

# Struggling Towards Decolonization in Canadian Music Schools

BEVERLEY DIAMOND

*I write this contemplation about several of Canada's music schools as an unintentional nomad, but a nomad committed to the work of each institution that was kind enough to hire me and allow me to be devoted to the communities in which they were situated. Across 43 years of teaching, during which I had no premediated plan to move, I spent thirteen plus years at each of three different Canadian universities and shorter tenures at two others.<sup>1</sup>*

This article is much less about progress than about struggle — for change, for relevance, for community responsibility, for decolonization. Perhaps because my experience in different university music school contexts has ranged widely, I think about some of the variances that shaped who we served, how we taught, and how we listened. These variances involve not just the teaching and making of music, nor the thinking of the many cultural histories that underpin that music teaching and music making, but the physical spaces of universities, attitudes toward interdisciplinary interaction, and community involvement. All of these factors have shaped sonic learning in Canada in the last half century. I offer my perspective on these matters as an invitation for a broader conversation about the struggle towards decolonization.

When considering how academics engage with (or ignore) broadly relevant social issues and challenges, a factor that merits consideration, but is rarely discussed, is the relative physical isolation of Music Schools. We make noise!<sup>2</sup> When students are learning their professional skills, it is often relentlessly repetitive noise. It involves learning basic techniques over time. It's not one big concert! People complain about noise! Hence, though there are exceptions, university buildings with music departments are only rarely shared with other departments, limiting interdisciplinary discussions. Office doors are often closed to contain noise, hence limiting the potential for casual encounters and conversations about current issues and events in and beyond the sonic. This

is not insignificant in relation to informal peer mentoring or the emergence of possible collaboration.

Of course, the larger context of the university's location is also a factor that determines the sociality of a university campus. Older campuses (McGill, the University of Toronto, Queen's, for instance) are downtown while newer ones (York, for instance) may be located in a suburban periphery. Others have multiple campuses, partially responding to different community needs. For me, it is significant to consider whether the campus includes natural spaces for quiet contemplation, such as a walking trail around a pond or a wooded area.

Another consideration is how universities symbolize their histories and their social status, enshrining colonial mindsets in many cases. The statue of Queen Victoria that sits on the steps to the old Strathcona building that houses part of McGill's Faculty of Music symbolizes the colonial past that universities generally share, and her stolid presence perhaps leads us to think about the slow pace of decolonization thus far.<sup>3</sup> The field of ethnomusicology, even though it often posits respect for cultural diversity as both exemplary open-mindedness and social responsibility, is not exempt from this slow pace. Part of McGill extends up Mount Royal which seems to invite a different metaphoric association — aspiring to the heights, the heights of intellectual inquiry, but also implicitly suggesting social class. Memorial's St. John's campus sits on the hillsides below Pippy Park, albeit lower than the government buildings. One could simply argue, in the latter case, that level surfaces are outnumbered by hillsides in the city of St. John's, but I posit geography as a marker of social symbolism. Naming is another mark. Several schools of music now have sleek new buildings, usually named after primary donors. New social narratives about gratitude but also about power and privilege are emergent!

The entanglements that universities have, then, with politics, community location, access to local institutions beyond the education sector, social demographics, and other factors are physically enshrined. These remind us of the assumptions of class and power that underpin our histories and some of our current structures, whether they are buildings or course designs.

When my teaching career began, I was still a graduate student and music schools were still preponderantly institutions that taught European classical music. When McGill hired me in the early 1970s, they really didn't know what to do with an ethnomusicologist. And having had a highly idiosyncratic introduction to ethnomusicology myself, I didn't know what to do with their demands. I was asked to develop a world music course and area studies course(s), but also to teach one of the historical musicology seminars and even a music theory course — four courses per term, eight per year. I drew the line when I refused to help a graduate student with a Medieval paleography project for

