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Listening with 'Big Ears': Accountability in cross-cultural music education research with Indigenous partners

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Abstract

In this theoretical article, I examine various conceptions of focused listening—including those held by specific First Nations communities—to determine how each conception might offer insights for listening while conducting cross-cultural music education research. First, I discuss the notion of "Big Ears," as it is understood by the jazz community. Then, I turn to scholars from various First Nations in British Columbia to learn about their conceptions of listening. I outline decolonial listening strategies as proposed by Indigenous Arts scholar Dylan Robinson, before learning about the role of listening from a settler-Canadian who formally Witnessed the testimonies of Indigenous residential school survivors over a period of years while working for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I examine the writings of music education researchers who have proposed listening as an important strategy in cross-cultural/intercultural pedagogy and research, albeit in different circumstances and for different reasons. Finally, I describe/reflect on my process of learning to listen cross-culturally as a settler-Canadian music education researcher engaged in community-based participatory research (CBPR) over the course of three studies, and list some of the ongoing questions I have. I conclude by proposing a revised understanding of Listening with "Big Ears" as one possible way for non-Indigenous researchers using a CBPR approach to enhance their application of Indigenist research methodology, especially in demonstrating their accountability to Indigenous co-researchers, participants, and communities, as they engage collaboratively in music education research.

Keywords

cross-cultural research, decolonization, First Nations, listening

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I begin this article by self-locating "in congruence with Indigenous research axiology and the relational accountability" that I have to you as readers (Windchief et al., 2018, p. 533). My name is Anita Prest. I was born and raised in Montreal, Canada. I am a settler-Canadian—that is, a person who immigrated (or whose ancestors immigrated) to Canada. My grandparents came to Canada from Italy approximately 115 years ago, passing on many aspects of Italian culture to their children and grandchildren. I spoke Italian, English, and French as a child, which has influenced my perspectives on the role of language in identity formation, socialization, and politicization. I moved to British Columbia (BC) as an adult and have since lived in several locations within that province. Following Indigenist[1] methodological and Indigenous pedagogical practices,[2] I begin this article with a story.

When I was 29 years old, I auditioned for the School of Music at the university where I currently teach and research. I was a mature student, married with two children. Although I operated a thriving piano studio that I had established following my graduation from a 2-year piano pedagogy program, I wished to enroll in a Bachelor of Music in Music Education program so that I could eventually teach music in schools.

One of my audition pieces was Liszt's Third Concert Étude (*Un Sospiro*), which was especially meaningful to me. I had first heard it performed when I was 10 or 11 years old. As I spoke Italian, I knew that the word *sospiro* meant "a sigh" in English, and that a sigh could infer many emotions and meanings, depending on the context. A few days prior to the audition, I had my last lesson with my piano teacher at the Victoria Conservatory. In a large performance hall, I played my audition pieces on a grand piano whose lid was held open with the extended lid prop.

As I was playing *Un Sospiro*, I had an unnerving experience. While my fingers played the music, my ears and consciousness were suddenly transported out of my body. I was aware only of my ears floating in the air near the piano's extended lid prop at the height that they would have been if I had been standing by the side of the piano. My ears felt enormous; the music that I was playing was magnified to such a degree that the only thing I was aware of was the intensity of sound—emanating from the side of the piano—that was filling my ears. It was as if my ears were located in between two stereo speakers cranked up to maximum volume, but without the pain or sound distortion usually associated with such a scenario.

Frightened by the experience, my consciousness and ears "returned" to my body sitting before the keyboard, noting that somehow, I had played without interruption during the brief episode. A moment later, I again experienced the same out-of-body phenomenon. After once more returning to my body and finishing the piece, I spoke to my piano teacher about what had just transpired. He did not comment, and, as it was my final lesson with him, we never spoke of it again. I returned home and shared the experience with my spouse, but for many years, I did not speak of this occurrence to anyone else, nor did I research the phenomenon. Yet, the embodied memory of this acute and overwhelming listening experience remains with me all these years later.

