That is true! There is some music out there that I *don’t* enjoy, and it *is* noisy. It doesn’t [Natasha pauses] it’s not *pleasing* to my ear. It’s someone else’s favorite Song, but for me—I am like—I ‘ll pass! [Natasha laughs]
- 4.51—4.54 Natasha: I like orchestra music. My kid plays clarinet, and she has a keyboard upstairs and it kind of helps her. She can follow the fingers when she plays the Songs. My son—he played the guitar and trumpet.
- 4.55 Dave: In school [referring to their kids playing those instruments at school]
- 4.56—4.64 Natasha: He still has a guitar, but he did trumpet in band class. They got so good! [Natasha smiles] I think music is important. Watching my daughter read music and then write it out after only being in music class for so many months! [Natasha raises her eyebrows] I still don’t know what that means! I was never privileged enough to play music [growing up]. That was *not* part of the budget. Music also helps with your cognitive learning. It makes your brain grow.
- 4.65—4.67 Dave: I listen to tonnes of music—huge playlist! I wasn’t a very musical kid. I didn’t even consider going into band.
- 4.68 Natasha: It was a choice—either music or band.
- 4.69 Angela: Shared about my kids using music when they are having strong emotions of any kind, and often making up their own lyrics or melodies.
- 4.70—4.76 Natasha: [Natasha looks at Dave] Remember when Kiera was like that? She would make up her own Songs. We were trying to teach her the ABCs. Then she’d say ‘Naahh!’, and she’d sing her *own* version. So stubborn! [Natasha

laughs] So, we'd let her do her thing. She'd just dance around, and sing, and making up her own Songs. [Natasha smiles]

- 4.77 Angela: If you were to go back in time, would you have wanted to do more music?
- 4.78—4.81 Natasha: Oh, yeah! Definitely! If it was up to me, yeah! [Natasha pauses and laughs] I guess there's nothing stopping me *now*!
- 4.82 Angela: What you want to learn? Dancing? Create? Compose?
- 4.83 Natasha: I don't know...
- 4.84 Dave: I think it's really cool to just learn an instrument—to have an instrument like a hobby.
- 4.85—4.86 Natasha: I'd like to just read music. [Natasha grins] I think I am going to get my daughter to teach me to read music! I feel like that is something I would like to do. Ok, so [Natasha pauses and laughs] I have been saying this for many years. I always say that I want to learn how to play violin...
- 4.87 Dave: [Dave smiles] The fiddle!
- 4.88—4.97 Natasha: Dave says fiddle—not the fiddle! The violin! [Natasha laughs] I feel like I could get *good* at the violin. I don't know where that [desire] came from! I would need to *read* music, and learn to *play* the violin. Maybe when I am an empty nester. Once they're eighteen, I don't need to worry about [my kids] anymore! [Natasha laughs] I can just make noise! If they don't like it...[Natasha smiles and shrugs] It looks extremely hard and challenging.
- 4.98—4.100 Dave: Just like any guy my age, [I sometimes think], 'I should learn how to play the guitar!' I don't know if I have the patience. [Dave laughs] I want to be *good* right away!
- 4.101—4.106 Natasha: That's how Kiera was with the clarinet [referring to wanting to be good right away]. She still plays. She's gotten really good! In the beginning, when she'd get all frustrated [we would ask to try her instrument, and then we would *hit* the note! [Natasha laughs] Then *that* was a challenge to her! And we'd ask if we could try [again], and she'd say, 'No!', and she would figure it out. [Natasha smiles]
- 4.107—4.113 Natasha: They are both into music [referring to her children]. They are both playing music. When [my son is] working out, it's a whole array of music! It's all

over the place! Kiera too. Kiera listens to all *kinds* of music. I don't like to push anything on them.

4.114—4.119 Natasha: [Referring to band class] With Kiera, yes, they are practicing the spring Songs for a concert. There is no freedom in it. She has to do what is next. So, yeah. If there was a little more freedom, and be allowed to be more creative with her music [Natasha shrugs]. When she knows that she has to practice—she practices.

4.120 Angela: I asked Natasha if Kiera creates her own music?

4.121—4.124 Natasha: No, she practices what she is *supposed* to practice. That is what they are playing write now. There is no fun—you know what I mean? She enjoys what she is doing, [but] there is no creative exposure there.

4.125 Dave: It might lead to that [Dave shrugs].

4.126—4.149 Natasha: In the summer time she just wants to *make* music! If they can do both... [referring to practicing what is required as well as creating music] [Natasha pauses] Playing in a band *and* keeping tune with everyone around you is hard work. To play in a band is a *skill*. The breathing, the counting—I remember with Kieras first concert. [Natasha laughs] Cute! Super, super cute! Were they really good? No! But that was the same with Stratton's very first concert. [referring to her son] But by the time they were in grade ten [or] eleven, they were amazing! I should have paid to be there! It was *so* good! Kiera *practices*. For her homework she has to take a video of herself playing, and then send it in to google classroom 'cause the teacher can't do [the assessments] during the class. So, she wants to make sure everyone is understanding and doing the breathing and fingering. So, [instead of assessing in class,] she can see it on the video. It's pretty nice. I like her band teacher. She plays every single instrument! So, she can only help every single student. Right now, [Kiera's] big motivation are the band trips because it's in school. Cremona went to Disneyland—Stratton went to Disneyland [referring to when he was in school at Cremona].

4.150 Angela: I asked Natasha if there were other thoughts she wanted to share about music—perhaps about traditional musics?

4.151—4.168 Natasha: [Natasha laughs] Oh, yes! So, for the traditional part—yeah. I dance traditional, and that's a different Song. Every dance has their own Song. For the men and women, there are different Songs that are sung for each category. So, if you were to listen to a women jingle [dance Song] and to a men's chicken dance [Song], you can hear the difference in the beats. Right? It has to [Natasha pauses] our feet match the beats, right? Traditional [dance] is a little more slower, and then fancy [dance] is fast. They look like they are floating on the air like birds!

