

**FROM DECOLONIZATION TO DEGENOCIDING:
REIMAGINING SETTLER CANADIAN AND INDIGENOUS FUTURES
THROUGH MUSIC**

VAN ARMENIAN

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School of Music
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract

This dissertation is a literature-based, interdisciplinary philosophical inquiry that examines whether, in light of Canada's human rights obligations and ongoing cultural genocide identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, creating meaningful spaces for Indigenous musics and worldviews within Canadian society can shift settler understandings, nurture reconciliation, advance decolonial praxis, and thereby contribute to what I call degenociding Canada.

Using a rhizomatic framework inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, the dissertation brings into relation four interlocking assemblages: decolonial praxis, Indigenous voices, human rights discourses, and sound studies. Methodologically, it combines Critical Discourse Analysis with a Human Rights Based Approach and centres Indigenous and Global South voices in order to develop an accountable, non-extractivist mode of inquiry. Its central claim is that the continued invisibilizing of Indigenous presence harms both Indigenous and settler children, denies their dignity, and leaves Canada in dissonance with its obligations concerning education, participation, and cultural life.

Performative reconciliation remains one of the dissertation's central concerns. In response, the dissertation theorizes music as a transformative space through which legal obligation, ethical responsibility, Indigenous resurgence, and human flourishing may be rehearsed together. Across these assemblages, state obligations, Indigenous-defined protocols, and settler responsibilities converge in a shared field of accountability. Music thus becomes a relational practice capable of unsettling colonial listening habits and reorienting Canadian public life toward dignity, accountability, and more truthful relations.

The dissertation culminates in the Degenociding Plateau, modelled through the rehearsal logic of a string quartet, which brings into disciplined relation Indigenous grounded normativity and protocol, decolonial reorientation, Human Rights Based accountability, and music's cultural resonance. Degenociding shifts the conversation from apology to obligation, from symbolic inclusion to accountable transformation, and from colonial inheritance toward the difficult, unfinished work of more ethical futures.

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Legend

The following is a list of abbreviations used throughout the dissertation. For ease of reading, the reports and documents listed below are referred to in the main text by their acronyms, without repeated mention of their full titles or publication years. For example, the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019c) is referred to as MMIWG, as in: “The MMIWG states that genocide is ongoing in Canada.” This convention applies to the main text only. In parenthetical citations, the acronym is accompanied by the year of publication – for example, (MMIWG 2019c) – to ensure clarity and proper citation.

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted 1979; opened 1980; entered into force 1981; Canada ratified 1981.
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted 1989; entered into force 1990; Canada signed 1990 and ratified 1991.
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted 2006; entered into force 2008; Canada ratified 2010.
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted 1966; entered into force 1976; Canada signed and ratified 1976.
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted 1966; entered into force 1976; Canada ratified 1976.
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted 1965; entered into force 1969; Canada ratified 1970.
MMIWG	Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, published 2019.
RCAP	Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, final report published 1996.
TRC	Canada’s Residential Schools: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, published 2015.
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948; Canada voted in favour.
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted 2007; Canada endorsed 2010 and removed all objections 2016.

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, founded 1945; entered into force 1946; Canada is a founding member.

Definitions

Colonialism (n.): The historical system of imperial rule (empire, conquest, administration).

Colonization (n.): The process that implements colonialism (settlement, institutions, laws, churches, schools, everyday practices).

Coloniality (n.): Aníbal Quijano's concept of the ongoing matrix of power that outlives formal empire – an epistemic, cultural, economic, and political framework that continues to rank peoples and knowledges along Eurocentric and racialized lines.

Decoloniality (n.): The onto-epistemic process of confronting and delinking from the enduring coloniality of power, knowledge, and being that persists beyond formal colonial rule.

Decolonization (n.): In this dissertation, the political and material process of confronting and undoing colonial structures, relations, dispossession, and authority.

Deleuze–Guattari “lines of flight” (n.): Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define these as “movements of deterritorialization and destratification” (3); lines by which a multiplicity changes nature and connects with the outside (9).

Deleuze–Guattari “assemblages” (n.): “An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 8).

Deleuze–Guattari “plateaus” (n.): “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end . . . Any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22).

Deleuze–Guattari “rhizome” (n.): “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and. . . and. . . and. . .’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25).

Grounded normativity (n.): Glen Coulthard's (2014) term for “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and long-standing experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time” (13).

Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) (n.): A normative approach that frames individuals and communities as rights-holders and states and other responsible institutions as

duty-bearers, emphasizing dignity, participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability. In this dissertation, the HRBA is used to assess whether institutional practices and policies fulfil human rights obligations rather than remain aspirational.

Musicking (v.): A term developed and defined by Christopher Small (1998) as follows: “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practising, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (9).

Onto-epistemic (adj.): Pertaining to a worldview that encompasses ontology (the study of being) and epistemology (the study of knowing).

Performative reconciliation (n.): Refers to actions, statements, or gestures that appear to advance reconciliation – through ceremonies, branding, speeches, symbolic acknowledgements, or one-off events – and that may look good and raise expectations of progress but that do not produce tangible, sustained change in colonial structures, power dynamics, policy, or lived conditions, often intensifying frustration, mistrust, backlash, and distractions that make genuine reconciliation harder (see Wilson-Raybould 2022, 293–294).

Return of the future (n.): Phrase formulated by Peruvian thinker Aníbal Quijano in “The Return of the Future and Questions About Knowledge” (2002). It refers to the possible return of collective hope, resistance, and social transformation after the defeats of anti-capitalist and socialist struggles made such futures seem lost. In this dissertation, the term is used chiefly through Catherine E. Walsh, Walter D. Mignolo, and Rita Segato’s 2024 interpretation: as a return not to a frozen past but to renewed relation with the grounded Indigenous ways of knowing, being, listening, and governing that colonialism violently interrupted, so that the future may be taken up again as a responsibility in the present.

Zero point epistemology (n.): The notion that Western epistemologies position themselves as objective and neutral – the so-called “zero point” of knowledge – thereby diminishing, marginalizing, and exoticizing alternative ways of knowing.

Prologue

On Celestial Symphonies and Earthly Discords¹

In the nascent dawn of creation, when Paradise was still resonant in memory, humanity understood a profound truth: music was not a mere sound but *the* divine language through which the heavens communicated. According to medieval Armenian Apocrypha, Adam and Eve, cast from Eden, were given a second chance and found solace and revelation on the Holy Mountain through the musical resonances coming from the heavens.

As Adam (apparently not Eve) listened intently, each of the twelve hours of daytime was marked by ethereal and joyful melodies – the Liturgy of the Hours – resounding from the heavens into their humble abode, the Cave of Treasures. This music represented all the sounds of nature – the air, the waters, and the animals – and became a divine liturgy. At the first hour, Adam prostrated himself and begged the Creator’s mercy; at the next the angels replied, then the birds, the other living creatures, and the heavenly hosts in turn, until the twelfth hour when God bestowed His blessing. In this manner, with a new musical composition sounding each hour, Adam learned to measure the passage of time itself.

The twelve hours of the night were likewise filled with mysterious music, during which Adam’s prayers were heard with even greater clarity and answered with God’s illuminating

¹ This Prologue draws on translations of Armenian Apocrypha presented by Jean-Pierre Mahé (2018, 75–86) in his article “Musique et mystère dans les apocryphes et les liturgies du Caucase.”

grace – literally providing light in the dark cave. Adam and his third son Seth (still not Eve . . .) took care to learn these songs that they might pass them unto posterity.²

Meanwhile, the first son of Adam and Eve, Cain, had been banished from the mountain, having, with characteristically poor impulse control, killed his brother Abel. He and his followers had moved down to the plains, where from the depths of the earth, there arose yet another music – that of fallen angels and, apparently, inventors of demonic and chaotic instruments, such as cymbals, drums, and pipes. *Naturally*, Cain was immediately taken by these new and tumultuous sounds and spent his days and nights in merrymaking with the demons and lustful women of the underworld.

Eventually, this cacophonous music, or diabolical symphony, made it up the Holy Mountain; the pure music representing God’s grace, the harmony of creation, and the integrity of society was corrupted by false notes and sounds. This dissonance did not belong on the idyllic Holy Mountain, yet overtook the harmonious music of the heavens, corrupting Seth’s descendants as well and, by extension, *causing the downfall of all of humanity!*

All? Well, not quite. . . Eight held out on the mountain, clearly blessed with better musical taste: a wise man named Noah and his kin – among them, happily, a master shipbuilder.

Note on the Prologue

The choice to open this dissertation with ancient Armenian apocryphal sources is intentional. Rather than beginning with Indigenous cosmologies, sacred stories, or ceremonial knowledge from Turtle Island – materials to which I do not belong and which have too often been extracted, translated, catalogued, and over-researched by non-Indigenous scholars – I begin from an archive to which I am historically and culturally accountable.

² The apocryphal sources do not appear troubled by Eve’s absence from this divine pedagogy of music, a silence that I suggest resonates with later gendered exclusions.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

In this section, I outline the thought processes that led to the development of the research question. I begin with a “seed” question that quickly germinates and spreads its roots into various areas of interest and disciplinary arenas. This micro-question is considered within the broader macro-narratives, ultimately converging back to the central question: Can Indigenous musics³ unsettle colonial logic and, in doing so, strengthen compliance by States Parties with human rights obligations while meaningfully informing and advancing the decolonial project?

1.1.1 ‘This Can’t Be Right’

Why have my daughters, both born and raised on Tiohtià:ke lands – now known as Montreal – never been taught anything of substance about the cultures of local Indigenous Peoples in school?⁴ Or put in a musical context: Why “Frère Jacques” and not the Kanien’kehá:ka “Water Song”?⁵ This basic “This can’t be right!” moment has guided me along a path of

³ The plural form of music is used throughout the study to emphasize the many hundreds of distinct Indigenous Peoples and their musics on the lands known today as Canada.

⁴ “Indigenous” and “Indigenous Peoples” hereafter are capitalized in compliance with Younging (2018, 20) – unless not capitalized in the direct quotes utilized. Furthermore, “settler Canadians” hereafter denotes citizens of Canada who are not First Nations, Inuit, or Métis. “Canadians” (without the “settler” attributive noun) is used only when paraphrasing or quoting other sources. Finally, in this dissertation, I indicate the Indigenous identities of individuals I cite to underscore the importance of centring Indigenous voices on Indigenous lands.

⁵ The Kanien’kehá:ka (Ga-niyen-ge-HAA-ga) are the Indigenous People of the region in what is now called Montreal. The Water Song can be heard at <https://youtu.be/9MvNaFWcQf4?si=X8L87EmL6R09G-Am>.

interdisciplinary⁶ examination and discovery – one I have come to perceive through a prismatic lens that naturally reveals multiple layers collectively forming the foundations of my research.

As I began probing the possible reasons behind this conundrum, I quickly found myself in several disciplines that unfolded “naturally” or “rhizomatically”⁷ for examination. Through the discourses on the harms of colonization (see “Definitions”), lack of Indigenous rights, onto-epistemic repression, cultural genocide, and ultimately genocide in Canada, I was not only confronted with these injustices but also began to uncover possibilities for change through major paradigm shifts – alternatives to present-day ways of being and knowing (or onto-epistemologies).

Here I encountered Indigenous intellectuals and theorists presenting Indigenous ways of knowing; scholars from the global South advocating for global decolonial futures; United Nations bodies promoting mainly Western liberal ideals of global citizenship, human rights, and social justice; and UN rapporteurs and experts offering pathways to realize these ideals. In these sources, I also noted much discussion on cultural revitalization as an important element through which one could (re)discover these suppressed Indigenous worldviews – worldviews of lands that could very well have been known as Turtle Island and Abya Yala.⁸

⁶ On my interpretation of interdisciplinarity, please see Chapter 2 (Frameworks and Methodologies) of this dissertation.

⁷ I develop and explain my interpretation (or variation) of the concept of rhizomatic thinking in Chapter 2 (Frameworks and Methodologies).

⁸ Using these terms (in lieu of North and South America) honours Indigenous Peoples and highlights the presumptuousness of naming their lands after an Italian navigator in the service of a Spanish king. Though not necessarily recognized in Western academia or normative law, these terms are commonly accepted by Indigenous Peoples and their allies. See Hessler (2008).

Therefore, to find a possible answer to this “This can’t be right” moment, I was inclined to explore how music, as a cultural revitalization mechanism, could help advance the process of decolonization in colonial states, such as what is now Canada.⁹ Could re-sounding and earwitnessing (Schafer [1977] 1994, 8–9, 272; Ouzounian 2023, 170) Indigenous soundscapes recentre the landscape *as* Indigenous and help undo the continuing imperial fantasy of “civilizing” *terra nullius* – or in this case, perhaps *sonus nullius* – with songs such as “Frère Jacques,” “Greensleeves,” and “God Save the King”? Could this suppression of the aural testimony of Indigenous presence be an aspect of genocide that can be undone? Who would benefit from this? What power could music even have to re-imagine the core values, cultural sensibilities, and ethical ideals of the individual and society? Certainly – and eerily – the administrators of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools understood this power: Indigenous musics were banned, along with any cultural elements that connected Indigenous children to their identity (Robinson 2020, 40; Powell and Peristerakis 2014, 79; Dolloff 2020, 138).

1.1.2 Comfortable Colonial Innocence and Reconciliation Narratives

This inquiry into music’s role in decolonization is inseparable from the broader discussion of the colonial structures of the settler state that seem to maintain systemic ignorance among its settler populations. Historical evidence demonstrates that to impose a Eurocentric–heteronormative–patriarchal view of the world, coloniality (see “Definitions”) relegated Indigenous perspectives to the margins, disqualifying their proponents as incapable of contributing to human progress,

⁹ Using the formulation “what is now Canada” helps expose the power dynamics and racism at play via the arbitrary renaming and reframing of Indigenous lands without consent (see Younging 2018, 20). Though I henceforth use “Canada” for efficiency, it is crucial to approach this dissertation with a healthy dislocated perspective – one that unsettles assumptions, embraces discomfort, and resists colonial framing.

thereby falsely legitimizing their enslavement for imperial gain (Said 1994, 106; Mignolo 2011, 87; Bradley 2012, 418; Razack 2002, 2–3; Battiste and Henderson 2024, 11, 17–18; Denetdale 2017, 72; Grovogui 1996, 5; 2006, 39–42).

Today, despite widespread calls for social justice and reconciliation to counter the enterprise of colonialism, most Indigenous studies scholars, decolonial theorists, human rights activists and researchers, and Indigenous and decolonial musicologists agree that Canadian policies continue to marginalize millennia of histories, cultures, ways of knowing, ways of being, and the musics of Indigenous Peoples (Coulthard 2014; Gaudry and Lorenz 2018; Forcione et al. 2023; Robinson 2020; Rakena et al. 2024). As author Thomas King¹⁰ (2013, 61) has found, contemporary views of Indigenous Peoples have not changed much over the centuries of colonial domination – Indigenous Peoples continue to be largely isolated, invisibilized, ignored, displaced, and forgotten.

The ongoing and pervasive neglect of Indigenous onto-epistemologies, along with the persistent erasures that accompany it, perpetuates systemic settler power structures and dynamics that are still deeply tainted with racist colonial rhetoric and attitudes (Donald 2012; Battiste 2013; Coulthard 2014; MMIWG 2019c). These dynamics reinforce the invisibilizing of Indigenous worldviews under the guise of colonial and European claims to “modernity” – a façade for presumed superiority and progress (Mignolo [2000] 2012, xvi; 2011, 214; Battiste 2013, 29).

¹⁰ Author Thomas King long self-identified as having Cherokee, Greek, and German ancestry. In November 2025, he disclosed that he had been misinformed about aspects of his ancestry and reported that he does not, in fact, have Indigenous ancestry. Nonetheless, he has written eloquently and persuasively on Indigenous matters. In keeping with the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and Indigenous protocols, Indigenous Peoples must be able to speak for themselves and determine – on a community-by-community basis – who speaks and which ideas represent their voices.

In her monograph *Looking White People in the Eye*, feminist critical race scholar Sherene Razack (1998) describes this “new” racist colonial rhetoric as the “culturalization of racism” (60), which discreetly replaces racism that was previously premised on “biologically based inferiority” (60).¹¹ Through concepts like multiculturalism and pluralism, white people remain comfortably in denial and innocence – believing that stereotypes belong to the past and that merely acknowledging the “other” is sufficient to eliminate racism and systemic inequities (Razack 1998, 10).¹² In her monograph *Unsettling the Settler Within*, former research director of the TRC and scholar Paulette Regan (2010) explores this further. She asks: “What does the persistence of such invisibility in the face of the living presence of survivors tell us about our relationship with Indigenous peoples?” (6). Regan (2010) highlights that without grappling with these difficult questions in our own truth-telling and developing a deep appreciation of the experiences of the victims, true reconciliation remains elusive.

These concerns are echoed in the ongoing and lively debate over the actual meaning of reconciliation, particularly within the context of ethical and power relations between settler Canadians and Indigenous Peoples. Member of the We Wai Kai Nation, former Canadian Minister of Justice and Attorney General, lawyer, and scholar, Jody Wilson-Raybould (2022) delves into the meaning of reconciliation in her book *True Reconciliation: How to Be a Force for Change*. She writes:

¹¹ Coulthard (2014) points out that Fanon’s “cultural racism” (146), where people’s ways of life rather than supposedly biological characteristics become the target of racism, anticipates what contemporary critical race scholars call the “culturalization of racism” (146).

¹² In the Canadian context, “other” can include Indigenous Peoples, racialized minorities, and individuals marginalized by abilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

Does one reconcile with one's oppressor? Does one reconcile when there has never been a proper relationship? Yes, we need justice. Yes, we need our rights upheld. Yes, we need #landback. Yes, we need fairness and equity. But reconciliation? With who? And why? And how? (4–5)

Perhaps a rebalancing of power dynamics could give more agency to all inhabitants – both Indigenous and settler – of colonized lands in disentangling themselves from what many consider and critique as the racist colonial domination of onto-epistemologies embedded in Canadian policies and in the very foundations sustaining the architectures of the settler state.¹³

1.1.3 Settler Quagmires Toward Genocide Recognition

Several scholars contend that meaningful change and the reorientation of settler Canadian identity toward a more progressive and accountable future require transformative strategies along with affirmative and compensatory approaches (Donald 2012; Maynard and Simpson 2022; Starblanket 2018; Coulthard 2014, 14; Styres 2019; Daigle 2019). While Canada's response is far from sufficient and long overdue, it has at least demonstrated a willingness to examine and apologize for its treatment of Indigenous Peoples (Harper 2008) – a stark contrast, for example, to the Turkish state's continued denial of the Armenian genocide, which greatly shapes my perspective on these matters.¹⁴

Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology to the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools program was a milestone decision in the official reckoning of Canada's past as a state that had the goal to "remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions, and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These

¹³ In the main body of this study, I elaborate on this notion via the work of several scholars.

¹⁴ More on my positionality in Chapter 3 of this study.

objectives assumed that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal” (Harper 2008).

Although these formulations remain non-binding in the sense of international or national law, they nevertheless reveal a gradual progression in how Canada officially recognizes colonial violence. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)¹⁵ described this history through the terms “injustice” and “subversion” (RCAP 1996, 1:578), as well as “harshly assimilative policies” (RCAP 1996, 1:564). By 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) described Canada’s residential school policy as one that “can best be described as ‘cultural genocide’” (TRC 2015, 5), defining cultural genocide as “the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group” (5). In 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in its supplementary report *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, concluded that the violence “amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples” (MMIWG 2019a, 1). This progression is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Indeed, based on the findings of MMIWG, it is this continued structural violence in Canada that is causing continued genocide of Indigenous Peoples, particularly women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA individuals (MMIWG 2019c, 27). Of particular significance is that Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, publicly accepted the MMIWG finding that Canada’s treatment of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls amounted to genocide (The Canadian Press 2019). Furthermore, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Canadian Museum for Human Rights 2019, 33) – the first museum in the world exclusively focused on the

¹⁵ Battiste (2013) rightfully critiques that the RCAP – whose third volume is titled *Gathering Strength* – has “gathered more dust than strength, as the government of Canada has done little to acknowledge its contents or its value” (26).

development, acknowledgement, and advancement of human rights – after some initial reticence, has officially recognized that the colonial experience in Canada, from first contact to the present, constitutes genocide against Indigenous Peoples.

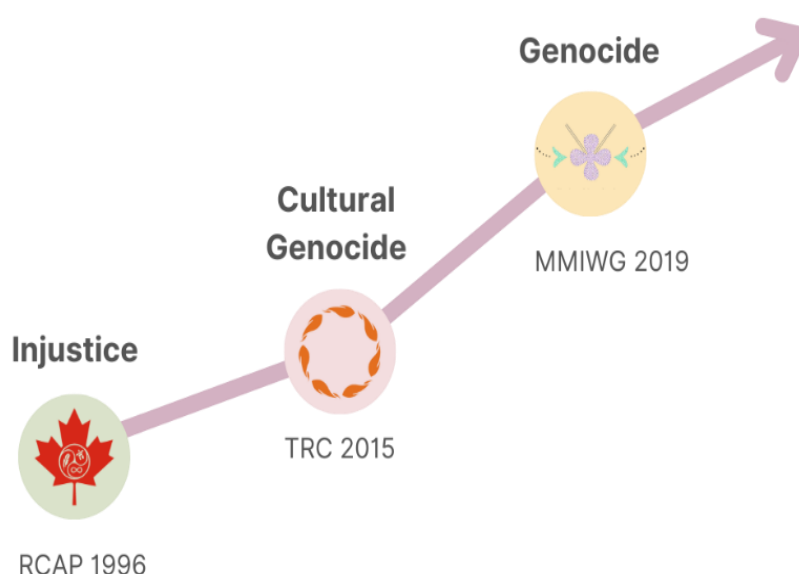


Figure 1.1 Progression of non-binding acknowledgements of the gravity of Canada's crimes against Indigenous Peoples

Although these are important first steps, efforts to shine a light on the injustices of the past and present and to offer financial compensation have not led to substantial changes in settler Canadian behaviour (MMIWG 2019c). Looking at the colonizer's motives, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that the “desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore” (9). The pattern of inaction has yet to be broken.

The Yellowhead Institute's *Calls to Action Accountability: A 2023 Status Update on Reconciliation* report, authored by Jewell and Mosby (2023), underscores the widening gap between the promise of reconciliation and its actual outcomes, describing a “deep chasm

between the two” (5). Similarly, the Assembly of First Nations 2023 “TRC Report Card” confirms that while some Calls to Action show moderate progress (including, for example, *Indigenous Child Welfare, Health, Education, Language and Culture*, and *Youth Programs*), or even significant movement (*Museums & Archives; Training of Public Servants; Media & Reconciliation; Sports & Reconciliation*), several key areas still show little progress (such as *Justice*, and *Business and Reconciliation*), including, importantly for this dissertation, *Education for Reconciliation* (Calls to Action 62 to 65).¹⁶

Exhibitions of regret and other settler-designed reconciliatory “performance” moves do not change the fundamental structural violence that is built into the architectures of the settler state and have effectively become Canada’s substitute for taking meaningful action (King 2013, 172; Coulthard 2014, 127; McKenzie 2021, 3; Wilson-Raybould 2022, 292–294; Grande [2004] 2015, 5). In fact, such actions generally provide false positives of accomplishment and innocence for settler Canadians (Nxumalo and Tuck 2023, 140; Robinson 2020, 6). Member of Gitksan First Nation, activist and scholar Cindy Blackstock (2018) describes this pointedly: “governments repeatedly say sorry and pay out settlements, but fundamentally repeat the same colonial patterns of thinking and acting that it did in the past” (17).

Hence, as outlined in MMIWG: “nothing less than a new and decolonized social order [is needed]; it is an opportunity to transform and to rebuild in real partnership with Indigenous Peoples” (MMIWG 2019c, 1a:6). For such change to occur in the Canadian context, settler

¹⁶ These TRC calls to action include the following: “integrate Indigenous Knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms” (Call 62 ii, 121); “establish senior-level positions in government . . . dedicated to Aboriginal content in education” (Call 62 iv, 121); “building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect” (122); the “teacher-training needs” (Call 63 iii, 122) to realize these calls; and “establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation” (Call 65, 127).

Canadians may have to accept a sort of new temporality in the living space they now share with the original Indigenous Peoples of these lands – perhaps akin to what Peruvian scholar Aníbal Quijano (2002) described as a necessary “return of the future” (75).

A future that should have been.

An interesting notion, indeed.¹⁷

Addressing fellow Indigenous researchers and allies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith ([1999] 2021), a Māori scholar of Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou descent, offers an argument that is also highly salient in the Canadian context, suggesting that the era of reports, inquiries, and other “deficit paradigms” (xxi) has essentially become diversionary politics, co-opting and undermining decolonial efforts. Similarly, Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard (2014, 121–123) observes that most of these reports and commissions are missing the point: colonialism continues and is the core problem to be addressed in solving socio-economic difficulties for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Most telling is Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2009 G20 summit statement, a little over a year after his apology, claiming that Canadians “have no history of colonialism” (King 2013, 124). This revisionist narrative of Canadian history exemplifies Canada’s core stance of wishing to overcome and forget “the subsequent *legacy* of past abuse, not the abusive colonial structure itself” (Coulthard 2014, 109, italicized in original). Harper’s cognitive dissonance exemplifies the widespread collective denial and “congratulatory narratives” (Schaepli and Godlewska 2019, 225) espoused by Canadian society.

¹⁷ For clarity on my interpretation of “return of the future,” please see “Definitions” section of this dissertation.

The question arises then: Does this collective amnesia – and the denialist attitudes within Canadian society and its supporting state organs – undermine or infringe upon Canada’s obligations as a human rights duty-bearer toward rights-holders?

Canada seems to be in a quagmire.

1.1.4 A Violation of Human Rights?

The continued invisibilizing of Indigenous onto-epistemologies and the refusal to acknowledge the depth and persistence of injustice and genocide toward Indigenous Peoples place Canada in a precarious position regarding its human rights obligations toward the populations it purports to serve. Quechua scholar Sandy Grande ([2004] 2015) even asks: “Can democracy be built upon the bloody soils of genocide?” (31).

The UDHR affirms that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (art. 1) – the CRC, ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD, CRPD, and CEDAW make it the law of the land in Canada. For example, the ICESCR states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (art. 13(1)).

As Argentinian scholar Walter Mignolo (2011) posits: “‘rights’ are attributed to us by someone who has the right to attribute rights; dignity cannot be attributed” (201). To ensure that this enshrined dignity of all veritably takes flight – as opposed to remaining only in legal documents and in the realm of the aspirational – it takes recognition, accountability, and action on the part of Canadian society through its state institutions.

In Canada, Indigenous children are wronged by a system that denies their rightful place on these lands and ignores their onto-epistemologies in the national narratives. At the same time, I

have argued that settler Canadian children are also wronged – by inheriting and unwittingly bearing a system built on the continued instrumentalization of colonial ideologies that dehumanize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples (Armenian 2025). The resulting transfer of intergenerational trauma to Indigenous youth, alongside the shifting of burden and moral weight onto settler Canadian youth via their entanglement in this ongoing trauma and genocide, violates the fundamental dignity of both groups – each in distinct yet profoundly consequential ways (Armenian 2025). Perhaps ensuring the dignity of all on these lands – “to position dignity as a foundation of human existence” (Shultz 2012, 39) – could be a path toward social justice and a way out of these quagmires.

I also build on this argument by acknowledging the child’s rights to receive quality education and have agency in their development, as mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989), to which Canada has been a State Party since 1991. Invisibilizing Indigenous cultures, denying historical truths, and transferring colonial racism to CRC rights-holders go fundamentally against any standards of what quality education should be and, again, do not empower Indigenous and Canadian children to build a better future for themselves on these lands. Battiste and Henderson (2024) powerfully state: “Together this honour and respect will lift our cultures into a fair global order and into the new and higher level of civilization the world needs. We cannot afford not to do it” (18).

Furthermore, I posit that the resulting denialist regime in Canada is a precarious position for any state to find itself in. As history has repeatedly shown, unchecked dehumanization – whether of Armenians in Turkey or Azerbaijan, Jews in Nazi Germany, Indigenous Peoples in the Americas, or Tutsis in Rwanda – too often leads to genocidal acts (Stanton 2023; Haslam 2020, 119; Sahakyan 2023, 864).

As a concerned parent, I naturally wonder: What values and sense of character are instilled in an individual by a state that erases – or turns a blind eye to – its own (back)history? What identities and worldviews are being transmitted across generations if they are tainted with colonial genocide and veiled racist dialectics that render invisible Indigenous presence (Abdi 2012; Battiste 2013, 30)? Is this misrepresentation or erasure of Indigenous worldviews leading to a “false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor 1994, 25) for both Indigenous and settler Canadian children?

Recognizing these injustices inherent in colonialism would seem essential not only for meeting Canada’s human rights obligations and advancing meaningful reconciliation and healing but also for undoing some of the ravages wrought by cultural genocide. Such recognition could lead to a critical first step toward what Indigenous activists and their allies consider the ethical imperative guiding decolonial justice – Indigenous resurgence and the return of stolen land (Tuck and Yang 2012).

1.1.5 A Gap in Scholarship

The depth of ongoing structural violence against Indigenous Peoples is well established in Canada (RCAP, TRC, MMIWG). What remains far less explored in the conversations and literature are the effects that the ongoing invisibilizing of Indigenous cultures may be having on settler Canadian youths – such as my daughters – and the broader settler Canadian public, particularly in terms of their sense of self-respect, dignity, ethical awareness, and the burden of inherited complicity.

While existing scholarship tends to treat human rights law, Indigenous resurgence, and musical practice as adjacent but largely separate domains, this dissertation brings them into

relation. Human rights law is often framed in terms of state compliance, Indigenous protocol in terms of self-determination and resurgence, and music in cultural or aesthetic terms. I therefore bring these areas into the same analysis and ask what each contributes, both theoretically and in practice.

Children develop ideas about race at an early age, including dangerously entrenched notions such as white superiority and the normalization of white privilege (DiAngelo 2018, 47). A critical question emerges: Are settler children inadvertently participating in the continued imperial and racist project of invisibilizing Indigenous presence – inherent to the “logic of elimination”¹⁸ in settler colonialism? Murray Sinclair (2021) argues that non-Indigenous people passing through Canada’s public school system “have been taught essentially a white supremacist belief system which is that they are better than us. And we have a lot of work to do to change that” (para. 3).

Forcione et al. (2023) show that this colonial project is reinforced by the geographical ignorance embedded in the Canadian curriculum, which leads settler Canadians “to understand themselves as inextricably linked and responsible to Indigenous Peoples” (1). By geographical ignorance, they mean teaching geography without real histories and presenting those geographies as neutral, abstract spaces, thereby preventing students from seeing land in more sophisticated, profound, and relational ways. In practice, this reduces Indigenous geographies to reserves and erases historical and contemporary Indigenous presence and voices – including musics – elsewhere.

¹⁸ More on the concept of colonialism’s “logic of elimination” in Andrew Woolford (2014) and Patrick Wolfe (1994).

This raises further inquiry about what this “feel-good history for whites” (Loewen [1995] 2018, 131) teaches settler Canadian children about their privilege and how that privilege shapes their worldviews. It then becomes important to consider whether this *blissful* ignorance – vis-à-vis the disastrous effects colonialism had, and continues to have, on Indigenous cultures and musics – is a symptom of white settler privilege that perpetuates the notion that the cultures of Indigenous Peoples belong to the past and are irrelevant in the present.

1.1.6 Music as a Tool for Degenociding and Advancing Human Rights

Tuck and Yang (2012) warn that “critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism” (19). The oft-used damage-centred theory of change¹⁹ applied to Indigenous Peoples – which exposes the harms and ensuing traumas of genocide and the short-lived empathy it often provokes – fails to produce substantive change in power dynamics that sustain colonial systems and structures. It neither contributes meaningfully to bettering the lives of Indigenous Peoples, nor does it support Indigenous resurgence (Nxumalo and Tuck 2023, 140).

Then what will? Could a deeper understanding of Indigenous onto-epistemologies lead settler Canadians up a path toward clarity on what many consider the “odious scourge”²⁰ of the colonial project on these lands? In the same vein, what role, if any, could Indigenous musics – and the onto-epistemologies they hold – have in helping settler Canadians understand

¹⁹ Theory of change is discussed in Nxumalo and Tuck (2023, 140).

²⁰ The descriptive “odious scourge” is used in the opening paragraph of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948a). Also see Schabas (2006) on the evolving definition of genocide to include “compromise[ing] of the survival of a group, such as forced displacements, even when there are doubts about the intent to physically exterminate the group” (102).

colonialism, and even perhaps take measures to counter it? As it currently stands, decolonization efforts pale in comparison to the relentless and ongoing genocidal impacts of colonization. A new theory of change may be needed.

Could this new theory of change be what I call the “degenociding” process (Armenian 2025)? I have argued already that degenociding may lead to “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” (Armenian 2025, 105). I elaborate:

This ground-up (re)learning process, starting at a young age (K–12), is directed toward 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 toward 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. (Armenian 2025, 109)

Could this process express more clearly and emphatically the gravity of the problem and the type of action being taken – the undoing of cultural genocide? Could music contribute to reversing some of the damage of cultural genocide? And finally, could this experience offer a more edifying, dignified, and higher quality education for Indigenous and settler Canadian children, as required by the CRC and the plethora of other non-binding yet rights-affirming declarations, principles, policy documents, technical notes, reports, and resolutions (UDHR 1948b; UNDRIP 2007; TRC 2015; UNESCO 2022, 2023)?²¹

²¹ For examples, see UNDRIP 2007: art. 15, 1 & 2; UNESCO (2022) Technical note *New Understandings of Education's Contributions to Peace*, ED/PSD/GCP/2022/04; UNESCO (2023) *Reconciliation Through Global Citizenship Education: Programme Paper*, ED/PSD/GCP/2023/07. This will be further examined and analyzed later in the dissertation.

In response to these questions, I will argue that – within a Human Rights Based Approach – music can operate as a normative and practical site where legal obligations align with Indigenous-defined mechanisms of repair to guide settler ethical duties of responsibility and repair and can become one among several modes of structural redress enacted through decolonizing praxis.

This dissertation will explore the possibility of settler Canadians moving beyond merely expressing regret and toward accountable practices of responsibility and repair. Writing from within that category, I will consider how settler Canadians might, perhaps, rewind the “colonial tape” and press a new “play button” of sorts, one that, in the name of future reconciliation and the realization by the Canadian state of its rights obligations, allows Canadian children to hear the distinct Indigenous voices and soundscapes, normatively grounded in the largely unceded lands on which they live.

1.2 Research Objectives

The overarching themes of this dissertation concern two main areas: first, examining how Canada’s entanglement in a racist colonial web – imposed through maintaining Eurocentric onto-epistemologies – affects the human rights of its present and future generations; and second, exploring possible music-based actions to help break this cycle.

It must be stated clearly at the outset that the objective of this dissertation is not to conduct research *about* Indigenous Peoples – or as Kovach (2005) states, to contribute to white people researching Indigenous communities “to death” (32). This same ethical concern informs my decision to open the Prologue with ancient Armenian sources rather than Indigenous Turtle Island sources. By beginning from an archive to which I am historically and culturally

accountable, I avoid turning Indigenous cosmologies, sacred stories, or ceremonial knowledge into illustrative material for my own argument. Garneau (2016) describes this “white, colonial, professional privilege” (23) as follows:

The colonial attitude is characterized not only by scopophilia, a drive to look, but also by an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit. The attitude assumes that everything should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage. The academic branch of the enterprise collects and analyzes the experiences and things of others; it transforms story into text and objects-in-relation into artifacts to be catalogued and stored or displayed. (23)

In keeping with this critique, the focus of this dissertation remains on the power of music to generate change, settler responsibility regarding colonialism, and Canada’s human rights obligations.

In this sense, this research focuses on the settler Canadians and – as I argue, when viewed through the prismatic lens of Indigenous paradigms and human rights responsibilities – their obligations to undo some of the enduring impacts of genocide. Furthermore, this dissertation is not about Indigenous musics from a musicological or historical perspective. Music here is suggested as a mechanism that could help accomplish some of these forms of responsibility and reorientation by functioning as a literal sounding signal for change. Accordingly, I am not simply saying that “music changes people,” but asking how it does so under specific relational conditions, and why that matters legally and politically.