In this theoretical article, I begin with my corporeal experience of what it means to engage in listening to the exclusion of any other sensory or cognitive input to illustrate and conceptualize the degree of focus that listening across cultures in music education research might require. I will then examine various conceptions of focused listening—including those held by specific First Nations communities—to determine how each conception might offer insights for listening while conducting cross-cultural research.[3] My goal in this literature review is to locate salient clues on how to listen better, rather than to compare or critique the conceptions. First, I discuss the notion of "Big Ears," as it is understood by the jazz community. Then, I turn to scholars from various First Nations in BC to learn about their conceptions of listening. I outline decolonial listening strategies as proposed by Indigenous Arts scholar Dylan Robinson (2020),

before learning about the role of listening from a settler-Canadian who formally Witnessed the testimonies of Indigenous residential school survivors. I examine the writings of music education researchers who have proposed listening as an important strategy in cross-cultural or intercultural pedagogy and research, albeit in different circumstances and for different reasons. Finally, I describe and reflect on my process of learning to listen cross-culturally as a settler-Canadian music education researcher engaged in community-based participatory research (CBPR) over the course of three studies, and list some of the ongoing questions I have.

While I am aware of the irony of centering my experiences (and consequently my whiteness) in this article to deconstruct the ongoing decolonization of my research practice, my purpose is to "locate ignorance . . . as a search for directions in which we might better listen (and listen better)" (Kallio, 2021a, p. 62). I conclude by proposing a revised understanding of *Listening with "Big Ears"* as one possible way for non-Indigenous researchers using a CBPR approach to enhance their application of Indigenist research methodology, especially in demonstrating their accountability to Indigenous co-researchers, participants, and communities, as they engage collaboratively in music education research.

"Big Ears" in jazz

When jazz players praise fellow musicians, they describe them as having "Big Ears." This expression refers to a musician's capacity "to hear and engage complexity as it happens" (Rustin & Tucker, 2008, p. 1). According to jazz scholar and ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson (1996):

> Listening in an active sense—being able to respond to musical opportunities or to correct mistakes—is implicit in the way that [jazz] musicians use this term. It is a type of listening much like that required of participants in a conversation, who have to pay attention to what is transpiring if they expect to say things that make sense to other participants. Listening affects what musicians decide to play at a particular moment . . . This spontaneity is absolutely central. (p. 84)

At the root of jazz playing, then, are the spontaneous, improvisatory interactions among musicians based on actively listening to one another before deciding how to respond. By contrast, musicians who practice a solo prior to performance and then play it on stage do not in any way engage with their companions' musical ideas. Thus, among jazz players, such musicianship is considered disrespectful.

Parties engaged in these improvisatory interactions speak the same musical language, and, equally important, they hold similar meanings for the musical phrases that they employ. Therefore, listening with "Big Ears" in jazz requires only being present and paying attention to what is being played or said. I now turn to local First Nations' conceptions of listening and then discuss how listening with "Big Ears" is more complex when people speak the same language but do not hold similar meanings for the words and phrases they employ, in part because their ways of being and knowing in the world are dissimilar.

Lyackson, Stó:lō, Líl'wat, and Syilx First Nations conceptions of listening

Contemporary First Nations' cultures on the Northwest coast of North America continue to emphasize the significant role of orality in knowledge generation and knowledge transmission. Today, as in the past, those who organize significant events or ceremonies in structures called Longhouses honor specific people who are present by asking them to formally Witness the

events so that in years to come, these Witnesses will be able to recall to their communities what transpired on that occasion, accurately and in detail. Lyackson scholar Qwul'sih'yah'maht (2015) shares that "Witnessing is a significant responsibility because a witness is being asked to pay attention to all the details of the evening . . . This highly sophisticated process of witnessing continues to be central to our traditional ceremonies" (p. 185).