Different Songs. [Natasha nods] And traditionally speaking, when you go to a pow wow, you hear pow wow music. When you go to a round dance, you hear round dance music. Different drums, different Songs, different sound, different beats. When you go [to] ceremony like the sweat—different sounds, different drum—well same drum—but different drum style. The way they are drumming the beat—again. And then you go to Peyote meetings and completely different drum, different Songs, different beat—everything! So, everything in traditional indigenous spaces we have different drums, different music for every *space*.

- 4.169 Angela: I commented about still learning about the various Songs, drums, beats, and dances.
- 4.170—4.171 Natasha: It would sound [different] because it's in a different language. These Songs are in *many different* languages.
- 4.172—4.175 Natasha: And the singing. [Natasha pauses] In the pow wows, it is male dominated. Women are included [sometimes]. They can *sing* too!
- 4.176 Angela: I asked Natasha, 'Are women allowed to join the drum circle?'
- 4.177—4.182 Natasha: Depends on who is running the circle. I go to a women's drumming circle with drumming, and its only women there—and we don't invite the men. But I am sure we would be open [to having them there]. But I guess a women's space *is* for women. And men have *their* circles, and women have *their* circles, and there's some that *are* combined. [Natasha pauses] And it is up to who's running the circle.
- 4.183 Angela: Depends on *the space*?
- 4.184—4.189 Natasha: Exactly. So, [for example] my sister had a traditional wedding. My aunties drummed, and we sang her down the aisle. So, that was the Aunties bringing her in [to the circle]. And there wasn't seats or an altar—it was a circle! [My sister and her husband] just came into the circle, and then we closed the circle.
- 4.190 Angela: We finished up our visit with plans to visit again, and I thanked Natasha for sharing.

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Randy Turning Robe and Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookh’bahk’bhook’siiks Visit Transcript

5.1 – end. Each sentence equals one count, and the square bracketed phrases are not counted as separate sentences.

A reminder that the square brackets are for clarification or for conversation flow, and most of Angela’s contribution to the conversation will be summarized in an abridged way to keep the focus on Randy’s and Spakoo-Igitstaan’s sharing. Superfluous words have been deleted as have other phrases upon each musicians’ request. *Italicized words represent when the speaker emphasizes those words.*

Present for the conversation: Elder and Drum Keeper Randy Turning Robe; his son Spakoo-Igitstaan Ahkookj’bahk’bhook’siiks; and researcher, Angela Brooks.

- 5.1 Angela: Asked about Grandmother Turtle program which they had told me about prior to our recorded visit.
- 5.2 Spakoo-Igitstaan: Our ex-director, she was part of a group—Anishinaabe-Ojibway people—and they trademarked the whole books stuff—all the Grandfather, [Spakoo-Igitstaan pauses] the sacred Grandfather teachings.
- 5.3 Angela: How can they *do* that? [asked with incredulity]
- 5.4 [Spakoo-Igitstaan shrugged in an ‘I don’t know’ gesture].
- 5.5—5.6: At each school they will provide an honorarium for my dad—on the first day. [For] the teachings, we just need to know the numbers of each class—to a maximum of [just around 100].
- 5.7 Angela: Spakoo-Igitstaan spoke about the schools they work with.
- 5.8—5.11 Spakoo-Igitstaan: We bring it up in discussion. My dad would share his residential school experience, and I talked about my personal journey in school in Calgary—in the Calgary catholic school board system. So, we just did that before Christmas. We did a dual storytelling on a professional day with an outreach school by Sunridge.
- 5.12 Angela: Do they reach out to you, or you to them?
- 5.13 Spakoo-Igitstaan: They reach out to me. Well, I got in touch with the principal at [one school].
- 5.14—5.15 Angela: How did you start with drumming? Not every young person goes on to learn drumming or to share it with others.

- 5.16—5.27: Spakoo-Igitstaan: I guess I was basically thrown into the lions, sitting with my dad, and my grandpa and my uncles. I just wanted to be like them. They were really good singers, [and] Song makers, and that is how we stay connected to our culture. The Blackfoot Ways of Knowing. And then, after my mom passed, [the organization I work for] wanted to keep it in the family. Keep her program. They wanted me to continue her legacy, I guess. I don't just do that program. I facilitate the men's healing circle here which we just started two years ago. And that's going strong. We got some funding for that. But Grandmother Turtle is one of our main biggest programs.
- 5.28—5.30 Randy: It's spreading. A lot of copycats. They get money from the government.
- 5.31: Spakoo-Igitstaan: Even the Catholic schools.
- 5.32—5.35 Randy: Siksika—they had it all this time! [Randy raises his eyebrows] They are trying to get it going. It's part of our Ways, and I don't know why they don't have it? They have ceremonies—but not like a drum circle—for men.
- 5.36 Spakoo-Igitstaan: No men's circle [referring to Siksika—on-reserve].
- 5.37 Angela: Asked if there are also women's healing drum circles?
- 5.38: Spakoo-Igitstaan: The [women] have a healing circle here on Monday's at 5pm.
- 5.39 Randy: They don't drum.
- 5.40 Spakoo-Igitstaan: [Spakoo-Igitstaan nods] But they don't drum.
- 5.41—5.59 Randy: Blackfoot—Siksika—women won't drum. Not supposed to sing. Back in the day— [Randy pauses] [Randy alluded to the picture in his phone]. The drum—I don't even have it in my picture. It is strange because it is a *ceremonial* [drum]. It was *initiated* to my *dad* from *his* Uncle. And my *Uncle* got it from *his* father—the Old Man Turning Robe. His real name is Ah-Koh-Bup-Poo-Kshii, [which is Blackfoot for] Many Turning Robes. He got it right from Sitting Bull—that first drum. So, I don't carry it—the drum I mean—that colour [referring to the drum being painted]. Back in the day—I guess—it was so *Powerful* those things. Ah-Too-Wop-Pii [Blackfoot word(s) for Sacred]. Especially the ones for ceremony. And women are not allowed to come near it—they can bleed to death—with their womanhood [referring to Moon Time—menstrual cycle]. That is how *powerful* they are. Well, that is just the drum. I don't know about the headdress, and the pow wow [belongings], and [other] artifacts. There is some Indian stuff [with a lot of Power], Nee-Top-But-do-Wop-Pi, [Blackfoot word(s)]

for Really/very sacred]. Mah-Tee-Wah-Khan-Ah, [Blackfoot word(s) for They are not toys].

