

A Canadian Identity Shift: Degenociding Canada Through Indigenous Soundscapes

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Decolonization actions are growing. Reconciliation calls are being trumpeted in Canada. Yet, change is too tempered according to the unwilling hosts on these lands: Indigenous Peoples. Three recent investigations – the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) – all highlight the pressing need for more profound remedial action. In particular, the national inquiry unequivocally implicates Canada in historical and ongoing acts of genocide.

In this article, I delve into the concept of degenociding to confront this troubling legacy of genocide in Canada. Degenociding proposes a ground-up change to Canadian society leading to substantive shifts in the way Canadians self-identify and how they meet and challenge both deeply ingrained power dynamics and colonial legacies. Preliminary examples of teaching Indigenous musics and cultures in Canadian schools are presented as promising tools to start the process of degenociding Canada.

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Les actions de décolonisation se multiplient. Les appels à la réconciliation résonnent au Canada. Pourtant, le changement reste trop modéré selon les hôtes réticents de ces terres: les peuples autochtones. Trois enquêtes récentes – la Commission royale sur les peuples autochtones (1996), la Commission de vérité et réconciliation (2015) et l'Enquête nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées (2019) – soulignent toutes l'urgence de mesures correctives plus profondes. En particulier, l'enquête nationale implique sans équivoque le Canada dans des actes de génocide historiques et continus.

Dans cet article, je me penche sur le concept de «dégénocidation» pour affronter cet héritage troublant de génocide au Canada. La «dégénocidation» propose un changement radical de la société canadienne, menant à des transformations substantielles dans la manière dont les Canadiens s'identifient et comment ils rencontrent et affrontent les dynamiques de pouvoir profondément enracinées et les héritages coloniaux. Des exemples préliminaires d'enseignement des musiques et cultures autochtones dans les écoles canadiennes sont présentés comme des outils prometteurs pour amorcer le processus de «dégénocidation» du Canada.

The Verbs of Genocide

Categorized
 Stereotyped
 Stigmatised
 Marginalized
 Disenfranchised.
 Deprived
 Victimized
 Robbed
 Ghettoised
 Deported.
 Stripped
 Raped
 Tortured
 Murdered.
 Mutilated
 Dismembered
 Discarded
 Denied.

Forgotten?¹

— Alan Whitehorn

I. Introduction

In 1996, the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples laid the groundwork for Canadian² society to start acknowledging the systemic mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.³ In 2015, this time with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), Canadians heard of a Canadian policy relating to the cultural genocide of

¹ Alan Whitehorn, *Return to Armenia/Veradardz depi Hayasdan* (Yerevan: Lusakn Publishing House, 2012) at 22.

² “Canadians” hereafter denotes citizens of Canada who are not First Nations, Inuit, or Métis.

³ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment*, vol 5 (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1996).

Indigenous Peoples through the Indian Residential School project.⁴ Finally, in 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls concluded that Canada has committed – *and continues to commit* – genocide against Indigenous Peoples and that “Canadian society shows an appalling apathy to addressing the issue.”⁵ Compounded by the recent (re)discovery of countless unmarked graves of Indian Residential School children,⁶ the urgency for Canadians to be accountable and make amends to Indigenous Peoples seems evident. Yet, again, Canadians shy away from affirmative strategies and transformative models that will bring substantive shifts in the architectures of the settler state and provide Indigenous Peoples with an ethical response to the most heinous crime known to humankind: genocide. Canadians continue to sidestep accountability and commitment to redress. It seems the apparently unsurmountable and pervasive power dynamics, also perpetuated in decolonizing attempts, do not allow for ingenuous and impactful approaches to reconciliation. Canadians seem manifest in genocide denial, and denial *is* the final stage of genocide.⁷ Despite laudable commissions, reports, and inquiries, is the goal of Canada to forget?

The TRC reports that the colonial racist policies of *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery (still echoing 15th century papal bulls) are reproduced *sine fine*, and that systematic violence against Indigenous Peoples continues to be maintained.⁸ To understand these predicaments and their

⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015) at 48 [TRC]; Stephanie May McKenzie, “Acknowledging Canada's Genocide” (2021) 16:3 *Postcolonial Text* 1; on Canada's response to the TRC “Calls to Action” see Eva Jewell & Ian Mosby, “Calls to Action Accountability: A 2022 Status Update on Reconciliation” (2022), online (pdf): <yellowheadinstitute.org> [perma.cc/2CHH-JANC].

⁵ See National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report* (Vancouver: Privy Council Office, 2019) at 4; on *mens rea* and *actus reus* of Canadian genocide of Indigenous Peoples see National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report* (Vancouver: Privy Council Office, 2019) at 17.

⁶ McKenzie, *supra* note 4 at 1.

⁷ Gregory Stanton, “The Ten Stages of Genocide” (2013) at X, online: <genocidewatch.org> [perma.cc/3EEU-9VET].

⁸ On *terra nullius* and Doctrine of Discovery see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol 1 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015) at 15–16; on examples of systemic violence against Indigenous Peoples, see summary of *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada v Canada* in Cindy Blackstock, “The Complainant: The Canadian Human Rights Case on First Nations Child Welfare” (2017) 62:2 *McGill LJ* 285 at 326–28.

consequences on Canadian society, and to seek out better ways to meet reconciliation goals facing Canada today, I first look at several quagmires obstructing Canada's path towards reconciliation. I argue that the resulting ontological status quo, in addition to the politics and policies maintained and developed by the duty-bearing State, leads to bestowing Canadian children with an identity tainted with colonial genocide that invisibilizes Indigenous presence.⁹ Consequently, the Indigenous and Canadian child rights-holder's access to quality education and to profound knowledge about this land is greatly diminished. These child rights-holders are anesthetized to the depth and beauty of millennia of knowledge and worldviews that this land has taught its human inhabitants. I then open the discussion towards a possible alternative to decolonization that I term **degenociding**. This ground-up (re)learning process, starting at a young age (K-12), is directed towards nurturing a more urgent and critical way of thinking about what the dignified response to genocide can be. I posit that adopting the degenocidal process will: a) lead to a reboot of Canadian identity and b) provide moral leverage and credentials to Canadians, thereby allowing them to engage meaningfully and purposefully with remedial action towards Indigenous Peoples. This also extends to other invested colonial societies. Indigenous-led ways of thinking will be envisioned as the central catalysts of degenociding, with the intended outcome of encouraging and empowering Indigenous and Canadian child rights-holders to self-define and self-express a new identity.¹⁰ I will then present how music and culture have historically been effective as place-based identity-building mechanisms and conveyors of place-inspired human knowledge. Finally, I will examine preliminary examples of teaching Indigenous musics and cultures in Canadian schools as promising degenocidal tools. Specifically, they hold potential for identity (re)creation and society building, and as mechanisms that will awaken (through multisensory learning and social well-being) an edifying paradigm shift in