which I had totally inadequate training (even though the one required course I had taken in that field was brilliant). I don't think anybody could do a good job with that sort of workload. It was a formula to ensure superficiality to be sure. In that context, ethnomusicologists, then, were thought to have a little knowledge of everything, so opposed to Mantle Hood's assertion around the same time, which I recall him saying at many conferences, that it would take 57 years of training to become a competent ethnomusicologist.<sup>4</sup> When I returned to McGill for a visiting term a few years ago, I got better acquainted with the remarkable current faculty complement in the musicologies (including Lloyd [Chip] Whitley, Lisa Barg, Roe-Min Kok, and David Brackett in the Faculty of Music and Jonathan Sterne and Will Straw in cognate departments — expert thinkers in popular music; gender, race, and class; media histories; embodiment; and childhood learning, among other things). Additionally, strong research initiatives there, including the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology, involve an array of musicians from different cultures. The curricular structures, however, were remarkably unchanged. The important question is whether structures and disciplinary affiliations matter or not, if personnel are sufficiently progressive. I would argue that they do matter.

I moved to Kingston, Ontario, for personal reasons in 1975 and was lucky to get a teaching position at Queen's University when one of their musicologists resigned. It was already a time of austerity with very few new music hires anywhere in Canada in that decade. It would be worth considering the stagnation that may ensue during hiring freezes and budget cutbacks, something about which little has been written. Queen's exhibits how a university in a small city can maintain high standards and cultivate creativity. While music had been taught there since Frank Harrison arrived in 1935, and some courses were developed by composer/theorist Graham George, a full-fledged program was created under the watch of distinguished composer Istvan Anhalt, who became head in 1971. On one hand, Anhalt looked to other centres for what was needed to update and energize the program: progressive British music educators (Denise Narcisse-Mair and Clifford Crawley) and the exceptional performance skills of instrumental teachers, some of whom were willing to commute from larger cities (Toronto and Montreal) with bigger arts scenes. On another hand, culturally diverse musical skill was sometimes locally available (notably the late Lakshmi Ranganathan who taught veena classes for many years). Queen's colleagues sometimes boasted of the advantages of being "centrally isolated" between Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa.

There are a number of differences between the structures of very large and somewhat smaller music schools. While most of the largest universities have, for practical reasons no doubt, created silos for the various departments within the

music school (usually performance, history and ethnomusicology, composition, and education), smaller ones have often bridged those different sectors. As university budgets suffered cuts in many instances, there have also been some mergers between departments on a number of campuses. At Queen's, the Music School and Drama Department have joined forces to become the Dan School of Music and Drama, now housed in several buildings: Harrison-LeCaine and Theological Hall (i.e., the respective homes of the former School of Music and Department of Drama) as well as the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, a stunning lakeside building that boasts state-of-the-art concert spaces as well as facilities for teaching, rehearsal, and performance. Their website makes a bold statement about boundary crossing: "Whereas many schools of performing arts focus solely on the performer, or on technical production, or on administration, or scholarship, at the Dan School we look at all these disciplines in connection with one another" (About the Dan School. [n.d]). As at McGill and elsewhere, there are faculty with training and/or research interests in ethnomusicology appointed to positions in departments beyond the music school. Dylan Robinson, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, is one such contributor to changing the face of music studies at Queen's University and beyond. His "Soundings" project, as Gordon Smith described it to me, featured both performances and other "powerful sonic renderings by Indigenous artists on several Queen's buildings." During my tenure at Queen's, the research project on "Sound-Producing Instruments in Native Communities" enabled presentations and classroom visits by Indigenous elders, singers, and drum groups from local communities as well as Mi'kmaq, Anishnabe, and Haudenosaunee communities. In addition, some Indigenous collaborators subsequently led a pre-conference symposium for the Society for Ethnomusicology on Haudenosaunee and Mi'kmaq cultures. Community is thought about differently in the universities of larger and smaller cities. In my experience, the major urban metropolises think of their community as the other elite arts organizations. In mid-size places such as Kingston, community was more broadly encompassing of potential collaborators, audiences, educators at all levels, and arts entrepreneurs, not just as commercial prospects but as neighbours. During my tenure there in the 1970s and early 80s, there was relatively little outreach to newer immigrant communities or to less advantaged citizens in the Kingston area, except by individual faculty in some cases.