- 5.60—5.62** Customs are passed down to young ones and they are selected by the Elders. A young one cannot ask [to be taught the ceremonial customs]. The Elders watch their behaviour and character before selecting them.
- 5.63** Angela: Do the young ones all speak Blackfoot?
- 5.64—5.70** Randy: No—they are trying to. Their parents—*they* speak Blackfoot. Just like us. Someone like my nephews and nieces, their parents, they speak Blackfoot. But—they don't speak—but they'll understand. They'll understand Blackfoot, but they don't speak. You gotta be brought up speaking it from infancy.
- 5.71—5.101** [The] drums have a *lot of Power*. [Randy pauses] I don't know if I ever told you. That Glenbow Foundation—I think its still there—Convention Centre [referring to the Glenbow Museum]. They have a lot of our stuff. [Randy pauses] I got a job there. This guy was retiring. My dad taught him. He was a couple years younger than my dad. My dad's a couple years older than him. He really liked the drumming—way back [referring to the younger man]. Real warrior—born in the 40s—1940s. My dad—we were practicing—and he came [referring to the man who was retiring]. He was the one who stood out. Not too many people get interested [in the drumming]. Anyway—time travel—he had to retire. The [Glenbow Museum] asked him if he knows anybody who could continue on. I was very young, and he liked how I was—my presence. [He told them], “[Randy] sings, he composes, he knows a lot, [and] his dad is my friend.” So, I was really happy! I brought it to my folks. And they said, SAH-KYUN-YA! It means ‘No way!’ in Blackfoot. They said, ‘Those things are still alive, son!’ SAH-KYUN-YA Ji-Kii! [No way, son!]. They were *dead serious*. They said if I could go in there—those things are *still* alive! They *still have Power*. Those things that are in there. [Randy pauses] I have *NEVER* been in there! It's not like I don't *want* to. It's not like I don't want those things to *come out*. I have *so much respect* for them. They have so much *Power*. [Randy pauses and lowers his eyes]
- 5.102** Angela: [After some silence, when Randy raised his eyes again] Is anyone singing with them, or caring for them, [or doing something] to heal the artifacts?
- 5.103—5.118** Randy: They do *some* things—they *do* things—but they are *supposed* to [do more]. Like Francis²⁷, he's got Bundles. I am not even allowed to *see* them. That's my *friend*! He is my *best* friend. I am *not allowed*. He won't [show me]. He's not going to open it in front of me! He just says Name-SKA-KOO-Yin-Ni-MA Oom-Moo-Bis-Taan [Blackfoot word(s) meaning Holy/Sacred Pipe Holder

²⁷ Francis First Charger is an Elder with the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Nation. He is an Elder-in-Residence at University of Lethbridge, Alberta. He is also the one who referred me to speak with Randy Turning Robes.

Bundle]. He *has all* those things. He *won't* tell me. He will *never* tell me what's in there and *nothing like that!* He is not *crazy!* These people in the city. [Randy shakes his head sadly] They come from his reserve, and ours—of course ours—they tell the *public* what's in there, and they'll *open it* and *show it up on the stage!* I have *so much respect* for our Ways. [Randy pauses]

- 5.119—5.31** [For example], my headdress, I told them—it was a big gathering—I tell them I will do this, maybe this once [referring to wearing the headdress]. This headdress [referring to the reclining headdress] came from the Sioux Indians. But out of respect for them, I got [on] my vest, my moccasins, my gloves, beading work, and just pray like this. *Francis* does that. He just prays. He doesn't even *have* to have a Smudge on. He's *got* Power. He just *prays*. That's what I told those people [that I would just wear it once]. Out of respect for the Sioux because we went there to drum [about] five years ago. And this guy—he sat with us. He really liked our stories, my boys, our nephews—his nickname is Dory [referring to his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan], his cousins. [Randy pauses] They shared a lot [with each other in conversation].
- 5.32—5.40** I asked him, 'How come there's no headdress at this pow wow?' The answer [was that] it's like a taboo to them. They don't have to. That's where it's *from*. Here, you got every other second guy showing off their headdress. Maybe for the pow wow—pow wow is nothing sacred. My mother calls pow wow and Round Dance 'dirty dancing'. It's where you get your infatuation! You're lucky you get your first kiss when you're twelve, [or] thirteen years old [when you're at pow wow].
- 5.41—5.50** Our headdress is upright. I think I told you that, you'll find it in [Randy pauses] Did you know that the casino—the hotel—if you ever go grab a bite at the casino, there's a restaurant on the main floor, It's called Little Chief. It's a restaurant. You walk in there, [and] there's pictures of the upright headdress. The Tsuu'tina adopted our Blackfoot ways, the upright headdress. I have got some pictures of those headdress. It's coming back. Our chief has got one. A lot of people got the upright headdress. The reclining [headdress] is from the Sioux.
- 5.51** Angela: So, is headdress only worn during ceremony? or not at all?
- 5.52—5.85** Randy: There is a headdress transfer ceremony. There's supposed to have been a certain feat accomplished. [Randy gave the example of his son, Spakoo-Igitstaan, earning his degree] Some of them just give it to them because they're friends. My grandfather, Tom Horning Owl, that's what he said. Every time his friend—from I think from Siksika, I think its Joe Turning Robe—he says every time [his] friend [asked], he will give them the headdress and they have it right in the ceremony at the pow wow. They'll take care of it. I have a headdress. But I don't wear it all the time. I don't go to pow wow with it. Too busy with the drumming—to haul that big heavy drum in. I am too wasted—my knees—can't even stand up to dance.