⁹ Emma Elliott-Groves & Stephanie A Fryberg, "'A Future Denied' for Young Indigenous People: From Social Disruption to Possible Futures" in Elizabeth Ann McKinley & Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds, *Handbook of Indigenous Education* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019) at 638.

¹⁰ On prioritizing child rights-holder participation, see the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3, art 12 (1) (entered into force 2 September 1990) [CRC]; note also the "deep concern" of non-compliance on this matter by States parties in the United Nations' *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2016, 71/177, Rights of the Child*, UNGA, 71st Session, UN Doc A/RES/71/177 (30 January 2017) at 4.

Canadian identity; an identity that replaces “appalling apathy” with “deep empathy” and positive action.

A. Positionality Statement

As an Armenian, I am viscerally connected to the ongoing genocide in our Indigenous lands.¹¹ At the same time, as a Canadian, I benefit from the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples in what is now Canada.¹² This almost dichotomic intersectional identity leads me to ponder: what might bring about atonement for genocide? The answers are quite straightforward to me: regret, respect and restitution from the perpetrators or their descendants. Nothing less can begin to address genocidal loss. Additionally, as a professional musician, I see music as a possible way for Canadians to reach the level of empathy and understanding necessary to make significant amends. Considering the recent progress made in Canada towards genocide recognition, Canadians may be well placed to take a leading role in the long-overdue degenociding of colonial lands.

II. Colonial Quagmires

When Western Europe’s self-perceived image of representing modernity – developed from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment eras – intersected with colonialism in the mid-15th century, a power relationship was woven into the fabric of interactions with Indigenous Peoples on the so-called newly “discovered” continents.¹³ The settler/Indigenous relationship, which is coined as *modernity/coloniality* by Quijano, and expounded by Mignolo, is based on racism, intolerance, expansionism, patriarchy, the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, and the imposition of imperialistic viewpoints through “the word of God or the word of Reason and Truth.”¹⁴ It continues to have devastating repercussions today. Calls by

¹¹ On the Armenian Genocide, see Alan Whitehorn, *The Armenian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2015) & Israel W Charny, *Encyclopedia of Genocide* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999).

¹² Using the phrase “in what is now Canada” helps expose the power dynamics and racism at play via the arbitrary renaming of Indigenous lands without consent, see Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018) at 91.

¹³ Walter D Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) at 28–29.

¹⁴ *Ibid* at xv.

16th century thinkers like François Hotman – who understood that cultural meaning for different societies has “its seasons, its changes, its particular morality, its particular *moeurs*, each has its own *complexion* and *humeur*, its own complexion and flavour”¹⁵ – were ignored. Similarly, a century later, Giambattista Vico discussed how every civilization had to be seen on its own terms; each civilization had their own values and could only be understood in terms of its own self-expression.¹⁶ This, too, fell on deaf ears as the colonizer pursued relationships with Indigenous Peoples on their own terms.

Today, this dystopian settler fantasy continues with, not only the imposition of Eurocentric sovereignty on these lands, but also the imposition of Eurocentric sovereignty on knowledge itself – or, what Mignolo describes as “theo- and ego-politics of knowledge, [and] zero point epistemology.”¹⁷ The colonial machine and its education systems have been oblivious to the rich and profound heritage that is indigenous to Turtle Island.¹⁸ This culture of invisibilizing Indigenous ways is generated by deep-seated quagmires in colonial societies that would need powerful mechanisms to undo.

A. Quagmire 1 – The Fort

When Europeans decided to settle on the lands in what is now Canada, they also chose to set *the fort*, or what Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald describes as “a particular four-cornered version of imperial geography that has been transplanted on lands perceived as empty and unused.”¹⁹ Thereafter, relationships have been based on a narrative of division, disconnect and distrust that Donald describes as “colonial frontier logics.”²⁰ This Eurocentric logic dictates which Indigenous worldviews are deemed “good enough” to enter the fort and which must remain outside the

¹⁵ Isaiah Berlin, *Gauss Seminars at Princeton University*, “The Origins of Cultural History: 3 – The Origins of the Conflict: Political Lawyers, Classical Scholars, Narrative Historians” (22 February 1973) at 21, online (pdf): <berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/origins3.pdf> [perma.cc/WN94-H2TU].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Mignolo, *supra* note 13 at 82. Mignolo characterizes this Eurocentric worldview, shaped by religious dogma and superiority complexes, as arrogantly positioning itself as the foundation of all valuable knowledge.

¹⁸ Andrea Bowra, Angela Mashford-Pringle & Blake Poland, “Indigenous Learning on Turtle Island: A Review of the Literature on Land-Based Learning” (2021) 65:2 *Can Geographies* 132 at 132.

¹⁹ Dwayne T Donald, “Forts, Curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining Decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian Relations in Educational Contexts” (2009) 2:1 *F N Perspectives J* at 3 [Donald, “Forts, Curriculum and Indigenous Métissage”].