Witnessing requires well-developed listening skills. Storytellers who take part in Longhouse ceremonies have told Stó:lō scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) that, "We have 'three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head and one in our heart'" (p. 76). In other words, "Listening requires the concomitant involvement of the auditory and visual senses, the emotions, the mind, and patience" (p. 76). For Archibald (2008), listening also shows that you are taking care of the speaker because you "become a participant who is actively engaged in the story" (p. 33). Líl'wat scholar Lorna Williams (2018/2019) describes such attentive listening as "oriented to an openness beyond our own personal thoughts and assumptions; being aware and conscious of everything around you as you focus on the task at hand" (p. 39). This description implies a heightened awareness of both the internal and external elements that constitute a listening environment.

Lyackson, Stó:lō, Líl'wat, and Syilx First Nations conceptions of listening entail a responsibility to the *relationship* between the listened to and the listener. The community's well-being is central to the listener's work. Archibald (2008) summarizes Jeanette Armstrong's (Syilx) description of listening "as preparation for taking responsibility for the effect on others of one's words/thoughts when shared publicly" (p. 27). In this view, the Listener listens not merely for their own individual purpose and advantage, but for the group's welfare. Moreover, the Listener listens well not to create a shallow sense of goodwill, but to establish and uphold good relations, jointly understood as fundamental to the overall functioning of a community.

Of the 600 First Nations communities in what we now call Canada, 205 of them (with 34 distinct traditional languages) are found in BC (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2020). While many First Nations community members are actively engaged in (re)learning and reviving their ancestral languages (McIvor, 2018), the majority speak English as their main or first language. In a recent publication, a colleague and I have summarized the difficulties various Lummi, Anishinaabe, Secwepemc, Nêhiýaw, and Kanien'kéha:ka scholars have described when Elders in their respective communities attempt to explain their worldviews in English, a noun-based language that has no vocabulary or syntax for the concepts they wish to convey (Prest & Goble, 2021a). Community members, then, use the English words that are closest in meaning to depict the original idea. Within the community context, individuals understand the English words as laden with the meanings of their community's worldview. However, in cross-cultural encounters, miscommunication can occur between Indigenous people who have grown up with or learned their community's worldview and non-Indigenous individuals who are not familiar with that worldview, because these two groups of people do not hold similar meanings for the words and phrases they employ in common, due to their dissimilar ways of being and knowing in the world. Listening in cross-cultural encounters then entails the recognition that seemingly benign words—for example, "relationship"—holds vastly different meanings for those attempting to communicate with one another (Prest & Goble, 2021b). Such recognition signals the beginning of acquiring a decolonial listening habit.

Decolonial listening

In his ground-breaking work entitled *Hungry Listening*, Stó:lō Indigenous Arts scholar Dylan Robinson (2020) notes that all "Listening is guided by positionality as an intersection of

perceptual habit, ability, and bias" (p. 37). In the context of listening to musical collaborations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous artists, he names three listening practices or habits: settler-colonial or hungry listening, decolonial listening, and resurgent listening. Settler-colonial or hungry listening "prioritizes the capture and certainty of information over the affective feel, timbre, touch, and texture of sound" (p. 38). Robinson likens settler society's historical displacement of Indigenous peoples and ongoing disregard for their well-being in their quest to rapaciously extract physical resources (e.g., timber, gold, oil) to settler audience members' similar "'fevered' pace of consumption for knowledge resources" (p. 53). He describes settler audiences as listening to musical collaborations without listening with heart—as Archibald (2008) has explained—or investing time and effort in relationship building with Indigenous peoples.

This settler-colonial form of listening is also based on a specific multicultural perspective widely and officially embraced in Canada. This perspective celebrates a pluralism that privileges "palatable narratives of difference" (p. 50) without acknowledging that multiple perspectives might result in dissensus, and without interrogating this "starving desire to hear Indigenous participation in art music as musical forms of multicultural enrichment or conciliatory resolution" (p. 118). Robinson (2020) also critiques the assumption on the part of some settler audience members that they have done "reconciliation" work by merely hearing such collaborations.