During the 1970s and much of the 1980s, Queen's — like many other Canadian and US music schools — incorporated a "world music survey" course as a curricular initiative that would hopefully address diversity, though, at first, the Queen's course was not a requisite for a music degree. In those decades, I enjoyed teaching this class because it attracted students from diverse cultures

and their stories became part of the cultural encounter. But the superficiality of such colonialist “survey” courses irked me and my students. In Canada, faculty at several universities found ways to circumvent the “quick tour” and arguably go beyond what Dylan Robinson (2020) has recently labelled the “hungry listening” approach to music cultures. Instead, he proposes “sovereign listening” that “does not reduce what is heard to the knowable, that resists a multicultural categorization of one cultural sound among many, that understands sound in its irreducible alterity” (2020: 64). As Julia Byl writes so eloquently, one more progressive program was at the University of Alberta where Regula Qureshi’s deep involvement with the North Indian and Pakistani communities, and her exceptional performance skills as both a cellist and a sarangi player, facilitated the development of a deeper, respectful and community-engaged Indian music program involving both academic study and performance. She also worked with community members to create archives of their cultural histories. Louise Wrazen also reminded me of Tim Rice’s important initiatives at the University of Toronto where he introduced a course on Balkan music, brought a distinguished Balkan musician to the Faculty of Music, and made many community ties, often inviting specialists from various communities into the classroom (see also Kippen’s article in this issue). Another significant exception to the introductory “world music in one course” approach developed in the late 1990s at Memorial University where Kati Szego developed ethnomusicology studies single-handedly for about a decade until the faculty complement expanded. Modelling the courses she developed on some she had taken at the University of Washington and the University of Hawaii, she considered large areas (not specific ethnicities or nationalities), often areas that had had extensive historical interaction, both negative and positive: Africa and the Americas, for instance, or Asia and the Pacific Islands. While of course ethnicities and nationalities were still discussed, these structures facilitated a broader look at connections and issues. Students came to grips with cultural flows, reinventions, and new stylistic emergence in contexts of both aggression and cooperation.

Another approach to breaking the colonialist mold of the single world music course has been to use themes rather than geographies as a means of organization. I adopted the thematic approach in various iterations. Both York University and Memorial University have required courses that cross cultural boundaries in order to expand students’ abilities to think more openly, to listen afresh, and to write more intelligently about music. Other courses often introduce cross-cultural material as a means of using implicit comparison to understand different perspectives, among them the perspectives of colonized populations.

I moved to teach at York University in the late 1980s, partly because I craved interaction with ethnomusicology colleagues and graduate students. York established a Music program in 1969 with an aim to be an alternative to the University of Toronto and most other North American music schools. Many of their full-time faculty had come to Canada during the later Vietnam war years, and perhaps a rebel spirit underpinned their style in that period. Faculty were boundary crossers in a variety of ways. Sterling Beckwith was the founder of the music program at York University.<sup>5</sup> Both Sterling Beckwith and the first chair of the Department of Music, Austin Clarkson, whose scholarly interests crossed musicology and psychology, exemplified this spirit. Jazz and improvisation were central to the program, challenging the hegemony of European classical traditions. Composer James Tenney was also a radical thinker. Bassist and ethnomusicologist Robert Witmer pioneered courses on North American music that went far beyond his charge to bring jazz studies to the program. Sterling Beckwith, David Lidov, Casey Sokol, and Alan Lessem brought new issues and approaches to their students. Performing non-Western music was valued highly at York, particularly in the South Indian program that *mridangam* virtuoso Trichy Sankaran developed there from the 1970s. Of course, Sankaran conveyed cultural depth as well as sonic skill. In the 1990s, York instituted a range of world music ensembles taught by local experts. Hopefully these courses also encourage deep cultural contemplation and responsible relationships with the community whose music is learned.

York did not require the credentials (from Conservatories for the most part) that validated applicants at most other universities. No particular certificates of training were required to get into the programs there, just a really good audition in whatever style or genre of music the applicant had mastered. At one point, I raised issues about the gender complement at York. Applicants were asked about improvisation experience, but faculty rarely noticed that very few female applicants had been encouraged to improvise. So not only the faculty and jazz instructors but also the York student body in music was predominantly male (ca. 70%) in the 1980s and '90s when I taught there. This was unlike other music schools in the country at that time where the gender balance was roughly 50/50. Gender was not open for discussion in the Music Department when I first arrived at York (though it was researched and discussed in other Fine Arts Departments at York). That has changed substantially in recent years, especially under the calm and intelligent watch of Louise Wrazen as Department Head.