²⁰ *Ibid* at 20, note 3.

fort because they are too primitive and “outside comprehension and acknowledgment.”²¹ These irreconcilable Indigenous and settler realities continued to coexist for some time until the former almost succumbed to complete destruction by disease and genocide and, in an almost Machiavellian turn of events, found itself in a “fort” of its own: *the reservation*. The fort had indeed essentially flipped and become a place “dedicated to special treatment within the Canadian system that actually enforced isolation and exclusion.”²² Simply put, Donald’s “imperial geography” was named Canada and market capitalism made sure it was no longer “empty and unused.” Furthermore, Donald notes how actions of decolonization are often imagined as acts of *incorporating* or *infusing* Indigenous perspectives.²³ We need only to look at the etymology of these words to realize that they suggest a process or action whereby a smaller component of something is “lost” into a larger body or component, again, demonstrating the insurmountable power dynamic of colonizer and colonized. Fort logic helps us understand this relationship and reinforces the need for a different approach, such as degenociding, to realize reconciliation goals in Canada.

B. Quagmire 2 – The ‘Mutual Recognition’ Game

Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard writes that by 1969 – around the time of the proposal and quick refusal of the infamous White Paper on Indian Policy²⁴ – Canada’s policy regarding Indigenous Peoples went from being “unapologetically assimilationist, [to being] couched in the vernacular of ‘mutual recognition’.”²⁵ These moves towards recognition and a non-reciprocal relationship, dictated by settler needs, compromise any chances for effective conciliation and reinscribes colonial control of the narrative Indigenous Peoples and their allies are trying to transform.²⁶ Coulthard goes further and suggests that this enticement of Indigenous Peoples to accept

²¹ *Ibid* at 18.

²² Dwayne T Donald, *The Pedagogy of the Fort: Curriculum, Aboriginal-Canadian Relations, and Indigenous Métissage* (Secondary Education Thesis, University of Alberta, 2009) [unpublished] at 376.

²³ *Ibid* at 147–48.

²⁴ Government of Canada policy proposal in 1969 that aimed to eliminate the political and legal responsibilities it had towards Indigenous Peoples.

²⁵ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) at 3.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

the tokenistic granting and imposition by Canada of a distorted identity not only reinforces the architectures of the settler state, but inconspicuously pushes “master sanctioned ... master/slave (colonizer/colonized) relations themselves.”²⁷ Moreover, the resulting entitlement or Whitestream²⁸ reinforces the traumas of the Indigenous-settler-enslaved triad and further entrenches racist foundations and ideologies of colonial states.²⁹ These mutual recognition games disguised as “postmodernism, new age spiritualism, or ‘playing nice’”³⁰ do not serve to help build the needed reciprocity in relationship building. Remaining complacent to these engrained structural behemoths – that have resulted in such horrors as the Residential School System, the ‘60s Scoop, and the cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – thwarts constitutional declarations of human rights and good governance³¹ and hardly inspires citizens, much less victims, to *stand on guard for thee*.³²

C. Quagmire 3 – Generational Racism

In the closing lines of the Preamble of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which is binding upon Canada, States parties are required to take “due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child.”³³ To reach the “fullest potential” of the child, Article 29 of the CRC requires States Parties to direct “[t]he preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic,

²⁷ *Ibid* at 26.

²⁸ Term used to describe the imposition of imperialistic epistemological hegemony of European models in academia and society in general. See Sandy Grande, “American Indian Identity and Intellectualism: The Quest for a New Red Pedagogy” (2000) 13:4 *Intl J Qualitative Studies in Education* 343.

²⁹ Margaret E Walker, “Towards a Decolonized Music History Curriculum” (2020) 10:1 *J Music History Pedagogy* 1.

³⁰ Dwayne T Donald, “Forts, Colonial Frontier Logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian Relations: Imagining Decolonizing Educational Philosophies in Canadian Contexts” in Ali A Abdi, ed, *Decolonizing Philosophies of Education* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012) at 103 [Donald, “Forts, Colonial Frontier Logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian Relations”].

³¹ See *Compilation of the Outcomes of Regional Consultations: report*, UNESCO, UN Doc ED/PSD/GCP/2022/09/REV (September 2022) [UNESCO]. For example: “Promoting non-anthropocentric visions, a diversity of worldviews and cultures, and avoiding of hegemonic and colonizing models” at 14.

³² For our non-Canadian readers, this is an excerpt of Canada’s national anthem.

³³ CRC, *supra* note 10. Note: Canada signed the CRC on 28 May 1990 and ratified it on 13 December 1991.

national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.”³⁴ Moreover, in 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council found “that shared histories [should] be taught to all children, indigenous and non-indigenous.”³⁵ Indigenous needs must be placed at the core of the dialogue in accordance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP).³⁶ UNDRIP stipulates the need to fight against prejudice and discrimination to “promote tolerance, understanding and good relations”³⁷ and for Indigenous Peoples to be able to sustain, safeguard and enhance their culture and knowledge.³⁸ Ignoring the original cultures of these lands directly contributes to prolonging (un)conscious generational racism.³⁹ What are we doing if not perpetuating colonial racism and fort logics by continuing to ignore the music and stories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canadian curricula? This racism is surely an important determinant of Canadians’ “appalling apathy to addressing the issue” of genocide mentioned in the Introduction. Indeed, as Canadians, we could ponder on a two-part question: what exactly are the traditions and cultural values of these lands and are we taking “due account” of the best traditions and cultural values for the benefit of our children? To answer this question in manner consistent with the CRC, which explicitly references Indigenous Peoples, degenociding would look at Indigenous grounded values and worldviews to reach that “full potential” of 21st-century-relevant rights models and sustainable development goals.⁴⁰

III. Degenociding Cannot Be a Metaphor

In order not to think through a “quagmired” lens that decolonizes only what is convenient for the settler, degenociding would offer a more drastic mechanism to face the destruction caused by genocide on Turtle Island. This commitment to deep transformation and the effective fulfilment of rights

³⁴ *Ibid*, art 29(d).

³⁵ *Rights of the Indigenous Child Under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, HRC, 48th Session, UN Doc A/HRC/48/74, UNOR (2021) at 12 (art 60).

³⁶ Héctor M Vázquez Córdoba, “(Re)centering Indigenous Perspectives in Music Education in Latin America” (2019) 18:3 *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education* 200 at 210.

³⁷ *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, UNGA, UN Doc A/RES/61/295, UNOR, (adopted by the General Assembly 2 October 2007), arts 1, 2 & 15.

³⁸ *Ibid*, arts 10 & 31.