Rather, Robinson (2020) contends that it is necessary for settlers to engage in a decolonial or critical listening positionality that "seeks to prompt questions regarding how we might become better attuned to the particular filters of race, class, gender, and ability that actively select and frame the moment of contact between listening body and listened-to sound" (p. 11). Decolonial and anticolonial listening practices move beyond certainty to engage in "a practice of guest listening, which treats the act of listening as entering into a *sound territory* . . . [in which] listening is perhaps always a listening through, or in relation with land" (p. 53). Decolonial listening practices require "increased self-reflection toward one's listening habits, privilege, and biases" (p. 73) and an awareness that one might not be able to hear all that is being said/sung/played—a sign of incommensurability. He asks those of us who are settlers how we "might listen as a respectful guest, and in ways that do not seek to extract" (p. 51) and offers the notion of *siwel*, a Stó:lō word, meaning "to become attentive to something, or to prick one's ears" (p. 72), as a way to conceive of such focused listening.

Lastly, Robinson (2020) considers resurgent[4] listening practices for Indigenous listeners that are "based in forms of Indigenous sensory engagement and ontologies" (p. 11). Such resurgent listening practices are ways that Indigenous listeners might hear the uniqueness and sovereignty of each other's Nations, plus their ontologies, through their specific cultural practices. When artistic action "draws on Indigenous logics" (p. 66) rather than drawing on a logic "explicitly oriented toward, defensive against, or responsive to the work of settler colonial sovereignty" (p. 67), it can be said to engage in *sensate sovereignty* because it centers Indigenous, rather than settler, ways of knowing and being.

Thus, in explicating the notion of hungry listening, Robinson (2020) helps us to apprehend the ontologically subjective nature of listening and to move toward a listening that is self-aware of its positionality. Moreover, such listening requires recognition that the very process by which we enact listening results from our positionality, that listening can be a conscious action, and that we can thus be deliberate in *how* we choose to listen.

Listening as unsettling

Paulette Regan, research director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada from 2008 to 2015, listens and writes from the position of a settler-Canadian. Having worked

directly with residential school survivors, Regan (2010) argues that settler-Canadians are "ultimately responsible for the past and present actions of our government," and that we can learn from the past to unsettle ourselves and rethink "our present and future relations" (p. 4). She explains how consciously learning to listen differently to residential school survivors' stories through engaging "in the act of bearing witness as an ethical undertaking" (p. 18) was part of her own unsettling process. Thus, her learning to conceive of listening as witnessing with deliberate intent mirrors some of the ideas by Indigenous scholars that I previously presented. Regan suggests that *unsettling* or *not knowing* "has power that may hold a key to decolonization for settlers" (p. 18). She asks settler-Canadians the following questions:

> How do we listen and respond authentically and ethically to testimonies—stories of colonial violence, not with colonial empathy but as a testimonial practice of shared truth telling that requires us to risk being vulnerable, to openly question our accepted world views and cherished assumptions about our colonial history and identity? How do we learn to listen differently, taking on our responsibility to decolonize ourselves, making space for Indigenous history and experiences? (p. 190)

She notes the pedagogical and transformative potential of listening, in part, through what we can learn when we prepare ourselves to listen to testimony by practicing "silence," and when we notice and interrogate the questions that we ask ourselves as we listen to others.

Music education and listening

At least two music education scholars have also examined the notion of listening in reference to cross-cultural encounters and conflict-laden situations; they offer their conceptions of listening to support music educators in these circumstances. In Lori-Anne Dolloff's (2020) view, listening across cultures requires the lens of cultural humility. Developing cultural (and other forms of) humility facilitates music educators' ability to work with cultural practitioners and jointly consider how they might embed Indigenous "musics" in their curricular practices in a way that is deemed apposite by local Indigenous peoples. According to the BC First Nations Health Authority (n.d.):

> Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases, and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience. Cultural humility enables cultural safety. (p. 10)

