

**Decolonization in Canadian High School Music Education:
Some Perspectives from a Settler-Teacher**

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Abstract

Even though work is underway on decolonizing Canadian curricula, there is still much to be done. This paper suggests that teachers, and curriculum designers can play an integral role in educating Canadian settler-youth about decolonization and Indigenous reconciliation. Implementing changes will take time but it is important to consider as changes and modifications are made to curriculum documents. This work contains a review of literature pertaining to the decolonization of music curriculum within Canada, in order to place more focus on the music and culture of Canada's Indigenous people. This paper is guided by the following research questions: 1) What research is available pertaining to decolonizing the high school music curriculum in Canada? 2) What are the challenges in decolonizing music curricula for settler-teachers and how might these challenges be resolved? This review analyzes research studies from Canada and the United States of America (USA) which focus on why decolonization of the music curriculum is required and also reviews less scholarly work, such as news articles, in order to make suggestions as to how decolonization can take place within the music curriculum. Studies from Canada and the USA have been included due to the similar settler history of both nations.

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Introduction

As a colonized nation, Canada, in many ways, remains a reflection of its European colonizers. In the Canadian curriculum, the reflection of European colonizers is abundantly clear. The need to decolonize curriculum has become more evident in recent years as more information about residential schools becomes public. To this end, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report containing 94 recommendations to aid reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians (Government of Canada, 2021b). In this commission, the government promised "to design a national engagement strategy for developing and implementing a national reconciliation framework" (Government of Canada, 2021b, para. 12).

As a settler-teacher, I do not claim to fully understand all the struggles faced by Indigenous people in Canada, nor do I claim to have all the answers as to how these problems can be resolved. The goal of this research is to provide myself, and other teachers, with some ideas and strategies for decolonizing practices within the classroom. In doing so, I aim to provide students with an education that will help them become better Canadian citizens. An education that was lacking in previous generations.

If a goal, as a country, is to promote decolonization and reconciliation for the Indigenous people of Canada, these concepts need to be clearly defined in our education system. It is important for students to have the opportunity to learn about the Indigenous people of Canada, the injustices they face and the need for Indigenous reconciliation. This will hopefully produce a generation that is passionate to work side by side with Indigenous people on the path to reconciliation. Within the music classroom and curriculum, providing students with this important knowledge is not possible unless changes are made to reflect these crucial issues. In doing so it is important to teach students about Indigenous musics as opposed to just the traditional focus of Western Classical music which is typical of many music curricula across the country.

Problem, Purpose, Context & Research Questions

In most areas of Canada, and in other developed nations, music programs in schools often focus primarily on Western classical music, suggesting that this music is "most worthy of study" (Hess, 2015, p.

336). This encourages students to perceive classical music as more prestigious than other genres. It also means that students have less opportunities to explore the music of other cultures within the context of their school's music curriculum.

According to the 2016 census, Statistics Canada (2022) reports that there are over 1.6 million Indigenous people living in Canada. The Government of Canada's (2021a) website also acknowledges that Indigenous people are "the fastest growing population in Canada" and "the youngest population in Canada" (para. 1). With a growing number of young Indigenous people in Canada, it is important that their music and culture be recognized and incorporated by curriculum designers. This would affirm for Indigenous people that their music and culture, which has long been ignored and suppressed, is now being taken seriously in the Canadian education system. It would also allow settler-students the opportunity to discover Indigenous culture and music through thoughtful and respectful representation in music curricula.

The purpose of this paper is to review literature regarding the importance of decolonizing music and bringing more diversity to music being taught in Canadian schools, thus providing students with a more complete musical and cultural education. This review is guided by the following questions: 1) What research is available pertaining to decolonizing the high school music curriculum in Canada? 2) What are the challenges in decolonizing music curriculum for settler-teachers and how might these challenges be resolved?

Definitions

The following definitions are important to consider with respect to the current research. Decolonization is often defined as "taking away the colonial" (Queen's University, 2022, para. 1). However, for the context of this paper, decolonization will be defined as "the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples" with relation to "Indigenous resurgence (Indigenous people reclaiming and restoring their culture, land, language, relationships, health etc., both independent of and with the support of non-Indigenous people)" (Queen's University, 2022, para. 2). Ingle (2016) states "Decolonizing music involves a conscious decision to move away from an 'either/or' 'colonial' mentality

to a 'both/and' 'decolonized' mentality" (para. 7). Indigenous is defined on the Government of Canada's (2021a) webpage as "a collective name for the aboriginal peoples of North America and their descendants" (para. 1). The Government of Canada notes that Aboriginal may also be used to identify Indigenous people; however, for the purpose of this paper, the term Indigenous will be used. One final term to be discussed is reconciliation. In the context of this paper, reconciliation will be used with respect to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This is Canada's promise to "provide those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences" (Government of Canada, 2021b, para. 1).