³⁹ Karina Czyzewski, “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Insights into the Goal of Transformative Education” (2011) 2:3 *Intl Indigenous Pol’y J* at 7.

⁴⁰ UNESCO, *supra* note 31 at 12.

obligations rests on the shoulders of the colonizer, represented by the settler state. A one-off apology, land acknowledgements, selective inclusions of Indigenous content in curricula or giving Indigenous Peoples “more lines in the script”⁴¹ in public schemes fall short of the systemic transformations necessary to match the scale of the crime. The process of reconciliation must fully contemplate our past before any successful reconciliation of the future can be accomplished, which brings us naturally to education.⁴² Indeed, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire stated that the *raison d’être* of education is to go from contradiction to reconciliation.⁴³

The purpose of developing new terminology in an already crowded environment of powerful words (and too often unfulfilled promises) may seem superfluous. Yet, I would suggest that the constant need for prompts and reminders by concerned advocates emphasizing that “decolonization is not a metaphor”⁴⁴ demonstrates that decolonization is perhaps too timid a concept for significant change to take place. Degenociding is inexorably about atonement, reparation, dignity and a phoenix-like rebirth out of the ashes of genocide. The goal of degenociding is to help colonial societies face history and themselves *at the core* and to work within a newly defined framework that purposefully reverses power dynamics. To reach this goal, the victims, the colonized, or in Fanonian terms, *The Wretched of the Earth*,⁴⁵ take the reins and guide society towards fundamental change in state architectures. Furthermore, Fanon reminds us that “[d]ecolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman’s agreement.”⁴⁶ Degenociding could be the Fanonian “total disorder” he felt was necessary for real change to happen. Hopefully, settler states willing to take on this challenge will, instead, lead the way in creating a “total reorder.”

Genocide is not only the destruction of countless genetic lineages of an ethnic group and the generational traumas it causes, but also the

⁴¹ Brenda Macdougall, “Space and Place Within Aboriginal Epistemological Traditions: Recent Trends in Historical Scholarship” (2017) 98:1 Can His Rev 64 at 69.

⁴² Danielle Lorenz, “Reversing Racism in the Time of Reconciliation? Settler Colonialism, Race, and Alberta Teachers” (2017) 8:1 Can J New Scholars Ed 80 at 92.

⁴³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970 [2005]) at 72.

⁴⁴ Eve Tuck & K Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” (2012) 1:1 Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1.

⁴⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grover, 1963 [2004]) at 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid* at 18.

elimination, for time eternal of libraries of knowledge, museums of artifacts, musical soundscapes and the hopes, dreams and beliefs of a people. Furthermore, genocide, in contrast to colonization, has legal import through the *Genocide Convention*, thus explaining the prevalent tendency towards denial by the perpetrator.⁴⁷ I posit that, by presenting degenociding as a powerful response to its sinister counterpart genocide, we will develop a mechanism that transcends the examples of colonial quagmires presented earlier. We can imagine a *Marshal Plan*-like financial and institutional commitment to undo the past injustices that *can* be undone, starting with a fully supported resurgence of all Indigenous cultures on these lands leading to a “restaging” of first contact, where the guest respects and abides by the host’s worldviews. Degenociding opens colonial societies to a possible new ethic of global citizenship, a space to consider a healthier identity, an ontology of care and a sustainable way of seeing life on this planet. Consequently, the Canadian child’s right to a dignified and quality education will be realized to a fuller extent through the lens of this new framework since, not only will Indigenous worldviews inform its core philosophies, but racist colonial power dynamics will be rejected. This empowering mechanism will, in theory, allow the child rights-holder to access several recognized rights in international law, including their right to participate in society, to define their identity and to have a say on how their community develops.⁴⁸ Degenociding *cannot* be a metaphor.

IV. Degenocidal Tools – Indigenous Inspirations

The Western-exceptionalism narrative and the idea of the “‘West’ and the passive, ahistorical ‘rest’”⁴⁹ must be overcome and replaced by new “regimes of knowledge.”⁵⁰ With the TRC’s final report, Canada received clear recommendations for fundamental changes in its settler-state

⁴⁷ Note that Contracting Parties to the Genocide Convention must “undertake to prevent and to punish” the crime of genocide. See the United Nations’ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, 78 UNTS 277, art 1 (entered into force 12 January 1951); on genocide denial see Laurelyn Whitt & Alan W Clarke, *North American Genocides: Indigenous Nations, Settler Colonialism, and International Law* (Cambridge University Press: 2019) at 8–25; Fatma M Göçek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence Against the Armenians, 1789–2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴⁸ CRC, *supra* note 10.

⁴⁹ Walker, *supra* note 29 at 12.

⁵⁰ Michael A Figueroa, “Decolonizing ‘Intro to World Music?’” (2020) 10:1 J Music History Pedagogy 39 at 40.

architectures in several policy areas.⁵¹ The Chairman of the TRC, Murray Sinclair (Anishinaabe), convincingly indicated the best path to approach such a challenge for Canadian society: "Education is what got us into this mess, and education is the key to reconciliation."⁵² Indeed, an important challenge facing Canada today is the "baggage" of colonialism that it carries over to its education systems. This baggage "weighs" on Canadian identity and perpetuates the legacy of genocide of Indigenous cultures with resulting skewed identities for both Indigenous and settler children, leaving them with the "impression that Indians have not done much since the buffalo were killed off and the West was settled."⁵³ Sinclair also emphasizes that "this is not an Aboriginal problem, it is a Canadian problem."⁵⁴ The narratives taught in the Residential Schools depicting Indigenous Peoples as "heathens and savages and pagans and inferior, was the same message we were giving in the public schools. And we need to change that message ... so that [settler and Indigenous children] will grow up learning how to speak to and about each other in a more respectful way."⁵⁵ For this narrative to be dismantled and then reconstructed into a non-racist narrative, the first step is for Canadian and Indigenous children to be able to (re)define and (re)discover the rich culture and worldviews of the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.⁵⁶

Several Indigenous scholars suggest mechanisms in "getting rid" of the colonial unconscious; mechanisms that could guide the process of decolonizing. For example, Quechua scholar Sandy Grande's *Red Pedagogy* can be instrumental in breaking the stereotypes imposed by colonialism.⁵⁷ An important aspect of *Red Pedagogy* is the rejection of dominant Eurocentric thought models and, instead, the application of Indigenous methodologies borne of these lands.⁵⁸ It is this *Red Pedagogy* that has enabled survivors of the colonizer's onslaught to maintain a certain degree of what was almost lost and, consequently, to create a possible future

⁵¹ TRC, *supra* note 4.