A brief aside: Of course, the gendering of leadership is always interesting to watch. While Canadian university presidents have often been female in the 21st century, some university music schools have still rarely been led by women. That pattern has changed substantially at both Queen's and York where

Margaret Walker (Queen's) and Louise Wrazen (York) have been in charge for extended periods of time in recent years. At McGill, Dean Brenda Ravenscroft has also assumed the lead. Memorial University has had women as Deans of the School of Music since the 1980s when Maureen Volk held the position, and in the 21st century when Ellen Waterman was Dean.

What I loved most about York was interdisciplinarity. Situated within the Faculty of Fine Arts, this music department interacted with all the arts — from dance to design, theatre and film to visual art — and with their histories and their best creators/thinkers. Dance and music are separated in so many music schools for no good reason since they are essential for one another in virtually all social contexts. In my view, all music departments should be Music and Dance departments.<sup>6</sup> It was a total joy (and a nice rebalancing of the gender dynamics) to have dance colleagues, in particular, as well as sculptors and visual artists, art historians, theatre professionals, and cultural studies theorists. I had the pleasure of co-teaching a course with Indigenous dance professor Nina De Shane. More generally, it was inspiring to hear performances in odd places, to see student art on exhibit in the hallways along our classrooms, to attend performances in the black box theatre, and so on. More recently, some professors, such as Sherry Johnson, are expert dancers as well as musicians. Beyond that, however, I also enjoyed interactions with Gender Studies, Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Canadian Studies, and others. I recall one iteration of my Canadian Music course that had students from six departments, each of whom enriched the vision of those students who were in the Music program. York was an explosion of new ideas, new approaches, artistic creativity, and beautiful weirdness.

Relating to community, however, was difficult at York partly because of the sheer size of the university on one hand, and the city on the other. The exceedingly diverse population surrounding this campus on the northwest periphery of the city of Toronto was extensively working class. While many people in the region were oriented to university studies in the late 20th century, the university did not specifically reach out to this catchment in the decades when I taught there, although occasional collaborations were possible. On the other hand, the burgeoning Asian communities building the economy in the north end of the city was large and invested in education. Off campus, many York colleagues individually cultivated connections regularly. Judith Cohen, Louise Wrazen, Irene Markoff, Sherry Johnson, Rob Simms, and the late Michael Marcuzzi all engage/engaged with communities, some whom they had known from childhood and others cultivated as adults. Louise Wrazen kindly made me aware of a more recent initiative to teach and perform gospel music, initially directed by Karen Burke, who was appointed in 2005 as the first Helen Carswell Chair in Community Engaged Research in the Arts. Wrazen writes

that she has “forged strong links to the Jane/Finch community in addition to the Regent Park School of Music. The position is now held by Amy Hillis who is seeking new ways to engage with community” (email with author, February 18, 2021).

As a whole, the diverse York community was invested in activist engagement in issues of concern. Sometimes unjustly characterized as the university of parking lots,<sup>7</sup> pickets, and protests, students and faculty did voice their views on campus, and I met many colleagues at peaceful protest in front of the provincial legislature on a number of occasions. Universities relate differently to the communities they serve and to the issues of the day. It’s easier to be part of community in smaller places. I personally have liked that aspect of both Queen’s University and Memorial University. Interaction with musicians of many styles and genres of music is easier in smaller cities and one’s circle of friends tends to be diverse. Audiences are more diverse in smaller cities and often both loyal and large since there are fewer competing arts organizations.

I moved to Memorial University in 2002 as a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair, a position that Kati Szego lobbied for and Tom Gordon secured when he was Dean of the School of Music. I was excited not only by the opportunity the CRC provided, but also by the sheer beauty of St. John’s, Newfoundland, and especially by the incredible energy and delight for music of all kinds in the province. I have never lived in another place where music is so valued as in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Renowned, until recently, more often for its settler musics than those by Indigenous populations, the traditional song and instrumental traditions of French, Irish, and English communities became more widely known when its new status as a Canadian province in 1949 effected changes in more formal music education. Organist and choirmaster Ignatius Rumboldt was first invited in the 1950s to offer music courses through the Memorial University Department of Education. A unique and significant institution was the Extension Choir and Orchestra that he formed in the early 1960s as a means of working with smaller communities, using choral music in particular to address social issues of concern. Consider, for instance, how powerfully a choral rendition of Otto Kelland’s well known song, “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s,” by a community choir such as Folk of the Sea would resonate when the cod moratorium began in 1992.