Method

Terms used to search for and obtain sources for this work were "Decolonizing", "music classroom/curriculum", "Decolonizing music education in Canada", "Indigenous reconciliation through music", "Jeremy Dutcher", "The Tragically Hip and Indigenous Reconciliation", and "Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund". These search terms were used in the MUN library general search, JSTOR, MUN Music Index, Google and Google Scholar.

Early research centered around decolonizing music in order to include Indigenous musics and music of other cultures and genres, such as jazz and pop. These search parameters yielded a broad field of information, so the decision was made to focus on decolonization with the purpose of putting emphasis on the Indigenous peoples of Canada, their music and their story. Some non-scholarly works were also reviewed to help guide settler-teachers in what changes can be made to help achieve a more decolonized music curriculum. Non-scholarly works were selected from reputable sources for the purpose of providing input and information which could not be found elsewhere. These non-scholarly works included news articles, blogs and interviews.

Each article reviewed covered some aspect of decolonization within music curriculum, or in the broader context of decolonization within the field of education. Unfortunately, these search parameters did not yield many articles authored by Indigenous educators, Indigenous elders, or musicians. More

direct input from the Indigenous community would have been helpful to the current study and the prospect of working towards decolonization within Canadian music curricula.

Review of the Literature

Why Decolonize The Canadian High School Music Curriculum?

Walker (2020), Woloshyn (2006), Attas and Walker (2019), Beynon et al. (2012), Bissell and Korteweg (2016), and Hess (2015) all agree on the importance of decolonizing music curricula in favor of moving towards the incorporation of Indigenous musics and reconciliation. Decolonizing curriculum reinforces the need for Indigenous reconciliation and inclusion of more Indigenous material in school curricula.

Margret Walker's (2020) article "Towards a Decolonized Music History Curriculum" focuses on the decolonisation of university music programs, more specifically music history curriculum. Despite being geared towards a university setting and not high school, the information in this article can help to inform educators on the need for decolonization within the Canadian school system. Walker (2020) notes that music programs within North America are usually presumed to be focused on the study of Western classical music, unless otherwise stated. This assumption is without doubt problematic in that it suggests that programs only have to state or justify their musical focus if the focus differs from Western Classical music. Walker (2020) also notes that the need for decolonization has been amplified in Canada because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and increasing information about residential schools in Canada. Walker (2020) states that focusing curriculum on Western classical music is problematic due to its ties to "white/European supremacy" (p. 12). Likewise, Robinson (2019) calls for the removal of "white supremacist, and settler colonial structures that guide our music education systems" (p. 137).

Woloshyn, who is a white, settler-Canadian, teaching music at an American University, also advocates for moving away from Western-centered curricula in favor of "making space for Indigenous political philosophies and knowledge systems" (Regan, 2010, as cited in Woloshyn, 2019, p. 42). In addition to the previously mentioned research, Battiste and Henderson (2009) focus on the importance of Indigenous knowledge (IK) being included in curriculum, as opposed to a more typical focus on

Eurocentric knowledge. They suggest that Eurocentric knowledge has “long ignored, neglected, or rejected IK as primitive, barbaric, and inferior, centering and privileging European methodologies and perspectives” (Battiste & Henderson, p. 6). The authors continue by suggesting that, in recent years, Indigenous peoples in Canada have placed an importance on Indigenous knowledge “marked by an emerging query of IK among governments, international organizations, universities, scholars, and policymakers” (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 6). Ultimately, Battiste & Henderson (2009) suggest that the need for implementation of curriculum which is led by Indigenous knowledge is “long overdue, urgent, and necessary” (p. 17).