⁵² Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Murray Sinclair Interview" (June 2015) online (video): <cbc.ca/player/play/2668647786> [perma.cc/X5PY-T4ZC] [Sinclair].

⁵³ Donald, "Forts, Curriculum and Indigenous Métissage", *supra* note 19 at 5.

⁵⁴ Sinclair, *supra* note 52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid* from 9:34–10:21.

⁵⁶ Czyzewski, *supra* note 39; Donald, "Forts, Curriculum and Indigenous Métissage", *supra* note 19.

⁵⁷ Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁵⁸ *Ibid* at 68.

rooted in traditional knowledge. Red Pedagogy has the capacity to facilitate the Canadian learner in an important aspect of decolonizing: cultivating a worldview more akin to the land they live on. Furthermore, Grande's approach advocates finding and listening to the Indigenous voices *in the plural*.⁵⁹ The Whitestream concept of the "Indian" as one group must be cast aside. Rather, the psychosocial cast Indigenous Peoples have been put in must be broken to let indigeneity flourish and self-define. Grande also explores the concept of "Indigena" as a post-colonial tool to develop a "decolonial imaginary", one that gives importance to dialectics of Indigenous languages and how they are a source of identity full of "metaphors of existence."⁶⁰

Choctaw playwright and scholar LeAnne Howe's concept of "tribalography" has similar echoes in that it reorients the narrative with Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.⁶¹ As its goal, tribalography positions and validates "Indigenous stories as central components in a way that disrupts colonial binaries and allows for authentic dialogue and engagement."⁶² To find this, as Osage scholar Robert Warrior labels, "alternative space," the conversation must change, and the methodology must be altered considerably for the learner to reach new and "meaningful" knowledge through Indigenous perspectives and worldviews.⁶³

Donald helps us reflect on Blackfoot wisdom of reciprocal relationship building through "*aatsimihka'ssin* ... the ethical imperative to act in a sacred way [in] *ainna'kootsiyo'p* or mutual respect."⁶⁴ This *ethical relationality* "requires ecological imagination to be enacted and repeatedly renewed."⁶⁵ For Coulthard, this place-based decolonizing mechanism will be achieved through the practice of "grounded normativity", which is defined as "the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others

⁵⁹ *Ibid* at 95.

⁶⁰ *Ibid* at 171–73.

⁶¹ LeAnne Howe, "The Story of America: A Tribalography" in Nancy Shoemaker, ed, *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2002) at 29.

⁶² Lee Francis IV & Michael M Munson, "We Help Each Other Up: Indigenous Scholarship, Survivance, Tribalography, and Sovereign Activism" (2017) 30:1 Intl J Qual Stud Educ 48 at 48.

⁶³ Robert Warrior, "The Future in the Past of Native and Indigenous Studies" (2011) 35:1 Am Indian Cult Res J 55 at 55.

⁶⁴ Donald, "Forts, Colonial Frontier Logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian Relations", *supra* note 30 at 104.

⁶⁵ *Ibid* at 93.

over time.”⁶⁶ Coulthard argues that much of the Canadian government’s discourse around recognition, reconciliation and accommodation seems to be within the confines of a “genocidal exclusion/assimilation double.”⁶⁷

Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon writes that *stories* will help in “discovering how one is personally affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Yankton Dakota anthropologist, Ella Cara Deloria, found that Indigenous Peoples must overstep or block out the settler-determined definitions and narratives to realize empowerment through their histories and within a liberating framework.⁶⁹ In contrast, she explains that for the settler’s quest to understand *Indigenous worldview aesthetics*, “we cannot truly know [Indigenous Peoples] until we can get within their minds, to some degree at least, and see life from their peculiar point of view. To do that we must learn what goes on in their ‘spiritual culture area’”⁷⁰ – which brings us to music.

V. Tuning in to Turtle Island

Central to the discussion I am proposing is the exploration of approaches colonial states can engage in to lead to a relationship that gives a prominent role to Indigenous worldviews in shaping society. My argument is that music has an important role to play in bringing us to this understanding. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Saint Ambrose, the fourth-century Bishop of Milan who coined the phrase “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”, was also credited with promoting antiphonal chant – an exchange of chants between two separate choirs during services. In fact, Saint Ambrose saw value in music as a tool for community building. Williams writes:

Ambrose’s hymns demonstrated and articulated the unity of a diverse population by allowing the constituents to express themselves in a single voice. What the hymns may have lacked in spontaneity – being complex and pre-composed – they gained in

⁶⁶ Coulthard, *supra* note 25 at 13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid* at 6.

⁶⁸ Grace L Dillon, ed, *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012) at 10.

⁶⁹ Ella Cara Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), originally published in 1944.

⁷⁰ *Ibid* at 18.

direction and discipline, so that Ambrose was able to exploit the unity and harmony of his congregation in support of his own political and religious aims.⁷¹

Indigenous musics could be important components of positive social transformation and enablement, and fundamental tools for reconciliation. Perhaps music can also contribute to a reboot of Canadian identity itself. Indeed, music is not only a “powerful means of resolving perceived differences between in- and out-groups in societies,”⁷² but like Coulthard’s “grounded normativity,”⁷³ music *grounds* us and has an innate power to induce kinaesthetic sensations and memories that are embedded in the produced sound for both the performer and the listener.⁷⁴ Music is, in fact, a soundscape informed by “cultural conditioning, including the geographical spaces in which the earlier feelings were formed. We constantly take in information from the geographical space.”⁷⁵ Keillor explains that on Turtle Island, musical expression for Indigenous Peoples is rich and diverse and “closely tied to climatic and geographical characteristics of the area.”⁷⁶ Music is in a sense part of the geography; in the case of the Lil’wat,⁷⁷ music “is right from the land; it is people, the trees, water, life.”⁷⁸ Music is normatively grounded in its geographical provenance.