Rather than adding and stirring "pan-indigenous musics to the curriculum, grabbing songs and music from the 'global songbook' . . . [or adding] a unit of listening to decontextualized pan-aboriginal music as suggested in many curriculum guidelines," Dolloff (2020) emphasizes the need to highlight Indigenous epistemologies, colonial histories, and ongoing colonial oppression when engaging in decolonial practices with music students. She notes the differences between a cultural competence framework that emphasizes developing identifiable skills, and a cultural humility framework that emphasizes (a) background knowledge of Canada's historical and ongoing systemic racist policies and local Indigenous cultural practices, attitude and skills; (b) awareness and avoidance of conscious and unconscious bias and stereotypes; and (c) new "musical and pedagogical skills that embody cultural humility," including new ways of listening and lifelong learning.

Alexis Kallio (2021b) explores the role of listening as a pedagogical approach for music teachers. She considers the ways in which listening can support music educators in

navigating irreconcilable conflicts, also avoiding outright censorship when students in their classes express animosity toward people who are different from them:

> I thus propose *listening*, as an active, creative, and political engagement that foregrounds relationality, connectedness, and an ethic of care—however difficult and discomforting—may better foster critical analysis of the conditions underlying such expressions . . . such an approach also allows for the recognition of each individual's complex personhood in ways that do not seek consensus but work towards new democratic visions of understanding and solidarity. (pp. 163–164)

Kallio (2021b) argues for the cultivation of four forms of listening (active, creative, dialogic, and political) when engaging in difficult pedagogical conversations, especially with those whose opinions are hateful toward others. These forms of listening include relational, historical, and attentive dimensions that enable teachers to model the connectedness and interdependence of the human experience rather than shutting down disagreeable opinions (p. 173).

Summary of ideas

The authors I have cited to this point have offered various descriptions of and reasons for Listening from their diverse perspectives (e.g., jazz, First Nations, white settler, music education). Yet, despite their different positionalities, the values informing the forms of Listening that they describe involve notions of respect, relationships, responsibility, and transformation. In the following section, I discuss my experiences learning to do music education research within an Indigenist research framework, applying specific Indigenous methods and engaging with the worldviews that inform those methods. Then, I examine how my learning to Listen better has run parallel with learning to do Indigenist research.

Description of three studies

Over the course of three studies since 2016, I have researched ways in which to decolonize and Indigenize music education practice in the context of BC, also learning about Indigenous research methodologies, primarily with my research partner, Scott Goble, from The University of British Columbia. We have developed partnerships with Indigenous individuals and organizations, developing and carrying out research together. To date, we have received input with informed consent from approximately 280 participants, 160 of whom are Indigenous from approximately 60 First Nations and Métis Nations. Following a description of Wilson's (2007) principles of Indigenist research, I will concisely outline the title, purpose, and partners of each of the three studies, which were approved by the Human Research Ethics Boards of both our universities. I examine our learning process through the lens of these principles as we attempted to Listen more acutely to what Indigenous research participants, colleagues, and partners shared with us concerning doing research with Indigenous community partners from diverse Nations. With each new study, we have adjusted our research practice according to what we have been able to hear.

Wilson (2007) explicates seven principles of an Indigenist paradigm in research as follows:

> [1] Respect . . . all forms of life as being related and interconnected; [2] Conduct all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty . . . [and] compassion . . .; [3] Research must . . . [bring] benefits to the Indigenous community; [4] The foundation of the research question must lie within the reality of the Indigenous experience; [5] . . . Theories . . . must be grounded in an Indigenist epistemology and supported by the Elders and the community that live out this particular epistemology; [6] The

> methods used will be process-oriented, and the researcher will be recognized and cognizant of his or her role as one part of the group process . . .; [7] It is advisable that a researcher work as part of a team of Indigenous scholars/thinkers and with the guidance of Elder(s) or knowledge-keepers . . .. (p. 195)

Wilson (2007) also outlines his views on who can use an Indigenist research paradigm:

> I use *Indigenist* to name or label the paradigm that I am talking about rather than *Indigenous*. It is my belief that an Indigenist paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets. It cannot and should not be claimed to belong only to people with "Aboriginal" heritage. To use an analogy, one does not need to be female to be a feminist. Researchers do not have to be Indigenous to use an Indigenist paradigm, just as researchers do not have to be "white" to use a Western paradigm. (pp. 193–194)

Wilson's (2007) clarification about non-Indigenous researchers using an Indigenist research paradigm gave us confidence that our adopting this approach in 2016 was fitting. Two years later, university Human Research Ethics procedures and federal granting bodies in Canada determined that all researchers who conduct research with Indigenous peoples must follow guidelines in congruence with these principles.