Teaching Towards Decolonization on Indigenous Land

The fact that white-settler teachers are delivering a colonized curriculum on the land once owned and inhabited by the Indigenous people of Canada, is another reason why decolonization is such an essential task. Walker (2020) suggests that settler-teachers “cannot begin to think about decolonization in (Eurocentric) music programs without considering how European global colonialism shaped what we teach and how we teach it” (p. 7). Walker points out that ideologies in Canada and the United States in the mid 1800’s led to white superiority and racism towards other cultures, which led to Canada’s 1869 Indian Act, as well as later forcing Indigenous children to attend Canada’s residential schools. Bissell and Korteweg (2016) paraphrase Donald (2012) noting that Indigenous people of Canada are still being “marginalized and excluded from settlerstream Canadian society” (p. 17). This is evident in many classrooms where Indigenous students feel they must conform.

On March 9th, 2022, Memorial University released a 2021-2026 Strategic Framework for Indigenization, from the Office of Indigenous Affairs. This document contains information on the importance of Indigenization, as well as the University’s plan to decolonize through seeking out Indigenous people when hiring, and “including Indigenous knowledges, values, worldviews, histories, and cultures into specific educational practices such as pedagogy, instruction, curricula formulations, and research” (Memorial University, 2022, p. 4). The University realizes that Indigenization needs to include non-Indigenous people working with Indigenous people in a capacity that “can be classified as

decolonizing, truth-telling, building capacity, and reconciliation” (Memorial University, p. 4). Although the document is geared toward the University setting, it is important to note that some of the ideas contained within this document can be adapted to the high school setting.

Although it may not be possible for individual schools to focus their efforts on hiring Indigenous teachers, it would be possible for the school board to work, in partnership with Memorial University, to encourage more Indigenous students to enroll in education. These teachers could then, one day, take a leadership role in decolonization within the public school system. Making changes to curricula or the way that teachers deliver curricula should be considered in terms of the benefits it provides to students’ education. It is also important to determine what changes are necessary before attempting to change curricula that have been in place for decades. In the case of changing music curricula in order to include music, and teachings, other than Western classical music, much of the research has already been completed. Teachers and curriculum designers need only to be open to change.

Importance of studying Indigenous music as opposed to solely Western classical music

Several pieces of literature have been written highlighting the importance of including music from Canada’s Indigenous people. Research indicates the importance of exposing students to different people and cultures through music, even though this may take them outside of more typical genres of study. Juilliard professor Greg Sandow (2015) suggests “Classical music coexists with other genres, all of which are taken seriously as art” and also states that, within these genres, people think of aspects of music differently than in classical contexts (para. 7).

Within the Canadian context, Piercey (2012) focuses on the importance of revitalizing lost traditional music of the Inuit people of Canada. She states that, due to the colonization of school curriculum in Canada, many Indigenous people feel that it is increasingly important to identify and promote “significant objects and ideas that strengthen Inuit identity and ensure that traditional Indigenous knowledge is passed on to future generations” (Piercey, 2012, p. 77). In some cases, use of the arts, such as music, can help to recover fading parts of one's culture. This may include stories and traditions which have faded though the passing of time. Bohonos et al. (2019) suggest that through the arts “students can

access the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and intuitive words of individuals or groups who are unrepresented in their classrooms” (p. 256).

In their article, Attas and Walker (2019) stress the importance of connecting curriculum with local music. They suggest that it is imperative for music educators to look into music throughout history and to include a variety of local music from different genres (Attas & Walker, 2019). They also relay the importance of considering the “messages about culture, values, race, or meaning [that] are embedded in how we relay information” (Attas & Walker, 2019, p. 14). Since Indigenous music is a long-standing part of Canadian culture, and Canada’s music scene, it is essential that this music not be ignored, or overlooked in music curriculum. Piercey (2012) takes this idea one step further, summarizing work by Veblen et al. (2005), by suggesting the importance of using “pedagogical strategies in teaching music that match the cultural way in which music is transmitted within particular cultural contexts” (p. 72). For white settler-teachers, it is also essential to consider how this can be done in a way that is respectful to the culture from which the music we are teaching originates.

Although decolonization in some school subjects may feel like an insurmountable task for teachers, this does not have to be the case in the music classroom. There are already Indigenous artists and groups, like The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, that have already undertaken some of the work to decolonize Canadian music education. This paves the way for music teachers to begin the conversation of decolonization within their classes, and to help curriculum designers implement Indigenous musics, and knowledge, as a part of their music curricula.