The late Murray Sinclair’s words, addressed to non-Indigenous people, help inform this approach and direction, namely the importance of non-extractivist research objectives:

One of the things I make sure non-Indigenous people understand is we don’t need you to help heal us, we need you to fix yourselves. We need you to get those people out there who are perpetrating this process of working against reconciliation under control. *We need you to straighten yourselves out*, we don’t need you to just step forward and say well here is what we can do for you because my question is always, what are you doing for yourself? What are you doing to get rid of that violent vocal force that is holding us all back, holding us all, holding this

country back? Because that is what's going to stop reconciliation. (Sinclair 2021, quoted in Wilson-Raybould 2022, 237; emphasis added)

Therefore, my objective with this dissertation is indeed not to impose any supposed solutions on Indigenous Peoples but rather to contribute to the broader – and, I argue, the necessary – work of settler responsibility and accountability toward decolonial futures. To that end, this dissertation seeks to synthesize recommendations and obligations from various progressive sources – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, ranging from individual advocates and scholars to international bodies, such as the UN – all of which challenge the status quo of continued colonial impositions on Indigenous lands, in order to identify common messaging within narratives about what decolonial futures might entail.

By engaging through critical analysis with this kaleidoscope of discourses, I explore points of convergence, particularly in relation to the possibilities the arts – and ultimately Indigenous musics – may offer in shaping the envisioned futurities of an emerging “new and decolonized social order” (MMIWG 2019c, 1a:6) in Canada.

In summary, by assembling clear mechanisms from various areas (human rights law and state obligations, Indigenous protocol and requests regarding nation-to-nation relationality, settler ethical responsibility as a moral–political obligation, and finally, music’s transformative capacity through affective and identity-altering mechanisms), this dissertation seeks to develop the conceptual innovation of degenociding as a synthesis of those mechanisms into a coherent normative and practical framework and to propose evaluative criteria for assessing degenociding praxis.

This analysis also asks not only whether such transformations are desirable and who stands to benefit but also whether they can and should be understood as obligations of the duty-bearing

state. For settler Canadians, responding to the Canadian genocide of Indigenous Peoples through compelling and dignified action – grounded in prominent Indigenous, social justice, and decolonial voices, as well as current UN human rights instruments that are designed to protect both Indigenous and settler Canadian children and their communities – may open a pathway toward a more invested and transformative society-building project.

Central to this inquiry is examining how, and under what conditions, engaging with Indigenous musics – as interpreted and given meaning by Indigenous culture bearers – can act as a transformative practice for reshaping settler subjectivities and behaviours. In this sense, music becomes not only a performative act but a medium to open pathways of reconciliation and to cultivate a deeper respect for, and understanding of, the land on which we live and the onto-epistemologies it has generated over millennia.

Finally, this dissertation seeks to model practices that may prove instructive in a broader global context, as many colonial societies display similar – and in some cases near-identical – genocide-resultant realities. To name only a few, the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, and Scandinavian countries enacted a range of overlapping policies that produced these outcomes. These included, in different combinations and degrees, cultural-genocidal measures such as language bans, residential and boarding schools, child removals and forced adoptions, prohibition of ceremonies and cultural practices, renaming of regions and topographies, church-state assimilationist and forced-conversion curricula, pass systems and mobility controls, forced relocations and the creation of restrictive settlements, suppression of Indigenous governance and legal orders, and, in some cases, mass seizure of children (UNPFII 2009; Miłosz 2017).

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Theoretical Rationale

Building from the previous sections, I propose that engaging with Indigenous musics – especially through the practice of doing music, as a powerful social act – may help advance Indigenous–settler Canadian relationality, provided that the music is practised with the explicit approval and guidance of respective Indigenous communities. This rationale is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives.

Firstly, ethnomusicological and sociological theories explain that music is not simply an aesthetic sound-based narrative but a social practice that is deeply relational. Small (1998) frames this as “musicking” (9): a verb that depicts the activity of taking part in musical performances through performing, listening, rehearsing, composing, or dancing. Similarly, Frith (2008, 178) and DeNora (2000) argue that music plays a dual role of shaping and sounding identity – as DeNora indicates, music is a “technology of self” (46–74). Therefore, music has transformative and relational potential in the individual and society.

Secondly, Indigenous scholarship insists that music cannot be separated from law, governance, and history – music enacts these realities. Stó:lō artist, curator, and writer Dylan Robinson (2020, 46) describes Indigenous musics as self-determining and responsibility-bearing expressions, while Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017, 57) explains how Indigenous musics and stories represent the relational realities between humans and more-than-human worlds. In this sense, engaging with Indigenous musics under Indigenous approval and guidance can lead to onto-epistemic relationality with a specific land and its respective Indigenous People(s).

Finally, decolonial and human rights frameworks reinforce the importance of this engagement. Mignolo (2011) describes such practices as forms of “epistemic disobedience” (139) that unsettle colonial assumptions of knowledge hierarchies, while Tuck and Yang (2012, 35) warn of the reconciliatory acts that can often lead to assumptions of settler innocence if those acts are not grounded in Indigenous sovereignty and refusal. Within a Human Rights Based Approach, ensuring dignity requires the state to uphold transparency, empowerment, participation, and accountability as core obligations (UN 2006). Framing Indigenous musics as a practice that advances these principles situates them within this broader rights discourse. In essence, I argue that state human rights obligations, Indigenous-defined protocols and benefit requirements, and settler ethical duties of responsibility and repair are not parallel discourses but interlocking imperatives.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives support the rationale that engaging with Indigenous musics – when guided by Indigenous communities – can reshape settler subjectivities and behaviours. By cultivating a deeper awareness, empathy, understanding, and responsibility, music may become a medium through which settler Canadians move toward more just relations, while also fostering creative options to fulfill Canada’s human rights obligations. Music, when governed through Indigenous-defined terms of engagement and evaluated against human rights obligations, becomes more than representation or inclusion; it functions as a mechanism of relational restructuring.

1.3.2 Guiding Research Question

This dissertation begins from three premises: Canada has human rights obligations; colonization in Canada produced cultural genocide; and music has transformative power. The guiding research question is therefore: Can providing meaningful spaces for Indigenous musics and worldviews within Canadian society help shift settler Canadian understandings of Indigenous worldviews as the original ethos of these lands, nurture reconciliation, and advance the decolonial process? If so, how might these shifts contribute to degenociding Canada, as defined in this dissertation?

1.4 Significance of the Study

As it stands, Canadian society largely continues to privilege ignorance over understanding, exclusion over inclusion, and silence over dialogue. This is evident in its reluctance to confront its history of colonialism and cultural genocide, to make space for Indigenous worldviews and musics in public life, and to educate settler children about their responsibilities as guests on these lands.

This dissertation advances a concrete pathway for degenociding Canada by proposing that Indigenous musics – understood as living sonic soundscapes and knowledge-bearing mechanisms – can help develop reciprocal, non-extractivist relationships within education, policy, and Canadian public culture. By theorizing how musical encounters can shift settler identity from awareness to obligation, and by proposing evaluative criteria that distinguish degenociding praxis from performative reconciliation or extractive inclusion, this dissertation contributes a model through which musical practice can be assessed as a site of structural redress.

Conceptually, by bridging Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), we can demonstrate how maintaining a Eurocentric soundscape prolongs cultural genocide in Canada, whereas cultivating a sonic world grounded in millennia of distinct Indigenous experiences with sound and music contributes to undoing it. In HRBA terms, the latter also focuses the aims of education toward a rights-based argument about settler Canadian children and Canada's obligations to them. In doing so, it repositions music not as a cultural supplement to law but as a transformative domain through which legal obligation, ethical responsibility, and Indigenous resurgence can be materially enacted.

Methodologically, I aim to model and ground my research in an accountable way by centring Indigenous and Global South voices – voices that are powerful counter-narratives offered by the so-called border-thinking segments of society. My use of Deleuze–Guattari rhizomatic thinking provides a structure that allows for space to experiment, where strategies remain open-ended proposals rather than fixed conclusions. This approach, aligned with respecting Indigenous sovereignty over Indigenous onto-epistemologies, allows for a natural flow and intersection of ideas that are not bound by Western concepts of research that often insist on pinning down findings that are then to be taken as universal truths.

Empirically, this dissertation reaffirms that practising music with the approval and guidance of Indigenous communities supports Indigenous empowerment and resurgence, deepens settler understandings of Indigenous worldviews, and helps lay the foundations for equitable reconciliation grounded in the human rights standards of dignity and respect. In this sense, music can become a site where legal obligation and Indigenous-defined benefit converge, and where – through decolonizing praxis within an HRBA – musical practice can be assessed as structural redress rather than symbolic inclusion.

Finally, practically, this dissertation offers actionable criteria for education, arts-institutional, and governance frameworks to align with UN-recognized human rights standards, protecting both Indigenous and settler Canadian children in the process. In essence, this dissertation thus contributes a replicable, ethically grounded framework that others can adapt across various contexts, from music to sports to business.

Chapter 2 Frameworks and Methodologies

This dissertation explores the possibility of bringing together narrative sources that, while seemingly disparate – Indigenous onto-epistemic teachings, decolonial praxis, human rights discourses, and sound studies exploring music as a site of identity and memory – ultimately converge in a shared understanding: that the transformative power of the arts, particularly doing music, can help with the advancement of social justice goals. To build this knowledge, I employ what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as rhizomatic thinking – an approach that enables me to consider several juxtaposed research frameworks with their respective research methodologies without imposing a linear or hierarchical order.

2.1 A Rhizomatic Thinking Framework

2.1.1 Overview of Rhizomatic Thinking

Inherent to interdisciplinary work is an integrative orientation – building knowledge by bringing into relation ideas developed across distinct areas. I find that an effective approach for this type of discourse and inquiry is to combine the traditional literature review and analysis sections of a dissertation, enabling an efficient intersection and discussion of ideas and sources. This approach builds meaning and develops arguments in a layered, wave-like, and dynamic fashion, while drawing on multiple methodologies. The focus I employ here is the flexible use of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), in their seminal collaborative work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, describe as a rhizome-like approach to critical thinking and knowledge-making – rhizomatic thinking.

Rhizomatic thinking is a heuristic device that allows for a framework of analysis that resists hierarchical models – theory, critique, and creative inquiry are interwoven and sprout, much like the rhizome in nature, in relation to one another, rather than following an arborescent, tree-like, linear path. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that rhizomatic thinking “is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (7). Here, we favour assembling and connecting various notions in onto-epistemic chains – such as found in sound studies, Indigenous teachings, decolonial praxis, and human rights discourses – to build new assemblages representing the emergence of possible solidarities between the various narratives (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7).

2.1.2 Musical and Methodological Resources

Though each section or thematic zone may be seen as a Deleuze–Guattari plateau in its own right – as each is self-sufficient and intense – my aim is to generate resonance across disciplinary narratives. There is no transcendent truth, only the becoming of new possibilities – or as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state, the “seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority” (106). To this end, I aim to build new assemblages within and between frameworks that collectively produce a new plateau – one I term “degenociding” (see Figure 2.1); a term that will itself be defined and refined at each step of the way of this dissertation.

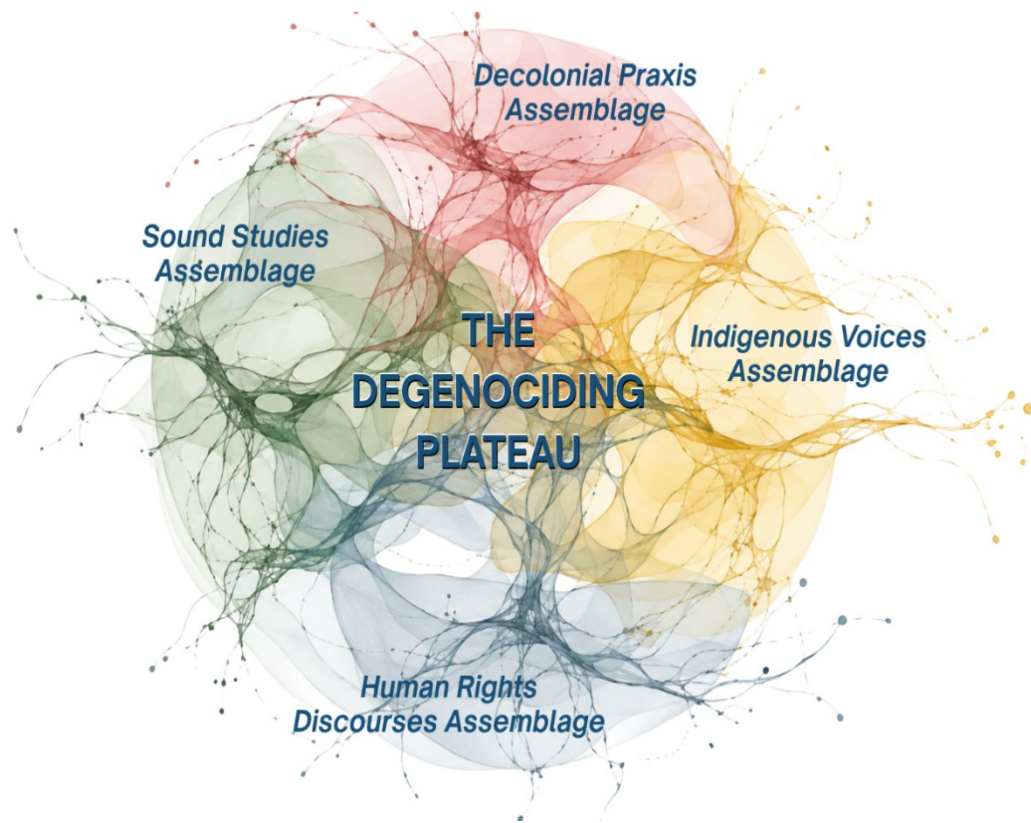


Figure 2.1 Conceptual diagram of the Degenociding Plateau as an emergent intersection of four interlocking assemblages – Human Rights Discourses, Indigenous Voices, Decolonial Praxis, and Sound Studies – where lines of flight and processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization braid heterogeneous elements into a provisional plateau.

This methodological framework is well suited for interdisciplinary work in general – and particularly when Indigenous theories are part of the discourse – as it is designed to bring different onto-epistemologies together, in a non-hierarchical manner, via individual lines of flight, leading toward new platforms of conversations, or plateaus: meeting places or convergences of ideas. These new meanings or concepts, assembled and emerging through multiple connections, remain actively open to a multiplicity of interpretations, transformations, and even, ultimately, rejections. The latter allows for each distinct Indigenous community to

decide when or if this proposed yet uncertain path toward reconciliation and redress is worth experimenting with.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) eloquently describe a plateau as “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (22). These open-ended, non-prescriptive, mindful, tentative, non-didactic, and sustained intensities are ideal for the work I am undertaking as they resonate with decolonizing and Indigenous research methodologies that privilege relationality and Indigenous self-determination in knowledge-making over the “‘pinning down’ . . . like the wings of butterflies” (Robinson 2020, 149) of highly subjective conclusions that are “derived from European-based interpretive frames” (Donald 2009, 311).

Andrea Smith (2014) replies to this Western demand to know with a “refusal to be known and the refusal to be infinitely knowable” (231), while Mignolo (2011) terms such resistance “acts of epistemic disobedience” (139): efforts to delink from the presumed universality and authority of Western epistemic norms while opening space for Indigenous and other ways of knowing on their own terms. Mignolo (2011) specifies that this decolonial thinking “presupposes delinking (epistemically and politically) from the web of imperial knowledge (theo- and ego-politically grounded), from disciplinary management” (143).

As demonstrated, both Indigenous and decolonial scholars advocate for Indigenous- or subaltern-centred methodological approaches for decolonization or reconciliation to be considered effective or genuine – rhizomatic thinking offers the researcher a compelling framework for addressing and advancing decolonial and decolonizing objectives.

The description of the plateau given by Deleuze and Guattari is also strikingly “musical” in its locution. The “resonant” conversations of music-making indeed reside in an open-ended and

in turn “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22), as each participant carries away a very personal and embodied understanding out of the experience – along with the innate dialogical nature and well-documented communal, relational, and identity-building benefits of music-making and listening (MacDonald 2017, v; Barrett 2017, 69; Vaugeois 2007, 167).

2.1.3 Analytical Components of the Rhizome Framework

It is useful here to unpack the analytical components of rhizomatic thinking, as it helps rationalize the reasoning behind the choice of voices I engage with in this dissertation. To reach these plateau intensities, Deleuze and Guattari explain that there is a conceptual, non-linear assemblage or equation that must be considered. They describe it as follows:

RHIZOMATICS = SCHIZOANALYSIS = STRATOANALYSIS = PRAGMATICS = MICROPOLITICS. These words are concepts, but concepts are lines, which is to say, number systems attached to a particular dimension of the multiplicities (strata, molecular chains, lines of flight or rupture, circles of convergence, etc.). (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22)

I employ this formulation in what I call *Rhizomatic Overtones*. These brief opening segments mirror Deleuze and Guattari’s equation, offering a cartographic prelude rather than a linear introduction. The goal here is to keep the thesis in motion and consistent with its decolonial and assemblage-based orientation.

I use the term “overtones” deliberately, drawing from the musical phenomenon in which every sounded note is accompanied by a spectrum of resonant frequencies – harmonics – that shape its timbre and depth (Green and Jones 2016, xvii–xviii). These overtones can often be subtle, barely audible, or even dissonant, yet they are what give sound its richness and distinctive character. In the same way, each *Rhizomatic Overtones* equation should be seen as part of a

conceptual “harmonic” series that represents the chapter’s central thematics, echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s equation and setting the inquiry in motion rather than fixing it in place.

I model this relationship as follows:

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* lines of becoming [ideas] branch, spread, and connect) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* deep-seated contradictions rupture systems and open new lines of flight, disrupting imagined stability and innocence) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* hardened layers of power and memory resist change) = PRAGMATICS (asks *what* practices and actions can be enacted to promote change) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* shifts in perception, relation, and practice reproduce or unsettle larger structures of power).

It is useful to remember that Deleuze and Guattari specify that the plateau is only the beginning of new possibilities, a platform from which new ideas and new actions, such as degenociding, can instigate new lines of flight. Together, these analytical components form a counterpoint of concepts that loop back into one another, creating emphasis, resonance, and constructive theorizing. Taken together, each term functions as a grid point marking a position – or tone – within its respective field, from which further resonances, harmonies, and/or dissonances emerge. This equation works well with the present interdisciplinary dissertation, as visualized in the following table.

Table 2.1 Rhizomatic Methodology Applied in This Dissertation

Concept	Description (Deleuze and Guattari 1987)	Example (Applied in This Dissertation)
Rhizomatics	The rhizome is acented and non-hierarchical, symbolizing the acceptance of overlapping and interconnected onto-epistemologies (17, 21).	Music, human rights, and Indigenous and decolonial theories are studied with the goal of identifying their interconnections rather than treating them as separate unrelated disciplines.

Schizoanalysis	Schizoanalysis rejects pretraced and hierarchical structures, treating the unconscious instead as an acentred, rhizomatic network. Rather than reducing or interpreting it according to a fixed tree model, it seeks to produce new statements and different desires (13, 18).	Human rights are taken outside their conventional legal and institutional frameworks and brought into relation with music and Indigenous resurgence, unsettling disciplinary boundaries and opening alternative lines of inquiry around dignity, agency, empathy, and humility.
Stratoanalysis	The social, political, linguistic, and historical layers of knowledge are revealed, examined, and contextualized (21).	Exposing the structures of the settler colonial state that maintain colonizer–colonized power dichotomies. For example, the imposition of the Eurocentric musical canon in education contexts.
Pragmatics	The effects, functions, uses, and consequences of the knowledge are considered (146–147).	Exploring how Indigenous musics could reshape identity and offer new approaches to reconciliation within the Canadian context.
Micropolitics	Knowledge is contextualized at a personal level and embodied through a political lens, with attention to power dynamics that influence its interpretation and even its very consideration (7, 213).	Examining how listening to Indigenous music, or bringing Indigenous worldviews into Eurocentric spaces (e.g., classical music concert halls), becomes a political act that either challenges colonial norms or creates false sensations of reconciliation.

2.1.4 Application to This Dissertation

It is through this process of rhizomatic exploration – where ideas were allowed to emerge, interconnect, and intensify – that the concept (or plateau) of degenociding sprouted (Armenian 2025). I understand degenociding as a Deleuze–Guattari plateau: an experimental space inspired by the assemblage of what I find to be harmonious narratives in, essentially, the fields of arts, human rights and Indigenous and decolonial theories.

The Deleuze–Guattari concept of the plateau, which develops without striving toward a fixed endpoint or predetermined conclusion, is foundational to my work as a settler Canadian. Any decolonial undertaking – such as the process of degenociding – must prioritize Indigenous empowerment as its central objective, without the settler presuming to impose a solution.

Analogous to the rhizome, which continually reconfigures its trajectories, degenociding operates as a “self-vibrating” mechanism (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22) that amplifies Indigenous voices and may be situated within diverse contextual frameworks – each determined by, and contingent upon the approval of, the respective Indigenous community.

2.2 Methodological Approaches

For the native, objectivity is always directed against him.

— Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

2.2.1 Where I Think: Centring Indigenous Voices

As discussed, this dissertation is fundamentally qualitative and literature-based in approach. However, I underscore Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous self-determination as essential guides to how degenociding might generate positive outcomes for both Indigenous Peoples and settler Canadians. As Kovach (2021) affirms: “methodologies form both a methodological and political project” (32). As a settler Canadian researcher prone to border thinking – partially due to my Armenian identity, as outlined in the Positionality section (see next chapter) – I consider it ethically inherent to ensure that an Indigenous research paradigm, grounded in the lands on which I conduct this research, guides both my methodological choices and my decisions in selecting which narratives to consider and examine.

The primary perspectives I engage with are Turtle Island Indigenous voices, since they are, evidently, the main voices calling for decolonization (the political) or decoloniality (the onto-epistemic) in Canada. They not only explain their dissatisfaction with Indigenous-settler relationships but give us insight INTO worldviews that belong to these lands. Indigenous voices explain what decolonization means to them and what is missing in the Canadian response – what

policies and actions work, and which ones do not. Indigenous voices also explain how they perceive cultural mechanisms as potential tools for meaningful change.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's [1999] 2021 monograph, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, provides a foundational critique of colonial research practices that have marginalized Indigenous onto-epistemologies. Although Smith's study of best practices in Indigenous-related topics is intended for Indigenous researchers, her insights shape my approach to the proposed decolonizing process by emphasizing that Indigenous voices must not only be prominent but also determinant in guiding how this process would – or could – be carried out. Smith ([1999] 2021, xx) posits that to somewhat undo the historical and continuing neglect of Indigenous onto-epistemologies it is essential for settler state actors to make space for Indigenous Peoples to articulate how Indigenous cultures, histories, and worldviews are represented in the shaping of policy and curricular content – thereby ensuring alignment with Indigenous priorities and upholding principles of Indigenous self-determination.

Smith ([1999] 2021) also reminds readers of the deeply problematic history of research on Indigenous topics conducted by non-Indigenous scholars. She writes:

From the vantage point of the colonized, . . . the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. (1)

This long-standing distrust is not unfounded; it stems from generations of research practices that have disempowered Indigenous voices while maintaining and advancing the colonial agenda (Reed et al. 2020, 34, 37; Ross-Tremblay 2019, 59). Indeed, colonial epistemic claims to objectivity – as highlighted in the Fanon (1963) epigraph at the top of this section (2.2) – have historically promoted Eurocentric interpretations of knowledge-making. As a result, Indigenous skepticism toward non-Indigenous research motives is, again, rightfully pervasive

(Sium and Ritskes 2013, iv). It is each Indigenous community's prerogative to decide whether, when, and under what circumstances trust may be (re)established (Smith [1999] 2021, 248; Laurence 2002, 24).

Without a substantive increase in settler commitment to decolonial futures, colonization continues – perhaps disguised in more conciliatory forms – but with the same relentless counterpoint of oppressive structures, onto-epistemic dominance, and the undermining of Indigenous agency and sovereignty (Smith [1999] 2021, xx). As a non-Indigenous researcher on Turtle Island, I cannot resolve the distrust that comes with research simply by declaring good intentions, humility, or care. I therefore treat this tension as a methodological constraint rather than as a problem to be overcome. My task is not to speak for Indigenous Peoples or to convert Indigenous knowledges into evidence for a settler argument but to examine how settler institutions, including law, education, and musical culture, can be made answerable to Indigenous authority, protocol, consent, reciprocity, and refusal. In this sense, humility is not an ethical credential I claim for myself; it is a practice of limitation, requiring attention to where my analysis must stop, where Indigenous voices remain self-determining and central (Reed et al. 2020, 37), and where the burden of transformation falls on settler Canada rather than on Indigenous Peoples.

Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001) similarly argues for a methodology that centres on relational accountability based on an axiology driven by the ethical commitment to decolonization and the betterment of relationships between settlers and Indigenous Peoples (177). In this dissertation, I do not engage directly with an Indigenous community, but I centre Indigenous authority with humility and purpose – the Indigenous community I ground my dissertation in comprises the extensive written and oral contributions of Indigenous scholars,

knowledge keepers, and artists. I treat each text not as a neutral “source” – as traditional academic research often (if not always) demands – but as a vibrant, anti-colonial expression of a living community of knowledge that powerfully guides and shapes my direction and analysis.

This is undertaken with respect for Indigenous Peoples and with humility in acknowledging the unearned privileges associated with whiteness. It is also guided by a personal, experientially informed, and moral imperative to contribute to decolonial action – explicitly aimed at countering centuries of extractive and destructive actions and research paradigms imposed since the arrival of Europeans on Turtle Island, where I live.

This dissertation, in essence, is *my* land acknowledgement.

2.2.2 Hybrid Methodologies for Interdisciplinary Inquiry

To examine how Indigenous musics might contribute to decolonizing Canada, I take guidance from Indigenous research frameworks, Indigenous research methodologies, and decolonial concepts of border-thinking, which often resonate with each other in meaningful and harmonious ways in their articulations.

Deleuze–Guattari rhizomatic thinking helps enable this relational approach guided by key considerations essential to research that engages with contemporary and lived realities of Indigenous Peoples. My goal is to explore and assemble (to use Deleuze–Guattari terminology) knowledge on how these domains understand the role of the arts in advancing the decolonial project, while also offering practical options for Canada’s fulfillment of its human rights obligations. In true rhizomatic fashion, voices in dissonance with the decolonial project – whether framed in self-assigned innocence or in sincere conciliatory and collaborative proposals – will offer useful insight into debates and challenges the decolonizing process may encounter.

2.2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis and Human Rights Based Approach

To interpret these interwoven concepts and build a robust interdisciplinary framework or assemblage, I apply a hybrid methodological approach that gathers insights from qualitative data in the literature through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Here, CDA examines how discourse produces, legitimizes, and contests relations of power, ideology, and institutional authority (Fairclough 2010). Fairclough (2010) explains the core purpose of CDA as “a form of critical social science geared to a better understanding of the nature and sources of social wrongs, the obstacles to addressing them and possible ways of overcoming those obstacles” (235). In this dissertation, CDA is therefore useful because it treats discourse as a site where power dynamics produce, normalize, resist, and potentially transform social meanings and institutional narratives. It also helps make visible the institutional processes through which these narratives either become accepted as “common sense” or are marginalized within dominant orders of discourse.

Because this dissertation examines both the invisibilizing of Indigenous onto-epistemologies and worldviews and the structural violence embedded in the architectures of the settler state, especially those organized through zero point epistemology (Mignolo 2011),²² CDA serves as an appropriate analytical tool. It allows me to uncover not only the discourse being produced around decolonization, decoloniality, and Indigenous resurgence but also the gaps between the language of rights, reconciliation, and recognition, on the one hand, and the persistence of colonial violence and cultural erasure, on the other. In this way, CDA helps

²² Reflecting on this broad concern of decolonial and Indigenous thinkers, Walter Mignolo (2011) asserts that “border thinking” and “border epistemology” (208) can offer a valuable response to the dominance of zero point epistemology. For “zero point epistemology,” see “Definitions” section.

identify important lacunas in the realization of the human rights obligations of the Canadian state.

To deepen this analysis, I also apply a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), using it as a baseline normative analytic lens to complement CDA. The HRBA allows me to assess state obligations and accountability in relation to specific rights. In doing so, I elaborate on key ethical considerations, particularly regarding how I ensure that my work avoids sustaining colonial dynamics. This dissertation instead aims to support Indigenous resurgent and empowered narratives and actions, while remaining attentive to non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion in the discourses I analyse and in the scholarly voices I centre.

To ensure that these objectives are upheld, I am guided by principles of the UN Common Understanding on the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA 2003), namely:

- a) **Transparency**, by explicitly stating my positionality and objectives
- b) **Empowerment**, by ensuring that research does not interfere with or undermine Indigenous resurgence
- c) **Participation**, by grounding my arguments in the scholarship and guidance of Indigenous thinkers
- d) **Accountability**, by ensuring that my research practices and conclusions do not cross any of these ethical commitments and by remaining open to Indigenous critique or refusal

Together, these commitments establish the methodological and ethical orientation of this dissertation.

2.2.4 Sources and Criteria for Analysis

The material for analysis is sourced from four key areas – decolonial praxis, Indigenous voices, sound studies, and human rights discourses – each offering rich and distinct narratives and analysis of decolonization. The rationale behind the selection of materials for CDA is their capacity to resonate with each other across disciplinary and onto-epistemic boundaries.

I theorize that by combining legal analysis, discourse critique, and musicological insights, this approach will highlight how Canada’s human rights obligations necessitate the creation of independent spaces for Indigenous worldviews in education, with music serving as a key catalyst for societal transformation. These understandings – drawn from scholarly discourses, policy documents, case studies, and human rights instruments – will contribute to the refinement of the framework of decolonizing through music and help weave a cohesive tapestry of knowledge that sheds light on the central research question.

Examples of sources to be examined through CDA include:

- a) **International binding and non-binding human rights instruments** (CRC, UNDRIP, and UNESCO documents²³).
- b) **Canadian-produced reports** such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 2015) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG 2019c).
- c) **Scholarly works** that cover decolonial theories, Indigenous resurgence, colonial studies, ethical engagement models, sound studies, and case studies on engagement with Indigenous musics in Canadian education and performance contexts.

²³ UNESCO produces several types of documents such as conventions, declarations, recommendations, reports, and policy briefs. I refer to the ensemble as “UNESCO documents.”

2.3 Scope and Delimitations

This dissertation is a literature-based, interdisciplinary philosophical inquiry. Its intervention is conceptual, analytical, and normative rather than empirical in the conventional social-scientific sense. I do not undertake interviews, ethnography, surveys, classroom interventions, or direct community-based fieldwork. Nor do I claim to speak for Indigenous Peoples, Nations, or communities. Rather, I synthesize and place in critical relation a broad range of scholarly, legal, policy, and artistic discourses as interlocking assemblages in order to ask what a degenociding framework might make visible, audible, thinkable, and finally actionable within the Canadian context.

The project is also delimited by its focus on what is now called Canada, and specifically on how settler Canadian society, Indigenous musics and worldviews, human rights obligations, and the ongoing afterlives of cultural genocide come into relation. Music is not examined here primarily as an autonomous aesthetic object, nor through technical musicological analysis for its own sake, but as a relational, pedagogical, ethical, and political medium through which identity, memory, obligation, and accountability may be reshaped.

2.4 Research Progression and Chapters Overview

While rhizomatic thinking resists rigid hierarchies and linear selectivity, it is by no means arbitrary or random in its construction. The assemblages and plateau produced in this dissertation are strategically constructed. The rhizome thus becomes a site for exploring possible decolonial transformation frameworks – a living structure for advancing the degenociding project, which in this dissertation finds resonance in Indigenous musics as rhizomatic assemblages that undo colonial binaries.

Shaped by these knowledges, the assemblages represent a Deleuze–Guattari becoming-space shaped by active and resonant constructions (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 189). Chapters 4 to 7 – titled *Decolonial Praxis*, *Indigenous Voices*, *Human Rights Discourses*, and *Sound Studies* respectively – bring together (or assemble) the interdisciplinary qualitative data that take flight toward building the proposed new plateau of degenociding. For clarity and structural coherence, the major assemblages and sub-assemblages that follow are introduced through “Rhizomatic Overtones” equations, and, where appropriate, “Functions and Effects” segments that explain what each assemblage does. Each subsection of these chapters outlines my methodological choices, presents the assembled material, and articulates conclusions grounded within the etymologies and discourses of the field.

In these chapter-assemblage constructions, I assemble and critically analyze qualitative data – examining academic works, as well as UN-based and Canadian-based human rights framework articulations – through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). By drawing on these themes, I examine how colonial structures persist, how denial impedes progress, and how epistemic and cultural shifts may contribute to undoing aspects of cultural genocide and advancing the Degenociding Plateau constructed through these theoretical, legal, and cultural assemblages.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I demonstrate – through an HRBA assessment and a decolonial best-practices framework – that the assembled insights from Chapters 4–7 can be operationalized to evaluate whether Canada is upholding its human rights obligations in concrete sites (notably K–12 and other public spheres) where Indigenous cultures, particularly musics, are presented.

Finally, Chapter 9 offers a set of tentative conclusions, reflecting on this dissertation's potential contributions to decolonial movements in Canada and to other parallel struggles for social justice.

But first, it is essential for the reader to know about the social construct that I represent – my positionality.

Chapter 3 Positionality

3.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “My Way”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* Armenian memory, settler location, musicking, and parenthood branch and interconnect as lines of becoming) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* genocide memory and decolonial study rupture innocence and produce responsibility as praxis) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* state narratives and institutional training sediment erasure and “fort logic”) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* guesthood practices – learning, re-tuning listening, and dignity-centred education – can contribute to degenociding work) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* these shifts occur – in family life, classrooms, and everyday encounters – as lived praxis).

3.2 Rhizomatic Fugues – Who is Thinking, and Where?

In this chapter, I use reflexivity to explore my personal and philosophical viewpoints, along with the motivations and inspirations behind this dissertation. I reflect on why I think, what I think, and where I think, grounded in the experiences and realities of being an Alberta-born, Armenian-Canadian musician; a father to two dynamic teenage daughters; a husband to a radiant Armenian woman; and, more recently, a dual citizen of Canada and Armenia. This intersectional identity – being part of both *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*, the former inhabiting the epistemic zero point, the site of supposed universal and objective knowledge; the latter situated in “the *exteriority* (the outside invented in the process of defining the inside)” (Mignolo 2011, 81; italics in original) – carries with it both potential biases and privileges that I acknowledge and seek to critically examine.

In contemporary social sciences and humanities research, it is now considered fundamental practice to provide clarity and transparency regarding the researcher’s positionality (Holmes 2020; Walter 2016, 98). The informed reader will inevitably ask: What are the cultural, social, and political identities of the researcher, and how do these inform the manner in which the

research is conducted? Smith ([1999] 2021, 193) emphasizes the importance of researchers – Indigenous or not – declaring their positionality from the outset, coupled with a critical reflection on how it influences the choice, reading, and interpretation of the research material. This kind of transparency is essential to building trust, particularly given a history of unethical social sciences research related to colonial histories as already discussed (Smith [1999] 2021, 193–194).

Essentially, Smith argues, Indigenous Peoples should not have to guess who the researcher is; both identity and agenda must be put out in the open (Smith [1999] 2021, 194).

Giving such deep thought and importance to positionality also challenges notions of a universality of knowledge and highlights the importance of seeing the world through multiple ways of knowing – a key element of decoloniality (Quijano 2007, 177). Mignolo’s (2011) notion of “I am where I do and think” (xvi), which “anchors new epistemic and ontological sites” (92), encapsulates the idea that knowledge creation is inherently tied to one’s positionality: where we live, work, build, and think shapes how we understand and interpret the world. The following sections explore this principle as it takes form through my lived experience – rhizomatically branching through my Armenian heritage, Canadian context, musical practice, and parenthood.

3.3 Dossier of (Un)certainities and a Rhizomatic Detour

So we are here in the weather, here in the singularity. Here there is disaster and possibility.

— Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

The more I study decolonization, Indigeneity, and the fate of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and beyond, the more it helps me determine how I see myself, as an Armenian, in this disordered world. This disorder – or “disaster,” as Sharpe states – I suggest is most deeply experienced by marginalized segments of society: minorities.

The great Armenian-American writer William Saroyan (1936) captured this sentiment in his portrayal of Armenians as “this small tribe of unimportant people, whose history is ended, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, and whose prayers are no longer uttered” (438). Growing up, that passage hung on a poster in our basement. For years, I believed this quote could only refer to my people, that we were the only tribe with such a tragic fate. Yet my life experience, together with this research on Indigenous realities, has led me to realize that we are many tribes engaged in the same struggle against imperialism, racism, colonialism, erasure, genocide, and genocide denial.

I have also come to recognize that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can serve as a critical platform for Armenians – particularly those from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) – who, having been fully displaced from their homes, continue to assert claims to self-determination, sovereignty, the right of return, and, ultimately, the right to exist on their own terms. This embodied knowledge as an Armenian has naturally brought me closer to understanding the plight of Indigenous Peoples in general but particularly those living within the boundaries of Canada – a community of diverse cultures and traditions working together to develop a stronger voice against their self-proclaimed Orwellian “Big Brother,” the nation-state.

I suggest that, as an ethnic Armenian, I am witness to both worlds: that of a people with a nation-state (Armenia), and that of ancestral lands that speak, sing, and tell stories in Armenian,

yet are today emptied of Armenians. The thousands of churches and *khachkars*²⁴ that converse with the mountains recall a time when vibrant Armenian communities lived, multiplied, and transmitted what Lemkin might call an Armenian “national pattern” through generations. This memory of dispossession is not equivalent to Indigenous experience in Canada, nor does it authorize me to claim Indigeneity as an identity. It is, however, not without value for clarifying my positionality vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples.

It creates a line of flight toward my understanding of the plight of Indigenous Peoples, particularly where land, language, memory, ceremony, and cultural continuity are attacked together. In relation to Indigenous identity, Bellier (2012, 62) explains that Indigeneity includes the right to self-identify, and that it is not up to Western science to decide who is or is not Indigenous. Similarly, Kanaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (2016, para. 13) affirms that Indigeneity is a sociocultural designation shaped by historical and political contexts, not defined by fixed or inherent biological traits. Nevertheless, I invoke these insights not to absorb myself into Indigenous identity but to clarify the limits and responsibilities of my relation to Indigenous struggles.

My connection to the suffering and fate of Indigenous Peoples is therefore not a claim of identity but a Deleuzian and Guattarian rhizomatic relation: an assemblage through which Armenian memory, dispossession, cultural survival, generational trauma, inherited grief, and the vibratory particles of resilience move within a broader plateau of Indigenous suffering and resurgence. It is not a point of arrival or equivalence but “a continuous, self-vibrating region of

²⁴ The Armenian khachkar, or “cross-stone,” is a carved memorial stele bearing a cross and intricate ornamental motifs. In 2010, “Armenian cross-stones art: Symbolism and craftsmanship of Khachkars” was inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2010).

intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22) through which proximity, affect, memory, and responsibility vibrate together.

Though Armenia exists as a nation-state, large portions of my ancestral lands have been emptied of Armenians over the last century and a half, including the most recent genocidal acts of the Azeri regime mentioned earlier. Beyond the planned genocides of 1895, 1915, and repeated campaigns of ethnic annihilation, Armenians continue to experience cultural genocide – paralleling, in significant ways, the ongoing cultural genocide faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In our case, of the more than 2,500 Armenian churches documented before the 1915 genocide, roughly 2 percent remain active in Turkey today (Balakian 2013, 63; Bardakci et al. 2017, 152). Similarly, of the 89 churches, 5,840 khachkars, and 22,000 tombstones photographed for posterity in 1987 in Nakhichevan – a region handed to Azerbaijan by Lenin and Stalin – not a single one remains (The Guardian 2019; Seppälä 2021, 201).

In mid-December 2005, observers filming from across the Iranian border documented Azerbaijani personnel smashing the remaining Jugha khachkars²⁵ with sledgehammers and pickaxes; fragments were hauled away on trucks and dumped into the Arax River (Pickman 2006; Seppälä 2021, 201). Subsequent high-resolution satellite analysis by the American Association for the Advancement of Science confirmed that the medieval cemetery had been demolished and the site leveled.²⁶ After international condemnation, including a European Parliament resolution (February 2006), nothing was done. Of note, Azerbaijani President Ilham

²⁵ Jugha (Ջուղա) is commonly anglicized as “Julfa.”

²⁶ See “*High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and the Destruction of Cultural Artifacts in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan*” report at: <https://www.aaas.org/resources/high-resolution-satellite-imagery-and-destruction-cultural-artifacts-nakhchivan-azerbaijan?>

Aliyev's wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, the present vice-president of Azerbaijan, was a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador at the time, and, in a sense, oversaw the final destruction during her tenure (UNESCO 2015; The Guardian 2019).

But why this rhizomatic detour into the tragedies of my Nation? The great Martinique-born anti-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon explains that shared pain and a common yearning for justice can catalyze chains of action and solidarity between the victim tribes, particularly through their shared experience of dehumanization. Fanon makes this point by contrasting ordinary military occupation with colonial dehumanization: in Algeria, he argues, the colonized are reduced to scenery, territory, and objecthood. He writes:

It must in any case be remembered that a colonized people is not only simply a dominated people. Under the German occupation the French remained men; under the French occupation, the Germans remained men. In Algeria there is not simply the domination but the decision to the letter not to occupy anything more than the sum total of the land. The Algerians, the veiled women, the palm trees and the camels make up the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence of the French. (Fanon 1963, 250; italics in original)

It is precisely this belonging to the community of the dehumanized that, I contend, shapes my positionality. I am mindful, however, of Collins (2021), who warns us that belonging to a marginalized group does not automatically make one right, exempt one from analytical rigour and openness to evolving standpoints, or authorize one to speak in monolithic or universal terms for “my” group. In short, epistemic credentials must be earned, if at all. Nevertheless, as suggested in the epigraph of the next section, my embodied knowledge – when accessed with intention and purpose – allows for a “deeper dialogue” (Snowber 2020, 69) rooted in the body and the gut, particularly around social justice and genocide paradigms.

3.4 Embodied Knowledges

The body holds a fragment of memory, conscious or unconscious, through the cellular landscape of skin, bone, tissues, and gestures. Here is the threshold for an embodied knowledge, which has the capacity to go beyond comprehension, and lies waiting to be discovered, holding possibility for deeper dialogue with how one traverses one's own relationship with their history or herstory.

— Celeste Snowber, *Identity Landscapes*

In Deleuze–Guattari terms, my positionality could be seen as “minoritarian” – a thinking and becoming that resists the “majoritarian” narratives shaping global onto-epistemological normativity. In this sense, they explain that the minoritarian can open lines of flight toward hegemonic discourses that contribute new onto-epistemic content rooted in lived and localized experiences (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 106).

Rhizomatic thinking – like the rhizomatic growth it emulates – emerges organically, almost instinctively, in response to its surrounding morphologies. To understand why I think what I think, it is essential to deconstruct the socio-morphologies – the social shapes and frameworks – that led me to the concept of degenociding. My marginalized identity allows for a spectrum of thoughts, seemingly epigenetically stamped in my being. I access a type of embodied knowledge that is, as Irish-Armenian-Canadian scholar and dancer Celeste Nazeli Snowber (2016) expresses it, “theory with flesh on it; a theorizing through the flesh” (4). My body is a place of knowledge.

My experiential knowledge, after all, tells me about genocide and trauma but also about music, children, and resilience. My background – and the experiences and vulnerabilities it carries – offers unique and potentially useful forms of embodied knowledge and inquiry. The contrasts and intersections between my victimhood through genocide, joy and wonder through music, and a hope for a better future for my daughters, partly through this research, define the

unique perspective I might contribute to the academic discourse and inform my allyship with the causes of the *damnés*.²⁷

3.4.1 As an Armenian and Canadian

We do not forget that one historic year.
One catastrophic event that defines who I am,
and who I always will be,
Now and forever.

— Alan Whitehorn, *Poems from the Diaspora: An Armenian Odyssey*

As Armenian-Canadian scholar and poet Alan Whitehorn (2025b) explains, for many Armenians the genocide of 1915 – and the continued trauma caused by Turkish denial – constitutes an important part of our collective identity. Fuelling this trauma today is the ongoing genocide in Artsakh and by what I have experienced as the international community’s broader indifference to Armenian suffering.²⁸

Snowber (2016) observes that the very experiences which anchor us in struggle and vulnerability also awaken us to beauty and wonder. What is normally seen as a limitation may instead serve as a source of creativity and growth. “Whether it is seeing our injuries as a place of possibility, or our grief as a source of compassion and place to access our humanity, the paradoxes within our lives give rise to the depths” (Snowber 2016, 66).

My engagement with the Artsakh issue, particularly through my family’s visit to the region in 2022 on a resilience-through-music project that I organized – the last major cultural event in the region before its takeover and subsequent de-Armenization (or genocide) by Azeri and

²⁷ See Frantz Fanon (1963).

²⁸ On the Armenian Genocide, see Alan Whitehorn (2015) and Israel W. Charny (1999). On genocide in Artsakh (also known as Nagorno Karabakh), see Luis Moreno Ocampo’s report at https://luismorenoocampo.com/lmo_en/report-genocides-december-2023/, and Whitehorn (2025a, 153).

Turkish forces – profoundly shaped my understanding of these lands as intrinsically indigenous to Armenians.²⁹ Witnessing Turkish and Azeri soldiers staring us down along the roadside leading to the capital, Stepanakert, brought into sharp focus the feeling of having one’s ancestral lands violently stripped away.

It confirmed my recognition of my own displacement as a descendant of Indigenous Armenians from Marash (now in Turkey), and my consequent approach to seeing the world through the lens of Indigenous Peoples globally. In many ways, the Armenian genocide and the present realities in Artsakh, including its recent forced depopulation and the continuing destruction of Armenian cultural heritage, have the potential to provide an ethical backdrop for Armenians in general to champion Indigenous rights globally.

Ironically, as a Canadian, I benefit from the genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Canada through white privilege, the unceded land I live on, and the benefits afforded to me through the distribution of stolen resources.³⁰ This almost “dichotomous” intersectional identity guides many of the questions in this dissertation and awakens a sense of urgency to confront and begin undoing the damage I find myself complicit in causing.

Living with the effects of denial has also made me attentive to the ways it can deepen trauma and push those whose experiences are denied further toward the margins – into the lower echelons of what Fassin calls the “hierarchies of humanity” (quoted in Toufayan 2011, 184).

²⁹ Note that Whitehorn (2025a) specifically discourages the use of *ethnic cleansing* (often used for the Artsakh case) since it “unnecessarily repeats the genocidaire’s language and world view” (147) and “implies that the victim group is ‘unclean’ or ‘unhealthy’” (148). Similarly, Blum et al. (2008) argue that the term “expropriates pseudo-medical terminology to justify massacre” (204).

³⁰ For context, see Sandy Grande’s lecture “Some of Us Are Braves,” University of Regina, July 25, 2015, https://youtu.be/7nYzYrjN7vI?si=v1-qr5o_w-1au3EL, where she asks poignantly: “What [does] the equitable distribution of stolen resources look like?” (7:47–7:52).

These lived experiences also shape my resistance to claims of universal knowledge and draw me toward Mignolo's (2011) critique of "the myth of universality grounded in theo- and ego-politics of knowledge" (xvi), discussed earlier in this dissertation. This dissertation, in essence, listens to my "grammar of the gut" (Snowber 2016, xiv), which not only informs but also guides the rhizomatic unfolding of my inquiry.

3.4.2 As a Musician

Another dimension of my embodied knowledge finds resonance in my experience as a professional musician, in which I find that every musical tradition has a distinctive pattern of elocution, shaped by the historical, cultural, and aesthetic values of the people who have developed and upheld it. My daily practice encompasses a fusion of the psycho-physical creation of a tapestry of sound that can hold deep meaning for both the performer and the engaged listener. The act of performing music involves not only this sounding of musical ideas but also, at its core, the formation of embodied knowledge through physical movement.³¹ In my experience, this act has allowed me to meld cognitive insight with what Snowber (2022) terms "bodysight" (92) – knowledge that my body "knows" and can teach me.

Having first-hand experience with the power of music and the effects it can produce on the performer and the auditor – coupled with my experiences directing the work of a charity I created over a decade ago to realize music education projects in Armenia – has informed my belief in an untapped potential of music to contribute to societal change. Music has "individual

³¹ Elisabeth Le Guin (2006) imaginatively describes a "carnal" and "kinesthetic" (24) embodied understanding and seemingly reciprocal relationship a musician can self-constitute with the composer.

meaning and collective resonance” (L. B. Simpson 2011, 34), possibly making it an ideal vehicle for change.

Music may also offer one avenue for loosening the hold of what Mignolo (2011) calls the colonial matrix of power. Understood in this way, musicking can participate in a process of delinking from the presumed universality and neutrality embodied in what Mignolo terms the “*hubris of the zero point*” (114; italics in original). In essence, music – and the arts more broadly – could help us uncover new soundscapes which lead to truth in parentheses and border thinking (208–209).

For these very reasons, it is conceivable to me that music could be instrumental in realizing a theory of change aimed at advancing the decolonizing process in Canada and other colonial states. This innate discursive power of music, as a carrier of collective memory and tradition, I believe, may have an important role to play in rebuilding, rethinking, rekindling, and reshaping broken societies, and seems very *à propos* to explore in the settler Canadian context. Through sustained, meaningful, and contextualized performance of and listening to Indigenous musics, a sense of decolonial cosmopolitanism³² in both the performer and the listener could very well be achieved, leading to the development of new settler Canadian paradigms that reconcile with and “redress the *longue durée* of modernity, its expression as settler colonialism, and the endless expanding pile of wreckage that it produces” (Garba and Sorentino 2020, 765).

³² Decolonial cosmopolitanism is about inter-culturality and inter-epistemology allowing for what Mignolo (2011) calls “truth in parenthesis” (44), meaning a pluralistic approach to truth, as opposed to imperial cosmopolitanism that is based on Kantian Enlightenment ideals represented by what Mignolo calls a “hubris of the zero point” (114), implying a universality and neutrality to European-centred knowledge.

3.4.3 As a Parent

Finally, as a parent of two teenage daughters, I witness firsthand that they are progressing through schooling without any meaningful exposure to the stories and music of the Kanien'kehá:ka and Haudenosaunee Nations, whose lands they occupy in the present-day Montreal area. This settler Canadian failure has reinforced my belief in the inconsistencies with what I consider to be the minimal expectations of guest-host dynamics, as well as the binding human rights commitments outlined in instruments like the CRC and the guiding principles articulated in, for instance, the TRC and UNDRIP.

Nikulkin and Zvonareva (2024) argue that parenting – and the “entangled positionality” (743) it generates, including a heightened concern for one’s child’s future and the “dynamic constellation of diverse, messy, and unpredictable daily practices” (743) of family life – can play an important role in research directions. In my experience, regular discussions about the concept of decolonizing with my daughters and spouse have made them natural “co-researchers” in this dissertation. In essence, this dissertation is carried out with the hope of shaping new worldviews not only for my daughters but also for the next generations of my community and lineage.

Again, we can refer to Snowber. For her, “Motherhood was the yoga studio to train to be deeply awake to the curriculum of life” (Snowber 2016, 209). For me, fatherhood has offered a similar awakening. It has allowed me to relive K–12 education through the experiences of my daughters and to rediscover what continues to be absent in the Canadian curriculum: Indigenous realities and the grounded, normative worldviews that belong to these lands – worldviews that traditionally, and I argue in accordance with Canada’s binding human rights obligations, should be recognized as such.

3.5 On False Narratives and Delusions

In museums and historical sites presenting early Canadian history, the colonization of Canada is a charming and often quaint story of intrepid explorers, hardy settlers, fur traders, military heroes, brilliant politicians and visionary artists, who, out of a harsh and unforgiving wilderness built Canada into the “fair and prosperous” country it is today.

— Lise C. Vaugeois, *Colonization and the Institutionalization of Hierarchies of the Human through Music Education: Studies in the Education of Feeling*

My parents collected several pieces of art by Indigenous artists – especially Inuit carvings made from whale bone or soapstone, and the occasional decorative snowshoes (which I thought were uniquely French-Canadian). Surely many settler Canadians can relate to similar stories. These Indigenous artworks were appreciated but considered part of multicultural Canada – something of Canada but not really Canadian. Such a view was not accidental – it was part of the colonial design made possible by educational and cultural policies of the state.

As Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Susan Dion describes in her 2009 monograph *Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples’ Experiences and Perspectives*, Indigenous Peoples were still portrayed “as romantic, mythical people of the past” (4) with the whole primitive “tipis, tomahawks, furs, and feathers” (4) caricatured aesthetic. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, I was taught about Indigenous Peoples through a lens of historical amnesia – they were “historical footnotes” (Dion 2009, 73), worthy of “respectful admiration” (Dion 2009, 71). In the history textbooks widely used throughout Canada, settlers were described as “heroes of dauntless heart” (O. J. Stevenson, “Pathfinders,” quoted in Garland 1954, 183), venturing forth to “encounter the wild animals, the unfriendly Indians, or the unknown demons that might live inland” (Garland 1954, 183) – yes, in that order. At the same time, we were reassured with quotes attributed to Samuel de Champlain that among the Indigenous Peoples, “plenty of them have good judgement, and answer very properly any question put to them” (Garland 1954, 4). They were thus

simultaneously cast through the colonial trope of the “noble savage”: romantically admired as supposedly closer to nature, a sort of “Native eco-guru” (Grande [2004] 2015, 95), yet fixed within a primitive past and denied full contemporaneity, political complexity, and living sovereignty.

Schaepli et al. (2019) argue that the broader context of colonialism continues to be presented through a “contact, settlement, or migration” (149) lens – framed as a heroic and adventurous quest for knowledge, filled with excitement and discovery, no less. Furthermore, the authors point out that the Constitution Act of 1982 is often misrepresented as marking the end of colonialism in Canada – portrayed as the moment the country emerged out of British and French colonial legacies into “autonomous nationhood, free of colonialism” (150). This narrative twist subtly blurs the distinction between colonizer and colonized, effectively erasing the ongoing realities of settler colonialism on the ground.

These false and sanitized narratives not only maintain the generational trauma of Indigenous Peoples but also constrain the empowerment capabilities of both settler Canadians and Indigenous Peoples. In doing so, they diminish the possibility of a human tapestry woven with dignity, possibility, flourishing, cultural continuity, and ethical relationships.

Furthermore, this institutionalized forgetting and ignorance – imposed on the small “me” by the Canadian education system – now appears as a clear infringement on my right to a quality education. Article 13 of the ICESCR – already binding on Canada at the time of my primary and secondary education years – affirms that education must foster the full development of the human personality, respect for human dignity, and understanding of human rights. These foundational aims were glaringly absent from what I was taught about Indigenous Peoples.

This erasure constituted a form of deliberate indoctrination and state-sponsored historical and cultural whitewashing (pun intended), portraying Indigeneity as incompatible with modernity (Schaepli et al. 2019, 151), even “relegating Indigenous peoples to the past” (Schaepli et al. 2019, 151). It reduced me, as a K–12 student in the 1970s and 1980s, to a “perfect stranger” in relation to Indigeneity. Indigenous presence was always there, yet I was never taught to see it.

Alarming, as late as 2019, Schaepli and colleagues found that 96% of first-year university students surveyed in Ontario still could not name the Indigenous Nation(s) on whose land their university was located (Schaepli et al. 2019, 155). This was decades after the RCAP clearly recommended that Canadians actively engage in learning about the historical and contemporary realities of Indigenous Peoples as “essential first steps in the process of healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people” (RCAP 1996, 5:11).

Furthermore, to return to the human rights themes of dignity and the development of self-respect, the 1996 Report quotes Nara Dewar Allingham’s essay on racism submitted to the public hearings:

If I work to maintain the power of the dominant White group, I can continue to participate in the privilege that power confers. If I work to empower others, I am unlikely to be a direct recipient of any privilege that they may gain. I will, however, be a member of a society for which I feel less shame and anger and in which I may be able to participate more equally and more richly. I fear a social order which diminishes groups and individuals – *I am equally diminished*. (RCAP 1996, 5:84; emphasis added)

Today, the flashbacks are many, and the questions remain the same:

Where were the Indigenous Peoples?

What was the Land trying to tell me that I couldn’t hear?

3.6 Interlude

Childhood Cartographies

I remember a school trip to Elk Island National Park
 What a surprise to meet the majestic plains bison
 just a few metres from our campsite
 But was any context given to this Armenian-Canadian settler?
 Not at all!
 Did I unknowingly miss a meaningful learning experience?
 Yes, certainly!

I remember our family trips
 Every summer across the Prairies and Great Lakes to Montreal
 where my paternal grandparents lived
 Then every winter through the Rockies
 to ring in the New Year with my maternal grandparents in Vancouver
 I travelled the country more than most
 but . . . did I *see* anything?

The names we encountered along the way
 often had Indigenous sounds: Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Neepawa, Winnipeg
 Then there were the other names: Portage La Prairie, Cartier, Dryden, Thunder Bay, or Val-d'Or
 There seemed to be an ideal coexistence between these names
A true reconciliation of names!
 But was there any truth
 in this reconciliation?

The Prairies stretched on . . . and on
 Fields of wheat and soy
 Monotonous stories
 There was no real *history* here
 The Great Lakes, in turn, were *empty*,
 endless lands with no history
 Waiting to be exploited.

Was there a story to tell beyond:
 "Prairie outposts!"
 "Tough settler life!"
 "Lumberjacks spending months away from home!"
 "The great achievement of linking the country by rail!"
 Yes, there were fabulous stories to tell –
 But they were drowned by the noise of colonialism.

And my hometown hockey team,
 the Edmonton Oilers
 Named after a natural resource
 the country's main source of income
 A monument to extraction
 A perfect glorification of colonial exploitation!
 Such comfort . . . in *ignorance*.

Where were Indigenous Peoples in this narrative?
 Why were they invisible to us?
 I now know more than ever
 and I explain it using Dwayne Donald's Fort logic.
 It is the colonizer
 who has simply
 Flipped the Fort.

Once they felt comfortable
 Outside the Fort,
 They switched places
 with the Indigenous host
 Dehumanized
Granting them the Reservation
 A different kind of Fort

Nestled in reserves
 the Indigenous Person
 rebranded as *Indian*
 Now
 Forgotten
 and
 Out of sight.

Why wasn't I taught about the rich cultures and traditions
 of the Indigenous Peoples of the Prairies
 The First Peoples
 Unfairly minoritized on these lands.
 Would knowing their music have connected me to the land?
 Taught me to respect and appreciate them
 Certainly.
 I have no doubt

The little "me"
 would have benefited from that grounded normativity
 or *sounded* normativity
 with the land
 I would have heard its true voice

developed over millennia.

What did I inherit instead?
A narrative of violent extraction
A history of conquest
And an invitation to take part
in the wreckage of colonization

NO TRUTH

NO RECONCILIATION

Chapter 4 Assemblage I – Decolonial Praxis

Engaging in decolonial thinking means confronting the imperial privileges of imperial/global linear thinking, not to resist but to re-exist in building decolonial futures.

— *Walter Dignolo, The Darker Side of Western Modernity*

4.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Frameworks of Resistance”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* critiques of modernity/coloniality branch and connect across decolonial and critical traditions) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* colonial binaries and “truth” regimes rupture and open lines of flight from settler innocence) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* coloniality hardens as race, canon, and state knowledge architectures) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* actions can be taken – delinking, pluriversality, and accountability under Indigenous authority, protocol, and meaning) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* shifts take hold – in research, curriculum, discourse, and daily practice – as structural redress).

4.2 Rhizomatic Fugues – Decolonial Counterpoints

According to French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault, in the modern world, knowledge is considered “truth” when sanctioned by those in power (Foucault 1980, 93).

Without authority over what is to be considered true – and what is not – the exercise of power is weakened; one defines and sustains the other (Foucault 1980, 52). He writes of the need for an “*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*” (Foucault 1980, 81, italics in original) – knowledges that have been disqualified, buried, or disguised – to counter the “régime of truth” (Foucault 1980, 131) maintained by the instruments of politics, economy, and institutions within dominant modern orders, including settler-colonial states such as Canada.

This call to action, however, must not be understood as extractive in nature, aimed at *pinning* knowledge. Rather, it is a conscious and responsible act of *answerability* (Bakhtin [1919] 1990) – the obligation to translate understanding into responsible action – that enacts

relationality with Indigenous Peoples in support of Indigenous resurgence and empowerment as a moral and ethical imperative.

Could this call to action be realized, in part, through degenociding?

What if releasing the reins on knowledge – allowing it to grow rhizomatically through music – could open a new, kinder, and more accountable era for humanity? Could this earwitnessing of subjugated voices provide the polyphony needed – as Bakhtin (1984) describes it: voices that are independent of each other but, when orchestrated together, become part of “a higher order than in homophony” (21) – to form a powerful harmony?

Fanon ([1952] 1986) speaks of a “massive psychoexistential complex” (14) that emanates from the juxtaposition of white and Black races. He articulated the bifocal nature of this colonial psychological complex: the colonizer – typically a white man – is fed a superiority narrative or “leadership complex” (99), while the colonized – whether a Black person in Africa or an Indigenous person in the Americas – has been conditioned to internalize an inferiority narrative or “dependency complex” (98–99) through subjugation. This dynamic operates through what Fanon ([1952] 1986) called a “racial epidermal schema” (112) – a culturally constructed and acquired framework that infiltrates the collective unconscious, manifesting through state structures and the politics that support them (188). He adds, with a note of idealism: “I hope by analyzing it to destroy it” (Fanon [1952] 1986, 14). This echoes my effort to analyze colonial psychoexistential complexes in order to contribute to dismantling the effects of cultural genocide and to build a Degenociding Plateau – one that specifically embraces Indigenous musics as foundational elements of transformation.

Settler colonialism entrenches a Manichean juxtaposition of settler and Indigenous, reinforcing rigid binaries and suppressing the relational and reciprocal possibilities that could

help undo the colonial scourge. Edward Said (1994) describes this Manichean phenomenon found in colonialism as reducing the “native . . . [via] the geography that segregates him, the ontology that dehumanizes him, the epistemology that strips him down to an unregenerate essence” (268). Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall (2017) describes this juxtaposition as the positioning of Indigenous Peoples as “objects to explain colonial histories” (73) rather than as “subjects of historical inquiry” (72), with Indigenous Peoples essentially serving as “foils for the colonial discourse of civilization overcoming savagery” (73). Foregrounding Indigenous voices, especially through the onto-epistemologies they convey through music, resists this “foil”-positioning and becomes a constructive act of decolonizing. It centres Indigenous musics as a grounded normativity³³ on which to build ethical identities, rather than reducing them to objects of curiosity or anthropological pinning.

Given these power dynamics, I find it essential to resist comfortable colonial innocence narratives and the onto-epistemologies they produce. These include, for example, past-tense teaching of harm, inclusionary gestures that leave authority untouched, and *checkbox* consultation and acknowledgement theatrics. Instead, I centre Indigenous ways of knowing (next chapter) and Global South decolonial thought, particularly through Fanon and Mignolo, while also drawing on Western critical theorists such as Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault, whose work challenges regimes of truth and epistemic control through which power legitimizes itself. Fanon (1963) expressed this most eloquently by stating: “The last shall be first and the first last” (2). In

³³ Coulthard’s (2014) concept of grounded normativity, defined as “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and long-standing experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time” (13), has become influential in many Indigenous contexts and movements for cultural resurgence, sovereignty, and authority.

doing so, the original and necessary extra-normative approaches required for the degenociding project can be accessed, assessed, and theorized.

4.3 Functions and Effects (Assemblage I)

Colonization (the political) and coloniality (the onto-epistemic) continue to define the priorities of those wielding power. This has prompted several activist scholars (for example, Borrows 2002, 140; Coulthard 2014, 6, 41; Coulthard and L. B. Simpson 2016, 251; Mamdani 2020, 19; Tuck and Yang 2012, 1, 7; Quijano 2024, 84, 333) and major commissions of inquiry (such as the TRC and MMIWG in Canada) to call for more radical transformations to reverse this onto-epistemic trajectory that maintains – and leads to – catastrophic environmental and societal traumas.

This first assemblage, feeding into the concept of degenociding, exposes current decolonization trajectories and why they remain unsatisfactory attempts at progress toward redress. I explore the discourse of how marginalized voices – particularly Global South voices (and Indigenous voices in the next section) – articulate decolonization and decoloniality. As discussed in the previous chapter, these voices are arguably the best positioned to express the worldviews that belong to these lands, particularly in response to ongoing settler onto-epistemic dominance.

The narratives I engage with challenge the Eurocentric Global North's onto-epistemic stranglehold on the theories of change – from Enlightenment-inspired universalism to corporate interests and liberal humanism, and, at its core, the definition of progress itself. The onto-epistemic disobedience of Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Mahmood Mamdani exposes what Mignolo calls the “Darker Side of Western Modernity” (the

title of his 2011 monograph): the establishment of a global colonial power matrix founded on concepts of race.

I also engage with American scholar Robin DiAngelo's theory of "white fragility," which helps explain the reticence of settler Canadians to "face the music" (pun intended) regarding colonial power dynamics that continue to deny the voices of the subjugated and conquered: Indigenous Peoples.

These scholars – many of them members of colonized societies – are foundational in the development of concepts such as decoloniality. They expose the often top-down and ineffective – even sometimes regressive – processes of decolonization. Recognizing these limitations helps explain why degenociding is needed as an added mechanism in undoing harms of colonialism and, in this dissertation, to open space for Indigenous musics as transformative praxis.

As this dissertation contributes to decolonial scholarship, the overarching methodology is approached through a decolonial lens. The methodology, therefore, resists colonial onto-epistemologies, centres Indigenous ways of knowing, and is more concerned with lived experience (hence, in part, the longer-than-usual length of the previous chapter on my positionality) and the reality of colonial oppression as the foundations and inspiration for shaping analysis.

Key principles guiding the selection and assembling of knowledge here include:

- a) **Centring decolonial and Global South voices** by listening to scholars to ensure the research does not replicate settler colonial biases and onto-epistemologies.
- b) **Rejecting assimilationist frameworks** by arguing for the creation of independent spaces where Indigenous worldviews flourish on their own terms – alongside, but not subsumed by, other knowledge systems – rather than advocating for the inclusion of, for example, Indigenous musics within settler educational structures such as the conventional music classroom.

- c) **Observing Mignolo's concepts of pluriversality and decolonial cosmopolitanism**, which advocate for a non-hierarchical coexistence of worldviews and challenge Eurocentric hegemony over knowledge, including, crucially, musical ones.

To ground these principles historically and conceptually, the next subsections move from 1492 and the emergence of coloniality of power (4.4), to pluriversality and border thinking as the conditions for music as praxis (4.5), to the ideal of decolonial cosmopolitan futures (4.6), to settler responsibility and identifying who the survivors are (4.7), to white fragility (4.8), and finally to hearing the Subaltern/Other (4.9) as the ethical prerequisite for accountable listening. I then gather these lines of flight in a brief synthesis (4.10), to prepare the modulation from *Assemblage I* toward *Assemblage II*.

In summary, this assemblage outlines why dominant Eurocentric “theories of change” in modern political orders – including settler colonial states such as Canada – so often reproduce the onto-epistemic hierarchies they claim to remedy. It does so by engaging with decolonial and anti-colonial critiques of modernity and its colonial power matrix, establishing why decolonizing is required as an added mechanism for undoing ongoing colonial violence. Foundational concepts of decoloniality, pluriversality, border thinking, decolonial cosmopolitanism, and perspectives on onto-epistemic resistance and resurgence are considered as frameworks that form the philosophical and ethical scaffolding of this inquiry and that provide necessary grounding to demonstrate how Indigenous musics can enact onto-epistemic resistance to better advance the decolonial imperative.

4.4 From 1492 to Coloniality of Power

Emerging in the 1990s from the Modernity/Coloniality framework, decolonial thought marks the year 1492 as a decisive turning point in modern history. Mignolo ([2000] 2012, 29) pinpoints

this period when, at the School of Salamanca – and more specifically at the Valladolid debates (1550–1551) – scholars in Spain were grappling with the justification of war, conquest, conversion, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, effectively debating the ethics of human conduct mainly in relation to the newly discovered lands across the Atlantic.

Decolonial frameworks contend that coloniality represents a particular “darker side” of modernity, trumpeting the concept of modernity as its clarion call. As Quijano and Mignolo argue, coloniality is not simply an aftermath of colonialism but a constitutive Eurocentric matrix of power that organizes politics, economics, and social relations, while simultaneously imposing its ways of knowing and being as universal onto-epistemologies (Hurtado López 2025, 23–24). Similarly, whereas postcolonial critiques – informed by postmodern and poststructuralist thinking – emerged largely from within Western thought as a response to the suffocating imperial and colonial structures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, decolonial approaches emphasize interconnectedness and reciprocal dialogue, explicitly acknowledging the contrasting and rich onto-epistemologies of humankind as well as their potential for coexistence (Ali and Dayan-Herzbrun 2025, xii).

Quijano’s perspective of coloniality of power is particularly relevant here. It is not simply a remnant of colonialism but the structural framework of the modern world-system, an ongoing process holding echoes of the Valladolid debates. At its core, coloniality is based on race as a category of domination. It is a global model of power that is self-categorized as modern, rational, and universal, yet in reality is a project designed to exploit, dispossess, and impose onto-epistemic control. It invades not only territories (through colonial conquest and rule – colonialism) and institutions, laws, and everyday life (through the implanting processes of colonization) but also imaginaries, knowledge, and subjectivities (Quijano 2024, 95). As Quijano

writes, colonization is a process that involves “a long period of the colonization of cognitive perspectives, modes of producing and giving meaning, the results of material existence, the imaginary, the universe of intersubjective relations with the world: in short, the culture” (Quijano 2024, 264).

Responding to this reconstitution entails delinking from Eurocentric zero point regimes of knowledge and relinking to Indigenous, place-based onto-epistemologies as authority. In this project, that relinking could materialize through Indigenous-led musicking frameworks, representing border thinking and decolonial pluriversal imaginaries.

4.5 Decolonial Pluriversality and Border Thinking

Decolonial and pluriversal thinking are not merely critiques of Eurocentrism and universality; they aim to go further: the goal is to place all “humanity on an equal footing” (Ali and Dayan-Herzbrun 2025, xiii) and to recognize the existence of alternative onto-epistemologies – “to move from universality to pluriversality; to decolonize the imperial concept of the Human and to build decolonial notions of Humanity” (Mignolo 2011, 242).

Decolonial pluriversality rejects the presumed “single universal” of modernity in favour of the coexistence of multiple onto-epistemologies (Walsh, Mignolo, and Segato 2024, 18). Border thinking (or border epistemology) resides in the space where these onto-epistemologies reverberate – a space for delinking from Eurocentric universals and relinking to land-based onto-epistemologies. As theorized in this dissertation, placing humanity on this equal footing means creating spaces where Indigenous musics are not “included” as exotic additions but instead stand as expressions of the pluriversality of Indigenous Peoples and their authority over the stories told

about them – thus contributing to this work as a decolonial-based onto-epistemological line of flight to the Degenociding Plateau.

Quijano further maintains that the possibility of achieving radically different worlds through decoloniality requires knowledge to be rooted in sensory experience before becoming rational. He understood that “music, the visual arts, poetry and literature were the forms of expression that most faithfully reflected this new imaginary dimension” (Quijano 2002, 82). For him, it is paramount that for decolonization to have any meaning it necessitates epistemological reconfiguration based on local Indigenous worldviews – the “gnoseological reconstitution of epistemology” (Walsh, Mignolo, and Segato 2024, 11). In Fanon’s ([1952] 1986) language, this is a psychoexistential shift in perception: a re-training of the ear and body.