An ethnomusicology program was developed in the 1990s by Kati Szego, as mentioned above. She also lobbied for the aforementioned CRC position in ethnomusicology, procured by Dean Tom Gordon. The addition of the CRC enabled the development of MA and PhD programs jointly through collaboration between the School of Music and the internationally renowned Folklore Department. I relished the challenge of creating these programs.



Folklorists (the late) Peter Narvaez and Neil Rosenberg were the two colleagues and friends best known for crossing into ethnomusicology, but others there (Martin Lovelace, Philip Hiscock, and Gerald Pocius, for instance) had also published on music topics. Although all of the aforementioned have now retired, current folklorists are still actively engaging in music studies. The remarkable Folklore and Language Archive in that department (with one of the largest audio collections outside of the Canadian Museum of History) was also an attraction. What I had not thought about before arriving there were the vastly different disciplinary histories of folklore and ethnomusicology. The former had to carve space out of more established disciplines such as English or history or linguistics and such an enterprise demanded that the intellectual boundaries of that new space be well defined. The latter — ethnomusicology — on the other hand, had been largely created by pushing the boundaries away in music departments, the boundaries of the music we studied, the ways we studied it, and the people/communities we came to know. Those two tendencies — making boundaries and pushing them back/down — created many intense conversations in the establishment of the ethnomusicology program and those conversations contributed to its thriving and development in positive directions.<sup>8</sup>

Memorial University is unique in several regards. With campuses in St. Johns, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley/Goose Bay (Labrador), the founders and all administrations since have reiterated a “special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.”<sup>9</sup> That obligation, however, recognizes that broadly based education is essential for their students, while local histories and cultures must also have prominence in the curriculum. Like Queen’s, MUN has drawn on professional musicians within the city of St. John’s in particular, or within Indigenous communities on the island and mainland. Cognizant of the university’s special obligation, and at the urging of Kati Szego, the School of Music began in 2001, offering courses in Newfoundland accordion, fiddle, and song traditions, taught by outstanding local singers and instrumentalists and crossing the borders between performance and academic study. Szego worked closely with esteemed local accordion player Stan Pickett to get instruments. Both Stan Pickett and Jim Payne have taught the accordion course while Christina Smith has taught fiddle and Anita Best the Newfoundland song course. The Newfoundland courses bring the long-lived cultural knowledge and experiences that underpin the best ensemble programs, but they also canonize the oldest European traditions, arguably casting newer immigrant traditions as less vibrant or important. Beyond these courses, a limited number of world music ensembles have been tied to the presence of a local performer of substance. An mbira course was offered by Curtis Andrews for some years before he moved to the west coast. Kati Szego described

to me how Curtis was “hanging out in a Shona community in Zimbabwe” and she asked if he could commission some mbiras for MUN, bring them home, and teach our students (email correspondence with author, February 9, 2021). Because the university was unwilling to wire money to him, she underwrote the payment to the instrument maker herself, eventually getting reimbursement. A qualified gamelan instructor, Bill Brennan, was available locally and a generous donation provided funding to acquire a Sundanese gamelan. The same type of gamelan is used in several other cities in Canada and on occasion, the universities with similar ensembles (Acadia, York, and Memorial) have collaborated to bring a Sundanese master to do special classes.