Using Technology to Facilitate Connections with Indigenous Musicians

Memorial University’s Strategic Framework for Indigenization suggests the importance of making connections with people within Canada’s Indigenous population in order to seek assistance in decolonization (2022). Beynon et al. (2012) state “Canadian communities, schools, and school districts in both urban and rural areas now have access to technology that links them in real time with communities around the world” (p. 187). They state that access to technology allows educators the opportunity to connect with people from all over our country and the world, an opportunity which has only multiplied

since the writing of this article. Ingle (2016) also stresses the importance of using technology in order to create “possibilities for ‘decolonized’ Indigenous music to be heard, experienced, and enjoyed by more people than ever thought possible” (para. 14).

Faizi et al. (2013) suggest that social media can be used in the classroom in order to allow students the opportunity to engage, communicate and collaborate with people and organizations. They suggest that social media can present an extra opportunity for students to connect with each other as well as teachers. It can also increase the engagement of students who are reluctant to participate in more traditional forms of learning and help facilitate collaboration between students (Faizi et al., 2013).

If these ideas are expanded upon, it is evident how this same technology can help to facilitate decolonization, especially in the realm of music. Through the use of social media, students are afforded the opportunity to connect with other students and artists, not only within their own community, but far beyond. This means that students who once did not have the opportunity to experience Indigenous musics, within their own community, now can have communication with people who can introduce them to Indigenous musics in an authentic and meaningful way.

Despite the benefits of technology, Ingle (2016) cautions educators not to place too much reliance on technology. Although technology is a great tool that can be used to connect with Indigenous artists, and explore the musics of Canada’s Indigenous musicians, it can sometimes be “a potent tool for ‘digital colonization’ by the companies who control who and what gets heard and whose only motive is profit” (Ingle, 2016, para. 14). As in many situations, there is a fine line between appropriate and overuse of technology in the classroom. Making direct connections with local Indigenous artists and leaders is definitely the preferred method for students and teachers to connect with the musics and culture of Indigenous people. In situations where these in-person or online connections are not possible, students and teachers may find added value in the careful, planned, use of technology. This may be a means to help students to understand, and explore, the music and culture of Canada’s Indigenous people. In these situations, it is important to first seek out material which has been prepared by, or in collaboration with, Indigenous people and to appropriately compensate these people financially for their contributions.

Challenges in decolonizing music curricula for settler teachers and how might these challenges be resolved?

This section intends to identify some of the reasons why settler-teachers may struggle to incorporate decolonization into their own music curriculum. Suggestions will also be made to encourage teachers to include music and stories of Canada's Indigenous people in music curricula in order to decolonize music education curricula.

Challenges

Many settler-teachers lack the confidence required when seeking to decolonize their music curriculum. As a result, instead of adding to their often heavy workload and learning about what they can do to help decolonize their music curricula, some educators may procrastinate this task and/or leave it to 'someone else'. Bissell and Korteweg (2016) note that "most settler-teachers are ill-equipped before, during, and after their teacher training programs to recognize Indigenous cultural identity as the foundation for indigenizing curriculum and educating for Indigenous student resilience and greater academic engagement" (p. 4).

Other teachers are a product of "cultivated ignorance" which has been taught to them over many years of their own life and education, causing them to claim "innocence while reproducing the mainstream of settler-colonialism in their teaching and curriculum" (Bissell and Korteweg, 2016, p. 3). Until recent years, many people did not see past this ignorance that Bissell and Korteweg write about and often did not recognize a problem in the colonized education systems across Canada. These realizations were intensified due to discussions surrounding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the residential school system.

While endeavoring to enact real change within the education system, it is important that teachers recognize the need for change and remain open to furthering their own education. When teachers and curriculum developers are willing to learn about new concepts, such as decolonization, there is a significant chance that changes will be made that affect the curriculum, the classroom, and ultimately, the students.

In many cases, the blame surrounding the lack of decolonized lessons being carried out in schools should not lie on individual teachers but rather on the policy makers and curriculum developers. As suggested by Hess (2015) “Many Canadian music curriculum documents encourage an ‘add world music and stir’ approach to Western classical music” (p. 339). Bissell and Kortweg echo Hess, when writing about history and social studies curricula. They write about the issue of expecting settler-teachers to teach “Indigenous education” as a part of their course without proper guidance (Bissell & Kortweg, 2016). By preserving Western classical music as the cornerstone of music programs and entrusting the implementation of “world music” to the teacher, curriculum planners are doing a disservice to teachers and students alike. Teachers are expected to complete research, and assemble resources in order to create lesson plans to teach music other than Western classical. This results in students being deprived of a prescribed, methodical, delivery of Indigenous musics and music of other non-Western cultures.