Studies confirm that music, in both its performative and receptive forms, is deeply rooted and fundamentally intertwined with our sense of self; music is “an identity project ... a forum in which we construct and negotiate our constantly evolving sense of who we are, and our place in the world.”⁷⁹ For example, in the Kanaka⁸⁰ worldview, language, music, chants and the land are interconnected and are the essential ingredients of identity.⁸¹

⁷¹ Michael Stuart Williams, “Hymns as Acclamations: The Case of Ambrose of Milan” (2013) 6:1 J Late Antiquity 108 at 108.

⁷² Raymond MacDonald, David J Hargreaves & Dorothy Miell, *Handbook of Musical Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) at 13.

⁷³ Coulthard, *supra* note 25 at 13.

⁷⁴ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵ *Ibid* at 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid* at 15.

⁷⁷ First Nations people from the Southern Coast Mountains region of British Columbia, Canada.

⁷⁸ Keillor, *supra* note 74 at 46.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, *supra* note 72 at v.

⁸⁰ The Indigenous Hawaiian people.

⁸¹ Katrina-Ann R Kapā’anaoalāoikeola Nākoa Oliveira, *Ancestral Places: Understanding Kanaka Geographies* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2014).

NA'AU⁸²

Kanaka scholar, Katrina-Ann R. Oliveira tells us of a certain sixth sense (na'au)

that, when enabled, allows one to feel the land, locate the land,

and hear the land speaking to us.

She states that "to truly know a place is to be able to recite its stories...

To know a place is also to be able to chant the landscape through poetry."

It is that feeling in the guts,

a feeling of belonging to a place

and an opening up to a discourse with ancestors, history, and time

that characterizes identity.⁸³

This almost "Herderesque" view of identity – where language and stories hold the keys to a people's soul, history and sense of place and time – is indeed an important notion that characterizes Indigenous knowledge transfer. In their songs and chants, the details of the landscape, the physiological aspects of the islands *en route* and natural phenomena, such as the ocean currents, were not only a way for the Kanaka to transfer generational knowledge, but an oral map of the place and guiding light for this seafaring island people.⁸⁴ Imagine a song (or Kanaka "mele") that describes ocean breaks and sea sprays, mentions types of flora and fauna, then describes a shoreline with cliffs – a truly eloquent "GPS" design if there ever was one. In addition, it is also ancestral knowledge that is "a holistic continuum grounded in the past, relevant in the present, and indispensable in the future."⁸⁵

Dale Turner⁸⁶ and Audra Simpson⁸⁷ determine that a powerful way to achieve clarity in identity is to place artists, intellectuals and writers in

⁸² These independent sections of thought that I aim to set apart with alignment are meant to allow you, the reader, to take pause and embed yourself in examples of Indigenous worldviews that genocide continues to seek to eradicate.

⁸³ Oliveira, *supra* note 81 at 66–67.

⁸⁴ *Ibid* at 52.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* at 113.

⁸⁶ Temagami First Nation.

⁸⁷ Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation.

leadership positions and as guiding lights.⁸⁸ Music, particularly *making* music, is a unique human experience that embraces, very much like Nishnaabeg values, “love, compassion, and understanding”⁸⁹ and will inevitably incite curiosity, joy, belonging, agency and self-discovery in the individual.⁹⁰ Turner and Simpson state that, “[n]ot only are we, as Indigenous peoples, very different from those that came to our lands and now claim it as their own, we are also very different from *each other*.”⁹¹ Considering that music is geographically informed, it becomes clear that our degenociding framework would have to respect the distinctiveness of at least eight geographic regions in what is now Canada: “Northwest Coast, Western Subarctic, Plateau, Plains, Eastern Sedentary, Eastern Nomadic, Maritime, and Arctic.”⁹² Each song from each region is coded with origin stories, values, morals, history and traditions of the land.⁹³

European settlers did not understand Indigenous Peoples’ musics and its important link to the environment. Many settlers, especially within the church, even considered it demoniacal.⁹⁴ Diamond describes Indigenous musics as holistic soundscapes that evokes ways of being, connecting to the land and to the past *and* a future generational continuum.⁹⁵ Many settler interpretations of indigeneity present it in a “flat worldview” space that eradicates the multiculturalism of Indigenous Peoples and keeps them in the frame of “modernity’s antithesis – if European cultures represent the civilized world, then Indigenous cultures represent the barbaric world.”⁹⁶ Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall found that this normalized devaluing of Indigenous culture and the fact that it is largely absent in “the history of Canada is the root of the conflicted relationship between Aboriginal people and Canada.”⁹⁷ Macdougall argues that true reconciliation can only come

⁸⁸ Dale Turner & Audra Simpson, “Indigenous Leadership in a Flat World” (May 2008) at 14, online (pdf): <fngovernance.org> [perma.cc/GWT6-3ZGK].

⁸⁹ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017) at 149.

⁹⁰ Susan Hallam, *The Power of Music: A Research Synthesis on the Impact of Actively Making Music on the Intellectual, Social and Personal Development of Children and Young People* (London: University of London Press, 2015) at 86.

⁹¹ Turner & Simpson, *supra* note 88 at 3 [emphasis in original].

⁹² Keillor, *supra* note 74 at 15.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* at 298.

⁹⁵ Beverley Diamond, “Canada Research Chair in Ethnomusicology” (2007) 29:1–2 *Ethnologies* 317.

⁹⁶ Turner & Simpson, *supra* note 88 at 3.

⁹⁷ Macdougall, *supra* note 41 at 81.

once Indigenous stories are told “from their perspectives [and] historical understanding of space and place.”⁹⁸ Encompassing that space and place is its soundscape – the music – inspired by, and created for, the land.