Indigenous musics perform border thinking – they represent onto-epistemologies through sound – and thus embody the concept of delinking and enable pluriversal coexistence. An ideal site for this coexistence – where, as I explore in the next chapter, onto-epistemic discourses are performed, embodied, and lead to transformations of subjectivity – is music. Mignolo (2011) similarly observes that it is not enough to reverse the “terms of the conversation . . . *Changing the terms* of the conversation is, instead, the decolonial project” (206; italics in original). For the degenociding project, this means recognizing that Indigenous musics must be listened to with “different ears” – outside colonial frameworks and logics of audition – thus enabling the transformation of listening itself.

Building on this premise, an important consideration for the *Sound Studies* assemblage is to assess whether learning Indigenous musics in the music classroom merely mirrors this colonial logic – by placing Indigenous onto-epistemologies within the same framework traditionally reserved for European traditions, only with the positions reversed. The alternative is

to create space for these musics to sound and be engaged with in accordance with the onto-epistemologies from which they originate. This is the central premise of decolonial cosmopolitanism: coexistence without hierarchies, where multiple worlds speak – and sing! – on their own terms, without being subsumed into a single normativity.

4.6 Decolonial Cosmopolitan Futures

Decolonial cosmopolitanism, as Mignolo defines it, represents a radical reorientation of how worldviews relate to one another. He writes:

Decolonial cosmopolitanism is not one more among others, but a project that promotes the shift in the terms of the conversation: from imperial cosmopolitanism (or cosmopolitanism without modifiers and without parenthesis) to cosmopolitan localisms (coexistence of cosmopolitanism with modifiers and with parenthesis). That is to say, inter-culturality and inter-epistemology should prevent the phenomenon in which one culture and one epistemology come to be considered good enough for the entire “metaphysical Globe.” (Mignolo 2011, 298)

If decolonial pluriversality establishes the grounds for a coexistence of multiple onto-epistemologies, decolonial cosmopolitanism can be understood as the space where these worldviews meet, interact, and take us to what Quijano imagined as a “return of the future” (Quijano 2002, 75; see section 1.1.3 of this dissertation), a future that is not subsumed under a single dominant logic.

Mignolo (2011) describes this shift as a “move from universality to pluriversality; to decolonize the imperial concept of the Human and to build decolonial notions of Humanity” (242). This framework extends and deepens pluriversality, as it provides an ethical and relational framework for the cohabitation of distinct onto-epistemologies – each maintaining its own integrity yet open to meaningful cross-pollination on equal footing. Such a non-hierarchical world order rejects the hegemony of Western onto-epistemologies and favours multiple, coexisting worldviews and the knowledge systems that accompany them.

In the arts – and, as theorized in this dissertation, in music – decolonial cosmopolitanism is not an abstract idea; it is praxis. Indigenous musics already enact pluriversality and border thinking: within ethical, protocol-bound, and accountable listening frameworks, they enable earwitnessing (Schafer [1977] 1994, 8–9, 272; Ouzounian 2023, 170), model reciprocity, and embody place-based knowledges in a flourish of resonances. In performance, pedagogy, and community contexts, they demonstrate in a very real manner how coexistence can be lived, heard, and taught.

Decolonial cosmopolitanism, as Mignolo frames it, is the next step forward. It is a vision of interaction and mutual respect across worldviews that reshapes global interconnectedness in an ethical way. He also insists that decolonial initiatives will either come from the Fanonian “*damnés de la terre*” (1961) or from allies who have shifted their worldview from imperial to decolonial frameworks (Mignolo 2011, 285). In short, decolonial cosmopolitanism is about interculturality and inter-epistemology, allowing for what Mignolo (2011) calls “truth in parenthesis” (44), a pluralistic approach to truth, as opposed to imperial cosmopolitanism, which is based on Kantian Enlightenment ideals and the “hubris of the zero point” (188) or “truth without parenthesis” (70) – the fiction of the innate universality and neutrality of European-centred knowledge.

In the Canadian context, decolonial cosmopolitanism helps us envisage a concrete future: Indigenous-led revitalization and sovereignty, and ultimately the transformation of the colonial nation-state into a societal model that respects Indigenous pluriversality, sustainability, meaningful Indigenous futures – guided by ethically grounded, Indigenous-led, land-based practices (Mullen 2022). As mentioned earlier, the ideal and most ethical outcome of decolonization – the material and political dimension – is “to give up land or power or privilege”

(Tuck and Yang 2012, 21). Decoloniality – the intellectual, cultural, and structural shifts in the colonial matrix of power – can help us get there. As theorized in this dissertation, Indigenous-led musicking is one of the practicable routes: it trains the ear for pluriversality, centres border thinking as an audible practice, and orchestrates relations fit for a decolonial cosmopolitan future.

4.7 Settler Responsibility and Survivors of Political Modernity

Mahmood Mamdani's (2020) work helps me situate the role of the settler Canadian in the degenociding arena. He suggests that we must view the settler state as an extension of European colonization in order to initiate political and onto-epistemic decolonization (20). Mamdani (2020, 21, 354) places great importance on the semiotics of the immigrant versus colonizer narratives, the former more comfortable and forgiving, the latter essentially about financial gain through violence. He contends that, regardless of whether one is a perpetrator or victim of colonialism, we “can all learn to see ourselves as *survivors* of political modernity – created by it, but not doomed to repeat it” (Mamdani 2020, 20; italics in original). In Mamdani's terms, decolonization requires transforming the political–social community itself – the *demos* – so that future generations no longer bear the oppressor/oppressed binaries (21). Emancipation and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples are not sufficient – there must be substantive shifts in the architectures of the settler state, beyond recognition, including structural changes in politics (17, 93) and “epistemological revolution” in education (34). Mamdani (2020) also notes that human rights, being focused mainly on the individual, do not equip society to deal with history, “nation-building violence” (17), and the collective re-identification necessary for peaceful coexistence.

Degenociding, I propose, could contribute to Mamdani's call to action because it speaks directly to two main arguments I make in this dissertation: (a) that the rights of settler Canadian children – to live in dignity and to receive a quality education – are being violated through inheriting the benefits of the crimes of colonization and through subpar, racially regressive curricula that erase, or invisibilize, uncomfortable truths, making them “survivors” of a broken system; and (b) that – as Lemkin sought to find an appropriate context under which one can prosecute national crimes vs individual crimes – degenociding seeks to address the need for an adequate response to cultural genocide.

Echoing Mamdani's line of thought, we can certainly consider that though Indigenous Peoples are survivors of genocidal processes, settler Canadians can also understand themselves as implicated subjects (or survivors) of a traumatic state-formation based on dispossession. Canadian nation building has been constructed on colonial narratives that paint over Indigenous onto-epistemologies and a history of suffering since contact with Europeans. For this, Lorenz (2017, 84, 92) argues, settlers must engage in their own truth-telling and reconcile with themselves before any reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples can be genuine or meaningful.

Côté (2019, 29) indicates that this truth-telling is best achieved through curricular change: for genuine reconciliation in Canada, a long process of decolonization of education must occur; and crucially, this decolonization is for all Canadians, not only Indigenous Peoples. Such a realization, when pursued under Indigenous guidance, can support dignity, quality, accountability, and empowerment, and contribute to the progressive realization of quality education and respectful – and human-rights-based – relations for the next generations of inhabitants on these lands.

4.8 On White Fragility

Though not from the Global South, Robin DiAngelo (2018) helps clarify a concept that also bears directly on settler Canadians – *White Fragility*, both the title of her defining monograph and the term she coined to describe a specific pattern among white people when confronted with their racial positioning. She describes this manifestation of the (sub)conscious mind as a sense of defensiveness and resistance among white people when confronted with issues of race and racism. These defensive moves – minimization, argumentation, silence, withdrawal, and deflecting accountability – serve clear functions: they restore racial binaries and preserve white comfort and entitlement (albeit cloaked in perceived innocence, objectivity, neutrality, and universality), thereby preventing shifts in the structural paradigms of settler-colonialism (DiAngelo 2011, 57).

This refusal to acknowledge the unearned advantages associated with whiteness helps maintain white racial control and advantage (DiAngelo 2021, 171) and attempts to bully BIPOC segments of society into accepting hierarchies of humankind favouring white people (DiAngelo 2018, 112–113). The author describes this refusal as “white people digging their heels in deeper and protecting their worldview, blocking any further engagement that could expand that worldview . . . It functions as a protective force field preventing growth” (DiAngelo 2021, 171). In essence, white fragility is part of what Bailey (2007) refers to as a “strategic ignorance” (77), an ignorance that teaches white people to view Indigenous “land as vacant, women of color as sexually available, and Indian schools as charitable” (80).

An element of white fragility is also the expectation in the curriculum to include authors positioned as normative representations of human knowledge – from Shakespeare to Hemingway and from Dostoevsky to Austen – because “they are presumed to be able to speak to us all”

(DiAngelo 2018, 56). DiAngelo (2018, 57) explains that, by contrast, when we study Black or minoritarian authors, we are expected to see them as representative of a specific racialized perspective rather than part of a universal human perspective. This aspect of white fragility is replicated in the Canadian music education space, which promotes a Euro-American musical canon dominated by white male composers and performers (Walker 2020, 1), coupled with a deafening erasure of the Indigenous musics developed over millennia on these lands (Armenian 2025, 123).

Degenociding requires confronting such ignorance and fragility, cultivating accountability, and building dignified practices and policies that do not necessarily lead to settler comfort. This “luxury of ignorance” (Howard 1999, 58), the bedrock of settler whiteness, must be undone for forward movement toward decoloniality to occur. Therefore, degenociding colonial states such as Canada through music will necessarily entail listening to Indigenous musics according to Indigenous protocols, practising accountable listening, and undertaking the often-uncomfortable retraining of the consciously and subconsciously colonized, Westernized musical ear.

4.9 Hearing the Subaltern and the “Other”

The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?

— Terry Goldie,
Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures

If decolonial cosmopolitanism describes a possible ethically sound(ed) future, then we must ask ourselves *how* we listen to this new soundscape?

Though perhaps the most oppressed and onto-epistemically erased by colonial and social structures, the *Subaltern* can be understood as part of the broader – albeit constructed – family of

the *Other*: akin to the *Wretched* of Frantz Fanon (1963); the *Oriental* of Edward Said ([1978] 1979); the *Oppressed* of Paulo Freire (2005); the *Margins* of Stuart Hall; the *Minoritarian* of Deleuze and Guattari; and the *Indigenous* in colonial societies – each representing a distinct facet of marginality.

For the degenociding project, I find it useful to remember that millennia of continental divide between *Homo sapiens* on Turtle Island and Abya Yala, and those in Eurasia and Africa allowed for the development of fundamentally different onto-epistemologies, hence the importance of delinking from Eurocentric zero point concepts of truth to understand Indigenous onto-epistemologies. Indeed, it is widely critiqued that Western epistemology sees itself through an illusion of objectivity and neutrality – as the zero point of knowledge – while marginalizing and fetishizing other epistemologies and peoples. Mignolo (2011) states that “border thinking and border epistemology are the antidotes to the virus of zero point epistemology” (208).

Like Mignolo, for Edward Said ([1978] 1979), orientalism was the “ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (2). In his influential book *Orientalism* ([1978] 1979), Said examines this phenomenon, noting that while the “Orient” was subjugated by Europe, it was simultaneously romanticized and sexualized by the West. In the Canadian and American contexts, the oxymoronic representation of the “noble savage” reflects this dichotomy in the West’s attitude toward Indigenous Peoples – a composite of wise, spiritual, and profound, yet dehumanized enough to justify dispossession and death. Thomas King (2013) writes: “Whites have always been comfortable with Dead Indians” (55).

Against this backdrop, foundational postcolonial theorist and feminist scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2012) cautions that simply providing space for the subaltern – the segment

of society “removed from all lines of social mobility” (430) – or, in this case, listening to Indigenous voices (as I elaborate on through the words of Ella Cara Deloria in the next section), does not by itself lead to fundamental disruptions of colonial structures and policies. She questions whether the subaltern can ever, in fact, be truly heard or meaningfully understood within existing colonial frameworks (Spivak 1988, 25). If the “presumed collectivity of listening and countersigning subjects and agents in the public sphere” (Spivak 2012, 326) fails to grasp the intended message, then even well-intentioned but poorly contextualized projects may end up reinforcing the colonial project or aesthetic.

Spivak further explains that a definitive – and even violent – loss in translation occurs when Indigenous voices are transcoded and heard through colonial aesthetics, lenses, and structures (Spivak 2012, 245), such as the music classroom or the concert stage. L. B. Simpson (2025) refers to this translation as “a powerful, political and oftentimes dangerous process for Indigenous peoples. Extracting a single concept or phrase out of our complex knowledge systems, taking it out of embodied practice and placing it in text, translating it, often literally, into English, and then repeating it in all kinds of different contexts results necessarily in dilution” (96).

These are important considerations to make regarding the translation of Indigenous musics in Western performance and education spaces. If Indigenous voices – particularly those expressed through music – are to be heard on their own terms, then what can be done to train the “tin ear” (Robinson 2020, 37) of the settler Canadian? How can we ensure that settler participation does not unintentionally re-colonize Indigenous musics?

Spivak proposes that an emphasis on aesthetic education – or “training the imagination for epistemological performance” (Spivak 2012, 122) – can help counteract onto-epistemic violence

by equipping the settler ear to listen in ways that are more reverent, restorative, and accountable. Listening with “fresh” ears and decentred, “out-of-the-box” listening becomes one way to resist the translational violence Spivak warns against. This act of re-tuning the settler ear through music could become a direct line of flight into degenociding praxis. Otherwise, the danger is that it becomes a line of flight toward re-colonization of sound.

4.10 Synthesis: Lines of Flight from Assemblage I to Assemblage II

Assemblage I demonstrates that the dominant Eurocentric “theories of change” that shape settler states tend to reproduce the very onto-epistemic hierarchies they claim to remedy, because they remain anchored in Western universalism, liberal humanism, and the praxes of the colonial matrix of power. Global South and decolonial thinkers, such as Quijano and Mignolo, therefore insist that meaningful change requires epistemic disobedience, delinking, and pluriversality: a refusal of zero point universalism in favour of multiple coexisting knowledge systems. Read alongside Fanon’s psychoexistential critique and Said’s exposure of the mechanisms of Orientalism, this assemblage clarifies that colonial domination is sustained not only through institutions and law but also through Western-imposed hierarchical categorizations of knowledge, culture, and values.

In this sense, degenociding aims to offer clarity on the work required to overcome the tendency of decolonization efforts that treat recognition schemes as successful reform. It emphasizes undoing the structures and habits that normalize cultural erasure, and it frames Indigenous musics not as supplementary “content,” but as potential decolonial praxis that can enact border thinking, ground pluriversal listening, and open ethical space for Indigenous authority over the narratives about these lands.

At the level of settler social life, Mamdani's insistence on undoing nation-building violence reinforces that transformation must be structural and forward-looking, and that the descendants of the colonized and the colonizer must learn to see themselves as survivors of the unfathomable violence that gave rise to colonial states, and to take responsibility to reshape institutions and educational systems rather than relying on symbolic gestures or individualized moral innocence. DiAngelo's account of white fragility also clarifies why even well-intentioned decolonizing initiatives so often fail to produce real change: discomfort is redirected into denial, defensiveness, and self-protective narratives that preserve the status quo rather than enabling dialogue and structural transformation.

Finally, Spivak reveals the dynamics of this impasse by cautioning that "hearing" the subaltern is not guaranteed within colonial frameworks, especially when voices are translated through dominant aesthetics and institutional norms; her emphasis on aesthetic education as "training the imagination" aligns with this dissertation's musical grounding in the education space, where retraining the settler ear becomes both necessary and risky if it remains unstructured.

Chapter 5 Assemblage II – Indigenous Voices

5.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Grounded Normativity v Metaphor”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* Indigenous methodologies – grounded normativity, refusal, resurgence – branch and interconnect as relational research lines) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* performative reconciliation ruptures into hungry listening and epistemic violence) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* recognition politics and curricular canons make Indigenous presence legible only as content) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* can be enacted – place-based listening, consent/protocol, refusal, and curricular disruption that hears Indigenous worlds on their own terms) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* transformation occurs – when Indigenous nations gain methodological authority and settlers choose obligation over innocence).

5.2 Rhizomatic Fugues – On Kinship Listening

As the previous assemblage took us on a line of flight from the necessity of hearing the so-called “Other” to the ethics of listening, this section now turns to the question of how listening might be grounded not in extraction but in kinship, relation, and accountability.

The importance of centring Indigenous voices on Turtle Island is not a new concept. Franz Boas, one of the founders of modern anthropology, played a key role in guiding the discipline toward Herderian and Humboldtian ideas of *Volk* and *Nationalcharakter*, principles that emphasized understanding cultures in their own contexts and that would later be associated with cultural relativism (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 47–48; Koskinen 2019, 425–426).³⁴ In this context, Boas’s collaboration with Dakota anthropologist and author Ella Cara Deloria – known as *Angpétu Wašté Wīŋ* (“Beautiful Day Woman”) – is especially significant. After meeting Deloria at

³⁴ It would be relevant to note that today, with the porousness, fluidity, and overlap of cultures, a normative form of cultural relativism is more of a theoretical concept than a clearly definable reality (Li 2006, 18, 65–66). Li (2006) explains that the notion that cultures are “‘incommensurable,’ or systematically different and mutually exclusive, is now discredited in anthropology as a poor reconstruction of what cultures are in the real world” (58).

Teachers College, Columbia University, Boas engaged her linguistic and cultural expertise in his work on Dakota language and Indigenous ways of being and knowing. This marked the beginning of a collaboration that would bring life and depth to Boas's emerging but still largely conceptual research approaches (Godfrey and Gardner 2000).

Deloria played a pivotal role in developing an original and authentic method of gathering and conveying qualitative data about the culture, language, and traditions of her people (the Dakota) in particular, and Indigenous Peoples in general. She referred to the method – rooted in the central role that kinship played in Dakota society – as “kinship ethnography” (Cotera 2008, 52). The primary goal of Deloria's liberatory framework was to empower Indigenous voices (in the plural form) and thus foster the development of a more authentic socio-historical narrative. These aims were realized not only through the innovative mode of inquiry but also by deliberately refusing settler-imposed definitions and narratives (Cotera 2004, 68–69).

Deloria's kinship framework resonates with Indigenous musics, which are often structured by networks of relationship and responsibility rather than by the individualist paradigms that shape much of the Western musical thought. Kinship listening affirms Indigenous relational onto-epistemologies and disrupts colonial modes of hearing, functioning as an ideal and powerful decolonizing practice. Central to decolonizing is recognizing each Indigenous People as a distinct culture, connected through their own stories and sustained by relationships that understand the land as kin.

Deloria's efforts were essentially directed at setting “the record straight” (Cotera 2004, 53) by affirming traditional knowledge as a holistic and living continuum – one that recovers and retells the past, revitalizes the present, and reimagines a possible future. For her, education was a “war shield . . . to change the minds of non-Indians about her people” (Geliga-Grazales 2014,

19). Indeed, Deloria understood language as the essence of a people; even before knowing about kinship obligations, the child is taught words – words that connect to the land and that become part of their experiential knowledge and understanding. She was intent on disrupting and reversing the effects of colonization and cultural genocide by reconstructing and revitalizing Dakota onto-epistemologies (Cotera 2004, 60–61). This matters for decolonizing because it underscores how my framework builds on Deloria’s understanding of language and positions K–12 education – and music as a form of language – as a decisive site where settler societies can either reproduce colonial logics or cultivate obligations toward just and dignified futures on lands marked by colonization, genocide, and human rights abuses.

Deloria’s goal was “decolonizing imagination . . . offer[ing] an alternative (and even utopian) mode of imagining history, agency, and consciousness” (Cotera 2004, 53). She was essentially advocating for a significant paradigm shift in anthropological – and more precisely, ethnographic – approaches to the study of Indigenous Peoples: one that sought to discover a people through the eyes of its own members, particularly its female voices, rather than the male informant sources typically valued in research at the time (Cotera 2008, 66). In fact, she saw the Indigenous woman as the central figure in cultural continuity and criticized the settler’s outright disregard for the important traditional roles of women in knowledge-making (Cotera 2008, 69) – certainly an instructive glimpse of how change in society can be manifested when we make space for different worldviews.

Reflecting on the role of women in Indigenous society, Deloria writes to Boas, in relation to their study of the North Carolina Lumbees (a highly mixed community), about a very clear difference in culture transmission based on the origin of the mother:

I notice that in the Sioux country, children of white men and Indian mothers are steeped in folklore and language, but children of white mothers and Indian fathers are often completely cut off from the tribal folk-ways. If every Dakota woman disappeared today, and all the men took white wives, then the language and customs would die. (Quoted in Godfrey and Gardner 2000, 481)

Indeed, Deloria noted that one of the tragic consequences of colonization was the imposition of patriarchal worldviews on a culture that had intrinsically given women the role of transferring knowledge, stories, and ways of being (Cotera 2004, 63). For instance, she understood that Dakota women are essential for cultural survival – they instill values in their children, transfer their stories and traditions, tend the fires, and carry the burden of weeping for and burying the dead (Cotera 2008, 60). They *never* forget. Where the male narrative often centres loss – wars, land, hunting grounds, and language – the female narrative, learned from aunts and Elders, was one of hope, culture transference, tradition-keeping, and connection to the land through stories, experiences, birth, and kinship (Cotera 2004, 65). The female voice champions cultural perpetuation, whereas the male voice is about loss and desolation. This representation of womanhood was not the submissive and dependent one seen on contemporary movie screens, in history books, or in ideological discourse; Deloria's Indigenous woman was defiant, assertive, protective, and a healer who had the role of the "voice of the people" (Hoefel 2001, 200).

This gendered account also clarifies how kinship is sustained or envisioned in practice: through everyday pedagogy, storytelling, and experientially learned values of a community. Her anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-patriarchal calls for paradigm shifts resonate deeply with the goals of decolonizing, particularly through the centring and amplification of Indigenous onto-epistemologies. Courageously and ahead of her time, Deloria sought to represent her people in a way that honoured Dakota onto-epistemologies beyond the constraints of the ethnographic gaze. To do so – a move of particular significance within the context of this dissertation – Deloria

ultimately turned to Indigenous storytelling and, thus, to creativity and to the arts with her 1948 novel *Waterlily*, a literary degenociding act embodying the cultural continuity of her people. Just as the novel can articulate and ground a way of life and worldview in the imagination of an attentive reader, I argue in the next chapter that Indigenous musics can go even further in developing this grounded normativity for both performer and listener.

One of the more poignant passages for me came from a school quarterly bulletin in which Deloria foreshadows a sincere hope that I also hold for a future Turtle Island: one that rekindles and incorporates the valuable teachings developed over the tens of thousands of years of separate Homo sapiens life on this continent – the essential premise of degenociding, namely, the responsabilization of the settler segment in colonial spaces. She writes: “How could the best features of such a successful way of life be carried over into general American society so that such values would not be lost and how could they be modified to fit modern times?” (Deloria 1976).

Though Deloria’s calls for a deeper understanding of Indigenous Peoples by settler society remain largely unanswered today, the voices have grown in number and the message in urgency. Several Indigenous women scholars and writers lead the way in these calls for societal change, such as Marie Battiste, Eve Tuck, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, among others, and have profoundly shaped my thinking and continue to provide invaluable guidance and direction in my work.

(Re)discovering Deloria is an essential part of this assemblage, for any rhizomatic development henceforth must begin with the foundational premise that Indigenous voices are paramount in composing the Degenociding Plateau.

5.3 Functions and Effects (Assemblage II)

This assemblage moves from critique to conditions by centring Indigenous voices as methodological authority – beginning with Ella Cara Deloria’s kinship-based listening – and by specifying how dialogue, research, and cultural engagement must be structured so that Indigenous worldviews and musics are not recolonized through settler metaphor, curricular “inclusion,” or performative reconciliation but can instead contribute to the decolonizing work of accountable listening and structural transformation.

I begin by situating listening itself as the starting point of settler re-training, and how settler metaphor disrupts what can be heard, and, at best, reduces it to “content” (5.4). I then turn to cultural appropriation and alliances to examine how Indigenous cultural expression can be distorted, extracted, or detached from the relationships and protocols that give it meaning (5.5). From there, I examine recognition and reconciliation logics – including the settler demand to “move on” – to show how inclusionary tactics such as multiculturalism can prevent transfer of authority and land and, ultimately, dignity-bound relationship (5.6). I move next to the necessity of disturbance – shaken, not stirred – arguing that decolonizing requires unsettling settler comfort, the sedimented strata of institutions (in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense), and curriculum-as-innocence, rather than reframing the same settler-state structures with new repertoire (5.7). I end by gathering these lines of flight in a brief synthesis that clarifies the conditions of ethical engagement and the conceptual bridge this assemblage builds toward the human rights architectures that follow (5.8).

Building on the risks identified in *Assemblage I* – for example, translational and epistemic violence sustained through dominant “norms” and zero point assumptions – this assemblage draws on Indigenous grounded normativity, refusal, and border thinking to clarify how onto-

epistemologies (including musicking) can be engaged within Indigenous structures – through protocol, consent, relational accountability, and non-appropriative action – rather than being lost in translation through multicultural inclusionary schemes.

In this way, *Assemblage II* prepares the decolonizing proposal to treat musicking not as representational “content,” but as a structured encounter where accountable listening can be practised.

5.4 Indigenous Voices Against Settler Metaphorizing

I’m uncomfortable with apocalypse because its focus is on endings, and endings are always more traumatic and violent if the seedlings of the next world haven’t been planted or haven’t yet started to grow. I think the engagement, the practice of building different systems together creates the knowledge and skills we need to actualize these visions and dreams of something different.

— Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Every Day We Must Get Up and Relearn the World”

Building from the kinship concept, this line of flight exposes a key caveat: settler metaphors and multicultural frameworks risk recolonizing Indigenous onto-epistemologies when engaged through misguided approaches. As Ella Cara Deloria (1979) reminds us, Indigenous onto-epistemologies must be heard on their own terms, not mediated through colonial filters. For Deloria, “language is indeed the gateway to their spiritual culture area” (16), making attentive engagement with Indigenous modes of expression essential to understanding Indigenous thought. Such knowledges risk being diluted or “lost in translation” through presumably well-intentioned but ultimately settler-based metaphors. L. B. Simpson emphasizes that the conditions of encounter also matter; understanding the “where” of the exchange of knowledge is essential because, as she notes, “the land would pull out a different set of conversations and gift us with a different way of relating” (Maynard and Simpson 2022, 33). When this “Coulthardian” grounded normativity is absent, such approaches displace authentic Indigenous knowledges, practices, and

political goals, replacing them with representations that are more legible or comfortable within settler-colonial-controlled frameworks. Accountability to Indigenous relations, law, and land is thus lost.

These metaphors have included attempts to place Indigenous Peoples within Canadian multiculturalism narratives, or to use Indigenous art and knowledge as Canadian identity symbols or aesthetic resources. Many Indigenous scholars address how attitudes toward Indigenous intellectual and cultural property have been impacted by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, R.S.C. (Government of Canada 1985), assented to on July 21, 1988. In his monograph *Hungry Listening*, Robinson (2020) argues that inclusion can continue to operate colonially when Indigenous expression is admitted into structures whose underlying authority and assumptions remain unchanged. Recognition and accommodation may therefore give an appearance of openness while leaving the settler institution in control of the encounter and preventing genuinely reciprocal relationships between collaborators (5).

His critique of the multicultural inclusionary “ticket” goes further: when Indigenous cultural expression is welcomed only through terms established by the settler state, Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and histories of land stewardship are displaced (12). Indigenous thought and culture can consequently become “resource” through which Canada enriches its own national self-image rather than expressions of distinct political, cultural, and onto-epistemic authority (Robinson 2020, 13). In art music, he adds, the fixation upon “Indigenous content, but not Indigenous structure . . . leads to epistemological violence” (6). L. B. Simpson also cautions that this violence is often veiled in seductive recognition-as-performance and inclusion-as-validation tropes, and that it must be met with refusal – of “the recognition, the invitations to perform, the individual validations, the crumbs” (Maynard and Simpson 2022, 179).

5.5 On Cultural Appropriation and Alliances

Gaudreault-DesBiens (1999) defines cultural appropriation as “the unauthorized borrowing of expressions, styles, symbolism, themes, or knowledge associated with a different culture, often by a member of a dominant culture from a dominated culture”³⁵ (401). Boucher (2010) finds that in Indigenous societies music is not merely entertainment but an essential element of preservation and reproduction of collective memory and language, and artists are often viewed as the “depositories” or “guardians” of this knowledge across generations (127). Western-inspired copyright laws traditionally focus on protecting individual moral and economic rights of artistic creation and performance, rendering Indigenous traditional musics vulnerable to cultural appropriation, since this cultural heritage often ends up falling into the supposed public domain (Boucher 2010, 127–128).

The damage appropriation does is manifold. Boucher (2010) discusses several examples of where it can go wrong: sacred symbols divorced from their ritual contexts

- a) Using sacred symbols divorced from their ritual contexts is offensive and disrespectful since these symbols are often the foundations of identity for Indigenous communities (129).
- b) Indigenous cultural integrity is endangered when non-Indigenous people or artists distort meanings, perpetuate stereotypes, and primitivize musical practices (129).
- c) Inequities present themselves when non-Indigenous artists or institutions profit from unjustly copyrighted works inspired by Indigenous musics, leaving the original creators or guardians of this music without recognition or remuneration. This intensifies the economic inequalities and deprives Indigenous Peoples of potential sources of income (130, 133).

³⁵ My translation of Gaudreault-DesBiens (1999): “Mais qu’entend-on au juste par ‘appropriation culturelle’? Pour l’essentiel, cette expression générique désigne l’emprunt non autorisé qu’effectue un membre d’une culture donnée, le plus souvent dominante, de modes d’expression, de styles littéraires ou visuels, d’une symbolique, d’une thématique ou d’un savoir-faire quelconque, qui sont généralement associés à une culture autre que la sienne, le plus souvent dominée” (401).

Today, in Canada, examples of musical appropriation continue to lead to distorted, stereotyped, and reductive representations of Indigenous Peoples, since the voices or instruments representing these cultures and worldviews are deterritorialized. The ability of Indigenous self-determination is lost and settler domination reinforced. Much like anthropologist Ella Cara Deloria (discussed earlier), ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond writes about dismantling the colonizer-imposed demeaning narrative and its accompanying stereotypes of how the “Indian” should perform, look, listen, or speak. Throughout her writings, Diamond (2006) criticizes the tendency of considering musics of Indigenous Peoples as “other” music, or part of “world” music (325). Her solution in alliance studies allows us to get closer to the meanings found in Indigenous musics and helps us reframe and redefine identity with new considerations (Giroux 2018, 92). These alliances have the potential to produce narratives, particularly the narratives between artists and academia, that could take the conversations to new levels of understanding where Indigenous cultures are no longer stuck in a “has been” formula but are considered within a vibrant, living, modern, and cross-disciplinary framework by ethnomusicologists.

One such ethnomusicologist, Giroux (2018), considers an even wider scope to alliance studies where the model “accommodate[s] alliances between east and west, and past and present, in turn intersecting with issues of distinctiveness and mainstreamness” (101). Giroux (2018) concludes, yet again in the manner of Deloria, that alliance studies highlight “kinship, relations, histories, and communities” and, on Métis identity, writes:

These alliances make the Metis nation. Metis identity is not about having a certain list of individual characteristics (blood, cultural competence, etc.) or a membership card, although these are often part of what makes a Metis person Metis. Rather, it is relationships with people and land – with kin and place – that are at the heart of the development and continuation of what it means to be Metis; these relationships define Indigenous nations. (114)

As is often the case, the United Nations already has the legal language to protect against appropriative schemes. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a United Nations agency, encourages the creation of *sui generis* systems to protect traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions (including Indigenous musics) from unauthorized use, exploitation, distortion, and misappropriation. Separately, and more narrowly, the WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge, adopted at Geneva on May 24, 2004, is a historic legal step toward building norms around the protection of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in the patent context. The question always remains, however: how do we move from laudable law to lived law – from rights articulated in principle to implementation and enforceable practice?

5.6 On Recognition, Reconciliation, and “Moving On”

So f*** all the bureaucracy.
Keep all your apologies.
I know you are sorry,
but you're more lost than me.

— Leonard Sumner, “I know You’re Sorry”

In reading Coulthard (2014), we see how “politics of recognition” encouraged by multiculturalism, accommodation, and inclusion tend “to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (3). In the Foreword of Coulthard’s *Red Skin, White Masks*, Kahnawà:ke activist and scholar Taiaiake Alfred sums up the problem with Canada’s attitude toward Indigenous futures: “There is nothing natural about the dominance of white people on the North American continent and the removal and erasure of our people, our laws, and our cultures from our homelands” (quoted in Coulthard 2014, x–xi).

This same logic and dynamic are reflected in Canadian reconciliation narratives. Coulthard (2014) explains that the settler Canadian state is intent on framing colonialism as an unfortunate legacy of the past, insisting that the present democratic state constructs itself as incapable of repeating such injustices (22). As a result, Indigenous Peoples are expected to move on – contemporary settler Canadians are absolved of complicity in this “‘sad chapter’ in our shared history” (Coulthard 2014, 125), rather than take on the obligations of repair and redress. To counter this, Coulthard (2007) suggests a different approach, one centred around “dialogue and listening” (447), not as performance but as a condition for structural change.

Choctaw playwright and scholar LeAnne Howe’s concept of tribalography helps clarify what dialogue can look like when it is grounded in Indigenous stories and practices rather than in settler metaphor or recognition-as-performance. Howe (1999) frames tribalography as a rhetorical mode of relation in which storytelling does not separate fiction from history; instead, it operates as a holistic practice of Indigenous worldmaking. She argues that these stories are a “living theater” (117, 123) that can generate conflict and discomfort but can also move participants toward “understanding and enlightenment – a sacred third act” (117) that emerges through the encounter itself. In a Canadian context, and especially instructive for decolonizing policies, Howe also notes that non-Indigenous listeners may respond by recounting or reliving their own histories of suffering – responses she posits as a possible sign that lives are being drawn into relation and that paradigms are being shifted (Howe 1999, 124).

Listening thus becomes the *actus reus* of these exchanges, an exchange circle in which relations are strengthened and futurities imagined. This type of sharing – as opposed to extraction – is key to any model, such as decolonizing, in which power dynamics can otherwise suppress listening. Read alongside Coulthard’s call for dialogue and listening, tribalography thus

offers a concrete Indigenous account of how colonial binaries can be disrupted, and why the conditions of listening – its “how” and “where” – must be ethically structured rather than left to multicultural logics.

Crucially, Robinson (2020) cautions that dialogue and listening must be structured within Indigenous protocols rather than by multicultural schemes. L. B. Simpson, in *Rehearsals for Living* (Maynard and Simpson 2022), adds that these “protocols,” or as she prefers to call them “practices,” operate at both the structural and practical levels and can mean systems “based on relationality, reciprocity, consent and diversity” (181).

In L. B. Simpson’s (2017) work, these practices find grounded normativity in Nishnaabeg knowledge, resurgence, and radical resistance against settler colonialism (34), including resistance to capitalist extraction’s “continual death march” (Maynard and Simpson 2022, 95). L. B. Simpson (2017) pleads with her nation to adopt a “radical resurgent present” (1) to destroy the “pillars of settler colonialism” (10) with “a rebellion of love, persistence, commitment, and profound caring and create constellations of coresistance, working together toward a radical alternative present based on deep reciprocity and the gorgeous generative refusal of colonial recognition” (9).

Would this resurgence be applicable to settler Canadian society at large? Would this be an answer to Dwayne Donald’s (2012) call for all Canadians to live up to their obligations toward humans, animals, land, water, climate – to extricate themselves from what he calls the colonial “pedagogy of the fort, . . . a kind of cultural ditch” (93) that denies relationality between Indigenous Peoples and settler Canadians?

Along the same lines, in her monograph *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson (2014) demonstrates that the reversal of cultural genocide cannot be achieved through “translation” or

“inclusion” (177) in the settler state but rather through a fundamental interruption of the settler-colonial narrative. The same anthropological missteps of “othering,” “ordering,” and “fetishizing” Indigenous Peoples – on their own lands no less – serve to reinforce colonial logics and monopoly on knowledge. Ella Cara Deloria’s calls to action and change over a century ago continue to search for resolutions today. Audra Simpson (2014) questions: “How to stop a story that is always being told? Or, how to change a story that is always being told?” (177).