Solutions

It is important to understand that despite a lack of teacher education surrounding decolonization, a presence of generational ignorance, and a lack of dedicated material in school curricula, many teachers in Canada do a commendable job at diversifying their programs (Hess, 2015). This effort by teachers is crucial in order to help the high school music curriculum move forward with the attention on decolonization. Hess (2015) emphasizes that music curricula currently focus only on select genres and time periods. It is critical to “broaden the curriculum from its specific emphasis on Western classical music to include different musics in a way that ultimately does not tokenize or trivialize them” (Hess, 2015, p. 337). As Tan (2014) states, it is important for teachers to choose music that their students will enjoy, learn from, and succeed in playing.

Including Music and Experiences of Indigenous Artists

Implementation of Indigenous musics and ideas of decolonization can be challenging tasks for many settler-teachers. With regards to decolonized teaching, Väkevä and Westerlund (2007) state that “music educators that want to apply democratic procedures need to constantly invent new ways of co-operation and continue to search for meaning in relation to the experience of the students and to the

educational situations and contexts” (p. 103). These authors acknowledge that curriculum designers, and teachers, not attempt to add Indigenous, or other types of world music, without first considering how the additions of this material will affect students and their overall learning.

One suggestion to help decolonize curricula would be to look to Indigenous people and musicians to help guide instruction within the classroom. One such artist is Jeremy Dutcher. Dutcher is an award winning musicologist, vocalist and composer and a “Wolastoqiyik member of the Tobique First Nation” in New Brunswick (Johnson, 2018, para. 2). Dutcher describes his goal as wanting “to engage young people and get them excited about the wealth of knowledge that sits within our language and songs” (Darville, 2019, para. 4). Darville reveals that Dutcher’s goal is to revitalize the language of his people, of which approximately only 100 people still speak, and a culture which is “nearly extinct” (para. 5). He also stresses that the Wolastoqiyik people “had been destroyed by the white settlers who arrived a mere 150 years ago” (Darville, 2019, para. 6). Dutcher’s goal, by creating his album “Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa” is to revive songs which are no longer present in his community, that he discovered through historical recordings (Darville, 2019, para. 6). Dutcher states that “his role is to ‘break down people’s misunderstandings’” and to show people “that the only things gone from this world forever are the old limitations placed on Indigenous peoples” (Darville, para. 11).

Through studying the music and story of Jeremy Dutcher, students might also be invited to study how young Indigenous people are attempting to rejuvenate their dying language and culture. Students can also study Dutcher’s reimagination of traditional Indigenous music as a part of their course’s required listening components. Through studying Dutcher’s music, students will have an opportunity to gain an appreciation for the loss of culture facing many of Canada’s Indigenous people.

The article “6 Indigenous artists you need to know in 2021” by Andrea Warner (2021) is also a useful resource for teachers who wish to teach students about Indigenous artists in Canada. In this article, Warner writes about six Indigenous artists, some of whom are producing contemporary renditions of traditional songs, while others are producing original music with Indigenous influence or telling the stories of their ancestors.

One such artist featured in the article is Jayli Wolf. Warner (2021) describes Jayli's music, saying that each song contains "Heartbreak, strength, rage, joy, grief and resistance" (para. 10). The purpose of Jayli's music is to tell "her family's story, and the intergenerational trauma and ongoing effects caused by the sixties scoop", her struggles growing up as a bisexual and her efforts to reclaim her Indigenous heritage (Warner, 2021, para 10). Wolf also has a very interesting personal story. Her personal journey of discovering where she is from began with her father finding his own birth records and, as a result, seeking to find his birth family. Wolf documents some of her journey on the social media app "TikTok". By sharing her story on TikTok, Wolf is making her story and music available to many students who spend considerable amounts of time on such platforms. This social media presence can also be a way for students to engage in a dialogue around Indigenous people and the struggles they face due to colonial attitudes of the past, some of which are still prevalent even today.