Indeed, it could be argued that all music aims to reproduce the sounds of the land and to give voice, through performance, to its past, present and future inhabitants.⁹⁹ The mountains, trees and waterways are the essential ingredients of a culture and part and parcel of human existence that music, language, stories and the arts aim to describe. Diamond and Witmer suggest that “music is a significant symbol which can be manipulated in the creation and contestation of nationhood and identity.”¹⁰⁰ The musical canon promoted today in Canadian music classrooms¹⁰¹ is so firmly merged with a colonial identity that it, in fact, contributes to what Walker describes as “racism through erasure.”¹⁰² Walker notes that the model of the university music program still means the study of Euro-American classical music, music of a self-proclaimed elite, yet this fact is so normalized that the “elephant in the room” – the rest of the music on the planet – is invisible.¹⁰³

The previously discussed settler-dictated relationships, power dynamics and state architectures must be understood, deconstructed and reconstructed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples in order to address the imperative of charting a path towards (re)conciliation.¹⁰⁴ Dolloff nevertheless warns us that “merely incorporating Indigenous music into music classrooms, without reorienting the teaching-learning context to incorporate Indigenous epistemology is an exercise in re-inscribing colonialism, ‘new wine in old skins’ if you will.”¹⁰⁵ Tremblay-Beaton concurs: presenting Indigenous musics within the context of multiculturalism, inclusivity or through Western lenses “becomes another form of colonization in which the material is being used to serve the needs

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Ray Hudson, “Regions and Place: Music, Identity and Place” (2006) 30:6 *Progress in Human Geography* 626 at 633.

¹⁰⁰ Beverley Diamond & Robert Witmer, *Canadian Music Issues of Hegemony and Identity* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1994) at 16.

¹⁰¹ In the context of this article, the phrase “music classroom” mainly denotes the K-12 learning environment.

¹⁰² Walker, *supra* note 29 at 17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid* at 1.

¹⁰⁴ Lori-Anne Dolloff, “To Honor and Inform: Addressing Cultural Humility in Intercultural Music Teacher Education in Canada” in Heidi Westerlund, Sidsel Karlsen, & Heidi Partti, eds, *Visions for Intercultural Music Teacher Education* (Cham: Springer Open, 2020) at 139.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid* at 144.

of the academy.”¹⁰⁶ Bradley explains that it is simply not enough to “nicely ‘provide space’ for the study of other cultures and other musics without changing any basic operating premises. Changing foundational assumptions represents the greatest challenge facing the curricular reform movement.”¹⁰⁷

Leaning on current literature about bringing Indigenous musics to the music classroom, we can visualize a different theoretical framework for reconciliation. This framework, which is not so integrated into Eurocentric structures, allows Indigenous knowledge to be communicated on its own terms.¹⁰⁸ Rooted in Coulthard’s “grounded normativity” and its land-based time-honoured Indigenous worldviews,¹⁰⁹ decolonizing offers settler learners the opportunity to engage deeply with Indigenous metaphors, histories, aesthetics and soundscapes within an Indigenous-led environment, with educators safeguarding against appropriation pitfalls.¹¹⁰

KOBADE

Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer, musician and academic Leanne Betasamosake

Simpson writes about reclaiming the “worlds that had already been lost.”¹¹¹

Worlds that were vibrant with life and lives that vibrated with the world.

This almost faded way of being that the Nishnaabeg call “kobade”

connects one like a chain to a distant ancestral past,

but also a distant future generation.

Creating a continuum of life with responsibilities

both to the past and to the future

¹⁰⁶ Katie Tremblay-Beaton, “Truth and Reconciliation: Treaty People in Instrumental Music Education” (2017) 59:1 *Can Music Educator* 14 at 14.

¹⁰⁷ Deborah Bradley, “Standing in the Shadows of Mozart: Music Education, World Music, and Curricular Change” in Robin D Moore, ed, *College Music Curricula for a New Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 205 at 212.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Copland Kennedy, “Earthsongs: Indigenous Ways of Teaching and Learning” (2009) 27:2 *Intl J Music Education* 169 at 169; Walker, *supra* note 29 at 1.

¹⁰⁹ Coulthard, *supra* note 25 at 13.

¹¹⁰ Simpson, *supra* note 89; Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); Walker, *supra* note 29.

¹¹¹ Simpson, *supra* note 89 at 2.

is the goal of this type of self-actualization;

we must, in the end, “give more than we take.”¹¹²

Such examples of eloquence and beauty abound thanks to the (re)discovery of Indigenous worldviews, languages, philosophies and knowledge this land has inspired for millennia. Nevertheless, they remain invisibilized to Canadian children. This type of heritage is what colonization has sought to destroy and, to a large extent continues to destroy, by deciding it would not *do as the Romans do*.

VI. Encouraging Futures

Today, primarily in response to the TRC’s Calls to Action, certain government bodies are taking steps to decolonize education in Canada. The Ontario Ministry of Education is committed to “support identity building for Indigenous students and to ensure all students in Ontario know and appreciate contemporary and traditional Indigenous cultures.”¹¹³ Reading the accounts by Indigenous and settler educators and parents in Milne’s 2017 study showed that integrating Indigenous worldviews in schooling was a very positive experience for all.¹¹⁴ Parents and teachers noticed character-trait improvements, such as heightened understanding, awareness, empathy, tolerance and respect, in the participating K-12 students. Furthermore, the same students were positively transforming their parents and community’s perceptions on Indigenous history and culture, and therefore contributing to fighting racism and prejudice. The study also found that Canadian teachers were reluctant to teach Indigenous worldviews, not because of lack of will, but due to lack of familiarity with said worldview. This gap in training and knowledge acquisition is perhaps the biggest hurdle to address in K-12 teacher training programs in Canada. Therefore, Milne stressed the importance of making it a *requirement* in curricula to teach about “Indigenous Peoples’ cultures, traditions, perspectives, and histories” – the benefits were simply too persuasive and valuable for the learner.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Ibid* at 9.

¹¹³ Emily Milne, “Implementing Indigenous Education Policy Directives in Ontario Public Schools: Experiences, Challenges and Successful Practices” (2017) 8:3 *Intl Indigenous Pol’y* J 1 at 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid* at 12.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid* at 10.