But, I *could* dance. *Because I deserve that. I deserve that.* Because my brother, and my nephews, they *honoured* me, because I am the *drum keeper*. I just didn't go through the ceremony. My dad and uncle got sick. They were both *veterans*. You have to get [the drum through ceremony only] from *veterans*. So, I just left it alone. I didn't want to be too pushy. My dad said it's kind of a taboo. There's a lot of bad things that went through... [Randy pauses] My dad... [Randy pauses] Our family... [Randy pauses] I thought about it. [My dad said], "It's up to you son. I am passing it on to you." So, I *think* about it. I didn't have to go through [the ceremony]. He *gave* it to me. I didn't have to go through it. I didn't want to push them—[My dad and] Uncle Mark. They both got sick. [Randy shares that they both passed on before the transfer ceremony of the drum to Randy could take place, but that it was still a valid transfer because it was given to him by his dad, a veteran.]

- 5.86—5.92** So, how I take care of [the headdress]. [Randy pauses] I don't wear it all the time. A lot of them, they go to pow wows—they don't [wear them]—the drummers. The old ones. It's mainly the older ones [who wear the headdress]. There's a lot of women [wearing headdress] now.
- 5.93—5.94** Angela: I haven't seen women drum at the pow wows. Is that traditional?
- 5.95—5.103** Randy: The women. Especially the women. As a matter of fact, it's called AH-KI-SAM. It's called the AHM Buffalo Society. Our Sundance—Kainai still has it. They are beautiful. Their societies. They still have their Sundance. We don't have ours anymore.
- 5.104** Angela: I remember you said that Siksika stopped their Sundance—because the Songs stopped.
- 5.105—5.123** Randy: Remember you went over to the church over here in Tsuu'tina? All mostly white from the city. The Tsuu'tina don't go to church. Because they don't like [church]. They took the same approach as the Siksika. They don't honour Christianity. They don't honour Catholicism. But mine is different. The old Blackfoots. The old Blackfoot Elders, they say, "I remember his grandfather, Amos Leather". He was like Francis back then. He was a really devout Horn Society member. He [Amos] told Clement [his grandson], that when he was a young boy, he was at Crowfoot Indian Residential School. He says, this church, Napyajimooms-Koan-Ska—white man faith—that was the translation. He told his grandson, "Utilize both. Our ways and the church now that you are going to school. Both ways will make you even stronger." That's what I do. Francis doesn't go to church. But his wife goes to full-gospel [church].
- 5.124—5.143** Randy: I think I told you in our language there's a word to forgive. Es-Kshi-Kim-Moo-jii that means we forgive, but more literally, love each other again. Or, Es-

Kshi-Kim-Moo-jii-yup which is forgiveness between two people; that both people forgive each other. Same with the Catholic church. If we forgive, you can't live in hate. You know, vengeance. It's a sin. Hate. Vengeance. Every time. There's one priest was talking: We see someone with a nice car, nice horses, nice this, nice that, beautiful woman, and we get envious. That's jealousy. They are sins in the bible. There are sins. There's greed. Pride. Pride is one of the worst. Envy, Lust—what's the other one? Deceit. Pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth—P-GLAGES.

- 5.144—5.147** Angela: I have not been taught by an Elder how the grandmother, or grandfather teachings connect with musics or the drum. I don't want to just read it online without that guidance. I don't understand how that connects with the drum. Would you be willing to help me to understand, please?
- 5.148—5.162** Spakoo-Igitstaan: Well, they all *connect* with the drum. Once you go through them, you'll understand why. The drum is part of Sweetgrass, or Sage. The Smoke. They're all interconnected. And it circles. Like, you do healing circles. Even our tipis are circles. Our Lodges. Start with Bison/Buffalo—Respect; Respect the drum, the Songs; the Song keepers; the Song makers; the drum keepers. It's *not* just a word. Being a drum keeper is a *way of life*. And *respecting* these items. You don't just finish the drum and put it in the corner. Blackfoot way [is] we *cover* our drums.
- 5.163—5.170** Francis told me a story about that. Whenever an Elder tells you a story, you give them some money, or a gift. Something that really means, “What he told me I cherish it forever”. So, I send him money for sharing his stories and his prayers, because he says he always prays for me. So, I sparingly send him and his wife some money. I say, “Oki Uncle, I am sending you some money for your prayers, and your knowledge”, and [Francis] says, “Oki, thank you!” He says, “Comes in handy!” That's all he says! [Spakoo-Igitsaan laughs.]
- 5.171—5.179** Randy: My late mother used to tell us [that] *her* mother— had Bundles. Which [means] Drunken Chief must have had one. Old Man Drunken Chief raised my mother. They must have been a big part of a Society. Back then there were only a few Blackfoots—now they are flourishing. [My mom] says—she remembers very distinctly—*her* mother—this is Siksika— tending to the Bundle. She [referring to Randy's mom's mother] sings to it like a baby—tender—takes *really good care* of it. They are *precious* items. I would have to say—the least of all—they are *Powerful*.
- 5.180—5.193** I don't know if I mentioned this too. Francis went overseas to repatriate from France, from Rome, Italy—[all around] Europe. Anyways, they found the Blackfoot items [that were] from around here. It's Kainai. Siksika. They [Francis and the others] recognized them and repatriated them back. [Went through] the

airport and stuff like that. They got to Calgary here. I don't know if they took a plane to Lethbridge. But from here—someone must have picked them up—and they went home. I don't know what they drove—maybe two cars. As soon as [the items] got to the Reserve, those things *started dancing* in the back. [The items] were *really happy*! That's how *Powerful* our ways are.