Since its founding, with the subsequent leadership of choral conductor Don Cook, pianist Maureen Volk, musicologists Tom Gordon and Ellen Waterman, and, most recently, Ian Sutherland (with professional expertise in performance and the sociology of music), MUN’s commitment to community has continued. Such projects as the Opera Roadshow (organized by voice professor Caroline Schiller), in which student performers tour the province as a summer job, or Tom Gordon’s collaboration with Inuit choirs and instrumentalists in Labrador, are examples of recent community-oriented initiatives. Under my watch, the Research Centre for Music, Media and Place also collaborated with several communities to create CDs, websites, and booklets about their musical traditions and histories. Collaborations with actors and dancers have also resulted in ground-breaking productions. A notable instance is Duo Concertante’s recent *Ecology of Being* project for which they commissioned new works, mostly from younger composers working in a wide range of styles who reflected on seeds, storms, and wildfires among other topics. Another recent initiative has been collaboration with the Indigenous First Light Centre to sponsor a series of Indigenous musician/artist residencies. The invitees gave classes to both undergraduate and graduate students, presented a lecture-performance to the general public, and they also did workshops and talks at the First Light Centre’s city centre location.

Not only has Memorial University made a clear commitment to community but community generally also supports university events exceedingly well. In general, a large audience can be expected to come to university performances at Memorial University. Even an ethnomusicology lecture in the Research Centre for Music, Media, and Place has sometimes had a standing room-only crowd that risks breaking the fire regulations. The topics of our speakers have ranged widely from a symposium on Indigenous improvisation, to presentations on the neglected history of logging songs in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as international presentations on many current issues in music scholarship. At the same time, it is essential to note that professional standards of performance, reputation, and international impact are exceptional in smaller places, as in large

metropolises. Unlike Queen's which can draw upon local musicians as well as those who commute from southern Ontario cities, the main Memorial University campus is, of course, on the island part of the province. Virtually all faculty, including performance faculty, must be hired into full-time professorial positions, not as adjuncts as in many mainland universities. The MUN School also has funding to offset the costs that their performers incur when they tour or travel to make recordings or engage in other professional activities. The standard is world-class as a result. Of course, digital teaching is now increasingly used as a mode of introducing world-class artists and scholars to students wherever they may be. Community is being radically redefined in the Covid-19 era.

Related to the socially engaged climate of St. John's are several non-university events, but ones that involve many university members (faculty and students) alongside a wide range of other people ranging in ages from 8 to 80 plus. One is the biannual International Sound Symposium that features new music/dance/theatre works and improvised performances as well as sound installations and sound walks around the city. Now four decades old, it is an event that draws individuals with distinct skills together from many countries and disparate backgrounds. Perhaps because of the cultivation of improvisation at this and other events, and with the initial leadership of Ellen Waterman, Memorial University became part of a large-scale SSHRC-sponsored International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation.

Another event in which university people engage with diverse community members, held annually during the month of February, is the RPM Challenge, an international "challenge" that originated in New Hampshire and takes place in dozens of cities as diverse as Toronto, New York, and Tokyo. The challenge is that during the month of February participants must compose music for an album, perform the music (with the help of as many friends as needed), record it and turn in a CD by the end of the month.<sup>10</sup> The intense and enthusiastic adoption of this challenge in Newfoundland leads to over a hundred new CDs in February each year — some for friends only but some that have actually led to professional recording contracts. The enrolment in the province is so high that Elling Lien (a journalist who promoted the event in the early years) has recently been asked to assume the international leadership of the event.

My dream had been for decades to establish a public-facing Centre where university personnel and community artists, musicians, and other cultural animators could initiate and collaborate on creative and/or research projects. A place that is stereotyped as a repository of "tradition" and a university that publicly acknowledges their "special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador" constituted an opportunity for my dream. The Research Centre for Music, Media, and Place (MMaP) became that place, named to include

“tradition” but not to the exclusion of any other category of creative endeavour, a place that published audio recordings and books, helped make websites, and organized performances and lectures of many kinds. Interim directors Kati Szego and Meghan Forsyth, and current MMAP Director Harris Berger all share a similar vision.<sup>11</sup>

Though seen prior to the 1980s as a strength, the focus of universities on Western art music traditions has been increasingly problematized. The hegemony of European classical music shaped the objectives and content of “Canadian Music” courses in my student days but all things “Canadian” were seen differently by the time I began teaching. At the same time, the “world tour in one course” problem described earlier was often regrettably replicated in Canadian music courses. Nonetheless, while pioneering instructors saw a role to play in defining Canadian Music (often with a focus on classical traditions, composers, repertoire, and institutions), many of us see an even more important role to play in changing perceptions of music in Canada, both validating culturally diverse local experiences and artistic initiatives while also pushing the boundaries of the local that many of our students may embrace. Many courses now ask, “whose Canada” and “whose knowledge” is represented in any curriculum. Such questions challenge every university in the country to consider how to make and think about music in a country that is ethnically and racially diverse, officially proud of that diversity but often blind to persistent racist undercurrents.