First study

Our first study, entitled *Culturally responsive music education: Integrating Indigenous knowledge, pedagogy, and cultural practices in rural British Columbian public schools*, took place from 2016 to 2019 (Prest et al., 2021b). In 2015, the BC Ministry of Education had mandated that local Indigenous knowledge, pedagogy, and worldviews be embedded in all K-12 curricula incrementally between 2015 and 2019, but most music teachers in BC were unable to do so as they were unfamiliar with Indigenous cultural practices. The purpose of the study was to examine the ways in which some public-school music educators in rural BC, together with Indigenous community members, had already embedded local Indigenous knowledge in music classes, schools, and the broader community so that we could provide examples to other music teachers.

We read Wilson's Indigenist principles for the first time as we prepared for this study and attempted to implement some of them. To familiarize ourselves with "Respect for all forms of life as being related and interconnected," we read two books by Nuu-chah-nulth hereditary chief, Elder, and philosopher, Richard Atleo. These books explicated the notion of *Heshookish Tsawalk*, or *everything is one*. We discovered that this principle of interconnectedness is common to the worldviews of many Indigenous peoples across Canada, and indeed the world. We attempted to consciously conduct all our actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness, compassion, and honesty; however, we were not familiar with local protocols or procedures and may have unconsciously and unknowingly expressed rude behavior (e.g., introducing ourselves by our professional roles rather than our familial ties, not gifting Knowledge Keepers or Elders). At the time, we were not concerned with our research providing benefits to the Indigenous community. We were more concerned with future benefit to music educators who wish to embed Indigenous knowledge and worldviews according to the new curriculum. Although we consulted with our Indigenous research collaborator, Dr. Onowa McIvor from the Swampy Cree First Nation, we did not develop research questions with the Indigenous peoples who participated in our study. As we explored the implications of everything being interconnected—or *Heshookish Tsawalk*—on our research, the study became grounded in a Nuu-chah-nulth epistemology but, apart from receiving permissions from the various First Nations authorities on each territory and the individuals who participated in the study, the Elders and community members who live out this epistemology did not actively support and may not have been aware of the research. While we nominally understood the concept of being process oriented, we

were, in fact, very goals driven. For example, we were concerned more with obtaining consent from all the First Nation territories upon which the schools we visited are situated than with developing relationships with the actual individuals who signed the consent forms.

Second study

We named our second study, which took place from 2018 to 2019, *Indigenizing choral music education: Toward an ethos of resurgence, reconciliation, and bridging* (Prest et al., 2021a). For this research, we partnered with a third music education professor, and a private consultant and facilitator from Cowichan Tribes, who, soon after agreeing to help us with our research, was hired as executive director of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), a large organization supporting over 18,000 urban Indigenous peoples living in the area. Soon after, the VNFC Indigenous Culture and Traditions Coordinator also joined us in this endeavor. The purpose of this second study was to facilitate four gatherings or sharing circles in which a diverse group of people with relevant expertise could work together to identify and discuss factors that must be considered to support Indigenous culture bearers and artists, composers, and music educators in their co-creation of Indigenous vocal and choral music resources in a manner that could be upheld by all concerned.

In the four conversations that ensued over the course of 1 year, many people emphasized that songs and drums are sentient, and that one of the functions of many Indigenous cultural practices was to connect people with the more-than-human world, including ancestors. We learned to conceptualize the term "music" according to the worldviews shared with us. We hoped that we conducted "all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty . . . [and] compassion." Through ongoing guidance, we learned some of the protocols and teachings that would demonstrate this sentiment to First Nations participants on their own terms, but we were not yet comfortable with these processes.