Prest et al. studied a promising program in which the integrations of Indigenous musics within the music classroom yielded notably positive outcomes.¹¹⁶ The common thread of these lesson plans was their collaborative nature, bringing Indigenous community members from the local community to guide or lead the lessons. The goal of such a program is said to “foster students’ intercultural and cross-cultural learning via the experience of making local musics with those for whom those musics have personal and cultural meaning.”¹¹⁷

Prest et al. found an important distinction must be made between the act of *reconciliation* and that of *resurgence*, as well as a clarification of the term *decolonization* in the context of Indigenous musics inclusion in the music classroom.¹¹⁸ Prest et al. lean on the work of Tuck and Yang, who warn that reconciliation is more about salvaging the settler foundations and building upon it while “graciously” allowing selected elements of Indigenous culture to “colour” these foundations.¹¹⁹ Resurgence, on the other hand, is the authentic expression of land-based Indigenous knowledge and is about revival and resilience.¹²⁰ Finally, Prest et al. consider that they are indeed witnessing an example of decolonization of education since, though it does not involve “repatriation of land” that is required through the lens of Tuck and Yang, “[s]chools and education in BC are inexorably tied to and implicated in relationships to land because – unlike most of Canada – much of British Columbia is unceded territory; that is, by treaty, the land was never surrendered to or acquired by the crown.”¹²¹

The music lessons that were evaluated involved: “[l]earning and singing songs ..., [d]rumming and making drums ..., [l]earning the meanings of songs, dances, and stories [and consequentially] ... [l]earning language.”¹²² To address the lack of confidence of settler music teachers, hiring Indigenous song keepers from the local Indigenous communities produced positive results for Indigenous and settler students, music teachers and the Indigenous representatives alike. Positive results included settler students

¹¹⁶ Anita Prest et al, “Enacting Curriculum ‘In a Good Way’: Indigenous Knowledge, Pedagogy, and Worldviews in British Columbia Music Education Classes” (2021) 53:5 J Curriculum Studies 711.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* at 713.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid* at 711.

¹¹⁹ Tuck & Yang, *supra* note 44 at 1.

¹²⁰ On Indigenous resurgence, see Coulthard, *supra* note 25 at 154–59.

¹²¹ Prest, *supra* note 116 at 714.

¹²² *Ibid* at 718–19.

finding the experiences “positive and perspective-changing” and feeling enriched by the act of participating in the perpetuation of the songs, stories and histories of the local Indigenous Peoples.¹²³ In the end “participants reported that respectful embedding of local Indigenous knowledge in music classes, schools and surrounding communities – as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and required by the new curriculum – had indeed contributed to fostering cross-cultural understanding and respect among the parties involved.”¹²⁴ The study concluded that music classes provided an ideal environment for “cross-cultural connection and relationship building” between all parties – likely *the* ideal environment considering the innate qualities of music to foster community spirit.¹²⁵ The study also found that there was an acute lack of resources, co-developed with local Indigenous Peoples, to facilitate the duplication of similar programs in other communities.¹²⁶

A music-led, culturally appropriate, freestanding and transformative K-12 space could indeed support a degenociding process in Canada. Knowing the well-established innate power of music to strengthen community, identity and particularly to build bridges,¹²⁷ Indigenous musics could be the catalyzing elements of the narrative-changing engine called for by degenociding. Indigenous musics could be those connecting chains, or Nishnaabeg *kobade*, that will help transmit profound knowledge to the next generation of *all* Turtle Island inhabitants. Degenociding is about a transformation from a Eurocentric/colonial approach to living in Canada to an approach that is informed by worldviews indigenous to Turtle Island. It is about shifting the paradigms of Canadian identity – for all settlers to *also* know about the land-based culture and knowledge of the place where they live.

VII. Conclusion

In a world of colonizer-dominated historical narratives and dichotomies of justice between privileged and underprivileged segments of society,

¹²³ *Ibid* at 722.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid* at 723.

¹²⁶ *Ibid* at 711.

¹²⁷ See Hallam, *supra* note 90; Andrea Creech, Maria Varvarigou & Susan Hallam, *Contexts for Music Learning and Participation: Developing and Sustaining Musical Possible Selves*, 1st ed (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

education is certainly a mechanism that can, as Sinclair said, “get us out of this mess.”¹²⁸ An ethical relationship built on respect and integrity is the *raison d’être* of degenociding, where colonial societies find meaningful and decisive ways to make amends for a violent past by facilitating the renaissance to the very cultures they meant to eradicate. We have seen the holistic ways the arts affect positive change in the world, and we ought to utilize them. Music precedes language and it may be the most basic characteristic of being human – it comes from a powerful source: the proto-human mother, calming her child at her bosom with a lullaby.¹²⁹ The kaleidoscopic effect of music is profound: it influences us physiologically, behaviourally, intellectually and emotionally, thus becoming a unique tool of aesthetic appreciation and of identity creation.¹³⁰ With that in mind, I see music as an ideal tool to start the process of rethinking and rebuilding the kind of identity to be handed down to the next generations of Canadians. This identity, I have suggested, must not be framed in accordance with settler-sanctioned decolonization, but through Indigenous-led degenociding strategies. Therefore, degenocidal policies in Canada must be determined by those who have inherited the intergenerational trauma of genocide: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Subsequently, these policies would be implemented by the settler-state structures, fostering a sense of long-overdue humility and exhilarating redemption.

Indeed, what could be more exhilarating than fulfilling our international human rights obligations and commitments by liberating our children from the darkness of colonial racism and providing them with a quality and dignified education? Sensitized through identity development strategies associated with Indigenous voices, soundscapes and land-based textural and experiential complexities, Canadian children will be gifted with time-evolved and place-inspired human knowledge of the lands on which they live. For Indigenous children, this will signify the emergence of a new Canadian narrative, one of acknowledgment and respect, thus contributing to post-traumatic healing, growth and empowerment. For the victims of Canadian genocide, it will mean that they have *not* been forgotten. This active and purposeful rethinking of Canadian values would become a

¹²⁸ Sinclair, *supra* note 52.

¹²⁹ Ian Cross, “The Nature of Music and Its Evolution” in Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, and Michael H Thaut, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) at 7.

¹³⁰ Hallam, *supra* note 90.

captivating blueprint for modern society where past injustices are not only acknowledged but transformed into positive and hopeful new beginnings and better ways of living.