- 5.194—5.203** Spakoo-Igitstaan: I heard a story too. The stuff at Glenbow. They were *bringing it back* [to the Glenbow]. It took *four men* to try to lift it up. The blanket and whatever was in there—they used it for a ceremony at Kainai and they were bringing it back to Glenbow—and the item didn't want to be lifted. It took four men. *Still*, it wouldn't move. It was *immoveable*. It *didn't want* to go back downtown. So, they had to get an Elder to bless it.
- 5.204** Angela: Why would they even send it back if the items were making it *so* clear they didn't want to?
- 5.205—5.226** Spakoo-Igitstaan: That was the thing. They were parked right outside of Glenbow. Like my dad was saying. We don't want to go there. We—I—don't even want to talk about it either. That is *so* Powerful. As soon as you talk about it, you're *giving* it Power. We don't have the Rights for it. *Some* things we can share. But we can't share the *whole*. That's part of *respect*. Our ways. The Tobacco. It's not just an item or an object. We *talk* to our drum. We call it *Grandpa*—in Blackfoot it's Na'as. We say, “Grandpa, we offer Tobacco”, and to the animal, we say, “Thank you for your time, and for your sacrifice, for teaching, for allowing us to still sing, allowing us to pass it on to children.” That's what I do, and that's what I say. That's *respect*. That's respecting the Ways of the Drum. The ancestors that kept it underground, that kept it alive for us. After the treaties, it was cutoff—it was *outlawed* to drum, pow wow, to do these things²⁸.
- 5.227—5.233** Randy: [Named a significant person in the specific Society]. He was part of the Tipi village committee at Stampede. The Calgary Stampede. He literally tried to sell... [Randy paused and shook his head]. He's the head—he's the main [person in the Society]! He's got the Bundle. My Ex-son-in-law told me there were two of them that almost [sold the bundle]. Pride. [Choosing] to give in to it.
- 5.234—5.252** And I told Francis about these things and about these people [wanting to sell the Bundle]. Francis really *honours* that I am part of the Society. He really *honours* the [specific] Society because Blood Indians don't have [that] Society. I told him that this is what they actually tried to do. But us three youngest ones—me, my cousin [name omitted for privacy], and my little brother [name omitted for privacy]—my younger brother—we *opposed* this. We said, “We don't *agree* with that. We don't *want* that. We want to keep it *on the Reserve*. It's our

²⁸ This is referencing the Potlatch Ban which made it illegal to do potlatch or other ceremony.

understanding that it's supposed to *stay on the Reserve*". [That person] was ready to *sell* it. He probably would've have pocketed *thousands of dollars*. And we wouldn't have known about it! That's what happens to these things all over the world. Some of them are stolen. They tell them [the people they are selling the item to], "This is not mine; I don't have no use for it". They die horrible deaths. They get hit on the railroad track. They get dismembered from their bodies. They die horrible deaths. [Randy pauses]

5.253—5.255 Spakoo-Igitstaan: During the famine, [when] the Buffalo [were] getting depleted. Some tribes—even the Cree—they were selling the stuff back then to the early settlers. So, they were selling to the elite back then, to the rich—their own artifacts—just to get food, and whisky.

5.256—5.257 Randy: Booze. Alcoholism

5.258—5.268 I ran this by Francis. I says, "It kind of bothered me Francis. Ana-pii [means friend in Blackfoot]. We call each other Ana-pii. I says, I thought, for us, we won't take it [the Bundle] to [the Stampede]. We won't dance. He [referring to the significant person in the Society mentioned earlier] wanted us to dance. I haven't seen [that person lately]. He's sick. I haven't seen him. He wanted us to dance at the Indian Village.

5.269—5.271 [Randy asked Angela:] Have you ever been to the [Calgary Stampede] Indian village? They moved to where the Saddle Dome is across the river. It's bigger now.

5.272—5.275 But anyway, the old [Indian Village], I think it was still in front [of] the old Stampede with all the trees. I think that's when [that person] was proposing, "We gonna dance there and they're gonna pay us. Stampede is gonna pay us!" Like—*every year*. I understand that he wanted us to show the Prairie Chicken Dance.

5.276—5.284 I think I showed you Children of the Sun.²⁹ [Randy pauses] [mentioned two people in the video]. [Randy pauses] That's me and my brother—that's what *we* do. Somebody—I think a Blood Indian—took a shot [referring to who took the video footage for the Children of the Sun video] because they were careful not to show the Bundle, or who it belonged to. Blood Indians don't have it. But, it's not in the ceremony—in the Initiation Ceremony. The [Stampede organizers] set the tipi [up] just for us [to use out of sight]. But the dance was [to be] out in the open.

5.285 Angela: Asked a question about how these acts of disrespect and deceit are addressed.

²⁹ [Circle of the Sun](#) is a National Film Board of Canada video. The timestamp of 13:25-19:25 shows and speaks about Blood Indian ceremony and particularly speaks a bit about Bundles.

- 5.286—5.295** Randy: Francis says, “Just watch. Don’t react. Don’t say anything to them. Just leave it alone. That’s them.” My folks always tell me—“Just watch. Don’t do anything about it. They’re wrong. What they are doing is wrong. It’s not right.”
- 5.296** Angela: Shared about deliberate acts of disrespect, and unintentional lack of understanding that I have seen in schools’ music classes.
- 5.297—5.317** Spakoo-Igitstaan: My one professor was part of a board in Quebec, Ottawa. Her people are Anishinaabe. This was before TRC [referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission]³⁰, and they wanted to open a museum. And corporations— I give them some grace, because they don’t know. They just get the word out that we need an Elder, we need a knowledge keeper, blah blah blah, and they’ll find anybody they can— find anybody who calls themselves an Elder and a knowledge keeper. So, they did that. And then they brought in—one of the universities brought in—these masks. Old Ojibway masks. *Ceremonial* masks. They were hanging them up, and [Spakoo-Igitstaan shakes his head sadly] when they went in again, the hair on those masks grew. Almost overnight! Then they just shut it down. They *shut it down*. Because that’s the old way. The [Anishinaabe] probably have the same teachings as us. The same protocols. We don’t show these masks off. We don’t show our stuff off. They are *alive*. Still [have] *life* in them. So, I *know* they shut it down, and those things went back to the [Anishinaabe] people.
- 5.318—5.319** Angela: On that note, I asked, ‘How do you teach the young people respect for the drum when you go into schools?’ I briefly shared what I do with my sons to help them be respectful of the drum and drumming.
- 5.320—5.333** Randy: That sounds like Cree teachings. Us—we don’t have that. I heard about Crees. Francis and I will talk about it. He’s heard about these people ‘waking up the drum’. There’s no such thing in the Blackfoot. But you *do* take care of it. I really take *good care* of my drum. That is the YMCA drum [referring to the drum present on Monday nights at the Drum and Dance workshop at the YMCA]. I really take *good care* [of it]. It’s a *beautiful* drum. Beautiful sounding drum. It’s *real heavy*. The guy who made it used really thick plywood.
- 5.334—5.354** Randy: Bull Moose. That cover we use now for the YMCA drum. The YMCA, they paid that guy for the drum. Serena—she’s in charge of the YMCA. She got a cover for it. But it’s white canvas. It’s really hard to keep clean, and it’s tearing. They put handles on it. It is so heavy—the drum— the handles are tearing off. We were trying to fix it, and this girl comes to the YMCA, Genesis. A young woman—she’s a seamstress. She works at one of these movies. Making dresses, or whatever they need. She sewed the handle on. Whatever she did, it helped! It’s