As before, we were initially more concerned with future benefit to music educators who wish to embed Indigenous knowledge and worldviews according to the new curriculum. However, as people began to express their opinions more openly over the course of the four sharing circles, we developed an awareness that this research encompassed acts of resurgence by Indigenous participants, and truth and reconciliation by settler participants. For this study, we developed the research questions with both the VNFC executive director and the culture and traditions coordinator. We continued to use *Heshookish Tsawalk* as our guiding principle, and seven Elders from Nuu-chah-nulth, Hul'qumi'num, Songhees, Kwakwaka'wakw, and W̱SÁNEĆ territories, plus our research collaborator, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule from the Dokis First Nation, guided us. By the end of the four sharing circles, we had learned that such processes do not necessarily lead researchers to results or outcomes, but simply more questions.

Third study

Our current study, entitled *From policy to practice in decolonizing and Indigenizing music education: Ensuring teacher understanding of Indigenous worldviews*, began in 2020 and will run until 2024. We are now eight partner groups, guided by a Steering Committee (comprising 14 Indigenous and 7 non-Indigenous members from the partner organizations) with advice given by two Elders at various times in the process. The study has three goals: to design, organize, and carry out a large, 2-day knowledge-sharing and knowledge-creation conference for music teachers and Indigenous teachers and leaders from all 60 BC school districts, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and other interested parties (which took place in May 2022); to develop and maintain networks of communication for participants as they engage in this ongoing work; and to design and create appropriate forms of sharing knowledge that support all interested parties.

This study is co-led by Indigenous partners at every stage of the research process, not only regarding the design of the research questions and conference, but also in terms of analysis and knowledge dissemination. We center both resurgence and reconciliation in this "ethical space" (Ermine, 2007), and to that end, Indigenous voices are amplified. For our conference, we engaged Elders, keynote speakers, Masters of Ceremonies, Knowledge Keepers, artists, drum carriers, videographers, floor managers, A/V personnel, and postsecondary students—all from various First Nations and Métis Nations. The CBPR design ensures that Indigenous Knowledge Keepers from across the province are the ones who guide music teachers in their region concerning if, how, and when to embed local Indigenous content, pedagogies, and worldviews in their music classes. Our Steering Committee has advised us that *Heshookish Tsawalk* should be the unifying principle. In fact, the title of our conference was *Everything is connected: Song, relationships, and Indigenous worldviews*.

COVID-19 slowed our timeline by more than 1 year, enabling us to focus on process over the course of approximately 25 Steering Committee, 10 subcommittee, and countless small group Zoom meetings over a 2-year period. We now recognize that taking the time to reach shared understanding about purpose and procedure is vital to partnerships deemed legitimate by Indigenous communities (Battiste, 2008; Latulippe, 2015). Despite meeting virtually, we found ways to ensure that we followed local teachings and protocols (e.g., gifting and payments to Elders; territorial welcome or acknowledgment, each person has a voice without interruption). Communication with the eight local First Nations communities was part of this process, and we will ensure that this communication will continue as we move forward.