Another artist from this article that students may find interesting is Hussein Ahmed, a.k.a. Handsome Tiger. Ahmed "is a producer/DJ of Anishinaabe Métis/North African descent and a fixture of Vancouver's bass scene" (Warner, 2021, para. 21). This artist creates bass-heavy electronic music, taking inspiration for his compositions from his culture as an Indigenous Canadian. His songs such as "Landback" and "Foundations" provide listeners with something completely different from the sounds of traditional Indigenous musics. Providing this variety in Indigenous musics is critical in encouraging students to get excited about Indigenous artists and to encourage students to support these artists by listening to their music.

Including the music of the Tragically Hip and Gord Downie's Legacy

The work of the late Gord Downie, his brother, and bandmates, help bring the tragic stories of Residential schools and Indigenous reconciliation to the forefront in Canada. As a result their efforts will be prominent in the minds of Canadians for decades to come. Gord's brother, Mike, said that his brother's legacy is "Bringing Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people together and getting them to know each other" (Wheeler, 2017, para. 15). Gord's unrelenting dedication to the reconciliation of Canada's Indigenous people was recognized by both Indigenous leaders and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief, Alvin Fiddler, said “Downie will be remembered for his advocacy for Indigenous communities in the North and notably his project ‘Secret Path’” (Kirkup, 2017, para. 3). Downie received the Order of Canada in 2017 “for his work raising awareness of Indigenous issues” (Jancelewicz, 2018, para. 7).

Secret Path

Gord Downie’s album *Secret Path*, its accompanying illustrated book and film, are a major part of the legacy that Downie left behind, as it continues to educate Canadians about Indigenous reconciliation and the Residential school system. On the *Secret Path* website, Downie describes Chanie Wenjack’s story of “trying to escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School to walk home” (Secret Path, n.d.). Wenjack died walking the railroad, about 400 miles from his home. Downie says that Chanie’s story, and others like it, are important in Canada’s history and raise awareness to the terrible acts inflicted on the Indigenous people while in Residential schools until their closure in 1996. Downie states “‘White’ Canada knew - on somebody’s purpose - nothing about this. We weren’t taught it; it was hardly ever mentioned” (Secret Path, para. 3). This statement by Downie is very impactful as it rightly places blame on white settler-Canadians for the terrible history of Residential schools, colonization of Indigenous people and the lack of information surrounding these issues in modern education.

As a part of the *Secret Path* album project, Downie invited Jeff Lemire to create a graphic novel, which was also adapted into a film. This film, and the accompanying graphic novel, can be a resource that educators use to teach students about Chanie Wenjack’s story and to bring to light the injustices faced by Indigenous people as a result of the Residential school system. The film adaptation of *Secret Path* consists of “ten chapters, each a song from Downie’s musical retelling of Chanie’s story - from his escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, to his subsequent and heartbreaking death from hunger and exposure to the harsh weather” (Secret Path, n.d., para. 17). Through the graphic novel and film, Downie makes Chanie’s story more accessible to younger generations, some of which may not connect as much with Gord’s style of music.

Woloshyn (2021) describes using *Secret Path* in her teaching, at an American university in order to consider “Indigenous critiques of projects led by (or entirely populated by) non-Indigenous artists” (p. 47). Although Woloshyn does not elaborate on this, it is an essential point for educators to consider when choosing music aimed at decolonization and reconciliation which is entirely written by white-settler musicians. Through research, it is clear that many Indigenous people appreciate and praise the work done by Gord Downie and the album *Secret Path* to help Indigenous people move towards reconciliation, and to help school curricula move towards decolonization. This is one of the reasons why this work is a good option for teachers to use in decolonizing their curriculum. There will always be people who believe that this way of teaching about decolonization is not appropriate; however, teachers can weigh the positives and negatives to decide, for themselves, what is appropriate for their setting.

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund

Another piece of Downie’s legacy is The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund. This organization's website can be a useful tool for teachers looking to incorporate decolonization into their classrooms. The goal of this Fund “is to continue the conversation that began with Chanie Wenjack’s residential school story, and to aid our collective reconciliation journey through a combination of awareness, education, and action” (The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, n.d.). On this website, under the tab “Legacy Schools Program”, teachers can access many resources created by various Indigenous groups and authors, pertaining to a variety of subjects which could be used to aid in the teaching of reconciliation within the classroom. In particular, this website offers numerous teaching resources, including several sets of lesson plans which link directly to the album *Secret Path* and a live CBC Radio recording of *Secret Path*.