³⁰ See also Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report (Government of Canada 2015).

holding! She's a good seamstress. I asked her if she could fix [the cover for the big drum]. [She said], 'I can make you one!' Now we have [a cover]. She even put insulation into the cover to protect the drum.

5.355—5.377 That's how I [show] respect. It's not a ceremonial drum. It didn't go through initiation. It's just a made drum. I *take care* of the drum. My folks—the old folks—said 'You take care of things; they will take care of you.' So, I really take care of that drum. I don't throw it around. I handle it like a child—like a baby. I don't put it in the back of the truck, I put it in my backseat—got a big truck. That's what you do. We don't need to go through ceremonies. This one young Cree was arguing with me. He says, 'No, we have our ways.' I says, 'Yeah, that's ok. You're Cree. We're Blackfoot.' He was getting angry. He's young. He's always talking about Sundance. He's probably putting curses on me for all I know. But I am protected. Francis and I are protected.

5.378—5.379 Spakoo-Igitstaan: That's another thing. We don't talk about Sundances openly.

5.380 Randy: No. [Randy agrees]

5.381—5.387 Spakoo-Igitstaan: You see a lot of these guys. I go to a lot of events. I don't argue. My dad and Francis advise me to [not argue]. You see all these guys talking about Sundance, Sweats, bragging. That's our church. That's like being Catholic, and saying, 'I am a good Catholic.'

5.388—5.389 Randy: [Like saying], 'I went to get the whole body—eucharist.' *Don't boast.*

5.390—5.393 Spakoo-Igitstaan: You'll know those kind of people in the community. And there's a lot. Sadly, these kinds are on boards. They're on committees.

5.394—5.433 Randy: They're envious. There's a lot of envy. A lot of those young Crees. They envy. And some older ones. But there's some older ones—they'll tell the young Crees, 'Leave the Blackfoots alone. They have got a lot of *Power!*' But they *don't like* that—the young ones. So, their envy turns to *hatred*. That's what happened here, matter of fact. He [referring to Spakoo-Igitstaan] had a colleague. A colleague—Cree—was trying to *shut us down*. Trying to shut us down! 'We don't need [the healing circle].' We *need* that. *We need that!* It's going so *strong*. Other people are interested. They *want* to have it. It's that jealousy. He's jealous of my son. [Of] us—what we do. A lot of that. [Like] the young guy I was talking about. Maybe they tell him, 'That Elder Randy, he's really good!', and they don't like that. They want a *Cree* Elder. I am not looking for recognition. I am just telling them what I know. I do belong to a Society. Like my son said—a headdress holder. Steven [referring to a different colleague]—he really honours that. He's got a headdress. He really honours that – having the headdress. And the drum—it was *given* to me. It didn't go through ceremony. I still *respect* the drum. I still *take*

care of it. Just *like* it went through ceremony because *my dad* gave it to me. There's jealousy. And now there's a lot of them are part Blackfoot who come now [to the men's healing circle], and they have Blackfoot blood in them, and they're *really proud*.

- 5.434—5.440** [Randy asks Spakoo-Igitstaan] 'Is [mentioned a certain coworker] here today?' [referring to a coworker]. Right in front of everybody, [that coworker] says—he practically *praises* the Blackfoot way, and—and he's Cree! And the other people, *they witnessed that!* And that's where the jealousy [comes in]. One or two of them said, 'I am never coming back. The hell with those Blackfoot!' 'Cause it still exists. You will never hear *Francis* talk like that.
- 5.441** Angela: I mentioned the Mount Royal pow wow and mentioned my surprise when I saw a Cree Elder I knew drumming with the Turning Robes at that pow wow because I had thought that Cree and Blackfoot drumming circles were separate.
- 5.442** Randy: My *dad* gave [that Cree Elder who was drumming with them] a Blackfoot name.
- 5.443** Angela: And [the Elder's] son was drumming with you too.
- 5.444—5.450** Spakoo-Igitstaan: Adopted them into the family—into the Turning Robes. And other Crees are jealous of them because they are close to us—and they get that in the [Cree] community. Oh, they say, 'They're Blackfoot lovers.' Blackfoots are *known for compassion*. If you look up Poundmaker—his story. Big Bear, and the rebellion. Blackfoots are somewhat intertwined in that story for preventing Poundmaker from getting hanged.
- 5.451—5.468** Randy: Two of them: Big Bear and Poundmaker. Poundmaker—Chief Crowfoot helped Poundmaker. Chief Crowfoot's children all died from the smallpox. He was left alone. His wife died too. He adopted [children]. He loved a lot of children. They buried [Poundmaker] when he died in Siksika. I think they still have a little plaque there. The Crees—they came and repatriated him back to his reserve. He was buried there [in Siksika] because Chief Crowfoot adopted him. A lot of stories. He was a very powerful man— Chief Crowfoot. He says, 'Compassion.' He was known for his compassion. They were going to hang Chief Poundmaker because him and his people joined Riel rebellion. But Chief Crowfoot told them, 'No, that's my son. Bring him here.' That's how he saved [Poundmaker's] life.
- 5.469** Spakoo-Igitstaan: Because the government respected Crowfoot for banding all the bands together, and signing the treaty.
- 5.470** Randy: We *respect* the treaty.