Listening as learning

While I continue to notice some of my errors in judgment in this ongoing research process, I am also aware that listening to the best of my ability over the course of these studies has helped me to learn, leading me to the following realizations. First, process is central to the functioning of our Steering Committee. However, process does not merely entail spending a requisite amount of time in discussion so that we can arrive at shared understanding, which is what I had thought originally. Rather, process also entails a specific way of engaging with one another that is entangled, emotional, iterative, dedicated, honest, respectful, and at times, difficult. I am learning to trust that this form of engagement eventually leads to desired outcomes. Consequently, I no longer panic about deadlines to the same degree as I have in the past, nor do I react as defensively as I did previously. As Regan (2010) suggested, listening requires sitting in discomfort, and commitment to those I may not understand, who may engage me in difficult conversations, remind me periodically of my privilege, or make unwarranted assumptions about me (Bascuñán et al., 2022). Despite occasions when there are impasses, I have discovered that Archibald's (2008) description of Listening as an engagement of the heart that tries to have everyone's well-being in mind is important for me to prioritize. Listening better has taught me to notice how and when I can reciprocate when people need a hand without their having to ask me overtly and intentionally. Listening has made me acutely aware of how the Indigenous members of the Steering Committee have committed to long-term relations with those of us who are non-Indigenous to decolonize music education throughout the province, despite the ways in which the colonial settler state continues to impinge on their professional and personal lives, and even though many members of our society continue to engage in conscious and unconscious racist behavior, affecting my colleagues' quality of life. And for their commitment, I am grateful.

Ongoing questions

I have many ongoing questions resulting from my research experiences in the past 5 years. How do I do the work of informing myself and sharing what I have learned with other non-Indigenous music education scholars via publications and conference presentations—as Indigenous scholars have stated is the responsibility of settler researchers (Biin et al., 2021), without appropriating or extracting knowledge as Robinson (2020) and others have cautioned? Is engaging in ongoing relationships, reciprocity, and power sharing in and beyond research endeavors sufficient to avoid this extraction? In what ways might I discern better and support the quality of relationships between and among steering committee members to support their well-being? How do I develop "an ethics of listening that . . . seeks to hear the indiscernible and the absent" (Robinson, 2020, p. 59), including Elders' often subtle and oblique suggestions? How do I support Indigenous colleagues at my university "by sharing the workload and ensuring there is more than one token Indigenous voice at the planning table" (Pardy & Pardy, 2020, p. 240) without co-opting Indigenous perspectives?

Emotions have been heightened in the current Canadian social climate and context, as more and more Indigenous children's graves are discovered at the 150 former residential school sites throughout the country, and as many First Nations hold various levels of government accountable regarding sovereignty and land issues. Thus, the stakes are high and the ramifications of settlers not Listening to what is (and is not) being said in research and everyday life are enormous. Bishop (2005) asks researchers who do work with Indigenous communities to consider to whom they are accountable. In this article, I have offered some conceptions of Listening that might support non-Indigenous music education researchers in being accountable to Indigenous partners when conducting Indigenist research, especially when cultural difference obscures meaning. I have shared my learning about Listening to date and the next steps I see in this journey. In conclusion, I propose a revised notion of *Listening with "Big Ears,"* one that is attuned not only to being fully present, but also to long-term relationships, lifelong learning, acts of reciprocity, self-awareness, amplifying Indigenous voices, cultural humility, and listening for ignorance so that we might draw nearer to such accountability in cross-cultural community-based participatory music education research with Indigenous partners. Such Listening with "Big Ears" would be deafening indeed.

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Notes

1. See section entitled Description of three studies for a description of Indigenist foundational principles.
2. See Archibald (2008) for a fuller explanation of Indigenous pedagogies.
3. I propose that Indigenous and Western conceptions of music and the worldviews that inform them are so disparate that the adjective *cross-cultural* is a more appropriate term than *intercultural* to describe this research. For me, the hyphen (Fine, 1994) represents Indigenous sovereignty and the necessity for non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous partners to engage in an ongoing, never-ending decolonizing process. As Tuck and Mackenzie (2015) elaborate,

> Working the hyphen . . . means that researchers probe how we are in relation to the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations . . . Working the hyphen means to unravel, critically, the blurred boundaries in our relation, and in our texts; to understand the political work of our narratives; to decipher how the traditions of social science serve to inscribe; and to imagine how our practice can be transformed to resist acts of othering. (pp. 162–163)

4. Resurgences comprise recasting Indigenous peoples in terms that are authentic and meaningful, to regenerating and organizing a radical political consciousness, to reoccupying land and gaining restitution, to protecting the natural environment, and to restoring the Nation-to-Nation relationship between Indigenous Nations and Settlers. (Alfred, 2013, para. 5)

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