My lengthy teaching career, then, has shown me a variety of approaches to such issues as the instantiation of power in physical location and naming practices, the struggles to de-centre the curriculum in order to recognize the complex array of geographies and ethnocultural histories, the challenges of both disciplinary boundaries and interdisciplinary initiatives, as well as different relationships between universities and the communities around them. There have been many initiatives. Exploring the strengths and weakness of each and recognizing emerging discussions and decolonizing strategies is part of our challenge for the future.

That challenge, then, is what Mi'kmaw educator and thinker Marie Battiste describes as “displacing cognitive imperialism” (2013: 158). Whose ways of knowing and whose definitions of knowledge remain powerfully inscribed in music programs in the 21st century? While I see valuable initiatives in many music programs, I wonder to what extent we recognize the need for “allowing each person to develop naturally into their giftedness and wholeness” (161), for connecting learning to responsibility, and for defining “academic work as ethical alliance” as literature professor Len Findlay suggests (2016: 75). Let’s continue the conversation. 🍀

## Acknowledgements

Conversations about decolonization had already begun when Gordon Smith and Margaret Walker at Queen's University, Louise Wrazen at York University, and Kati Szego at Memorial University all kindly responded to an early draft of this article. They offered a number of corrections and amplifications for which I am very grateful.

## Notes

1. My first appointment was at McGill University in 1973. I moved to Queen's University in 1975, to York University in 1988, and to Memorial University in 2002. I have had visiting appointments for one or two terms at the University of Toronto, Harvard University, and McGill University.

2. One ethnomusicologist who has written about this is John Carlos Perea (2019), drawing on responses to the powwow drum classes that he instructs as a component of his San Francisco University teaching load in Indigenous Studies.

3. I do not support the tearing down of colonial emblems in most cases since reminders of a colonial past may be useful stimuli for discussions about decolonizing for the future. What we need are new public emblems that reflect diversity and new approaches to history and citizenship. I do understand, however, that visible emblems of colonialism may evoke pain and other negative reactions.

4. Hood was making the colonialist assumption that ethnomusicologists were EuroAmericans who would have to learn the languages, music skills, histories, and lifeways of the (non-EuroAmerican) people they wanted to "study." Today there are ethnomusicologists in virtually every country who study topics that may include new cultural encounters or may focus on the cultural histories/practices of communities they know well. In the 21st century, themes often focus on an enormous range of topics, among them intercultural practices, global influences, mediation, and human mobility, including the forced migration that has become so common.

5. Historical information is available in the "A Brief History" section on the following website: <https://music.ampd.yorku.ca/about>. See also Sterling Beckwith's contribution in this issue.

6. I would later take some action on the music-dance issue. In St. John's, I collaborated with the Arts and Culture Centre (ACC) to fundraise and build a professional dance studio. Located in the St. John's ACC, it is available free of charge to dancers and choreographers of any style or genre if one books well in advance.

7. A subway extension to the campus was completed only in 2017 although direct bus service from the end of the early subway line had been in place for some years before that. Nonetheless, a large segment of the faculty, staff, and students travelled to the York campus by car.

8. See [www.mun.ca/mmap](http://www.mun.ca/mmap) for lists of the graduates of the joint ethnomusicology program.

9. Reiterated in various documents. See, for example, [www.mun.ca/president/planning/vision.php](http://www.mun.ca/president/planning/vision.php)

10. Mathias Kom describes the history and artistic interaction of the RPM Challenge in “Just Because You Can: The RPM Challenge in St. John’s” (2021). RPM is, of course, “revolutions per minute.”

11. In 2020, the Society for Ethnomusicology recognized and honoured MMAp’s work with the Judith McCullough Award for public-facing work.

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