- 5.471 Spakoo-Igitstaan: *Peace*. [Spakoo-Igitstaan nods] [Randy nods also]
- 5.472—5.481 Randy: They say that his people [referring to the Cree] were jealous. They didn't like that. They cursed [Poundmaker]. Put a spell on Poundmaker, and he choked—or he was poisoned. It turned to *poison* what he was eating! That story says something about don't eat any berries. He died—that's the story. That's how the story goes. They killed him—his own people—they were jealous! All the other Crees were hung, but [Poundmaker] stayed alive.
- 5.482—5.486 There was another one [Crowfoot] saved, but he stayed in Saskatchewan. But to this day, that jealousy is still there. We can't put an end to it. Just accept those things you can't change. They will be like that for the rest of their days.
- 5.487 Angela: How would you teach youth to walk and drum in a Good Way?
- 5.488 Randy and Spakoo-Igitstaan: *Respect*. [both gentlemen spoke at almost the same time]
- 5.489—5.496 Randy: Drumming pow wow, and a drummer on a big drum—like as I say, my mother calls it 'dirty dancing.' There's nothing sacred, [or] holy—it's a pow wow! Like going to a dance, [or] having a fiddle dance. I was brought up with fiddle music and guitar. I know how to do the fox trot. I know how to waltz. And there were square dances, and stuff like that. There's nothing *sacred* there.
- 5.497—5.503 But you *respect* things. Like, for example, if part of our regalia—there's weasels in the upright headdress [Shows Angela a picture from his phone]—I think she's from Piikani. Let's say if one of those things falls off—a thread just tore [because] it didn't secure, and it fell out. If she's dancing, she has to pay the pow wow committee, or do a little give-away, or pay the drummers. Things like that. There's *some* respect there. I can't speak for the Cree ways [of respect during pow wows].
- 5.504—5.505 Angela: I shared about my upbringing, and what I am doing with my youngest two sons to help them be connected with their culture. I specifically mentioned my youngest son enjoying dancing at the YMCA Drum and Dance.
- 5.506 Randy: He's got Indian blood? [asking about my sons]
- 5.507 Angela: Yes, they are Coast Salish.
- 5.508—5.511 Spakoo-Igitstaan: Thank you for sharing. I [just] sent you the seven sacred teachings circle map. There's a lot of good stuff on YouTube. Short stuff on each animal.

5.512—5.551 Randy: I was going to say—that girl Shirley [smiling kindly as he referred to Shirley Hill, the female Blackfoot Elder who dances, and teaches dance on Monday nights with the Turning Robes]—she was brought up white. She’s my cousin—first cousins. Her mother is Rose. [Rose’s] dad—we call him Uncle Joe. He’s my mother’s cousin. Uncle Joe’s *dad*—his name is Kee-toe-kee [which means] Prairie Chicken. When he went to go sign his name—I guess at the school or someplace—they asked him what was his name—his English name. He doesn’t *have* one. A lot of us don’t speak any English. I went to school—I didn’t speak a word of English—just Blackfoot. They said his name was Kee-toe-kee. The interpreter—they said that means Prairie Chicken. So, they signed him Prairie Chicken—that’s Drunken Chief. He is the oldest of the Drunken Chiefs. He is the great grandfather—that is my mothers’ older brother. He was adopted. She was two years old, and Uncle Cyril was two months old. Their mother [my grandmother, had] died. Back then, a lot of women died from hemorrhage from giving birth. So, they had older siblings, but they could take care of themselves. Just like [Spakoo-Igitstaan] is taking care of my late sister’s grandson who is ten years old. He [referring to the grandson] can help himself, he can feed himself, go to the bathroom. But my folks couldn’t—too young. So, Old man [Drunken Chief]... [Randy pauses] Compassion runs really deep in the Siksika, and my mother calls them Old man and Old lady Drunken Chief—Mrs. John Drunken Chief. So, that old lady [Shirley Hill] is related to that woman who died. So, they’re related. They have blood lines. So, we are related in some way to Shirley’s mom, grandfather, and stuff like that. But, she was raised white. Her father is German—Curt Hill. And he Chicken Dances. He’s right into the Blackfoot ways. He’s a real good dancer. Elder Ska-plug showed him. He’s one of the last ones. He’s old now. He’s probably ninety now. He is German. He’s not even Blackfoot, so you don’t need to be Blackfoot [to learn Blackfoot ways.]

5.552 Angela: I asked for redirection and correction with my attempts to teach my sons, and with this research project.

5.553—5.559 Randy: We misstep too. That’s why I have Francis. He says, ‘Ana-pii,’ and he will call me right away. He does that when he’s free. He’s really busy with naming ceremonies. He’s going to get a break at home. He’d rather be at home with his wife.

5.560—5.563 Even *Francis*—he has to go through the Elders. His sister knows a lot. She’s older. Same age as my sister.

5.564 Nobody knows everything.

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“Statement on Indigenous Musical Sovereignty”

Maintaining ownership and control of our stories and artistic projects is of vital importance for Indigenous creators. The stories we need to tell at this time often significantly vary from the existing canon of “Indigenous inspired” works.

Simply, a work is Indigenous when it is created by an Indigenous artist, regardless of theme or topic. A story is Indigenous whether it comes from ancestral knowledge, lived experience or imagination. We as Indigenous creators are best positioned to tell our stories that discuss hard truths faced by our communities while ensuring appropriate steps are taken to provide emotional support and aftercare. We seek an end to those musical works by outsiders that shock audiences and re-traumatize our most painful experiences.

To non-Indigenous composers who seek to tell “Indigenous-inspired” works: be honest with yourself and ask why you feel compelled to tell this story and whether you are the right person to do so.