The “Artist Ambassador Program” is yet another useful initiative put in place by the Gord Downie Chanie Wenjack Fund aimed at bringing “Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians and other artists into high schools across Canada to inspire student leadership and forward the journey of reconciliation” (The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, para. 1). In these in school workshops, students are involved in learning more about reconciliation and are encouraged to share their own

“reconciliATIONS” with their guest performers. As noted by Woloshyn (2006) “virtual and in-person guests are a relatively easy way to centre Indigenous voices in the classroom” (p. 45). This opportunity, offered through the Gord Downie Chanie Wenjack Fund, is an excellent chance for teachers and students, to hear from, and work with, musicians who are actively involved in the decolonization of music within Canada.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are several limitations which must be discussed and recommendations to be made for future research in this area. The first limitation was the lack of information on decolonization from Indigenous people within Canada. Sources were obtained regarding settler-teachers teaching Indigenous musics to Indigenous youth, settler-teachers teaching settler-students about Indigenous musics and quotes from Indigenous people about the efforts of Gord Downie’s work to aid reconciliation; however, only two articles in this review were actually written by Indigenous people. Another limitation in this research surrounds the lack of research pertaining specifically to decolonizing the high school music curriculum in Canada. Much of the research already completed on decolonizing music curriculum focuses on the University setting. Although many of the concepts and suggestions can be transferred to the high school setting, it would be nice to see more original research focused at the high school level. This research could be used to better inform teachers and curriculum designers on how to appropriately decolonize the high school music curriculum. A third limitation in this study, as noted earlier, is my own background. Although I am very passionate about decolonizing the music curriculum, I am a white-settler teacher who did not grow up in an Indigenous community nor was I surrounded by Indigenous culture and knowledge.

Despite these limitations, it is crucial that new research in the field of decolonizing the high school music curriculum be encouraged and undertaken by educators who are passionate about creating meaningful change. The topic of decolonizing the Canadian music curriculum would benefit from having more sources written from the perspective of Indigenous Canadians as well as more research aimed at exploring decolonization specific to the Canadian high school music curriculum.

Discussion

The literature reviewed in this paper places an emphasis on the importance of decolonization in Canada's education system and highlights the need for more focused research in this field. This literature review first highlights the importance of decolonization within the music curricula in Canada, including teaching towards decolonization on Indigenous land. Next, the importance and significance of including local and Indigenous artists in the music curricula, as opposed to the exclusive use of Western classical music is demonstrated. Finally, the challenges of decolonization for settler-music teachers are discussed and suggestions are made surrounding how curriculum decolonization can begin within these teachers' programs.

As a result of the research discussed above, three conclusions have emerged that are important for educators, and curriculum designers who wish to work towards decolonizing the Canadian music curricula. First of all, the need for curriculum decolonization within the music curricula of Canada, and other settler-nations, is critical. The focus needs to shift from solely Western classical music with a splash of "other" music, to focusing on the music of local and Indigenous artists with a lesser focus on Western classical music. Secondly, through a decolonized music program, students will benefit from learning more about the music of Indigenous people within Canada and will hopefully gain more respect for these people, their traditions, and their significance in Canada's history. Finally, although this task may seem quite daunting for settler-teachers, it is possible if teachers and curriculum designers are willing to take time to create changes and engage in collaboration with Indigenous people. By teaching students about Indigenous artists, connecting with local Indigenous musicians and through the use of Gord Downie's work, including the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, teachers are able to begin the decolonization process, one lesson at a time.

Conclusion

Working towards decolonization may seem like an insurmountable task for a settler-teacher. Doubts surrounding whether or not it is their place to implement decolonized curricula and questions about where to start may stunt the process or cause teachers to be reluctant to begin the process in the first

place. Canada's Indigenous people do not deserve to continue living in the shadows of a colonized majority. Battiste & Henderson (2009) suggest that the need for implementation of curriculum which is led by Indigenous knowledge is "long overdue, urgent, and necessary" (p. 17). This will not happen overnight, however, changes should not take decades to implement. In order for music teachers to ensure students are educated on important topics, such as decolonization, they need to think critically about what their students' glean from the music they study. Teachers and curriculum makers need to step up and create real change, allowing Indigenous musics and musicians to shine through in music curricula dominated by Western classical music.

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