Ultimately, she proposes a triadic approach in which Indigenous nations are accepted as “nested sovereignties,” settler recognition or ethnographic “pinning” of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge is not the goal (what she terms as “ethnographic refusal”), and finally that Indigenous political life and presence must be seen as contemporary, self-determining, and legitimate (Audra Simpson 2014, 10–12).

The spoken-word piece “Keep all your apologies” (see epigraph) by Anishinaabe MC, singer, and songwriter Leonard Sumner captures the problem with contemporary reconciliation schemes: remorse is performed while the structures that require transformation remain intact, leaving settler Canadians “more lost” than they know. For decolonizing, the goal is not to seek recognition and apology but to re-centre responsibility: for settler Canadians to undertake relationship-building on Indigenous terms, to accept Indigenous authority, consent, and protocol, and to “find” and face their obligations ethically, in line with international human rights norms.

5.7 Shaken, Not Stirred

As a parallel point in education, Battiste (2013) argues that the “‘add and stir’ model of bringing Aboriginal education into the curricula, environment, and teaching practices has not achieved the needed change . . . , [it] continues to sustain the superiority of Eurocentric knowledge and

processes” (28). The colonial system effectively needs to be “shaken” for change to occur meaningfully with the ultimate goal of respectful (*ergo* dignified) existence on stolen lands for settler Canadians. Canadian national narratives invisibilize Indigenous onto-epistemologies and the gravity of the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples on these lands resulting from settler encroachment (Donald 2009, 141). Battiste (2013) locates this “great forgetting” (115) in Canadian curricula and shows how it has had the effect of diminishing Indigenous accomplishments and contributions – a racially tainted program that parallels the colonial project. In fact, she reveals a counter-narrative in which “every First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student has been contaminated by a system built on false colonial and racist assumptions that target them as inferior, child-like, or corrupt” (65). This curricular assessment underscores the need to include non-Indigenous learners in decolonization metrics so that they can face a broken system (the settler state) and the obligations they inherit to help repair it.

Relatedly, Chickasaw–Cheyenne human rights lawyer, advocate, and educator James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson (2000) describes the process of undoing the colonial stranglehold on worldviews and knowledge-making as “making the familiar strange and the strange familiar [as] part of the ongoing transformation of knowledge” (255). For settler Canadians (and settler institutions), what feels “familiar” – normal, neutral, and “just the way things are” (for example, curriculum, academic categories, research methods, cultural property, authorship) – must be treated as imposed through the coercion and violence of racist colonial structures and attitudes that deemed Indigenous ways of knowing and living as inferior. What feels “strange” – marginal, “other” (for example, Indigenous law, protocol, relational accountability, land-based knowledge, and musics) – must become legible on its own terms. These structural/relational realities demonstrate that the dominant power sets the terms of

recognition, while the colonized are expected to internalize a Fanonian psychoexistential reality that normalizes their condition of domination.

5.8 Synthesis: Lines of Flight from Assemblage II to Assemblage III

Several themes and concepts are shared among the scholars engaged in the previous subsections. Together they form substantial guidance and a strong voice for possible onto-epistemic transformations in settler states. A common thread is that decolonization requires fundamental reconfiguration or even refusal of Western zero point onto-epistemologies. As *Assemblage I* established, Global South voices often articulate their calls for change through theoretical frameworks such as epistemic disobedience, delinking, and decolonial cosmopolitanism, while in this assemblage, Indigenous voices saw change more through cultural and land-based experiences. Robinson, L. B. Simpson, and other Indigenous scholars clarify that knowledge must be rooted in local Indigenous worldviews and lived relations rather than seen only through the lens of Western rational thought – a general call to “listen through a different ear” as ethical practice and to shift from universality to pluriversality.

In parallel, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Audra Simpson, and Howe provide guidance on how knowledge affecting Indigenous Peoples must be researched and created – with Indigenous voices at the forefront. The recurring concern across Indigenous voices is that knowledge-making must be accountable, relational, and non-extractive, emphasizing local practices, lived experience, and sensory–experiential ways of knowing. Howe’s (1999) concept of tribalogy further shows that dialogue can be held through Indigenous storytelling practices that disrupt colonial binaries and open an ethically structured space for relationality – one in which listening may be uncomfortable yet refuses settler-driven closure or appropriation.

Within settler realities and social dynamics, this ethical requirement must be approached with the recognition that colonial power is not only institutional but also affective and behavioural. Reaching back to the previous assemblage again, DiAngelo's account of white fragility helps identify common patterns of defensiveness and self-protection in settler society and settler-state narratives that can derail dialogue, even when reconciliation language appears progressive. In this sense, Indigenous refusals of recognition-as-performance, along with calls for upholding protocols and practices grounded in reciprocity and consent, are not rhetorical preferences but necessary conditions for accountable listening and knowledge creation in settler states.

This same recognition logic also operates through schooling, where curriculum becomes a key technology for normalizing what counts as knowledge, culture, and history. As this assemblage has shown, education is a primary site where this narrative is reproduced – and therefore a primary site where it can be contested and reframed. This dissertation therefore links human rights obligations and settler implication, and it treats the arts – particularly Indigenous musics, approached through accountable musicking – as a practical and promising site for undoing this warped narrative that sustains cultural genocide.

Read together, these Indigenous scholars clarify that settler engagements with Indigenous worldviews and knowledge – and the musics that enact and carry both – should be approached respectfully with decoloniality in mind and in action. Their work offers key indications on which types of settler relationships with Indigenous knowledges (and musics) could be beneficial for decolonization, and in what situations they may instead reinforce colonial dominance and frameworks.

These lessons bridge directly to our Human Rights Discourses Assemblages: *Assemblage III A – From Principles to Duties*, where UN-based and Canadian frameworks articulate binding obligations (e.g., CRC) and non-binding recommendations (e.g., TRC) for education and children’s rights, and to *Assemblage III B – Cultural Genocide and Diagnosing Denial*, which names how cultural genocide persists and where degenociding could help the work of redress. They also prepare the ground for treating music not as illustrative “content,” but as a site of encounter where listening, protocol, and accountability can be practised and trained.

Chapter 6 Assemblage III – Human Rights Discourses

6.1 Rhizomatic Fugues – On Human Rights Laws

A watershed moment for humanity was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948b), proclaimed in the aftermath of World War II and the hopeful calls of “Never Again.” Paradoxically, it was largely drafted by representatives of countries still involved in serious, ongoing human rights violations at home – residential schools in Canada, Jim Crow laws in the USA, Stalinist purges in the USSR, brutal suppression in Indochina by France, and the United Kingdom’s rushed withdrawal from India, which caused millions of deaths during the Partition of India and Pakistan.

Yet, the text of the Declaration itself became the basis for other important watershed moments in human rights law at both international and national levels. At the UN we see the ICESCR, ICCPR, ICERD, CEDAW, and CRC, and at the Canadian level, the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977), and the Constitution Act (1982) with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The UDHR (itself non-binding but largely regarded as reflecting customary international law) has also been foundational to a plethora of non-binding – but influential – frameworks, including UNDRIP at the international level and, in Canada, the TRC and MMIWG reports. In Canada, the UNDRIP Act (2021), in principle, is a commitment to align laws with UNDRIP.

International human rights represent the civilizational needs of a particular moment in humanity’s ongoing story. Complacency and indifference toward these rights inevitably lead to their erosion and ultimately violation. With another *clin d’œil* to Deleuze and Guattari, it is

incumbent upon humanity to keep human rights in a “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22). Fortunately, human rights law is not static; it remains open to reinterpretation, improvement, and expansion in light of new ways of thinking and knowing.

As we will observe in this two-part assemblage, *Assemblage III A* engages with the work of binding treaty bodies (CRC, ICESCR, ICCPR, etc.), along with that of independent experts, Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups, and other non-binding mechanisms – including guidelines for onto-epistemic change in Canada via the TRC, MMIWG, and other national and Indigenous policy recommendations – providing valuable and inspired insight and guidance on how to realize the human rights enshrined in these covenants and conventions.

We then head into *Assemblage III B*, where I take a deep dive into the genocide question in Canada, Canada’s obligations vis-à-vis the Genocide Convention, and the impetus for the concept of degenociding. I will argue that genocide denial functions as an obstruction to rights realization, enabling Canada to evade its obligations toward rights-holders. Genocide denial, at its core, not only prevents Member States from bearing their obligations or, at the very least, from being taken seriously in human rights discourse but also transgresses the very opening notion of the UDHR: the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” (UDHR 1948b, Preamble).

Finally, this assemblage sends lines of flight into the following chapters, where I enter the domain of music and consider the possibilities it offers for advancing and upholding the rights of the most vulnerable in Canadian society, while shaping their identities, affirming their dignity, and supporting their agency in K–12 and other spaces.

6.2 Assemblage III A – From Principles to Duties

6.2.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Shall, Should. Could You, Would You?”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* human rights instruments connect as lines of flight into obligations for education and cultural life) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* rights-talk ruptures into assimilation, “pinning,” and false reconciliation narratives) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* obligation hardens as law, guidance, and reports while colonial control over culture persists) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* can be enacted – translating dignity, participation, and non-discrimination as praxis, with Indigenous-led protocol and anti-extractive safeguards) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* change sticks – when children are treated as rights-holders and settler responsibility becomes praxis, not “deceptive cadence”).

6.2.2 Functions and Effects (Assemblage III A)

This assemblage, feeding into the Degenociding Plateau, brings together the provisions of various human rights instruments – both binding and non-binding – and the guidelines developed through them by UN experts and committees, as well as RCAP, TRC, and MMIWG, seen here as Canadian human-rights based domestic accountability frameworks. I do so in an ordered sequence as follows: I begin with the instruments themselves (6.2.3); I then turn to UN/UNESCO interpretive guidance (6.2.4); and I end by situating these obligations within Canadian commissions and reports as domestic accountability architectures (6.2.5).

I focus on the UN/UNESCO interpretive guidance that resonates with and outlines how settler-colonial societies should (or could) uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples in general and settler children in particular. In this manner, I foreground Canada’s binding obligations as a baseline, enriching them with interpretive guidance, generating lines of flight for the degenociding roadmap. The purpose of this assemblage is therefore to critically examine and contextualize international human rights and education instruments that could mark this roadmap and help undo the enduring impacts of colonialism, particularly through mechanisms of cultural resurgence – mechanisms that are understood as Indigenous-led and authorized.

As a research focus, within these international human rights instruments, I aim to identify parallels with the concepts already explored in the previous assemblages, thereby continuing to weave the interdisciplinary Deleuze–Guattari lines of flight that feed the Degenociding Plateau.

I am keenly interested in education – specifically the instruments and interpretations that outline rights to quality education, to dignity, and to agency in the child’s development – as human rights law recognizes it as the key to full personality development and the foundation for realizing other rights (ICESCR 1966, Art. 13.1 and CRC 1989, Art. 29.1). For this reason, most of this section revolves around children’s rights.

The aspirational recommendations of UN Special Rapporteurs and UNESCO guidelines, which draw direct inspiration from these instruments, offer both substantive and practical mechanisms for advancing decolonial objectives in education. In examining these guidelines and the possibilities they outline, I have focused on identifying actionable suggestions that can contribute to building the Degenociding Plateau as a mechanism to undo – to the extent possible – the act of cultural genocide.

To do so, I examine the following questions:

- a) What obligations must states fulfil under binding (“hard law”) instruments to ensure the transmission of local values and dignity to children, and to ensure the child’s agency in their own development?
- b) What practices are recommended for transmitting local values and dignity to children, and for ensuring the child’s agency in their own development?
- c) How do Canadian commissions and inquiries (RCAP, TRC, and MMIWG) interpret these obligations and recommendations as domestic accountability frameworks in a settler-colonial context?

By drawing on both the instruments themselves and the analyses of key interpreters, I establish the normative requirements and suggested practices in these areas, thus helping clarify my

reasoning to substantiate the theory of degenociding as a mechanism to undo elements of cultural genocide.

In summary, the instruments and interpretive guidance mapped here offer guidance, obligations, recommendations, and commentaries articulating best practices for decolonial education, state obligations and responsibilities toward children, and Indigenous resurgence mechanisms. These documents represent the legal anchors of this inquiry and will ultimately be used to describe conditions required for Indigenous musics and worldviews to flourish as positive and ethically sound(ed) forces of change within the degenociding process.

6.2.3 UN Instruments on Education, Cultural Life, and Indigenous Inclusion

In this section, I trace a normative line of flight through UN and UNESCO instruments. I begin with early child-rights and human rights texts that frame education as necessary for the dignity and moral development of the child. I then turn to binding treaty law on education and cultural life. I then move to the question of Indigenous inclusion in curricular narratives and cultural transmission. Finally, I end by situating the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as possible scaffolding to ensure best practices in engaging with “intangible” onto-epistemologies (including Indigenous musics) – key knowledge for degenociding praxis in order to prevent re-inscribing colonial zero point schemes.

Just over a century ago, the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child poignantly stated that “mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give” (League of Nations 1924, Preamble). This well-meant, yet inherently vague, statement laid the foundation for further declarations such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which Article 26 stipulates the right of free and compulsory elementary education for all to enable “full

development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups . . .” (UDHR 1948b, art. 26.2).

The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (DRC) offers the child the opportunity to develop “morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity” (Principle 2). Education goals, such as the development of “individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility” (Principle 7) and the need to protect the child from “practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination” (Principle 10), are specified.

A year later, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) – the first legally binding international instrument dedicated to the right to education. This Convention enshrines a few main principles formulated in the previous declarations but leaves out more progressive elements such as those stated earlier in Principle 7 of the DRC. Canada has neither signed nor ratified the 1960 Convention.³⁶

Next, in 1966, two Covenants are adopted simultaneously by the General Assembly of the UN. The first, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, briefly mentions education in the context of parents being given the liberty “to ensure the religious and moral education of their children” (Article 18.4). The second, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), goes much further, namely in Article 13, and includes all

³⁶ Canada is a signatory to all but the first listed – the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960). Arguments typically given for Canada’s non-ratification relate to its federal structure and the division of powers regarding education. Canada does nevertheless commit to the non-binding Recommendation. However, other Member States with similar systems, such as Australia, Germany, and Brazil, are signatories. An analysis of this apparent discrepancy falls outside the purview of this study.

essential elements of the DRC and states the important role of education in promoting “understanding, tolerance and friendship . . . for the maintenance of peace.” Article 15.1.a enshrines the right for everyone to “take part in cultural life” as proposed in Article 27.1 of the UDHR.

Finally, in 1989, the UN adopts the legally binding Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that will enshrine several education goals. Clearly leaning on Article 26 of the UDHR and Article 13 of the ICESCR, the child’s “inherent dignity” (CRC 1989, Preamble) is accepted as a baseline for the goal of this instrument to enable the development of the child to its “fullest potential” (CRC 1989, art. 29.1.a). Children will have the right to participate in society, to define their identity, and have a say on how their community develops (CRC 1989). Article 29.1 is of special interest in possible Canada-specific decolonizing education goals. For example, it addresses the importance of respecting the “national values of the country in which the child is living” (29.1.c), directs States Parties to prepare the child to live in a society that promotes values of understanding, peace, and tolerance with Indigenous Peoples (29.1.d), and promotes the “development of respect for the natural environment” (29.1.e), through education. Furthermore, Article 31 recognizes the right of the child to take part without restrictions in cultural life and artistic pursuits.

In sum, these instruments do more than declare an abstract “right to education”: they specify education’s normative purpose as including the cultivation of dignity, moral development, agency, participation, and non-discrimination, while also affirming cultural life and artistic participation as rights-bearing dimensions of human flourishing. Building on these lines of flight, I trace the task-specific architectures of international human rights law that articulate what forms of ethical transmission (including refusal, protocol, and consent) are

paramount when Indigenous cultural practices are at stake and curricular development is in play. From this baseline, I pivot toward “intangible cultural heritage” to examine how the international community expects Member States to safeguard living knowledges and practices – and to do so in ways that do not reproduce extractive logics – in settler colonial contexts where the risks of cultural oblivion³⁷ (that of Indigenous Peoples) are acute.

Within the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (CSICH), three provisions are especially important to watch when assessing how an international safeguarding mechanism could either advance – or reproduce – the very power dynamics that degenociding seeks to undo: Article 11 and Article 15, which place community participation at the centre of safeguarding and “management,” and Article 12, which obliges States to create and regularly update national inventories of intangible cultural heritage. Article 11 is useful for degenociding praxis as “participation of communities” is required for States to “identify and define” intangible cultural heritage. Article 15 extends this beyond consultation by calling for the “widest possible participation” and active involvement in management.

Yet Article 12’s inventory requirement is also the Convention’s most controversial mechanism in settler-colonial contexts, because listing, documenting, and “pinning” practices can easily drift into extractive methodologies – especially where Indigenous songs, ceremonies, knowledge, and pedagogies are governed by Nation-specific consents, protocols, and forms of refusal. Later recommendations in UNESCO’s *Basic Texts* regarding CSICH emphasize that awareness-raising actions should not “de-contextualize or denaturalize the intangible cultural

³⁷ See Innu Essipit scholar Pierrot Ross-Tremblay’s (2019) account of “cultural oblivion” and “amnesia” resulting from genocidal policies against Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

heritage manifestations or expressions concerned” (UNESCO 2024, 62) and that Indigenous communities “play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of the intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2024, 4). At the time of writing this dissertation, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Russia are among the small number (approximately eight) UN Member States that have yet to approve, accept, or ratify the CSICH.

Read through the lens of degenociding, the same instruments outline education’s normative purpose as the cultivation of dignity, agency, participation, and respect for difference, including specific references to cultural and artistic life and, in some instances, explicit reference to Indigenous Peoples. Degenociding utilises these normative and binding state obligations as a grounding to identify where colonial structures – and the exclusionary policies regarding Indigenous onto-epistemologies (and musics) that they advance – have the effect of undermining the child’s “fullest potential” and distorting their “national values,” thereby clarifying what a rights-based curricular reorientation must confront and undo.

Accordingly, to ensure the realization of these rights and in line with ICESCR 1966, Art. 13.1 and CRC 1989, Art. 29.1, degenociding mechanisms for undoing elements of cultural genocide work best in education. For this, re-orienting curricula, ensuring accountable encounters, and supporting Indigenous resurgence will shape settler children’s developmental conditions toward dignity-based, non-discriminatory, and relationship-centred ways of knowing and living.

This list of instruments and provisions is not exhaustive, but it establishes the binding and normative foundation required for this dissertation: education as dignity, agency, participation, and cultural life, and clarity on the relevant (and minimal) legal commitments against

discrimination and cultural erasure. The next section therefore turns from enumeration to interpretation – how Member States can enact these obligations in real-world educational and cultural settings.

6.2.4 UN/UNESCO Interpretive Guidance

Once human rights conventions are adopted, committees are tasked with producing relevant commentaries that interpret and give direction on the treaty content. These documents provide policy makers, NGOs, and other invested parties with insight into the latest “best practices” for addressing specific human rights issues.

For example, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has added meaningful commentary on Article 13 of the ICESCR. The CESCR General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (Art. 13) (1999) updates terminology on education and describes it as a vehicle to “lift” oneself into full participation in one’s community with the resulting “enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, [as] one of the joys and rewards of human existence” (para. 1). This is indeed a noteworthy goal that could be realized with decolonizing strategies in education. In paragraph 6.c. – *Acceptability*, the OHCHR remarks on the importance of ensuring the relevance, cultural appropriateness, and quality of the form and substance of education. Paragraph 6.d. – *Adaptability*, adds that education must serve changing society and community needs and should demonstrate flexibility in K–12 (see also paras 9 and 12).

Decolonizing asks Canadians: If education must be culturally appropriate and adaptable (para. 6.c–d), how can Canadian K–12 schooling marginalize Indigenous knowledges and musics and still claim to meet the right to education?

The OHCHR's General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education (2001), prepared by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, refines the CRC's Article 29, namely by asking States Parties "to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values" (para. 2). The Committee also importantly highlights "the links between article 29 (1) and the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance . . . the exploitation of prejudices, or the teaching or dissemination of distorted values" (para. 11). In this light, the Committee suggests that children can play "a unique role in bridging many of the differences that have historically separated groups of people from one another" (para. 4). These commentaries are in line with, and help frame, the goals of degenociding: by reversing the invisibilizing of Indigenous worldviews, they address remnants of colonial racist policies and advance transformative educational curricula.

Degenociding asks Canadians: If we are obligated to promote a culture infused with human rights values, and to resist the dissemination of distorted values that sustain racism and related intolerance, how can Canadian education continue to invisibilize Indigenous worldviews and still claim to support children – individually and collectively – in developing their "personalities, talents and abilities" and living "a full and satisfying life within society" (para. 2)?

At the "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance," held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, education was again deemed to be a key measure of prevention for "changing attitudes and behaviour based on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in societies" (UN General Assembly 2002, 36). Furthermore, colonialism and the structures it supports were deemed an important source of continued manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (17), and were characterized by the

exclusion of Indigenous Peoples (19). In fact, to support victims, the Durban Conference's Programme of Action clearly urges States Parties to "promote better knowledge of and respect for indigenous cultures and heritage" (52) and, in the *Education and awareness-raising measures* section, to "promote an accurate understanding of the histories and cultures of indigenous peoples" (89). Twenty years after the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the UN General Assembly prepared a follow-up resolution and acknowledged that "discrimination, hate speech, stigmatization, racism, systemic racism, stereotypes, racial profiling, violence, xenophobia and intolerance, both in person and online" against minorities, including Indigenous Peoples, had risen (UNGA 2021, para. 7).

Degenociding challenges Canadians: If these patterns are rising (UNGA 2021, para. 7), how will Canada measure – within curricula, teacher education, and public institutions – whether schooling is actually shifting settler understandings toward dignity, accountability, and respectful relations, rather than leaving colonial "common sense" intact?

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) published General Comment No. 21, Right of everyone to take part in cultural life (art. 15, para. 1a of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (2009), in which I note paragraph 23, detailing steps toward the elimination of discrimination by, for example, the recognition by States of "the existence of diverse identities of individuals and communities on their territories," and notably paragraph 27, directing States to incorporate Indigenous Peoples' "history, knowledge and technologies, as well as their social, economic and cultural values and aspirations . . . in school curricula for all" – not only for Indigenous Peoples.

Similarly, the UN Human Rights Council's Report on the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2019) notes that "it is . . . of paramount importance to address

indigenous concepts of recognition, reparation and reconciliation . . . as a means of addressing colonization and its long-term effects . . . recognition of indigenous peoples’ claims to their lands, the decolonization of education systems . . . should be considered an essential part of recognition, reparation and reconciliation” (Sec. II, art. 14). In describing reparation and reconciliation the Report states that these are processes rather than destinations (Sec. IV, art. 45). These processes will need to “address the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on indigenous peoples’ education, cultures and languages [and support] indigenous peoples’ cultural revitalization [while] integrating indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols and connections to the land into the reconciliation process” (Sec. IV, art. 45).

Important to note for decolonizing work is the 2021 report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education. Koumbou Boly Barry notes that international rights instruments on education ask Member States to ensure that the cultural dimensions of the right to education are well integrated into education structures to ensure quality and inclusive education. A key reference for decolonizing praxis is the reminder to *not* subordinate “the multitude of cultural identities present in a territory to a single approach to education in a way that is likely to create a situation of institutionalized discrimination” (UN Human Rights Council [A/HRC/47/32] 2021, para. 27(d)).

In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council’s Study of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, specifically aimed at integrating an HRBA into Indigenous children’s rights under the UNDRIP, advises Member States to: (a) consult Indigenous Peoples – including children – on school curricula; (b) ensure that curricula present accurate Indigenous histories and eliminate stereotypes; (c) fund capacity-building to support culturally appropriate services; (d)

recruit and retain Indigenous teachers and strengthen Indigenous-led education initiatives; (e) ensure that national standards respect Indigenous educational traditions and knowledge systems (UN Human Rights Council [A/HRC/48/74] 2021, annex, para. 17).

Also, in line with decolonizing goals, UNESCO's 2022 technical note *New Understandings of Education's Contributions to Peace* explains that structural and epistemological violence derived from exclusionary beliefs calls for transformative education models based on customs and traditions of the local cultures and Indigenous communities, models that must respond and adapt to "local needs and realities" (UNESCO 2022, 3) and "redress past injustice" (UNESCO 2022, 6).

UNESCO has also been cognizant of the importance of rethinking education through a clearly defined reconciliation lens, and, accordingly, provides an avenue for its realization through the *Reconciliation Through Global Citizenship Education* Programme paper (UNESCO 2023b). Within the framework of UNESCO's "Education 2030" agenda, adopted in 2015, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) "opens space for multiple and marginalised voices and encourages learners to question their assumptions and adherence to dominant perspectives . . . is especially suited for reconciliation . . . [and] must draw on local values or concepts" (UNESCO 2023b, 4). GCED is an ideal tool for reconciliation as it balances national, cultural, and Indigenous worldviews, while simultaneously striving to confront injustices and disparities across local, national, and global levels (UNESCO 2023b, 5). GCED as a transformative pedagogy "can contribute to reconciliation by valuing knowledges that have been oppressed and using these to question powerful, universalized assumptions. By embracing a pluralization of ideas, GCED can also foster meaningful engagement across epistemic divides" (UNESCO

2023b, 8). UNESCO urges Member States to “confront racist exclusion at an individual and structural level . . . and engage with various ways of knowing and being” (UNESCO 2023b, 9).

These UNESCO interventions sharpen what “reconciliation” requires at the level of pedagogy and curriculum. The required paradigm shifts include opening space for marginalised voices, unsettling settler (dominant) perspectives, and grounding educational transformation in local values and Indigenous community realities.

The Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development (REPHRSD) (UNESCO 2023a) is a standard-setting instrument on education. It supersedes the 1974 recommendation of a similar name, and updates quite considerably the spirit and language of the previous document. It is largely grounded in the binding principles of the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Geneva Conventions (1949), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The recommendations are also meant to be read through the lens of UNDRIP, which is consequential for my work, since it means that music education curricula must adhere to Indigenous rights regarding cultural expression and intellectual property. There are several recommendations that are critical for decolonising praxis and can be useful for the music educator. The following table helps target the main ones:

Table 6.1 Recommendation on “Education for Peace, Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development” (REPHRSD) through a Degenociding Lens

Recommendation Directives	Degenociding Praxis in K–12 Music Education
Paragraph 6(c). Value “diverse knowledge systems and learning activities . . .”	Reinforces an anti-colonial onto-epistemic shift of treating Indigenous musics in K–12 as Nation-based practices with valid pedagogies and knowledge systems, and engaging with them through protocol, consent, and accountability.
Paragraph 20. Support the “development of contextualized curricula . . . that connects with the concerns and issues that learners face in their daily lives, as well as with diverse knowledge systems.”	Supports localized, land-based music pedagogies that prioritize the specific Indigenous territories where the education takes place over standardized, decontextualized content.
Paragraph 24. Teaching and learning of history/social sciences should include “fostering critical views of and supporting the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations . . .”	Mandates an accountable K–12 history and arts curricula must not be neutral but must actively engage in truth-telling regarding historical and ongoing colonial structures.
Paragraph 26. “Culture and arts education advances creative learning and. . . provides a better understanding of cultural heritage and strengthens a sense of belonging . . .”	Validates music education as a site for collective imaginaries and identity formation, moving it from a peripheral subject to a core mechanism for degenociding colonial societies.
Paragraph 27. To “valorize, respect and enhance the diversity of knowledge systems, way of expression, transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage . . . [through] the promotion of intercultural dialogue . . .”	Reinforces the use of Indigenous musics as a primary vehicle for language revitalization and protocol-respecting and accountable transmission of intangible cultural heritage.
Paragraph 41(a). To “challenge all forms of biases, embrace anti-discrimination and anti-racist practices, and promote and respect cultural diversity . . .”	Implies a state obligation to ensure music classrooms are not “neutral” spaces but active sites of anti-racism that challenge the supremacy of the Eurocentric music canon.
Paragraph 42(e). Strive for “collaboration among . . . stakeholders – including teachers . . . Indigenous Peoples and their heritage-bearers . . . – to co-design, implement and review education programmes . . .”	A useful directive for music educators to move beyond “inclusion” and achieve established collaboration protocols with Indigenous Peoples in curriculum design.

6.2.5 Canadian Reports and Commissions

The Calls to Action of the TRC and the Calls for Justice of MMIWG appear to represent turning points in reimagining what Canada can be. Though both are non-binding recommendations, they address grave issues that call for action on the part of Canada – specifically, the former concerning the survivors of Residential Schools and the latter focusing on Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA persons. Taken together, these reports can be read as domestic accountability frameworks that translate international and UNDRIP-aligned principles into Canada-specific expectations. Interestingly, some of the calls specifically urge settler Canadians to familiarize themselves with Indigenous Peoples and their worldviews.

The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada provides several Calls to Action to the Canadian government to pave a path toward reconciliation. These Calls to Action could be considered a good starting point for an HRBA analysis on education in Canada. Several Calls to Action deal with Indigenous cultural promotion and financing for Indigenous Peoples, but all fall short of demanding substantive shifts in the Canadian curriculum. Here is why.

None of the Calls have the equivalent of “When in Rome, do as the Romans” that I am advocating for as a principle based on respect and dignity – a principle that would require settler schooling to treat Indigenous onto-epistemologies as authoritative on their own lands, rather than as optional “add-ons” to an otherwise Eurocentric curriculum. The Commission rightly values the promotion and funding of Indigenous cultural “preservation, revitalization, and strengthening” (TRC 2015, Call to Action 14(iv)).³⁸ The TRC also repeatedly advocates for the “repudiation of concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and

³⁸ For Indigenous culture development and promotion also see TRC Calls to Action Nos 61, 84 & 85.

peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius” (TRC 2015, Call to Action 46(ii)).³⁹ Yet even these important moves do not explicitly compel a deeper reckoning with Eurocentric sovereignty over knowledge itself.

In the “Education for reconciliation” section of the TRC, we come closest to the substantive shift in the architectures of the settler state that I propose – and therefore to a possible “place” for Indigenous music learning for non-Indigenous Canadians. The TRC (Article 62. ii) asks all levels of government to “provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.” TRC Article 63, then calls on Canada’s Council of Ministers of Education to develop and implement K–12 “curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools” (TRC Call to Action 63) and to build “student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect” (TRC Call to Action 63). These last two points may be the closest Calls to Action for Indigenous worldview learning for non-Indigenous Canadians, but they still lack an explicit call to confront Eurocentric sovereignty on knowledge itself.

Perhaps since the focus of the TRC Calls to Action was to recommend steps to remediate for the crimes of the Residential Schools system, the resulting recommendations were more reflections about how Canada can compensate Residential School victims and Indigenous Peoples in general. I argue that an important way to enact this compensation is to shift the paradigms of Canadian identity – specifically by asking non-Indigenous peoples to also know about the land-based culture and knowledge of the region they live in, and thus allowing non-

³⁹ For Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius repudiation also see TRC Calls to Action Nos 45, 47 & 49.

Indigenous children to learn about the culture of their adopted land as one would naturally do in the spirit of respect and humility as a guest.

Of special interest to me in response to my question, “Why ‘Frère Jacques’ and not the Kanien’kehá:ka ‘Water Song’?” are, for example, the MMIWG Calls for Justice encouraging decolonization by learning the true and local histories of Indigenous Peoples, celebrating their cultures, acknowledging the significance of land and relationship-centred interactions guided by Indigenous principles (Calls for Justice 15.2 and 15.7). The TRC similarly calls for clear mandates for settler Canadians to take responsibility for transforming their understanding and actions by embracing Indigenous worldviews in classrooms (Calls to Action 62–66), to reject colonial doctrines and develop relationships with Indigenous Peoples (art. 46) that align with UNDRIP (2007).

6.3 Assemblage III B – Cultural Genocide and Diagnosing Denial

6.3.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Triumphal Marches and Appalling Apathy”

RHIZOMATICS (asks how genocide, cultural genocide, and denial branch through law, schooling, and cultural policy) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks where genocide denial ruptures into settler ignorance, performative reconciliation, and multicultural inclusion) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks where cultural genocide sediments as Indian Act logics, schooling, curricular oblivion, and property/copyright regimes) = PRAGMATICS (affirms what can be enacted – naming denial as continuity and operationalizing degenociding through measurable institutional and curricular redress under Indigenous leadership) = MICROPOLITICS (asks where apathy shifts to obligation – when Indigenous nations set the terms in classrooms and public narratives).

6.3.2 Functions and Effects (Assemblage III B)

One of the central objectives of this dissertation is to elaborate on the concept of “degenociding” as both analysis and praxis. To that end, it is essential to identify, with precision, the colonial

structures, practices, and onto-epistemologies that constitute cultural genocide, and to delineate what must be unlearned and redressed to support Indigenous resurgence.

Assemblage III A gave clarity on Canada's obligations; here we will examine how Canada can enact redress and confront genocide, cultural genocide, and their denial as ongoing colonial mechanisms. In summary, this assemblage marries the theoretical and the legal to expose the systemic erasures that continue to operate and to show why these could necessitate degenociding through onto-epistemic and cultural transformation. This foregrounds Indigenous musics as identity-reset mechanisms within the broader degenociding project for Canadians.

Structurally this assemblage returns to 1492 and its "triumphal marches" (6.3.3), clarifying genocide's relation to colonialism (6.3.4), defining cultural genocide through Lemkin's lens (6.3.5), testing how prevention and punishment frameworks open the question of degenociding (6.3.6), confronting a "Lemkinesque" conundrum that follows (6.3.7), and ending with genocide denial and "an appalling apathy" as ongoing settler mechanisms that must be diagnosed and refused (6.3.8).

Put differently: what, precisely, are we degenociding?

6.3.3 Back to 1492 and “Triumphal Marches”

Among the works pleasing to the Divine Majesty and desirable to our heart, this assuredly holds first place: that the Catholic faith and the Christian religion, especially in our times, be exalted, and everywhere enlarged and spread, and that the salvation of souls be procured, and that barbarous nations be subdued and brought to that same faith.

— Pope Alexander VI, *Inter caetera* (1493)⁴⁰

The mid-fifteenth century marked a decisive turning point in world history. With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, trade networks were profoundly disrupted, and the Silk Road between Europe and Asia – already weakened due to the collapse of the *Pax Mongolica* in the previous century – was almost completely eclipsed (Dauverd 2015, 95; Lach 1965, 54). Europe sought alternative routes to secure its coveted spices and goods.

In 1492, driven by a spirit of imperial consolidation, religious intolerance, and racialized ideology, the Crown of Castile seized Granada and issued the Alhambra Decree ordering the expulsion of the Jews (Mamdani 2020, 5; V. Deloria [1974] 1985, 86–87). That same year, at the court in Seville, Columbus persuaded the Castilian monarchy that he would chart a direct westward route to Asia (Mamdani 2020, 5). When he, instead, landed in the Caribbean, a watershed moment began in our story: the emergence of an intricately designed, racially ordered,

⁴⁰ Inter cetera Divine Maiestati beneplacita opera et cordis nostri desiderabilia illud profecto potissimum existit ut fides Catholica et Christiana religio nostris presertim temporibus exaltetur ac ubilibet ampliatur et dilatetur animarumque salus procuretur ac barbare nationes deprimantur et ad fidem ipsam reducantur (Latin text from *Inter caetera*, 1493; orthography preserved from facsimile transcription).

papal-bull-sanctioned⁴¹ program of the conquest of Turtle Island underpinned by genocidal logics (Mamdani 2020, 24, 101).

Genocide would not only cause the destruction of physical life on these lands but, for surviving Indigenous Peoples, would also entail attempts to obliterate ways of living, knowing, and relating to land, ancestors, sound, and spirit (Quijano 2024, 211).⁴² All of these events unfolded under what Mignolo (2011) has called “the triumphal march of modernity” (206).

These global logics – racialization, dispossession, and onto-epistemic violence – did not remain in the distant past; they became the foundations on which countries such as Canada would be built.

6.3.4 On Genocide and Colonialism

The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism . . . is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.

— Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*

Today, when Canadians are confronted with the concept of genocide, they do not believe it relates to them – they remain in “convenient ignorance” (Lorenz 2017, 84). Consistent with other white settler societies that built European worlds on the lands of Indigenous Peoples, Canadians

⁴¹ Three papal bulls are normally cited in relation to “conquest”: Dum Diversas (1452) legitimizing enslavement of non-Christians and the seizure of their lands; Romanus Pontifex (1455) sanctioning dominion over “discovered” lands not held by Christians; Inter Caetera (1493) granting the non-Christian world to Spain and Portugal, authorizing conquest and conversion. As Lakota scholar Vine Deloria ([1973] 2003) states with trenchant clarity: “the pope was supervising not the divinely ordered division of the world’s lands but national hunting licenses for rape and pillage” (259).

⁴² For example, for Andean Aymara and Quechua peoples, “Pachamama” – the more-than-human – is kin, whereas for Europeans, the Earth was property (Mignolo 2011, 11). Mignolo further notes that “Pachamama” is often reductively understood as “nature” in European frameworks (10), whereas for Indigenous Peoples of the Andes it signifies “a living system” (174), even the “living energies of the universe and not only the planet earth” (310), of which humanity is an inseparable part.

often deny that the foundations of their state are built on “conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour” (Razack 2002, 1–2). As Innu Essipit scholar Pierrot Ross-Tremblay (2019) observes, “it is still ‘taboo’ to speak of colonialism, genocide and the historical mistreatment of First Peoples in Canada” (57).

To understand the implications of such denial, it is useful to recall the legal and conceptual foundations of genocide *tout court* by taking a closer look at the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereafter Genocide Convention), adopted in 1948, namely Article II:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (UN General Assembly 1948a, 1)

As the definition itself makes clear, several of these acts pertain to the treatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada – most visibly Article II (e), but also Article II (b), (c), and (d) – through several policies and practices. These include: the Indian Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, medical experiments on children, forced sterilization and, as noted in the Introduction and acknowledged by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the murders of Indigenous women and girls (Milloy 1999; Woolford 2009; Mosby 2013; TRC 2015; MMIWG 2019a). Gregory Stanton’s (2023) *Ten Stages of Genocide* likewise show that genocide is not confined to overt

acts of mass killing; it unfolds through extended processes that include classification, discrimination, dehumanization, organization, and denial.⁴³

Upon closer examination, parallels between genocide and colonization become apparent in both structure and duration. Patrick Wolfe (2006), widely considered the founder of settler colonial studies, contends that the “logic of elimination” (387) inherent in settler colonialism is indeed not far from genocide – it differs from classical genocides only in its *longue durée* (400).⁴⁴ He states: “Settler colonialism destroys to replace” (388), underscoring the fact that colonial projects are not episodic outbreaks of violence and greed but sustained structures of erasure and theft. The timeline of colonial genocide – spanning centuries – can make the gravity and scale of the crime seem less obvious – genocide *au compte-gouttes*, if you will.

Through colonial genocide, Indigenous Peoples also faced a system designed not only to govern land but also to reshape or “modernize” their humanity by seeking to control memory, sound, identity, and cosmology (Donald 2012, 59–60). As Fanon (1963) writes:

Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (210)

Kingston (2015) similarly cautions that cultural genocide is too often treated as a historical matter, despite its ongoing manifestations for Indigenous Peoples (69). This is particularly visible in Canadian education and cultural policy frameworks, which continue to render Indigenous onto-epistemologies – including Indigenous musics – invisible (Schaeffli and

⁴³ For reference, the *Ten Stages of Genocide* are: 1. Classification, 2. Symbolization, 3. Discrimination, 4. Dehumanization, 5. Organization, 6. Polarization, 7. Preparation, 8. Persecution, 9. Extermination, and 10. Denial (Stanton 2023). Stanton states that in hindsight, he would have named them “processes” of genocide, as opposed to “stages” as they are often cumulative and combined events.

⁴⁴ For the argument of colonization of Canada as an extended form of genocide, see MMIWG (2019a, 9).

Godlewska 2019, 223; Robinson 2016, 60). Such institutionalized absences are not neutral; they are active mechanisms that continue genocidal processes of cultural domination. Similarly, DiAngelo (2021) notes, “White settler colonialism is a specific type of colonization that seeks to replace an Indigenous population with white ‘settlers’ through a process of domination and genocide and to enforce a culture of white supremacy” (200).

In the Canadian context, these stages manifested through policies designed to find a “solution” to the “Indian problem” by erasing or assimilating entire peoples. In the chilling words of Richard Pratt, founder of the first residential schools in the United States – the very model soon adopted in Canada – the objective was to “kill the Indian, save the man” (Zalcman 2016; Collins and Gervais 2016, 172).

As Forcione et al. (2023) observe, rather than being a space for building healthy and harmonious societies, public education in Canada “still serves settler-colonial predations” (16), shaping stories and outlooks that are “(re)producing and legitimating settler-colonial dispossession and violence against Indigenous lands and people” (16). Education thus becomes a site for the reproduction of cultural genocide. In Quebec, for instance, narratives of national and cultural distinctiveness often obscure or erase Indigenous sovereignty; the notion that Indigenous Peoples have held sovereignty for millennia over lands now controlled by the province challenges and threatens the very foundation of these narratives (Ross-Tremblay 2019, 58). This erasure is compounded by what Ross-Tremblay terms “the architecture of cultural oblivion” (248) – a structural refusal to remember.

Finally, drawing again from Stanton’s *Ten Stages of Genocide*, these processes manifest clearly through, for example, us versus them narratives of *Classification*, the denial of Indigenous laws and customs as part of *Discrimination* policies, and an exclusionary ideology

toward Indigenous onto-epistemologies that reflects a broader *Dehumanization* framework (Stanton 2023). In other words, the *Ten Stages* framework helps clarify how seemingly ordinary state practices – curriculum design, teacher training, assessment priorities, and ostensibly neutral cultural policy – reinforce and maintain logics of classification and discrimination while presenting themselves as benign and balanced state-narrative dynamics and governance. With this in mind, the ongoing invisibilizing and indeed *Denial* of Indigenous onto-epistemologies in education and public spaces in Canada is not incidental; it becomes one of the mechanisms through which elements of genocide are sustained.

If cultural genocide is understood as the systematic erasure and replacement of Indigenous onto-epistemologies, then degenociding must be understood as the deliberate and assertive work of reversing those erasures through Indigenous resurgence, structural redress, and onto-epistemic re-centering.

6.3.5 On Cultural Genocide and Raphael Lemkin

The concept of “cultural genocide,” though long debated, is increasingly acknowledged in legal and scholarly discourse, including in the findings of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 2015). As discussed in Chapter One, the TRC, though non-binding, is clear that, in its estimation, Canada’s treatment of Indigenous Peoples amounts to nothing less than cultural genocide, citing the state’s deliberate attempts “to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages, not only in residential schools but in Aboriginal communities through ceremonial prohibitions” (TRC 2015, 5:125). It is worth noting that, conveniently for Canada, cultural genocide was rejected for inclusion in the Genocide Convention. As Powell (2007) notes, “The

wording of the Convention was shaped by the desire of its framers not to criminalize their own behavior” (532).

For Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term “genocide” and led the campaign to establish the Genocide Convention, cultural genocide was a critical aspect of understanding genocide. He writes: “Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor” (Lemkin 1944, 79) either by force or colonization. When Lemkin was eventually forced to hold back his insistence on including cultural genocide in the final draft of the Convention – fearing it would derail the entire process – he wrote: “This idea was very dear to me. I defended it successfully through two drafts. It meant the destruction of the cultural pattern of a group, such as the language, the traditions, monuments, archives, libraries, and churches. In brief: the shrines of a nation’s soul” (Lemkin [1959] 2013, 172).⁴⁵

To justify the need for degenociding, the first step is to explain what aspects of genocide may be somewhat undone – if any. Lemkin’s wish to include cultural genocide in the Convention is an important indicator of what degenociding could mean in the decolonial context of seeking onto-epistemic pluriversality. Lemkin ([1959] 2013) wrote: “When a nation is murdered, its culture goes too. The dead cannot write literature. Through its culture, the life of a nation continues, when the physical life of individual members is finished” (127). These definitions by Lemkin are at the core of how I define cultural genocide, notwithstanding its exclusion from the Genocide Convention. Degenociding, in this sense, seeks to create conditions under which

⁴⁵ In his autobiography, Lemkin states that he hoped that eventually the UN would adopt an additional protocol on cultural genocide. He felt that the fight to protect culture was not over (Lemkin [1959] 2013, 173).

cultural life – the “life of a nation,” in Lemkin’s words – can continue, even after centuries of attempted erasure and annihilation.

Culture – the redeemable element of genocide? A more hopeful eleventh stage that refuses *Denial* (Stanton’s 10th stage of genocide) and takes dignified and affirmative acts of redress and accountability?

6.3.6 Prevention, Punishment, and Degenociding

When Lemkin arrived at the word “genocide,” it was because he faced a conundrum. He recognized that existing legal and moral frameworks could name and punish the murder of an individual but could not adequately name – let alone deter – the destruction of an entire people.

He reflected on this in relation to the Armenian genocide:

The Armenians sent a delegation to the peace conference at Versailles to demand justice. Then one day I read in the newspapers that all Turkish war criminals were to be released. I was shocked. A nation was killed and the guilty persons were set free. Why is a man punished when he kills another man, yet the killing of a million is a lesser crime than the killing of an individual? (Lemkin [1959] 2013, 19)

Furthermore, as the name of the Convention indicates plainly, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is not only a framework to penalise but importantly one that aims to deter. Nevertheless, even many decades after its adoption, Diamond and Packer (2024) demonstrate that, within the international law community, the focus problematically remains on the punishment of genocide as a crime primarily committed by individual perpetrators (42). An important obligation and duty of signatory states – the prevention of the crime, a central *ratio legis* of the Convention – is lost in the process (Diamond and Packer 2024, 42).

Lemkin’s ideas provide valuable material for testing and expanding the concept of degenociding. Since my goal here is to reflect on possible futurities in a society like Canada if degenociding is put into action, and to indicate how music may help realize these goals and aspirations, I wonder how a new way of being on these lands can even be envisioned when, still today, the invisibilizing of Indigenous onto-epistemologies in Canadian education and cultural frameworks sustains several elements of genocide. Indeed, if we return to Stanton’s (2023) *Ten Stages of Genocide*: Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination, and Denial, we realize that only one process involves physical death; the other nine processes are cultural in nature, each one with the goal of invisibilizing, denigrating, and mocking the very nature of a people at the cultural (or “essence” to mirror Lemkin’s terminology) level. Seen in this manner, we can postulate that degenociding therefore has an important and very real role not only at every undoable stage of genocide but also in meaningfully contributing to the *prevention* of the crime: degenociding as redress and prevention, perhaps as an eleventh stage, as demonstrated in the following table.

Table 6.2 Degenociding and the Ten Stages of Genocide: Indigenous Musics in Settler Canadian Classrooms

Stages of Genocide (Stanton 2023)	General Genocidal Acts (past and/or ongoing, or future)	Suggested Degenociding Acts Through Musical Interventions
Stage 1 – Classification	Construction through law of racial categories such as “Indian” or “non-status” that falsely homogenize and invisibilize the vast diversity of Indigenous Nations.	Teaching nation-specific songs with clear attribution to specific Peoples, territories, and languages will break the denigrating and reductive classification act.

Stage 2 – Symbolization	Attaching stereotypes and racist meanings to Indigenous symbols and songs (drums, feathers, regalia, languages, dances).	Inviting Indigenous knowledge keepers and musicians to share appropriate ceremonial or community songs and explain their meanings, so that students encounter these symbols and soundscapes as life-affirming and contemporary rather than representations of a “lost” past.
Stage 3 – Discrimination	Systemic exclusion of Indigenous musics, languages, and worldviews from the curriculum, while privileging Euro-Canadian and Euro-classical repertoires as “normal,” “universal,” or “high culture,” thereby discriminating against Indigenous cultural expression in education.	Rebalancing music programs so that Indigenous musics and dances are treated as core curricular material – assessed and studied independently from European or Western music by Indigenous knowledge holders and teachers – signaling to students that Indigenous musics are worthy of institutional time, resources, and serious study.
Stage 4 – Dehumanization	Depicting Indigenous Peoples as “uncivilized,” “primitive,” or “deficient,” including through silence about their musics in textbooks and songbooks, and through narratives that reduce them to problems, statistics, “issues,” or “crisis” rather than full human beings with complex artistic lives.	Use recordings, live performances, and hands-on experiences of Indigenous musics to demonstrate, experientially, the musical breath, humour, grief, and joy found within, and thus support students in reflecting on the emotions and stories in these musics, so that Indigenous cultures become audible as a human act, full of complexity and contemporaneity.
Stage 5 – Organization	Deliberate institutional planning to suppress Indigenous cultural expressions, such as residential school policies that banned drumming, singing, and ceremony, and curricula that systematically replaced Indigenous soundscapes with Christian hymns and British or French repertoires.	Organize school music programs in partnership with local Indigenous communities so that Indigenous musicians design units, thereby reversing older institutional patterns by structurally centring Indigenous leadership and priorities.
Stage 6 – Polarization	State and public discourses that divide “Indigenous” and “Canadian” as opposing identities, fuelling resentment and misunderstanding, and marginalizing Indigenous voices that call for justice, land back, and cultural resurgence.	Facilitate collaborative music-making where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students learn and perform Indigenous-led pieces together, with guided discussion on listening, respect, and shared responsibility, so that music models relationship rather than “us versus them” separation.

Stage 7 – Preparation	Justifying land theft, forced relocation, and child removal by portraying Indigenous cultures as “backwards,” “doomed,” or “vanishing,” and by preparing public opinion to accept policies that would further undermine Indigenous cultural continuity.	Teach contemporary Indigenous musics that speak to land defence, language revitalization, and community strength, and connect them to local histories, so that students begin to understand Indigenous cultures as living, future-oriented, and essential to the shared future of these lands.
Stage 8 – Persecution	Targeted attacks on Indigenous cultural life, including arrests, penalties, and punishments for engaging in songs, dances, and ceremonies, as well as the ongoing underfunding and obstruction of Indigenous-run cultural and educational institutions.	Use songs that recount specific histories of persecution (residential schools, bans on potlatch or the Sun Dance, child apprehensions) and pair them with classroom dialogue and written reflection, so that students hear persecution as a concrete injustice inflicted on real communities, to this day, and not only in an abstract past.
Stage 9 – Extermination	Acts and policies that contribute to the physical and cultural destruction of Indigenous Peoples, including deaths in residential schools, starvation policies, murder, and the attempted erasure of languages, songs, and ceremonies that carried intergenerational knowledge.	Integrate memorial and honour songs into school events of remembrance (for example, on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), led by Indigenous musicians, so that students participate in sonic practices that remember the dead, affirm the living, and insist that Indigenous presence will continue.
Stage 10 – Denial	Persistent refusal to name these histories as genocide or cultural genocide, ongoing minimization of harm, and a schooling system that often omits Indigenous accounts of what happened and what continues to happen.	Assign Indigenous musics that explicitly name genocide, cultural genocide, or state violence, and invite students to connect these works to survivor testimonies and official reports, so that music becomes a vehicle for confronting denial with embodied, affective, and repeatable acts of truth-telling.
Stage 11 – Degenociding?		Participate in the act of undoing elements of cultural genocide, proactively and under Indigenous direction.

6.3.7 A “Lemkinesque” Conundrum in the Making

In this dissertation, I argue that we face a similar *Lemkinesque* problem today in Canada. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in this country were marked by an extraordinary paradox: while law expanded to protect the rights of composers, publishers, and performers in the Euro-Canadian sphere, Indigenous musics were either criminalized or erased from the legal order. Though individual cultural rights are protected – for instance through performing rights, publishing, collective agreements, and copyright laws each with relevant penalties when violated – there remains a gap in addressing and punishing institutionalized cultural suppression. This gap creates a parallel with the prosecution of individuals for genocide, while leaving the institutions or the state that perpetrate it beyond effective legal reach. This legal silence is not a neutral omission but an active structure of cultural genocide, with legacies that continue into the present and, I argue, need to be met with concrete redress and undoing.

A brief step back is necessary to understand how we got here. The passage of the Indian Act in 1876 inaugurated a legal framework that targeted Indigenous cultural practices. Indigenous musics, dances, and customs were criminalized from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries (V. Deloria 1999, 308; L. B. Simpson 2017, 101). Amendments in 1884 introduced the Potlatch Ban, which banned these ceremonies on the Northwest Coast, many of which relied on complex musical forms (L. B. Simpson 2017, 101). Other prohibitions extended to the Prairie “Sun Dance” and similar ceremonies, effectively outlawing the very contexts in which Indigenous musics thrived and sustained cultural continuity for their communities (L. B. Simpson 2017, 101).

In addition, the residential school system – established in the late nineteenth century and operating into the late twentieth century – systematically suppressed the use of Indigenous

languages and culture (Marie Battiste 2013, 54). Children from the hundreds of culturally and ethnically distinct Indigenous Peoples in Canada were prevented from learning their songs and forced to learn hymns and Western musical forms (Marie Battiste 2013, 54). Notably, Christian hymns were used to great effect as one of the most powerful tools of evangelisation and colonial propaganda (Goodman 2019, 92) – a propaganda that *classified* Indigenous beliefs as inferior, ridiculed Indigenous cultural *symbols*, leading to widespread *discrimination*, *dehumanization*, and the remaining stages of genocide as outlined earlier (Stanton 2023).

Cultural suppression, and with it, musical suppression, was effectively normalized as state policy. The “shrines of a nation’s soul” (Lemkin [1959] 2013, 172) were to be almost destroyed, as law operated not to safeguard cultural and musical life but to extinguish it. In effect, the legal logic dictated – and continues to dictate – that culture is recognized only when it is individualized, fixed, and contextualized as property.

In parallel, Canada’s Copyright Act (1921; in force 1924) entrenched an author-centred, text-dependent model of protection in which music had to be written to qualify as intellectual property. As a result, Indigenous musics – often orally transmitted, community-based, and deeply embedded in ceremony – were excluded by definition, leaving collective, land-based musical traditions outside the scope of legal recognition and redress. For instance, Canada is well equipped to prosecute an individual who destroys a work of art in a museum (Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, s. 430(4.2)) or steals a melody from a singer-songwriter (Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42, s. 27). However, even as a State Party, it cannot be adequately held accountable under existing legal frameworks for destroying the cultural knowledges of Indigenous Peoples. Mamdani (2020) frames this as enabling the non-prosecution of such acts – an “escape from nation-building violence” (17).

By the late 20th century, Canada adopted multiculturalism as state policy (1971) and later as law with the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, R.S.C. (Government of Canada 1985), assented to on July 21, 1988. These measures affirmed diversity and encouraged the celebration of multiple cultures within the Canadian mosaic. Nevertheless, this framework, while inclusive in appearance, failed to address the specific harms of cultural genocide. Multiculturalism positioned Indigenous Peoples as one “ethnic group” among many, flattening the distinct status of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as sovereign Indigenous Peoples with inherent rights and cultural integrity, and as Peoples deserving of nation-to-nation relationships with Canada. Moreover, it celebrated diversity going forward but offered little acknowledgment or repair of the legal silences and prohibitions that had already devastated Indigenous musical traditions.

Taken together, these inherited problems remain largely unresolved in Canadian society today. While instruments such as the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) provide valuable guidelines for Indigenous resurgence in colonial societies, the absence of legal accountability for cultural genocide leaves a profound gap: Canadian law lacks a framework for redressing the erasure of Indigenous musics to this day.

Against this backdrop, it is helpful and illuminating to consider Raphael Lemkin’s work on genocide. When he sought to address atrocities that could not be captured by existing criminal law, he shifted the frame of responsibility from the individual to the collective, creating a new legal category that international law could use. The resulting Genocide Convention (1948a) criminalizes genocide but as already mentioned crucially excludes cultural genocide as a prosecutable category. In a comparable way, copyright law in Canada and elsewhere continues to

enshrine the rights of the individual creator, with no mechanism to protect the unique and diverse cosmologically inspired soundscapes of Indigenous nations against erasure through cultural genocide.

In this light, the concept of degenociding may be a useful innovation that contributes to resolving this conundrum: a framework for somewhat undoing cultural genocide by recognizing and protecting the collective dimensions of cultural and musical life. Just as Lemkin's invention of the term genocide named collective destruction, degenociding provides a conceptual and normative tool for collective restoration, an active undoing of cultural genocide that shifts law and institutions from instruments of erasure toward frameworks that enable resurgence. In turn, degenociding becomes not only about repairing past harms but also a policy-shaping and preventive framework that creates legal, institutional, and cultural conditions that allow Indigenous musics to thrive as living traditions originating on these lands.

6.3.8 Genocide Denial and “An Appalling Apathy”

As this analysis begins to reveal, the purpose of degenociding is to go beyond reconciliation as apology. It requires a deeper structural transformation and the re-education of settler society, or perhaps to use a less loaded word, a “reboot of Canadian identity itself” (Armenian 2025, 120). It is also about fixing a relationship. As Cree-Métis musician iskwē sings in her song “Caught in the Waves” about relationships – we “ride the waves of a false start” (iskwē 2024).

Denial – Stanton's final stage of genocide – inevitably *continues* genocide and deepens the trauma of its victims. In this context, this criminal continuity is not only discursive. It also encompasses politics of not remembering, not commemorating, and invisibilizing Indigenous cultures in education systems. In effect, by privileging colonizer narratives and constructs, along

with imported Eurocentric cultural values and forms, these practices perpetuate several aspects of slow but relentless cultural genocide. In addition, they reinforce the settler Canadian state's evident non-compliance with several binding obligations, as discussed earlier.

An important failure to help remedy the effects of cultural genocide is that most studies on Indigenous issues are “damage-centred research narratives” (Nxumalo and Tuck 2023, 140) that provoke short-term empathy but allow settlers to fall back into the comfort of ignorance and inaction. Policy makers have – at best – focused on finding mechanisms to revive Indigenous cultures for Indigenous Peoples. Nevertheless, the TRC Calls to Action (2015) advocate for inclusionary strategies in society, education, practices, and policies, and expose continued Canadian affinities to ideas of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* (TRC 2015, Call to Action 46(ii)). In practice, settler ignorance and innocence – and arguably by extension, apathy – are reinforced by denying Indigenous worldviews and cultural expressions in K–12 discourse throughout Canada (Battiste 2013; Forcione et al. 2023).

Reconciliation missteps are too numerous to illustrate here, but Indigenous scholars and allies have highlighted several recurring shortcomings in reconciliation efforts in Canada (see *Assemblage II*). As already discussed, these shortcomings include the tendency to leave settler–Indigenous power imbalances intact, to downplay the historical realities and ongoing dangers of appropriation, and to substitute performative, “feel-good” gestures for sustained, accountable action – moves that, in practice, undermine genuine reconciliation (Robinson 2020; Donald 2009; L. B. Simpson 2017). In other words, performative reconciliation can reproduce denial by mimicking closure while the structures of the settler state that produced the harm remain intact.

To illustrate this protection of innocence at the level of the Canadian learner and the national narratives, we can refer to Fanon. He writes: “The colonial mother [colonial society and

its institutions] protects her child [the settler subject] from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology, and its own unhappiness which is its very essence. . . . And . . . those who are most responsible for this racialization of thought . . . are and remain those Europeans who have never ceased to set up white culture to fill the gap left by the absence of other cultures” (Fanon 1963, 211–212; brackets added).

Applied to the Canadian context of reconciliation discourse, Fanon’s framing helps us understand how settler innocence is protected through narratives that displace responsibility. In this sense, denial and apathy are not merely individually produced; they are socio-political in nature. As a result, they keep white cultural frameworks centred while rendering Indigenous worldviews marginal or invisible.

The conclusion of the MMIWG (2019b) notes this “appalling apathy” (4) on the part of Canadians toward the plight of Indigenous Peoples in general and the murders of Indigenous women and girls in particular. Moreover, this apathy is aggravated by what the “Assessing Student Awareness of Indigenous Peoples Project” (Godlewska et al. 2010–present) finds to be the systemic and willful ignorance of Indigenous historic and present realities that is promoted in education systems throughout Canada. In effect, settler Canadians are not only apathetic to the plight of Indigenous Peoples but also apparently blind to colonial racism’s grasp on education and “subconscious” identity.

The normalization of colonial racist attitudes and the denial of complicity with the colonial matrix of power in settler Canadian society infringes upon foundational principles of the child’s right to dignity, quality education, and agency in their development, as mandated by the CRC. Accordingly, genocide denial and the apathy it enables should be understood not as a passive and innocent settler condition but as an active and deliberate move that sustains cultural genocide and

obstructs the critical reawakening required for degenociding. It is well established that such denial warps what Indigenous learners are told about their own histories and realities; I underscore here that it also gives non-Indigenous learners a warped, incomplete, and ultimately undignified story of the country they live in.

Chapter 7 Assemblage IV – Sound Studies

7.1 Prelude in (G)roove

One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.

— Bob Marley & The Wailers, “Trench Town Rock”

These much-loved lyrics, from Bob Marley’s 1971 song *Trench Town Rock*, are indeed more than a groovy play on words from a great musical icon who understood the power of his art, particularly when read alongside the growing body of research on music’s positive effects.

Scholars have found more than *one* good thing about music. Its *groove* – we can define this as a relational, embodied experience within a shared temporal flow; a “feelingful participation” (Feld 1988, 75) – helps heal traumas (both physical and mental), fights marginalization, and has proven to be an important element in addressing systemic inequalities (Attas and Walker 2019, 11; Boer et al. 2013, 2362; Hallam 2015, 94; Lidskog 2017, 24, 31; Feld 1988, 89; Zapata Restrepo and Hargreaves 2017, 741).

This section clarifies why “groove” matters within Chapter 7’s music-related assemblages that feed into the next chapter’s plateau: groove is not only an aesthetic pleasure but a relational force that can support dignity and resilience, or reproduce unequal authority, depending on how the encounter is governed. In other words, the same affective force that bonds can also stabilize settler innocence and zero point legitimacies.

It is said that since the dawn of time, music has not only nurtured the human spirit but has been used to heal, as Bob Marley suggests, the *pains* of humanity. The proto-human could have used vocalization and rhythm to improve the chances of finding a companion, procreating with efficacy, calming the newborn, and improving clan unity (Cross 2009, 7). In classical antiquity,

Homer endorsed it as a path to joy and fulfilment; Plato and Pythagoras as a tool for a healthy and balanced lifestyle (Gladding 2016, 26). Religion has used it as a means to reach the divine; psychologists, as a means to reach the inner worlds of their patients (Gladding 2016, 26). These historical perspectives affirm that music's groove has been for human civilization a force that bridges body, spirit, and community.

Contemporary research underscores this long-standing belief about the power of music. For individuals suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a study by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs found promising evidence of the benefits of music therapy, noting its non-obtrusive and non-stigmatized characteristics as treatment (Landis-Shack et al. 2017, 334). Indeed, the same research finds that music – and the many reactions it provokes – is regulated in the brain areas used for emotion, pleasure, and reward. Additionally, numerous studies argue that this versatile art form is an instigator of creative thinking, emotional regulation, and communication across contexts and ages, from trauma-inflicted societies to clinical therapy patients (Hill 2013, 12; Mutch and Latai 2019, 253; Ghetti 2013, 120; Hallam 2015, 19; Stepakoff 2007, 410). In this sense, music is often described as a communication tool that reduces isolation and takes us to better places in our minds (McLellan et al. 2013, 167) – its groove functions as a neurobiological and psychosocial powerhouse for resilience and renewal.

The holistic effects of art, in particular doing art, are widely reported to improve resilience, self-expression, self-esteem, social inclusion, motivation, and related emotional vectors, with benefits ranging from the intrinsic to the societal, health, educational, and economic (Hill 2014, 2–3).

To defend spending on the arts, advocates have used various strategies. The examples range from helping youth to deal with social challenges, earn better grades, and stay away from

crime and drugs, to invigorating tourism and local businesses via artistic institutions and events (McCarthy et al. 2004, 67). Subsequently, Canadian and American funding for the arts has shifted quite considerably since the beginning of this millennium; projects that provide “measurable” benefits for the well-being of society, be it economic or psychological, have been favoured over performance and production-based projects (Hill 2014, 6; McCarthy et al. 2004, 1).

Read through the problem of power dynamics that dictate curricula in the Canadian context, this shift is worth holding in mind as we move forward. Settler metrics of “value” or “return on investment” can pressure musicking to “prove” itself, thereby narrowing what kinds of encounters are recognized as legitimate, who is authorized to define them, and on whose terms they are enacted – a constraint that can ultimately dilute the transformative capacities of decolonizing through music by reasserting settler logics of evaluation.

Another topic of research, with mounting positive results, is the study of how psychological “pain” is reduced with, to borrow from Marley, a “hit” of music. Mutch and Latai (2019) found that in observations of children who had survived natural disasters (such as the New Zealand 2010–2011 earthquakes or the 2009 Samoan tsunami), the use of arts in the curriculum has had a double effect: it proved to alleviate the trauma and helped to assess post-traumatic conditions (250). Using the arts, teachers and psychologists were able to facilitate the child’s expression of their feelings and then interpret the various “revealed” stages of the child’s inner emotions. To bring out the feelings that the child was finding hard to express, various forms of art were used, such as dance, storytelling, and drama. Similarly, through drawing, the children’s inner emotional conditions were made visible – quite directly – in the images and

colours they used, making it a useful tool for assessing the child's psychological state (Mutch and Latai 2019, 253).

Stepakoff (2007) posits that psychological and social rehabilitation can be facilitated with music's unique capacity to safely bring about nonverbal representations of lived, intense, and even deeply distressing experiences (401). Indeed, music has long been used to develop resilience and enable healing from the trauma caused by humankind's plethora of repressive and cruel acts inflicted on one another – once traumatic experiences are expressed and the silence broken, the healing begins (Stepakoff 2007, 412). For example, music has grown out of these depths through the anti-colonial songs and chanted hymns used by enslaved African Americans to heal the scars of the forced labour and oppression to which they were subjected (Gregory 1997, 125). Greatly inspired by the civil rights movement in the United States, other outlets to express or release generational traumas were the protest songs against racism and colonialism such as Sam Cooke's 1964 "A Change Is Gonna Come" and Nina Simone's 1964 "Mississippi Goddam" to Buffy Sainte-Marie's "My Country 'Tis of Thy People You're Dying," Willie Dunn's "I Pity the Country," XIT's *Plight of the Redman*, and Hugh Masekela's "Soweto Blues."

The benefits of music for healing can also be seen in its many growing uses within the healthcare sector. For example, researchers find positive results in the use of music therapy during post-operative care for liver and kidney transplant patients and in pre-operative care for patients of cardiac catheterization procedures (Ghetti 2011, 482; 2013, 120). During surgical procedures on the brain, markers such as nervousness, awareness of being operated on, and stress were greatly reduced with live music therapy (Walworth et al. 2008, 357). Other studies find evidence of improved control of the peripheral nervous system for anthracycline-treated breast

cancer survivors with regular music therapy sessions, resulting in temporary improvements to physiological markers associated with survival (Chuang et al. 2011, 316). Recent neurobiological findings have been interpreted as supporting the production of the social bonding proteins vasopressin and oxytocin through music-making, thereby creating *inter alia* the same safe and comfortable sensations of mother and child during breastfeeding (Chanda and Levitin 2013, 188).

The idea that music can be an ideal non-invasive medicine for physical ailments has yet to be qualified and quantified fully with larger control groups and comparisons with other non-musical activities, be they active or passive and group or individual-based (Chanda and Levitin 2013, 189). Nevertheless, the results of these and numerous other studies point to a promising role for music in healthcare, particularly as a low-risk complement to conventional care, with few reported adverse effects, if any (Ghetti 2011, 467).

Yet, how can these therapeutic and social benefits contribute in any way to decolonial repair? This discussion of music's groove establishes something foundational for this dissertation: musicking provides a demonstrable force on human beings – sculpting palpable emotions, memory, belonging, and conduct. It is therefore a force to be reckoned with; a mechanism that makes change possible in and through culture. Nevertheless, in a settler-colonial state, the same affective force that heals and bonds can also be diffused through settler comfort – producing “good feelings” that reinscribe settler-state structures, dominance, and identity norms. This body of scholarship is therefore not incidental background; it is the evidentiary ground – accounts of human experience with music – on which I build the claim that musicking can, under specific conditions, help bring about change. With this in mind, I now turn to the language of “lines of flight” to ask whether music's groove – its soundscapes – can be oriented toward the

horizon of Indigenous resurgence and redress and organized into a sustainable Degenociding Plateau rather than another form of managed inclusion.

7.2 Introduction: Contrapuntal Lines of Flight

Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many “transformational multiplicities,” even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome.⁴⁶

— Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Each assemblage in the previous chapters has focused on a specific aspect of this interdisciplinary research, with sub-sections for clarity. In rhizomatic fashion, this weaving of a tapestry of different knowledges collectively acts as scaffolding for possible answers to my research questions. With each assemblage, I have built a line of flight that leads specifically to the arts – more precisely, to the transformative power of music. These meetings and the intertwining of lines of flight are intended to produce emergent, still-sprouting forms of knowledge that remain in a constant state of “self-vibrating” reflection or resonance (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22).

Therefore, since the lines of flight have brought us here, let us witness the discussions about the power of music and see whether the “musical” Degenociding Plateau, as I suggest it, can be built. The question being asked? What qualitative data can we gather, and critically assess, to suggest that music can – or cannot – advance the decolonial project and the partial undoing of cultural genocide in Canada?

⁴⁶ Original: La musique n’a pas cessé de faire passer ses lignes de fuite, comme autant de « multiplicités à transformation », même en renversant ses propres codes qui la structurent ou l’arbrifient ; ce pourquoi la forme musicale, jusque dans ses ruptures et proliférations, est comparable à de la mauvaise herbe, un rhizome. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 19).

In this chapter, I argue that music can truly take flight – becoming a line of flight for decolonizing colonial societies and thus realizing the rights and resurgence of Indigenous Peoples in general and the rights and quality of education of settler children, in particular. As discussed, this can only happen when Indigenous onto-epistemologies, including musics, are treated not as universal aesthetic objects or mere curricular add-ons but as spaces of respectful, accountable, protocol-bearing encounters, with a clear understanding of the power dynamics that have historically, and can still, derail the process.

This chapter therefore will do two things at once: it will trace *how* music can affect people and communities (its affective and relational force), and it will distinguish *when* that force is absorbed into settler innocence praxis versus when it can support Indigenous resurgence and settler accountability. Structurally, I pursue these two analytic tasks across the two assemblages that follow. Drawing from a range of promising examples in the literature, I explore the many variations through which music has expanded worldviews and – with Indigenous musics in particular – how it seems to foster a deeper understanding of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples, often resulting in healthy and “resonant” alliances essential to decolonizing efforts.

The question, then, becomes not whether music moves people but how that movement is governed: whose histories become audible, whose laws and protocols set the terms of encounter, and what forms of responsibility follow once people are brought into relation. If music is a force that forms communities, attachments, and shared imagined futurities, then it can become part of the mechanism of either cultural genocide or resurgence – either stabilizing colonial legitimacy or reorganizing relations under Indigenous authority. The Deleuze–Guattari “musical” lines of flight, as described in the above epigraph, are the counterpoint of this movement that carries us

from music's affective capacities (groove) toward the conceptual preparation required to articulate a Degenociding Plateau.

I theorize and envision that Indigenous musics could possibly play a useful role in realizing international human rights obligations and in undoing cultural genocide, to the extent possible, on colonized lands such as Canada. To develop this premise, I examine the literature on how music, an advanced medium of expression in *Homo sapiens*, has proved to be a valuable tool in changing societal worldviews and *localviews*. In a world where music has become more globalized and the local characteristics of musical expressions have become blurred, local soundscapes are essential to grasp in order to understand one's relationship with the land on which they live.