As Indigenous creators, we value our non-Indigenous collaborators and creative partners. We invite partnership across all levels (librettists, orchestrators, performers, producers, curators, artistic directors, etc.) and insist that when telling stories that are specific to Indigenous experiences that we as Indigenous creators are granted authority and full oversight on how our Indigenous communities are portrayed. Recognize that we as Indigenous creators are accountable to our communities in cross-cultural projects and that this represents additional responsibility and emotional labour in our creative work.

As Indigenous artists, we seek to represent our peoples truthfully and in our full complexities. We too ask ourselves if we are the right peoples to tell these stories – and recognize that we as Indigenous creators do not always have the positionality to tell every Indigenous story. We seek to hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards of Indigenous community engagement and request that our collaborators in the Canadian music community work to the same level of accountability.

Cris Derksen
Melody McKiver
Ian Cusson
Beverley McKiver
Jeremy Dutcher
Sonny-Ray Day Rider
Michelle Lafferty
Corey Payette
Jessica Mc Mann
Andrew Balfour

“An Open Letter from the Second Iteration of the Canadian Indigenous Classical Music Gathering”

From December 1–15, 2021, our collective gathered at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity to further discuss, collaborate, and create as a group of Indigenous musicians, vocalists, and composers working within Western art music frameworks. Since our inaugural gathering in 2019, we have seen the world change through the pandemic. Our initial statement was widely circulated throughout Canadian musical institutions. Our colleagues, allies, peers, and service organizations have increasingly sought our feedback as we seek to redress Indigenous experiences of racism within the classical music community and further share our stories and music. In extending this open letter, we hope we can continue to work together and invest in a better future for Indigenous youth who also seek to share their stories in this field.

To our valued collaborators: please understand that government funding for Indigenous arts is reserved for Indigenous peoples. This funding is a form of restitution issued at arms-length from the same governments that colonized us. Indigenous arts funding is the bare minimum in reparations following centuries of land theft and devastation, and stolen children into the clutches of residential and day schools and child welfare systems. If these traumas are not your immediate familial stories, access to these funds is not for you.

Working with Indigenous artists and our collective stories is an act of trust and responsibility. If we trust you as a collaborator, we value your artistry and integrity. Please do not violate that trust by feeling entitled to our few funding streams; if you are included on an Indigenous-funded project it is at the discretion of the lead Indigenous artists and not at your own initiative. Do not put our names on your funding proposals without our consent! To properly tell our stories in a manner that is respectful of our communities and our protocols, project planning takes time and open communication. A request for a letter in the 48 hours prior to a grant deadline is not appropriate. Neither is insisting on maintaining the same deliverable date when community or funding dynamics have shifted. We have work to share beyond June 21 and September 30! The process is the work.

Our numbers of Indigenous artists working within Western classical music frameworks remain disproportionately few, though we are grateful for the continuous growth of our musical families. Recognize that these low numbers are not for lack of ability or capacity, but due to multiple structural barriers that are in urgent need of addressing.

- Ageism – we often start our careers after the age of 24. We are rarely, if ever, on thirty under thirty lists due to the multiple ongoing pressures within our extended families that do not grant us the same level of mobility in pursuing our musical careers.
- Classism – the recommended career path for a classical musician remains to be expensive private lessons beginning in pre-school, instruments costing tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, costly summer camps, conservatory education, graduate degrees, and un/derpaid internships. Though poverty is not a universal Indigenous experience, remember that 40% of Indigenous children in Canada live in poverty.

- Racism – We want to see a musical community that reflects the Canada that we live in. Many of our ancestors signed treaties in the good faith that land and resources would be shared equally and equitably. We affirm that Black Lives Matter, and extend our concerns to rising rates of Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant sentiment. We recognize that many Indigenous peoples are multi-racial and live within these intersections. Within our musical community there are many harrowing experiences of racism both within Canadian society at large and specifically within our musical institutions. This needs to change.
- Homophobia, transphobia and sexism – Especially as performers, we continue to face sexist expectations in terms of concert attire and voice type. The colonial gender binary remains stubbornly entrenched, at the pain and expense of our trans, Two-Spirit and queer communities.
- Disability and mental health – As survivors of genocide, Indigenous mental health outcomes are negatively impacted. Our families carry significant traumas, and there needs to be more consideration for neurodivergence and trauma-informed practices, especially when dealing with Indigenous stories. This includes protocols, mental health resources, accessibility, and capitalistic workload expectations.
- Appropriation – We reaffirm our original statement on Indigenous Musical Sovereignty (2019); Indigenous stories are best told by Indigenous peoples.
- Location – Our musicians and storytellers live on every inch of these beautiful lands.

Educational and performance opportunities are not equally distributed. We no longer want to see that youth in Tuktoyaktuk, Tobique, and Tall Cree have any less opportunity than those in Toronto.

We believe that with the support of our allies, collaborators, funding bodies, service organizations, and educational institutions at all levels there is both the will and the capacity to begin to improve outcomes for our musical community, and especially our Indigenous youth and the generations to come. We ask that our concerns are heard with care and humility, and that this work does not fall solely upon our shoulders.

For further reading, please see our Indigenous Musical Sovereignty (2019) statement issued from our inaugural gathering.

Woliwon, miigwech, kinanâskomitin, mahsi cho, kiitamatsiin,
 Andrew Balfour (Cree)
 Cris Derksen (Cree-Mennonite)
 Jeremy Dutcher (Wolastoq)
 Michelle Lafferty (Tłıchǫ Dene)
 Beverley McKiver (Anishinaabe)
 Melody McKiver (Anishinaabe-Lithuanian-Scottish)
 Jessica McMann (Cree)
 Sonny-Ray Day Rider (Blackfoot)

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FIVE GENERATIONS gathered Wednesday at the Priory. From left to right are grandmother Dorothy Reed, great-grandmother Grace Croft, great-great grandmother Rose Macdonald, baby Angela Higgins and her mother Brenda Higgins.

Angela Brooks (née Higgins) plus four maternal generations of ancestors.