Sound studies guide us in the ways soundscapes can help shape identities. I am interested in determining how music helps one open to new or different worldviews and, at a macro level, whether music can even influence societal consciousness – essentially, whether music functions as an effective transformative tool. Insights from sound studies will be used to explore how listening to music – or participating in its performance and creation – could possibly undo prejudices and racist colonial narratives and offer possible solutions to the *lacunae* exposed in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

I seek answers, based on the previous assemblages, to questions such as:

- a) Do Indigenous soundscapes – mainly through Indigenous musics – help reimagine identity, community, and connection to place for both Indigenous Peoples and settler Canadians?
- b) Can “earwitnessing” and “counterlistening” play a role in challenging Eurocentric narratives?

- c) What can we learn from the affective and communal power of sound and music to develop strategies that counter cultural genocide and support decolonial cosmopolitanism?

This chapter comprises two assemblages and draws on academic works that offer qualitative data on the transformative power of music in general, and on music and decoloniality in particular.

The aim is to present music as a degenociding tool for expanding worldviews, reshaping relationships, and advancing decolonial reconciliation efforts. Of particular interest will be empirical data through which we can establish correlations between music curriculum content and Canada's human rights obligations toward child rights-holders, including children's rights to dignity, quality education, and agency in their own development, as mandated by the CRC.

Chapter 8 then gathers the criteria assembled into the Degenociding Plateau proper. By highlighting case studies demonstrating music's role in unsettling colonial perspectives and supporting Indigenous resurgence, and by using assemblages I to IV as conceptual and normative scaffolding, I will be able to assess whether outcomes are positive – ergo, not merely performative – and therefore constitute valid instances of degenociding, insofar as Indigenous Peoples benefit from the exchange and settler Canadians are meaningfully engaged in the process of undoing cultural genocide.

Finally, more generally, this chapter aims to place music at the centre of this dissertation as a channel for new ways of thinking.

Music – a possible tool to contribute to an important dialogue in Canada.

7.3 Assemblage IV A – Where Music Takes Us

To ask why humans are musicking creatures is tantamount to asking why they are speaking creatures or why they imagine and perceive immaterial, even unreal things.

— Gary Tomlinson, *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*

7.3.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Sounded Normativity”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* four nodes of musicking – storytelling, bridging, worldmaking, teaching – interconnect to shape identity, belonging, and place) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* affect ruptures listening regimes into counterlistening and embodied responsibility) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* canon, curriculum, and institutions reduce music to managed “content”) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* can be enacted – an HRBA arc plus Indigenous consent/protocol and settler accountability as conditions for power transfer and structural change) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* repetition produces change – Indigenous-led musicking that moves settlers from awareness to obligation and institutions toward structural shifts).

7.3.2 Functions and Effects (Assemblage IV A)

In what follows, in the spirit of the rhizome, I unfold four “nodes” that, when assembled, frame why music can be a useful mechanism to support decolonizing goals as proposed in this dissertation. Here we explore the transformative power of music in fostering new ways of thinking and being by drawing on scholarship that shows how musicking shapes identity, situates persons within worlds of meaning, and helps us understand “who we are and what we are capable of being” (Frith 2008, 178). It develops four interlocking nodes – Music the Storyteller, Music the Bridge, Music the Worldmaker, and Music the Teacher (Fig. 7.1) – each proposing a rhizomatic rationale that links embodied musical practice to decolonizing.

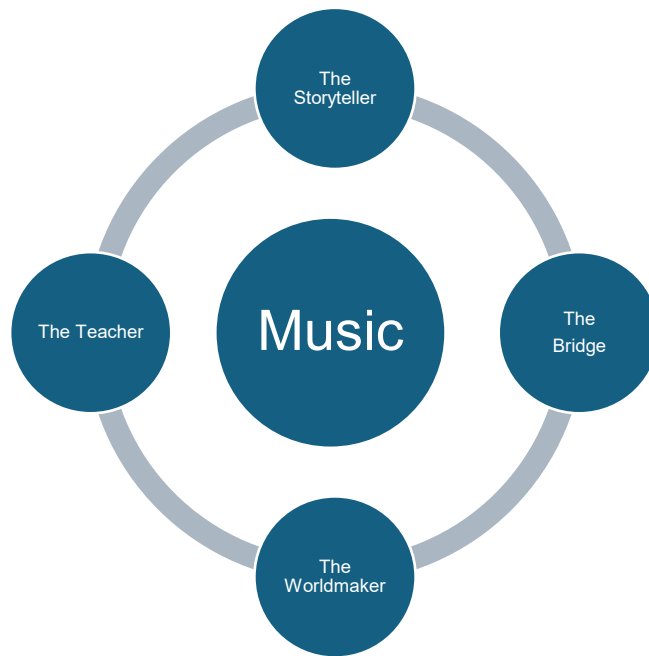


Figure 7.1 The Music Nodes

These nodes do not form a linear sequence but rather intersect and resonate with one another, revealing multiple lines of flight that emanate from the transformative soundscapes produced through music. Nodes are temporary points of connection and intensification where different lines meet, branch, and reconfigure, allowing the assemblage to keep generating new relations without a fixed centre or hierarchy, in “furor or agony” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 297). Specifically, these nodes trace how music can tell stories and make histories audible, create bridges of encounter and relation, build worlds of possibility, and teach new ways of hearing and being – capacities that, in practice, can also bear witness, carry memory, and mobilize ethical action. Here, music is put to the test as an agent of change, capable of transforming onto-epistemic geographies. This nodal assemblage constitutes the sounded normativity through which music functions in decolonial praxis and, more specifically, as a degenociding mechanism.

Read through an HRBA, I order these nodes along a simple rights-based arc; lines of flight toward the Degenociding Plateau addressed in Chapter 8:

- a) **I begin with story:** music can make Indigenous histories, worldviews, and responsibilities audible – especially what settler Canada has tried to keep unheard.
- b) **I then turn to bridging:** music can bring people into encounter in ways that rehearse relationship – but in degenociding work, that encounter must be governed by Indigenous authority, consent, and dignity.
- c) **I move to worldmaking:** music does not only reflect who people are; it helps make who they can become – how they hear land, self, and relation.
- d) **I end with teaching:** music can train responsibility over time so that learning does not stop at awareness but moves toward accountability, structural change, and redress. This matters because music’s force is real but not automatic: the same musical forms can be absorbed into settler institutions as “content” without power transfer (as we will see in *Assemblage IV B*), or they can open lines of flight toward redress when governed by Indigenous authority, protocols, and ongoing accountability.

In this sense, *Assemblages IV A* and *IV B* establish the terms by which musical initiatives can be evaluated not as inclusionary gestures but as possible sites of obligation, structural change, and degenociding praxis.

7.3.3 Node 1 – Music the Storyteller

Motif

In this node, I consider music as storyteller within the degenociding assemblage, focusing on how sonic narratives carry memory, identity, and worldviews into relational spaces.

Music is the human experience set to sound; it always tells a story, with each line and each inflection representing a facet of life – human or non-human, past, present, or projected future (Baker and MacDonald 2017, 436; Abels 2022, 93). Far from being merely aesthetic, music’s narrative carries cultural memory, identity, and worldviews, making audible what might otherwise remain in silence. As Snowber (2016) writes: “We are found in each other’s stories,

whether they are written, oral, danced, painted or poeticized” (xiv). Through these stories, people are transformed and enlightened while communities are brought together to create meaningful moments in time.

More broadly, music – this often overlooked sonic intervention – enables resistance, relationship-building, ethical awakening, and a becoming-with space and place, encompassing spatiotemporal dimensions and sensory experiences. It both reflects and reshapes discursive frameworks of nationhood, belonging, and social justice (Elliott and Silverman 2017, 128, 137; Hudson 2006, 626–627).

In the context of degenociding, this narrative quality of music matters because the stories it sounds can either reproduce colonial imaginaries or be the foundations for unsettling them through Indigenous worldviews, intrinsically connected to the land.

Propositional Theme

If music is a carrier of narratives and cultural memory – enabling communities to make sense of themselves and each other through embodied, sonic storytelling – then centring Indigenous stories and musics in public life will shift settler understandings of Indigenous worldviews, establishing shared interpretive frameworks for reconciliation and clarifying decolonial responsibilities, thus advancing the degenociding process. This proposition situates music’s storytelling qualities as a key mechanism for transforming settler frameworks toward ones that are more aligned with Indigenous accounts of land, history, relationship, and responsibility.

Development

Contrary to common assumptions, music, per se, does not have any meaning; it becomes meaningful through onto-epistemic frameworks embedded in it – contexts that shape and reproduce larger webs of culture and daily life-worlds, ultimately manifesting through embodied

and emotional experiences (Abels 2022, 91–92; Blacking et al. 1979, 6). Neither is music a universal language; rather, in most instances, an investment must be made in understanding cultural contexts to begin to appreciate the meanings sounded through it, both for audiences and performers (Bradley 2015, 196; McClary 2002, 21).

Nevertheless, music is a great instrument for communication and self-expression due to its ability to provoke emotional responses in a direct and emotionally and physically felt manner (Turino 1999, 224). In fact, without this embodied felt element, transfer of knowledge or meaning is minimal, if not non-existent (Abels 2022, 64–65). Moreover, Abels (2022) argues that the musical experience is unique in that it makes understandable and meaningful elements of life through “felt-bodily” perception (145). Schafer ([1977] 1994) builds on this by suggesting that it is in music that one can best represent “true harmony of the inner and outer world . . . [creating] perfect models of the ideal soundscape of the imagination” (42). Taken together, these perspectives underscore that music tells stories not only through lyrics or aesthetic impressions but through embodied, experiential ways of knowing.

In addition, DeNora (2000) explains that music is a powerful mechanism – sometimes conscious or sometimes subconscious – through which individuals and communities “construct [their] perception and imagination of non-musical matters” (26). This reinforces Adorno’s ([1949] 2006) observation that music “is itself sedimented spirit, preformed socially by human consciousness” (32). In this sense, it is a social product imbued with history, spirit, and onto-epistemologies, representing both the time and place of a society and the interplay between the individual and the community. Accordingly, music contributes to this self-definition and group identity through the emotional, cognitive, and social constructions enacted through musicking (Lidskog 2017, 25).

Historical and cross-cultural examples illustrate this point: early European renaissance and baroque music mirrored aristocratic elements of society – a more private and courtly art, known as *musica reservata* or *musica secreta* – performed in chambers (*musica da camera*) for small circles of the royal elite (Clark 1957, 27; Cohen 2017, xxiv), emulating authority through elements such as the *corno da caccia* or hunting horn (Chirico 2014, 123). Later, with the rise of public opera houses and concert halls, the full orchestra reflected a more complex and urban society – an almost industrial or factory-like formation – with clear divisions of responsibility between the leaders and the followers, producing large-scale collective productions (Schafer [1977] 1994, 108).

Examples from diverse cultural contexts further affirm these propositions. For instance, in Palauan music, history is retold and enacted through chant, with narratives that are continually evolving and subject to reinterpretation (Abels 2022, 55). The idea that history in fact “lingers on in sound” is a natural and intuitive notion for the people of Palau (Abels 2022, 96). Similarly, in southern Africa, music has long served purposes of “storytelling, motivating, recording, and transmitting history, celebrating and mourning life’s milestones, healing, teaching values and customs, and conveying messages” (Woodward 2015, 617).

On Turtle Island, Indigenous musics and the stories they tell carry clear social and representative purposes “such as healing, enlivening, restoring balance, or strengthening relationships (to human, non-human, and spirit beings)” (Diamond 2016, 243). Kanien’kehá:ka scholar Sandra Styres (2019) explains that these storied soundscapes “are etched into the essence of every rock, tree, animal, pathway, and waterway (whether in urban or rural/natural or built environments) in relation to the Indigenous people who have existed on the land since time immemorial” (29).

Frith ([1996] 2011) goes further, asserting that “making music isn’t a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them” (111); it is a way of saying “*This is who we are*” (Small 1998, 43; italics in original). Likewise, in Indigenous ontologies of song, musicking carries important narratives of historical documentation and expressions of sovereignty over land – a form of “sensate sovereignty” (Robinson and Levine 2019, 239). Since the land holds the stories of its Indigenous inhabitants, music brings those stories to life. This relationship between land, story, and obligation is expressed particularly clearly by Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows (1999), who writes that “our teachings and stories form the constitution of this relationship and direct and nourish the obligations that it requires” (72).

These examples substantiate the fact that music, as storyteller, does not merely narrate the world; it sonically enacts the worldviews sourced from and inspired by the land and those who have interacted with it for millennia. In this sense, it becomes a life-giving sounding-board through which land-based stories resonate and transfer intergenerational experiences and knowledge. Through these narratives, music does not simply *re-play* what has been; it actively shapes what can be. Accordingly, as its stories are inspired by interactions with land, social realities, and memories, music is also a world builder, generating and inspiring – always in rhizomatic fashion – new ways of feeling, connecting, and knowing.

In the Canadian context, this raises the question of which stories are heard and considered legitimately “Canadian” in public soundscapes, to the detriment of Indigenous land-based narratives.

Coda

In sum, music as storyteller conveys onto-epistemic narratives that together sound memory, identity, and land. When Indigenous musics and stories are centred in Canadian public and

educational life, they do more than add “diversity”: they make audible Indigenous sovereignties and worldviews, enabling settlers to hear, and therefore be accountable to, histories and responsibilities that have long been suppressed. In this way, music the storyteller contributes to decolonizing by unsettling dominant narratives of Canada and opening avenues toward more truthful, dignified, and accountable ways of being.

7.3.4 Node 2 – Music the Bridge

Motif

When the early *Homo sapiens* sang about their surroundings or returned home with new songs picked up during visits to other tribes, they may have felt compelled to continue to journey forth – to discover more of the unknown and to seek the unseeable (Blacking et al. 1995, 171). More broadly, music has a remarkable capacity to expand our horizons, as it bridges one’s worldview to another – be it a composer’s inner soul, a sociocultural representation of a community, or the imaginary realm of the supernatural. Moreover, music possesses transcendental potential, lifting us beyond the immediate and material, taking us to the possible and yet-to-be-imagined realms of thought, emotion, and spirit (Blacking et al. 1979, 8). Here are the spaces where new meanings and ways of being can emerge, where barriers maintained by language, custom, or socially imposed structures give way to connection, resonance, and openness to change.

In this node, I therefore consider music a bridge, emphasizing its capacity to create shared spaces of encounter in which relations can be rehearsed and thus brought toward transformation.

Propositional Theme

If music creates spaces for encounter, connecting people despite perceived differences – contact that translates into relationality and heralds resonances of trust – then Indigenous-guided

encounter spaces will cultivate accountable listening, leading to trust-building and durable relational commitments, thus advancing the degenociding process. This proposition stresses that while music can bridge many kinds of difference, degenociding requires bridges that are explicitly guided by Indigenous Peoples, so that listening and relationship-building occur within ethical frameworks cognizant of power and history.

Development

Stirling (2019) observes that research on music has largely centred on its semiotic and representational aspects, while the “affect and sensation” it produces remain undervalued and sidelined (56). This downplaying of felt, bodily, and sensory experience privileges interpretation over participation and, in turn, obscures the extent to which music can effect change within both public and scholarly discourse. For example, Stirling notes that “repetitive-habitual sonic affects – when collectively embodied or shared by a counter-hegemonic social assembly – can simultaneously be transformative” (64).

In the same vein, musicking establishes models of “ideal relationships,” grounded in a deep sense of responsibility and mutual commitment among all participants (Small 1998, 218). Cross et al. (2012) describe how, in the process of music-making, there is an “alignment of our own emotional states with those of our collaborators, and may give rise to a sense of empathic community . . . a scaffold that can help us to acquire the habit of empathizing” (340). In essence, musicking involves attempting to build bridges – onto-epistemically – toward one’s “co-musickers” in a space of moving and sounding processes, entering their “consciousness, and . . . inner state, in a framework of care and sympathy” (Laurence 2011, 178). In this relational dynamic, Laurence (2011) insists: “the ‘other’ is enhanced and not diminished” (178).

By building these musical bridges, participants can practise and model positive dispositions that resonate into their everyday relationships (MacDonald et al. 2017, 5, 29–30). Relational elements that are necessary for meaningful musical experiences – such as increased trust and respect among participants, along with the required practice of honesty and authenticity (particularly essential in small musical groups) – provide valuable groundwork for a sense of solidarity and connection between groups, to be able to “decenter oneself and adopt the perspective of another” (Ruud 2017, 596). The result is important social capital and bonding between groups and individuals (Ruud 2017, 597).

Yet bridging is not only an empathic act; it also can become a practice that either reproduces Eurocentric zero point approaches to listening or becomes accountable to place, history, and Indigenous authority. This earwitnessing may be used as a form of counterlistening – a direct challenge to, and subversion of, Eurocentric aesthetics and worldviews. Ouzounian (2023) writes of this *counterlistening* – or “listening *against* official narratives” (166) – as possibly enabling subaltern agency over dominant narratives, particularly those imposed by the colonizer.

This, I argue, may help move us closer to the goals of cultural degenociding: the re-sounding – and resulting earwitnessing (Schafer [1977] 1994, 8–9, 272; Ouzounian 2023, 170) – of the sonic memories that, ethically and morally, should have been heard from the very outset of the settler–Indigenous relationship. This act may also open the participant’s ears to a vivid new soundscape and change their attitudes toward the landscape and worldviews emanating from it – an important element of degenociding through Indigenous musics and the stories they tell.

In degenociding terms, this means that listening is not neutral in its reception; it is a practised ethical relationship-building mechanism to place, history, and authority. Ouzounian

(2006) defines “situated sonic practice” as encompassing “all musical/sonic practices that highlight space- and place-based aspects of sonic experience. Situated sonic practices take into consideration not only aspects of the built environment, architectures and social spaces, but also the temporal dimension of space as expressed through memory and history” (72).

Born (2011) strengthens this bridge logic by showing how musicking not only connects individuals in the moment but can also gather listeners into shared “publics” and “collectivities,” shaping how people imagine belonging to place and to one another. In decolonizing terms, this matters because the same powers of association that bind people through sound – through collective feeling, entrainment, and shared attention – can also help “reboot” a location’s meanings by associating land with Indigenous stories and experiences rather than colonial narratives. Born writes: “music conjures up and animates imagined communities, aggregating its listeners into virtual collectivities and publics based on musical and other identifications” (Born 2011, 378). Read alongside this node’s proposition, the point is not that any musical activity is automatically ethical but that Indigenous-guided encounter could, theoretically, direct music’s bonding force toward accountable listening, trust-building, and durable relational commitments.

Similarly, Bowen (2011) observes that artists have long served as moral conduits, awakening public conscience and advocating for justice through their creative expression (106). In the Australian context, Bowen explains that music functions as a powerful tool for making visible what “white Australia” commonly refers to as “The Dead Heart” of the country – an appellation associated with perceptions of the continent’s arid interior as empty, sparsely populated, and culturally void (101). Challenging these perceptions are collaborative music projects with Indigenous Peoples that have acted as relational bridges between cultures,

generating new narratives that speak – and sound – vibrant and deeply rooted Indigenous cultures connected to land (Bowen 2011, 102).

More broadly, musicking has proven to be an effective mechanism for shaping and improving cross-cultural and intergroup dialogue (Harwood 2017, 3). It provides an imaginary meeting place where coordinated acts of a psychological, physical, and communicative nature allow people to speak a mutually relatable language through which they can negotiate differences and express complex emotions (Harwood 2017, 19–20). In this sense, the ethical dimension of musicking extends beyond the artistic event; a larger sphere unfolds, creating catalysts for empathy and new reflections, perceptions, and visions for the future. Burnard (2015) affirms that music – for instance, in peace-building initiatives in post-war contexts – creates a moment of “empathic creativity ... a celebration of differences and a symmetry between everyone’s relation to one another without polarization [occurs]” (360–364). Similarly, Hallam (2015) lists several such instances where musicking has helped bridge intergroup tensions, promoting understanding and tolerance between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland (87), refugee children and the wider Australian community (83), and Palestinian and Jewish children and their families in cross-community school visits in Israel (83).

Along the same lines, Olivier Urbain’s edited volume *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* (2008) demonstrates that music-making can bridge divisions across contexts of geopolitical conflict, displacement, social fragmentation, and post-conflict repair. Across the volume, the act of musicking is presented as a relational practice through which people rehearse forms of listening, cooperation, and trust in shared spaces that are often blocked in ordinary political or social life.

- a) In **geopolitical conflict settings**, several examples show how music can place members of opposing or estranged communities in a shared artistic process. The West–Eastern Divan Orchestra, associated with Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said’s 1999 Weimar project, brought Israeli and Palestinian musicians together in an environment where the discipline of rehearsal required participants to listen across political division and to produce something collectively notwithstanding the unresolved conflict that separated them (2). Yair Dalal’s Oslo concert similarly created a symbolic and practical meeting point by involving Palestinian and Israeli children in a joint musical performance (2, 206). In Burundi and South Africa, Drumming for Reconciliation used collective drumming as a means of bringing young people from communities shaped by ethnic violence into rhythmic cooperation, allowing musical participation to interrupt inherited patterns of fear and separation (35).
- b) In **intercultural and community-based contexts**, musicking has shown effectiveness as a way of strengthening belonging and cultivating cross-cultural recognition. The Cambridge Women’s Quilts Project in Massachusetts responded to racial tension by combining storytelling, quilt-making, and song composition, allowing young participants to translate tragedy and loss into shared artistic expression (32–34). The Resonant Community Project in Oslo worked within multi-ethnic school settings, using performance, participatory music-making, dance, and encounters with immigrant musicians to help students and families experience cultural difference as a resource rather than a threat (179–180). Likewise, the Min-On Concert Association in Japan promoted cultural exchange by bringing international performers to Japanese audiences, framing music as a vehicle for dialogue across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries (6–7).
- c) In **therapeutic and reconciliation-oriented contexts**, musicking also functions as a means of rebuilding trust, empathy, and relational repair. The Bronx Psychiatric Center Band gave psychiatric patients an opportunity to participate in an ensemble where performance, listening, and mutual dependence could strengthen confidence and social connection (166). In Crimea, Guided Imagery and Music dialogue seminars used musical listening to help participants from communities affected by conflict move beyond rigid defensive positions and enter a more vulnerable dialogical space (129). In South Africa, reconciliation performances using Afrikaans and Zulu musical repertoires – such as Sibongile Khumalo’s performance of the Afrikaans folk song “My Sarie Marais” at the South Africa Love Workshop – allowed audiences to recognize shared histories of suffering, producing a cathartic moment in which music opened space for historical empathy and mutual recognition (65). In all instances, musicking processes humanized the imagined *Other* and enabled relational repair.

Solomon (2015) affirms that music, as a deterritorialized form of expression, generates a sense of reterritorialization for participants in musicking (205–206). He argues that this imaginary bridge can transport the diasporan participant to a distant homeland. Edensor (2019) similarly illustrates how music can connect the traveller – or settler – to their new place of

residence through what he calls the “sonic rhythms of place” (158), which can range from the everyday sounds of urban life to the anthemic chanting at football stadiums, the meditative chants of monks, and the time-deep Indigenous musics of any given territory.

Yet it is precisely this bridge toward Indigenous musics and onto-epistemologies that is consistently left uncrossed in settler Canadian contexts, where they have been muted – systemically and systematically – and therefore rendered inaudible to the broader public (Armenian 2025, 127).

Aksenova (2020) describes the arts as a helpful bridge between legal frameworks and societal values, capable of advancing societal transformation (497). She highlights three ways in which it operates:

Firstly, art reflects the complexity of the human condition and reserves a place for emotional processing. Secondly, it is a useful relational tool in opening a space for dialogue, the latter being essential for reconciliation. Lastly, art has the capacity to translate legalistic findings into a language accessible to a wider audience. (Aksenova 2020, 499)

In addition, Aksenova points out how art creates space for memory work, enabling the processing of historical truths and fostering meanings without imposing uniformity. Through clear perception, music and art can surpass cognitive biases, highlighting areas in need of attention (Aksenova 2020, 502; Aksenova 2025, 112).

Indeed, in my experience as a concert violinist, these relationships – both imagined (with the unknown audience member, with the composer, etc.) and real (with fellow musicians on stage or a specific group or individual in the audience) – form a truly rhizomatic web of bridges that materialize moment by moment during performance. They are rhizomatic because many are instigated spontaneously and often unexpectedly. To name only a few, such virtual bridges are reciprocal: they link performer and audience, performer and co-performer, performer and conductor, performer and composer (and the era from which the music emerges), and equally,

audience members with one another. A less obvious yet essential dimension of musicking – and the responsibilities it entails – is the network of bridges that take shape in the sound-creation event itself, with every musician and audience member contributing – often with deeply personal or “floating intentionality” (Cross and Morley 2009, 68) – through sound, intention, attentive listening, and responsive action, so that music becomes a moment of co-creation and mutual becoming.

Coda

Thus, music is not merely shared history and experience but a relational technology that can cultivate trust, reciprocity, and ethical awareness in contexts where relations are not predetermined by coercive power dynamics but instead are allowed to flourish with dignity. Through music, bridging is not metaphor but a lived method – one that embodies the ethical and structural objectives of decolonizing by repairing relational avenues through “continuous, self-vibrating region[s] of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22). In the Canadian context, when Indigenous protocols are upheld (for reference, see *Assemblage II – Indigenous Voices*), musical bridges encourage accountable listening and commitment rather than temporary intercultural exchange, thereby forming lines of flight from colonial normativity toward more just, harmonious, and answerable relationships.

7.3.5 Node 3 – Music the Worldmaker

The essential quality of music is its power to create another world of virtual time.

— John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?*

Motif

If music as representation encodes cultural values and social structures, music as practice makes them lived and relational, or otherwise embodied. Accordingly, Mahrenholz (1999) describes

this as a type of worldmaking: the construction of new perspectives through musical engagement (82). Moreover, Pearse (2019) extends this interpretation, arguing that music's capacity for "cultural exposure" (27) can reveal – and counter – Canada's colonial narratives in a more immediate and direct way, linking sound and lived experience to deeper knowledge and difficult truths.

Hence our interest here in what kinds of worlds music could create. Specifically, what Small (1998) refers to as musicking (see "Definitions") offers individuals opportunities for new embodied experiences. The act of musicking not only involves the production and/or reception of sound but is fundamentally about the (re)forming of new and old relationships among the participants (Small 2011, xi). These connections allow participants to explore, affirm, and even celebrate their identities – who they are, who they think they are, or who they aspire to be. In this sense, musicking functions as a social practice of identity formation and negotiation.

Indeed, in my experience of musicking, whether as performer or listener, I can attest to the creation of a meta-temporal reality – one that nonetheless resounds within a real, embodied space. This space – be it the concert hall, the land, or even the body itself – is transformed through the assemblage of a felt present, simultaneously creating a harmony of lived memory (the past) and imagination (the future).

In this node, then, I approach music as a worldmaking force that shapes how participants experience time, space, and relation – and, crucially for this dissertation, how they might reimagine them around land-based Indigenous onto-epistemic paradigms.

Propositional Theme

If music is not only a reflection of existing realities but also a worldmaker – shaping how individuals and their communities imagine, enact, and transform their worlds – then creating

independent, Indigenous-led worldmaking spaces in public, educational, and cultural settings may redefine the Canadian identity narrative, in turn establishing ethical and dignified relational norms and driving institution-level change, thus advancing the decolonizing process. This proposition highlights worldmaking as a decolonizing practice: by enabling Indigenous-led soundscapes to become resonant expressions of their congruent landscapes, it unsettles existing colonial variations of British or Francophone themes and reorganizes them away from these colonial patterns.

Development

Empirically, scholars identify clear patterns showing how music can directly influence the way human beings perceive themselves in relation to, and within, their communities (Sterne 2003; Spychiger 2017, 281). Specifically, Turino (1999) emphasizes that music influences the internal voice and thought by naturally producing “chains of semiosis” (252). These musical experiences transcend linguistic forms of communication and thought, as direct (sound), social, and physical (performance or dance) acts are coupled with emotional and non-linguistic self-perception (Frith [1996] 2011, 124). As Frith ([1996] 2011) further argues, music not only reflects a community’s worldview but can *also* contribute to its production and construction – music not only mirrors identity but also helps create it (109). For example, Burns and Lafrance (2002) suggest that arts-based encounters can unsettle habitual frames of reference: using destabilizing and discomforting musical, narrative, and physical references, musicians can generate intense and transformative audience engagement and critical thought (9–10).

Within diasporic identity formation, Lidskog (2017) argues that music can actively reproduce and renegotiate identities (25); “the past is not only remembered but shaped, influencing the future social positioning of groups” (35). For example, in Armenian post-

genocide contexts, music functions as a soundtrack of remembrance, sustaining diasporic consciousness – a means of refusing forgetting and even re-creating lost worlds (Turabian 2024, 1). This occurs through the musical and aesthetic experiences it generates – experiences that are both individual and social, “of the subjective in the collective” (Frith [1996] 2011, 110). Identity, being fluid and constantly in a process of becoming, is shaped by the innate mind and body characteristics of music, flowing and resisting permanence as a “self-in-process” (Frith [1996] 2011, 109).

In other words, worldmaking here is not only representational; it is produced through embodied knowledge and relational, participatory vectors. Returning then to Abels (2022) and her notion of “felt-bodily” perception (145) (see Node 1), we can observe that during musicking, sound is experienced as a “coalescence” (112) of meaning that actualizes itself “atmospherically” (112). When musicking occurs, the counterpoint between the experiential (the physical and social) and the semiotic – the tapestry of symbolisms, philosophies, customs, embodied affects, and belief systems through which meaning is enacted and interpreted – co-creates new worlds into being (Abels 2022, 19).

Moreover, music also becomes a meeting place for the “discursive and non-discursive dimensions of taking part in the world” (Abels 2022, 175) and an ideal space for projecting desired relationships and an acute sense of togetherness and community. Notably, DeNora (2000) explains that music can be seen as a mode of transport, as it is always *going* somewhere, taking us to places (7). This “transport destination” depends on “how” we listen: what onto-epistemic regimes determine what we hear, what we feel, and what we consider meaningful – and therefore what kinds of worlds can be made through sound.

To make this “how” concrete, it is helpful to recall that sound does not carry one normative meaning across contexts; it produces different meanings depending on who hears it, where, and under what social conditions. For example, the sound of a police siren in the streets of New York may well engender feelings of security, fear, or apprehension depending on the class, race, and gender of the subject who hears (Bull 2019, 340).

I am particularly interested in how sound could help recreate a way of being or knowing in the participant, be it auditor or performer, since degenociding is about destination. It asks: Where do we want to go as a society? What commitments and accountable actions are we ready to take to reach this destination? When revived and resounded, music helps awaken these sonic memories and helps the participant relive and imagine, in their own way, or through guided listening, a past, present, and future worldview. Through sound studies, we can study the soundtrack of humanity and the role of sound in culture; we learn to listen and be critically aware of what sounds are curated for us by the dominant structures in society. Robinson (2020) qualifies settler listening orientation as a Western “single-sense engagement” (40) and “a process of the ear rather than the body” (41). The manner in which settlers listen to and consume other musics and cultures prioritizes “the capture and certainty of information over the affective feel, timbre, touch, and texture of sound” (Robinson 2020, 38).

Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari explain the processes brought about by music and possible change that is generated through the arts:

Art is never an end in itself; it is only a tool for blazing life lines, in other words, all of those real becomings that are not produced only *in* art, and all of those active escapes that do not consist in fleeing *into* art, taking refuge in art, and all of those positive deterritorializations that never reterritorialize on art, but instead sweep it away with them toward the realms of the asignifying, asubjective, and faceless. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 187; italics in original)

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) remind us here that art is not mere representation or entertainment but a force that sends us on lines of flight into new ways of being. Read pedagogically, transformative, even insurgent musical practice sets such lines of flight in motion: small, yet regular disruptions in classrooms and public spaces that in time re-compose the soundscape of a location and thereby reshape how we see the space we live in. This can only be realized with (a) openness (the *asignified* realm), (b) empathy (the decentring lines of flight into new ways of being beyond ego or *subjectivity*), and (c) onto-epistemic guidance from the minoritarian (those rendered *faceless* through power dynamics).

Deleuze and Guattari specify that through music one can become “memoryless, simultaneously animal and imperceptible: in love” (187). “Memoryless” because music can help us experience life as intensity and resonance, not as fixed (colonial) narrative; “animal” because music opens pathways to our un-coded/un-tainted/un-trained instincts; and “imperceptible” because music provides a potential space that escapes the colonial gaze and labels. And “in love,” since the degree of affective reframing in decolonial work requires empathy, care, and the willingness to be changed. Thus, for the settler Canadian trained to listen through the Western musical ear, engaging with Indigenous musics on Indigenous terms can help re-tune this ear, escape the rigid power dynamics, and, potentially, lead to new becomings, accountabilities, worldviews, and relational praxis.

Building on this, Burke Stanton (2018) emphasizes that in decolonial contexts, musicking can open spaces in which “the cognitive, emotional, and social elements . . . could emerge to challenge hegemonic relations and colonial histories” (16). Drawing again on Deleuze and Guattari, the musicking subject is essentially deterritorialized through these acts, then reterritorialized into new spaces of becoming. In other words, musicking is not only a process of

relationship-building but also one of unsettling colonial structures and imagining alternative futurities.

For example, Swart (2020) argues that to help overcome the deep scars of apartheid in South Africa, access to music education resulting from initiatives like the *Mamelodi Music Project* in Mamelodi West, Pretoria, has been – and remains – an important component of positive social transformation and enablement for underprivileged learners, as well as an effective tool for reconciliation (56). An example within a Turtle Island context would be what Dena’ina interdisciplinary musician and scholar Jessica Bissett Perea (2019) refers to as the process of bringing the world into being through sound, or “Inuit Sound Worlding,” which leads to unsettling colonial sound-logics by asserting Indigenous land-based sound narratives (174–175).

This land-based account of sound as worldmaking is not only analytic; it is also articulated directly by Indigenous artists as a way of knowing and relating. Similarly, writer and musician Joy Harjo (Muscogee Nation) poignantly describes the reciprocal relationship between land and sound – sound shaping land, and land shaping sound:

All landscapes have a history, much the same as people exist within cultures, even tribes. There are distinct voices, languages that belong to particular areas. There are voices inside rocks, shallow washes, shifting skies; they are not silent. And there is movement, not always the violent motion of earthquakes associated with the earth’s motion or the steady unseen swirl through the heavens, but other motion, subtle, unseen, like breathing. A motion, a sound, that if you allow your inner workings to stop long enough, moves into the places inside you that mirror a similar landscape; you too can see it, feel it, hear it, know it. (Harjo, quoted in RCAP 1995, 2)

Harjo’s formulation clarifies how worldmaking operates through sound as a land-based practice of relation. Here landscapes have “distinct voices,” and sound becomes a way of relating to place – of hearing it and being oriented by it. Musicking can therefore function as a practice of learning to hear place – an embodied pedagogy that reorganizes perception and, with it,

responsibility toward land and water. Read this way, worldmaking is inseparable from ethics: the question is not only what worlds musicking helps bring into being but what kinds of relations those worlds inspire.

To understand this “ethics” mechanism, we can turn again to Bakhtin ([1919] 1990), this time considering his concept of *architectonics* – the ethical structuring of relations between self, other, and world – to understand, for example, Indigenous–settler Canadian relationality. The shared experience (or “event” as Bakhtin would state) of musicking between participants, harmonized with consent-based and Indigenous-guided protocols that frame the musical event, can create transformative spaces that shift settler perspectives on the historical and cultural soundscapes of Canada. Abels (2022) reinforces our understanding of this transformative potential by noting how music-making intertwines with lived realities, facilitating not only world-building but also, through the felt-bodily knowledge it provides, movement toward action. These practices enable individuals and communities to interpret and transform their environments by integrating discursive and non-discursive forms of engagement (Abels 2022, 174).

Accordingly, music is not a passive but an active, embodied medium of relational understanding – one capable of making audible what is otherwise inaudible – for example, revealing Indigenous worldviews and situating participants in new ethical positions of settler answerability. As discussed, such encounters must remain ethically grounded – with a clear awareness of power dynamics and the history of colonization – and must translate into concrete practices of repair and justice – that is, into the work of decolonizing.

Born (2011) also helps clarify how worldmaking can be the result of individual feelings and affect that accumulate over time into collective imaginaries and futurities: communities

develop shared attachments to particular places and the related narratives that emanate from them across generations (Born 2011, 378).

For decolonizing praxis, this is precisely what worldmaking through music could do: when Indigenous musics sound in public and educational life under Indigenous authority, they can re-compose what a place signifies – amplifying Indigenous presence as lived governance rather than as curated content – and, in doing so, reshaping the stories that are told, the identities that are felt, and the futures that become thinkable on the shared land.

As noted earlier, Edensor (2019) writes of “sonic rhythms of place,” through which we gain embodied knowledge or sensory situatedness through our interactions with “scenes, textures, smells, sounds, and a host of affordances that are experienced repetitively and regularly” (159). On a broader scale, music can also be part of national narrative-building projects: Boer et al. (2013) demonstrate how “music ‘speaks’ one’s language” (2361), not only literally but emotionally, connecting the personal self with one’s national identity and producing reverberations of sound that form a shared mental architecture in the participants of musicking. Taken together, such processes suggest that music can do more than reflect existing realities – it can open up new ones.

Rosaldo (1993) finds that culture is essential to a people; it helps them find meaning in life. He continues by stating that “culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high nor low, culture is all-pervasive” (26). Similarly, Darder (1991) finds that Indigenous language teaching develops a strong sense of self-identity: “Within the student’s native language is contained the codification of lived experiences that provide the avenues for students to express their own realities and to question the wider social order” (37).

Accordingly, I argue that if we are to go beyond settler Canadian narratives of what Canada is, music can be the worldmaker that takes us to new, collectively shared and enacted realities. In essence, music as worldmaker, in a contrapuntal manner, builds lines of flight to re(compose) alternative futurities – or perhaps, realize “the return of the future” (Quijano 2002, 75). Music thus becomes a dynamic architectural blueprint – one that can be drawn, constructed, and experienced simultaneously, and that remains open to tearing down walls, shifting foundations, and raising new structures for the occupants.

Coda

In summary, music the worldmaker is not a static reproduction of contemporary realities or power dynamics, nor is it an abstract poetic notion; it has the potential to (re)compose new narratives and objectives for society. When Indigenous-led worldmaking musics find their voices in Canadian public and educational life, they can help the degenociding process by offering resonant lines of flight away from the colonial zero point onto-epistemic “régime of truth” (Foucault 1980, 131), toward a reimagined identity imbued with humility and dignity for its inhabitants.

7.3.6 Node 4 – Music the Teacher

All music making, all music listening, all music talking, all musicking is essentially an identity project. Music provides a forum in which we construct and negotiate our constantly evolving sense of who we are, and our place in the world.

— MacDonald et al., *Handbook of Musical Identities*

Motif

In this node, I consider music as teacher within the degenociding assemblage. Where earlier nodes emphasize music as storyteller, witness, bridge, or worldmaker, here the focus is on music’s pedagogical force in shaping subjectivities and ethical orientations, particularly in

institutional spaces that form settler children and Indigenous youth. Read through an HRBA, music education becomes a site where rights-holders (students) encounter or are denied Indigenous-led sounded normativity, and where duty-bearers (ministries, school boards, and teacher education institutions) either reproduce colonial patterns or counter cultural genocide. This node therefore examines how music, as teacher, can participate in maintaining colonial sonic paradigms or in enabling degenociding lines of flight in educational and public spheres.

Propositional Theme

The central proposition of this node can be stated as follows: if music destabilizes dominant orders and teaches ethically and politically – operating micropolitically, shaping identities, cultivating critical consciousness – then supporting Indigenous-led insurgent musical practices in educational and public spaces can unsettle colonial normativity, opening lines of flight toward repair and transitions in policy and practice, leading to ethical reorientation and growth of decolonial practice across institutions, thus advancing the degenociding process.

Music operates effectively as what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) term a “micropolitical” intervention – a molecular-level catalyst capable of disrupting large-scale societal, or “molar,” structures (216).⁴⁷ If we consider the molecular as the individual and the molar as the state – both rhizomatically interconnected and capable of affecting change in one another – we arrive at the crux of what I call degenociding. For Indigenous Peoples, the arts – with their symbolic, relational, and emotional force – not only support their resurgence but also invite settler Canadians to engage more deeply in decolonial work, to confront long-standing neglect of

⁴⁷ In Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, molar organizations refer to the architectures of the state and society that normalize binary onto-epistemologies through institutions, classes, and identities (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Indigenous cultural expressions, and to begin the difficult but dignified task of redressing centuries of disregard.

By instilling new onto-epistemic knowledge in both the molar *and* molecular subjects, music informs new worldviews that, in turn, orient life decisions, policies, and ways of being, undoing certain elements of cultural genocide in the process – the *raison d'être* of degenociding.

Development

To understand how music *teaches* in degenociding or colonizing paradigms, it is necessary to understand the sonic norms that influence curricula, listening habits, and institutional priorities.

Born (2011) underscores why school-based musicking matters politically, not only pedagogically: music can conjure and animate communities, alongside social imaginaries and social struggles (378). In K–12 contexts, musicking therefore becomes a mechanism through which belonging and legitimacy are produced – either reproducing settler authority or reorganizing the conditions of encounter under Indigenous governance in accordance with the animating imperative of degenociding: Indigenous resurgence and settler redress.

Maxine Greene's work is instructive here because it frames arts-based learning as a public practice of inquiry rather than a consumption of content. Greene insists that for meaningful learning and “to help kids shape their identity, we've got to awaken them to their own questions and encourage them to create their own projects. They don't really learn unless they ask” (quoted in Oringel 2002, para. 11).

From a sound studies perspective, this node must also take up questions of listening and space. In their article “Soundspace: A Manifesto,” Ouzounian and Lappin (2014) take the lead from R. Murray Schafer and state that “we must, first and foremost, learn how to listen” (306). Attentive listening, they explain, becomes accountable through “sonic thinking,” in turn leading

to what we could call a Deleuze–Guattari-type “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22) that is “alive, open to influence, responsive, aware and connected” (Ouzounian and Lappin 2014, 310). The listener must embrace a listening posture that acknowledges their prejudices and biases and is receptive to non-Western ways of knowing and experiencing sound – that is, to a sound that is a situated sonic practice, originating from the land they inhabit today.

Read through these lenses, K–12 musicking is not a neutral delivery of “music content,” but a public-making practice in which authority, participation, and dignity are organized – and therefore a site where decolonizing obligations can be either enacted or refused.

Like space, music in Canada has been extensively shaped by colonization and could be reclaimed through decolonial practices. Drawing on Coulthard, I understand grounded normativity to be under threat in these lands, and what I call a *sounded* normativity is likewise muted. Where grounded normativity is about land-based practices and knowledge and the modalities of Indigenous systems, a parallel definition of sounded normativity could be as follows: “The modalities of Indigenous *sound*-connected practices and long-standing *sound-based* knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time.”⁴⁸

Due to historic and ongoing colonial racist policies, dominant Canadian identity has largely been shaped without an ethical sonic relationship to the land – it largely lacks a *sounded* normativity Indigenous to this land. The education system in Canada has a powerful role to play

⁴⁸ Here, Coulthard’s (2014) definition of grounded normativity remains the same, except for the italicized modifiers. See footnote 33 for the original definition.

in undoing this attempt to invisibilize Indigenous cultures – an attempt that I analyse in this dissertation as a form of cultural genocide.

This approach to listening is essential for degenociding mechanisms involving musicking, because it invites receptivity toward Indigenous authority in shaping the contexts to be understood. Only when musicking is enacted within such Indigenous-led spaces – open, flexible, and non-prescriptive – can it function as a genuine degenociding act. This emphasis clarifies why school music education cannot be treated as neutral: “When space is understood not in abstract or absolute terms, but as socially and politically constituted, a spatial sound practice can emerge not only as a poetics, but as a politics; not only as an aesthetics, but as an ethics” (Ouzounian 2020, 106).

At the same time, Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that culture itself can play a central role in the symbolic violence enacted by education (188). Education and knowledge themselves are dimensions of – and vessels for – imposing political power (Bourdieu 1977, 165). The selection of cultural principles and preferences that dominate education is a window into a society’s power dynamics: it reflects the values and interests of the ruling group, often to the detriment of the minoritarian groups (Wright 2015, 345).

In music education specifically, the canon is an expression of hegemony in action, imposing – through the power of sound – imaginary hierarchies of what is considered *worthwhile* to hear (Wright 2015, 345). Consequently, Hess (2018) recommends that any non-Western music must be “introduced through the constructs it presents” (334), explaining that not all musics can

be taught using Western theoretical and aesthetic principles – this would result in imposing what Battiste (2013) has described as “an experience of cognitive imperialism” (26).⁴⁹

The experience of sound and music in colonized spaces such as Canada and the United States is deeply embedded in Eurocentric aesthetics and assumptions (Bradley 2015, 199; Matthews 2015, 245; Gaztambide-Fernández and Rose 2015, 463). Within curricular mechanisms, Bradley (2015) elaborates: music “colonizes as often as it emancipates . . . the music of some people is worthy of inclusion in the curriculum; the rest is unworthy of being taught in schools” (198). The result for the Canadian learner is a constrained understanding of music, shaped by “Anglo-European cultural hegemony and musical dominance” (Matthews 2015, 243), thereby limiting their agency and creativity. Recent sonic-insurgent-pedagogical examples in Canada that contest or interrupt this hegemonic dominance are the *Idle No More Round Dances* presented in public squares and Indigenous hip-hop that mobilizes youth and voices discontent at colonial contradictions: the former using a more traditional approach, the latter, a contemporary art form (Vosen 2019, 91–92).

Of special interest for a decolonizing process using music education as a facilitating element (the crux of my thesis goal), UNESCO (2022) mentions Social Emotional Learning (SEL):

SEL, combined with cognitive and action-oriented learning, supports the development of five fundamental competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. SEL has long-term impacts, with evidence showing higher levels of well-being throughout life (6).

⁴⁹ Battiste (2013) defines cognitive imperialism as being “about white-washing the mind as a result of forced assimilation, English education, Eurocentric humanities and sciences, and living in a Eurocentric context complete with media, books, laws, and values” (26).

Váradi (2022) and others have confirmed the strong relationship between SEL and music education in developing these competencies in the child, as well as “empathy . . . a good quality of life, and well-being” (Váradi 2022, 2).

These findings matter beyond the educational benefits associated with music learning because they connect artistic participation to broader questions of dignity, agency, and human rights. Chartrand and Packer (2015) describe the Arts as “manifestations of human creativity, communication, ideals and imagination” (125) and emphasize their capacity to mobilize. Donders (2015) similarly understands artistic and cultural expression as capable of generating counter-discourses that challenge existing relations of power (137). Her observation that “cultural identity and cultural community are part of human dignity” (138) is particularly important here, since dignity lies at the centre of the international human rights framework considered throughout this dissertation. Milani (2015) approaches the issue through the gap between legal norms and lived realities. His distinction between the “*arrested* reality” (149; italics in original) of the legal document and the “*restless* reality” (149; italics in original) of the Arts suggests that rights acquire social force through the ways they are experienced, interpreted, and enacted in society. From this perspective, music can become one of the spaces in which human rights principles move beyond written commitments and enter lived social relations.

The question then arises: How exactly do children encounter and live with music in their everyday learning and socializing environments? From an early age, children absorb music much like speech, shaped by the creative, cultural, and collective narratives around them; combined, these form a framework of meanings that guide them through life (Bannan and Woodward 2009, 467; Gaztambide-Fernández and Rose 2015, 467). In positive learning environments – preferably with student-led content – the effects are kaleidoscopic, even if difficult to quantify (Swart 2020,

53). Hallam (2015) reports extrinsic benefits of music learning, including enhanced concentration, creativity, self-control, literacy, and compassion (9–19). Music creates space for memory work, emotional processing, and dialogue, translating complex truths into accessible and embodied notions (Schafer [1977] 1994, 180; Ouzounian 2023, 170). Importantly for decolonizing, O’Neill (2015) describes musicking as an agent of transformation, leading youth to reflective, dialogical inquiry; engagement that encourages them to “*see things differently*.” They are encouraged to *speak back* to the realities of their world and discover that they are capable and ready to effect positive change” (389; italics in original).

For Indigenous Peoples, cultural knowledge and a strong connection to land and community have proven to be important factors for Indigenous communities in preserving their resilience and strengthening their capacity for recovery and revitalization (McQuaid et al. 2017, 428). A successful program, the *File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council*, includes youth workshops and culture camps designed in recreating Indigenous identities and in having discussions on suicide and decolonization (Barker et al. 2017, e209). Wilfrid Laurier University has a Master’s in Social Work program based on Indigenous teaching that includes a cultural camp and courses on Indigenous “identity, knowledge and theory” (Quinn 2007, 80). *FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth)* is an organization that “uses traditional beading, theatre, digital storytelling, photography, and music to help teenage girls express their knowledge, opinions, and questions about health and love (and everything in between).”⁵⁰ With a strong focus on sexual health and empowered decision-making, through the arts, girls across the North get to know themselves a little better. *FOXY* has reached over 4,500 youth in more than 35 Northwest

⁵⁰ “About FOXY,” n.d. Accessed December 21, 2020, <https://arcticfoxy.com/about-us/>.

Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon communities through over 400 workshops (Fanian et al. 2015, 74). Other organizations, such as *BlueprintForLife*, use Hip-Hop to great effect in developing community spirit, resilience, self-respect, and pride in Inuit youth (Leafloor 2012, 134).

It is important to note that research today confirms that colonizing systems and assessment methods do not work within the Indigenous worldview; the rich systems of education and community cohesion innate to Indigenous identity will indeed bring many more positive results (Kallio 2020, 187).

The important documentary film, *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* by the acclaimed Abenaki director, Alanis Obomsawin, tells of the struggle, known as *Shannen's Dream*, to get funding for a school in Attawapiskat, a northern Ontario community. In one of the scenes, we witness the power of experiencing one's own culture when a young member of the local *Young Eagles* drum group explains how the music influences him, he says: "The spirits are helping me, and it makes the good thing coming [*sic*]. Bad thing goes out, and you feel so happy, just smiling, singing, and dancing."⁵¹

Burns and Lafrance (2002) observe the power of music as a mechanism to counter various forms of oppression, be it patriarchal, institutional, or sexual. Lafrance (Burns and Lafrance 2002) explains powerfully the disruptive nature of music: "musicians agitate, destabilize, and, at times, appall prevailing cultural politics in incisive and powerful ways" (1). Music, in essence, becomes a force for cultivating ethical, compassionate, and creative ways of being, leading to an experientially felt interrogation of what is considered normative.

⁵¹ Alanis Obomsawin, *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* Montréal, Québec: Distributed by National Film Board of Canada, 2013, 1:07:45.

Viewed through an HRBA, music education becomes a potential space where the micropolitical and pedagogical meet. The question that must then be asked is: Are obligations and accountability met, or is the status quo maintained? Music education can be a powerful agent empowering underprivileged segments of society and, when administered with postcolonial methodologies, is an effective tool for advancing social justice goals. Wright (2015) notes that music can be an excellent medium in “applying a small point of pressure for larger social change . . . to disrupt the social status quo” (341). Nevertheless, in using music as a tool for social equity, the educator must consider questions of access, repertoire, educational philosophy, and ideology as tools of empowerment and not of continued oppression (Gaztambide-Fernández and Rose 2015, 468). Indeed, Gaztambide-Fernández and Rose (2015) find that through music, society can counteract the negative effects of low socioeconomic status; the learner will develop trust in others and will be encouraged to reflect on a wide spectrum of issues from history to racism, sexual diversity, and elitism (468). Consequently, the music teacher has the potential to occupy a privileged place as a champion for the rights of students (Swart 2020, 63) – an important notion to remember when considering the possibilities of decolonizing colonial states through music.

For example, in the Province of Quebec, guidelines for teachers on engaging with Indigenous knowledge are clear: they specify that teachers should avoid stereotypes, prioritize resources approved by the relevant Indigenous communities, invite Elders and Indigenous community members into classrooms, teach local histories explicitly from Indigenous perspectives, and recognize oral practices and experiential knowledge alongside written ones (Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation 2024, 60–63). Nevertheless, under a decolonizing lens, this approach is inadequate since authority still sits with the Ministry (credits, assessment,

governance), the guidelines are not yet part of the education structure, and the basic reality of cultural genocide – let alone genocide *tout court* – is not named, thus weakening accountability and, I argue, the possibility for students to develop in dignity. I develop this critique of Québec education more fully elsewhere, arguing for Indigenous-governed learning spaces in which non-Indigenous students learn as guests according to protocols established by Indigenous hosts (Armenian 2026). Indigenous-led insurgent musical pedagogy could provide not only sounded normativity for learners but also, more generally, micropolitical repair that unsettles colonial normativity.

In other words, the same musical processes that currently support student critical thinking capacities, when oriented by Indigenous-led sounded normativity and HRBA obligations, become degenociding pedagogies rather than extensions of colonial sonic hegemony.

Coda

Taken together, these analyses indicate that when Indigenous-led musicking has an independent space in curricula and public learning structures, students are offered access to a sounded normativity rooted in these lands rather than to a predominantly Eurocentric sonic aesthetic. In such moments, I argue that music can teach new worldviews: it can operate micropolitically to redirect identities, unsettle colonial normativity, and advance the degenociding process.

7.4 Assemblage IV B – The (Art)icles of Listening

. . . to hear the language of Inuit women linking breath to sound to land to meaning and creating new frequencies that disintegrate the noise of colonialism.

— Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Rehearsals for Living*

7.4.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “From Hungry Listening to Guest Listening”

RHIZOMATICS (asks *how* this assemblage maps criteria toward the Degenociding Plateau – from what Indigenous musics are, to how hearing is governed, to what accountable encounter requires) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks *where* decolonial aims rupture against settler listening defaults and zero point universality) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks *where* capture sediments as suppression/salvage/extraction across schools, archives, canon, and land logics) = PRAGMATICS (affirms *what* can be enacted – delinking, treating song as living law/history/relation, and making Indigenous authority, consent, and Nation-specific protocol constitutive conditions) = MICROPOLITICS (asks *where* durability appears – guest listening with limits/refusal, settler obligation, and institutional accountability beyond inclusionary performance).

7.4.2 Functions and Effects (Assemblage IV B)

As explained in the previous chapters, if Canadians want to participate in the decolonial process, they need to be receptive to Indigenous worldviews – questioning and breaking away from the structures and legacies of colonialism. Through the scholarship of Spivak, Mignolo, Fanon, Said, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and others, we have seen how power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized suffocate the voice of the latter. Therefore, it is important to note that degenociding through music mechanisms can only be effective when guided by Indigenous-led orientations and grounded in accountability in listening. This – what Mignolo (2011) calls delinking from settler colonial culture – is a refusal of the colonial matrix of power and opens space for Indigenous resurgence. It also requires more than resistance: it entails re-existing – confronting the imperial logics of global, linear onto-epistemologies, and inhabiting diverse ways of knowing and being (Mignolo 2011, 90).

Crucially, one cannot think decolonially while remaining within the onto-epistemic structures of *Humanitas* (see 3.2); doing so merely appropriates the contributions of the *Anthropos* and replicates coloniality (Mignolo 2011, 90).

Accordingly, decolonial objectives must emerge from the onto-epistemic structures of the *Anthropos* – in our case, Indigenous Peoples. These structures are founded on what he calls the “geo- and body-politics of knowledge” (Mignolo 2011, 89): knowledges that are situated, embodied, and tied to specific territories, lived experiences, and histories, such as Indigenous musics. By contrast, the perspectives of *Humanitas* – here represented by settler Canadians – are built upon “theo- and ego-politics of knowledge” (Mignolo 2011, 89): knowledges that are supposedly neutral and objective, which assume a “zero point epistemology” (Mignolo 2011, 89). Western musical thought exemplifies this positioning, presenting itself as universal and therefore applicable to all worldviews, while in fact reflecting Eurocentric positionalities. This universalizing claim has historically erased and delegitimized other musical knowledges, contributing to cultural genocide, for example in the Canadian case, by denying Indigenous musics the right to stand on their own epistemic ground. In this light, decolonizing requires not only centring Indigenous musics but also refusing the authority of Western musical thought to define what counts as “music” itself.

This opening sequence therefore establishes (a) why music cannot be treated as a universal aesthetic object; (b) how settler institutions, both historically and contemporaneously, include or exclude Indigenous musics in education and public spaces (I mainly look at the Canadian case); and (c) the criteria by which contemporary initiatives can be assessed for decolonizing potential.

It also clarifies the order of what follows – essentially, lines of flight that directly lead to the proposed Degenociding Plateau.

This assemblage is the final scaffolding needed for the Degenociding Plateau. It clarifies what Indigenous musics are understood to do and be (7.4.3); it then traces the settler listening regimes that have been, and often continue to be dominant (7.4.4); and it ends by articulating guest listening as the protocol-centred alternative (7.4.5). In summary, this assemblage shifts from diagnosis to pre-evaluation. It does so primarily by clarifying criteria before turning to *Chapter 8*, where we experiment with the Degenociding Plateau.

7.4.3 Indigenous Musics as Living Archives: Law, Relation, and Resurgence

It is widely accepted that music, as a concept and practice, has developed in distinct ways around the world (Morley 2013; Tomlinson 2015). Morley (2013) characterizes these differences between many Indigenous and European musical practices: (a) percussive, vocal, monophonic, and often microtonal for the former, in contrast to melodic, instrumental, tonal, and polyphonic for the latter; (b) ceremonial and social orientations for the former, and primarily aesthetic for the latter; (c) sourced in the supernatural and in nature for the former, while created by a composer for the latter; and so on. Morley (2013) emphasizes that these traditions are “sophisticated in both form and intended function” (123) and cautions that European music is certainly not “representative of the diversity of musical forms that exist in other societies” (130).

However – and importantly for my theory of degenociding through music – the deep-time geographic separation of the continents, and the resulting absence of sustained cross-cultural contact, led to the development of musics with widely differing soundscapes and purposes (Morley 2013, 14). In a related vein, Tomlinson (2015) challenges teleological assumptions that

the technological development of complex musical instruments represents a normative evolutionary step that some societies *missed*. Rather, he describes such developments as localized “microbursts of innovation” (247) within a broader process of “limitless difference” (234) in human cultural expression. As he puts it, “It is not the case that every human society that hunts large birds will end up fashioning from their bones pipes for musicking” (247).

I have not found comparable scholarship that directly tests the inverse possibility: that while many Indigenous musics developed in sustained attunement to land, relationality, and the spiritual world, European art music may have moved progressively farther from these relations – thereby “missing,” rather than expanding, certain onto-epistemic possibilities of musicking, and thus remaining in dissonance with what might be called the complex overtones of humanity and the natural world. Relatedly, and as a suggestive counterpoint, Berendt (1987) gestures toward the potential value of learning and living non-Eurocentric musics as he discusses the richness of microtones and overtones in Tibetan, Indian, and several Indigenous and other musical practices that purposefully seek to emulate and become attuned to – and part of – the sounds of the natural world, or what he calls the “Cosmos of all tones” (28).

The practice of music is generally framed through a Eurocentric lens of assessment rather than, as many Indigenous Peoples consider, a form of relation, healing, law, and spiritual practice (Morley 2013, 26), and even mapping and survival (Oliveira 2014, 78; Killin 2023, 578–579). For example, through what Kānaka Maoli scholar Katrina-Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira (2014) terms “performance cartographies” (65), Kānaka Maoli of Ko Hawai‘i Pae ‘Āina (the Hawaiian archipelago) used *mele* songs to map the names, locations, and characteristics of winds and rains (91), and to preserve physical features of landscapes, history, and ancestral knowledge (98). Oliveira further describes Kānaka “sense abilities” (94) as systems

of geographical knowledge through which navigation depended on observing stars, the sun, moon, clouds, ocean currents, birds, and sea life, listening to the rhythm of the ocean, and feeling the movement of the canoe. Other *meles* preserved genealogical connections (3) and were used to validate royal heritage and the right to rule (22).

For many Indigenous Peoples, singing has been understood as more profound and meaningful than the spoken word; prayers were therefore commonly sung, and music used in ritual contexts and, at times, in medical treatment (Bamarki 2016, 4). In this worldview, music carries spiritual and healing powers that can extend to the natural world, and music therapy has been widely used to heal or soothe physical and emotional pain (Bamarki 2016, 4). The Great Basin Ute, for example, understand songs as coming through dreams (Bamarki 2016, 4). The Navajo, by contrast, describe music as flowing from nature's sorrow as she gives up her sons to become heroes and saviours of humanity; accordingly, when a boy came of age, he would undertake a vision quest – sometimes for days – and return only once he had “found” his song, gifted to him by Mother Nature (Bamarki 2016, 5).

These examples foreground music as an onto-epistemic practice – one that cannot be reduced to an aesthetic object without erasing its legal, historical, and spiritual force. This understanding also resonates with John Borrows's (2010) description of Indigenous legal traditions as “living systems of law, open to human choice and agency” (56). The inseparable connections music has to many aspects of the lives of Indigenous Peoples are a clear indicator of its potential as an integral part of Indigenous resurgence but also hold potential to teach settlers about Indigenous ways of being and of understanding the world and land on which they live.

Robinson (2020) states this point with particular emphasis: “Indigenous song . . . serves strikingly different functions, including that of law and primary historical documentation” (41).

This fact would certainly become part of the evaluative criteria in developing K–12 curricula for non-Indigenous learners: if song is law-bearing and history-bearing, then consent, protocol, and Indigenous authority are not optional ethical gestures but constitutive conditions of legitimate educational praxis.

Taken together, these perspectives position Indigenous musics as living archives and as law-bearing, relational practices – conditions that any educational or performance initiative must treat as foundational rather than optional – especially in Canada, where settler institutions have repeatedly translated Indigenous musics into “content” under settler authority. With this grounding in place, I now turn to the settler listening regimes that have historically governed what can be heard, how it can be heard, and who gets to decide.

7.4.4 Settler Listening Regimes: Suppression, Salvage, Extraction

The systematic denial of the veracity of Aboriginal cultures as having anything intellectual to contribute to the history of Canada is the root of the conflicted relationship between Aboriginal people and Canada, and so the mechanism to reconciliation is through the act of writing Aboriginal histories from their perspectives.

— *Brenda Macdougall, Space and Place Within Aboriginal Epistemological Traditions: Recent Trends in Historical Scholarship*

These songs cast a wholly new light on the depth and dignity of Indian thought, the simple beauty and strange charm – the charm of a vanished older world – of Indian poetry.

— *Theodore Roosevelt (1906), facsimile in Curtis (1907)*

Tragically, considered to be somewhere between barbaric and satanic, the musics and cultures of Indigenous Peoples were suppressed and discredited for centuries by the colonizer. This mindset is exemplified in the eighteenth-century French Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune’s “colourful” description of the music he heard from Indigenous Peoples, writing in his journal: “I believe that if the demons and the damned were to sing in hell, it would be after this fashion” (Le Jeune,

quoted in Bamarki 2016, 3). This early comparison establishes a long-running logic of cultural imperialism where settlers are the civilizing agents (with a monopoly on aesthetics) and Indigenous Peoples are dehumanized in order to provide ideological justification for dispossession, theft, and the imposition of settler authority.

This attitude has prevailed well into the twentieth century with demeaning depictions of Indigenous Peoples in songs such as Harry Macdonough's *Hiawatha*, in which the Indigenous woman is rendered a sexual object for the white man, or Loretta Lynn's 1969 song, *Your Squaw is on the Warpath*, using stereotype-infused lyrics depicting Indigenous men (Bamarki 2016, 12). Even the Canadian music icon, composer, writer, educator, and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer (1961), referring to Inuit music, is quoted as saying: "The Eskimos are such an astonishingly unmusical race that the composer really has to wring his material to make it musically presentable. There is a marked similarity between an Eskimo singing and Sir Winston Churchill clearing his throat" (quoted in Robinson 2020, 1). This bigoted commentary on Inuit music – by a pioneer of sound studies no less – clearly situates the listening positionality of the settler ear: an ear that has long refused to accept Indigenous musics on their own terms, and that, to borrow from the title of Frantz Fanon's seminal work, casts the cultural expression of the "other" as "wretched" (Fanon 1963).

Robinson (2020) provides a late-1980s Canadian institutional "scene" in which this listening regime encounters juridical power. He recounts Judge McEachern's objection to hearing a Gitksan song as part of the evidence in a land-claim trial – declaring "I've got a tin ear" (37) and "This is a trial, not a performance" (43). The refusal to hear is therefore a refusal to receive Indigenous song as truth-bearing witness within settler institutional space. Here, music was meant to take the role of witness: affirming Indigenous right to land. The late judge's

disdain – even at having been exposed to the music – reveals the enduring (sub)conscious settler fear of the potential significance of Indigenous cultures as “legal and living document[s]” (45), and their power to (re)write an authentic history of these lands, leading inevitably to decolonization of mind and matter – that is, of identity and land.

Robinson (2020) poignantly observes: “Decolonizing musical practice involves becoming no longer sure what LISTENING is” (47). In this assemblage, this is not an abstract provocation: it provides a practical demand placed on schools and public institutions that claim reconciliation while continuing to govern encounter through settler listening defaults.

While some promising shifts have emerged in recent decades (to be discussed later), the underlying logic remains strikingly persistent within settler institutions over the past three centuries – not only in Canada but with almost identical results in Finland, Australia, and the United States, to name only a few (Dolloff 2020, 138). This disturbing relationship between Europeans and Indigenous musics illustrates how colonialism operates through aesthetic regimes of power.

In musicological research, Indigenous musics have increasingly been studied within their own onto-epistemic contexts, rather than through “Civilizations” (Old World/Eurasia) versus “Primitives” dichotomies. Seaton and Watson (1979), for example, explain without hesitation that they *must* use the latter term for “largely mnemonic” (102) purposes. In contrast, Tomlinson (2015) argues that continental separation led human societies down divergent, even “*Trackless Paths*” (233; italics in original) – a “*foundational sameness bringing about limitless difference*” (234; italics in original). These divergent paths of cultural expression produced valid but fundamentally different forms, functions, and technologies of musicking, including substantial differences in the development and use of musical instruments. While Europe was developing

polyphony and notation, Indigenous Peoples were developing equally complex systems suited to their “epicyclic” paths (Tomlinson 2015, 242). In essence, Morley (2013), Tomlinson (2015), and others argue against normative models of musical development across cultures. This challenges assumptions that differences in musical technologies represent natural hierarchies and provides an essential premise for decolonizing praxis in and through music.

This is precisely where the “genealogy” becomes directly relevant to decolonizing: if institutions have repeatedly absorbed Indigenous musics as content while retaining colonial structure, then reconciliation cannot be framed as inclusion but must be framed as structural change, protocol, and accountability – effectively becoming a philosophical challenge to settler onto-epistemology itself.

Historically, these aesthetic and institutional logics intensified at a specific moment when genocidal policy and “knowledge production” began to mutually reinforce one another. In the late nineteenth century, the genocidal policies in Canada and the United States were to reach a clear inflection point, as anthropology became institutionalized and residential schooling was articulated as a systematic instrument of assimilation. Relationships between the settlers and Indigenous Peoples took a turn from being about “space” to being about “time” (Sterne 2003, 27). Since the “space” was already in settler hands and Indigenous Peoples were considered to be on the verge of “dying out,” an attempt was made to make a record of their cultures, customs, languages, and musics for posterity, or more specifically, for the museums. In the case of Indigenous musics, new sound-recording technologies “embalmed” songs grounded in oral traditions, rendering them “frozen in time” on the cylinder disc (Sterne 2003, 319). In other words, suppression and salvage coexisted: the same cultures being attacked were simultaneously being “preserved” under settler control, for settler archives and institutions. In this way, salvage

becomes extraction: Indigenous musics are converted into institutional resources – collected, classified, and displayed – while access and protocol remain in settler hands.

At the curricular level in Canada, by the late 1980s, Indigenous musics were grouped within folk music and ethnic genres, a classificatory move that appears inclusive while keeping Eurocentric standards of evaluation intact (Oberhofer 2020, 48). As discussed in the previous assemblages, a distinction must be made between content and structure if positive transformations in Canada's identity narratives are to occur and real redress toward Indigenous Peoples is to be enacted. Surface-level recognition – like featuring Indigenous performers in settler-determined venues – obscures ongoing dispossession and fails to restore Indigenous soundscape sovereignty. Furthermore, as already discussed, the Canadian multiculturalism project – far from being reparative toward Indigenous Peoples – is understood by many Indigenous scholars and communities as an extension of settler-colonial control.

Burnett et al. (2023) suggest that within the sound record of Indigenous musics and voices lies “a sovereign space of power that challenges an imperial culture's perceptions of its own music and practices” (348), or what Diamond (2016) has called “performative moments [of] asserted micro-sovereignties” (242). Would this (re)mapping and (re)hearing of Canada's soundscapes ultimately lead to a better way of living – with a felt dignity founded on respectful cohabitation with Indigenous Peoples and the land? Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) cautions: “To reject other knowledge systems is to subject students to selective silences and collective ignorance” (120–121).

Taken together, this genealogy traces a recurring settler-institutional culture – denigration and suppression, salvage and museumization, and inclusion without power transfer. Indigenous musics are extracted as a “resource” that supports settler architectures, feeding settler

institutional legitimacy and settler identity narratives while withholding Indigenous authority, protocol, and consent, as well as settler accountability. This extractive listening regime stabilizes, justifies, and even seeks to “redeem” those architectures by sheltering them in the comfort of assumed settler innocence and well-intentioned benevolence.

This is the crux of the next section: the issue is not simply whether Indigenous musics are present but how presence is governed. What would it mean for sustained and institutionalized musical encounter to be governed by Indigenous protocols, consent, and settler accountability?

7.4.5 Guest Listening as Praxis: Protocol and Accountability

For this dissertation, it is essential to recognize that many Indigenous Peoples consider certain songs and dances as belonging to them – whether for spiritual reasons or as an anti-appropriative strategy. For this reason, as discussed in *Assemblage II*, when addressing Indigenous musics, whether in research, education, or performance, the Nation-specific consent and protocols must be adhered to (Dolloff 2020, 136).

In fact, Dolloff (2020) argues that any movement toward reconciliation in Canadian music education necessarily requires confronting entrenched power dynamics and undertaking a structural reconfiguration – in essence, dismantling prevailing approaches and building new ones in their place (139). Madrid (in Dolloff 2020) goes further and reminds us that the musical canon is more than what it appears at face value; it is in fact a representation of ideology. This, Dolloff continues, is “an exercise in re-inscribing colonialism” (Dolloff 2020, 141).

In *Hungry Listening*, Robinson (2020) presents what could be called “instructions” for decolonial praxis in the field of music. These instructions help us centre relational practices that must be enacted – rather than merely affirmed or acknowledged – if decolonial and decolonizing

goals are to be met. Robinson's intervention is not merely about improved musical etiquette; it is an argument that listening itself is structured by colonial norms and institutional habits, and that settler listening frequently operates as a technology of entitlement, legibility, and extraction. In this sense, the stakes exceed the aesthetic: because cultural genocide in Canada included the suppression, distortion, and appropriation of Indigenous musical epistemologies, decolonizing work must reconfigure settler listening as a political and relational act rather than a neutral reception. Robinson frames this critique through the concept of "hungry listening" (2), a term derived from two Halq'eméylem words – *shxwelitemlh* (settler methods and things) and *xwélalà:m* (listening) – linking settler listening to an ongoing hunger for Indigenous lands, resources, and cultural life. Read alongside this dissertation's HRBA framing, Robinson's "instructions" therefore function as a rights-based imperative: participation with dignity presupposes Indigenous authority, protocol, and limits, rather than settler access and authority.

They include:

- a) Rejecting tokenistic inclusion in settler-led cultural projects. Robinson (2020) argues against "inclusionary performance" models that merely add Indigenous performers to Western art music structures (such as the symphony orchestra) without changing the underlying power dynamics or venue protocols. He posits that this type of inclusion denies the political and onto-epistemic validity of both the Indigenous performer and their culture; more strongly, he insists that Indigenous musics require independent spaces and terms of presentation rather than integration into settler musical ecosystems (8–9). This critique is clarified through the descriptions of extraction offered by Indigenous artists, including Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq, who remarks that such schemes can make her feel as though her voice is being used "as an ingredient in someone else's stew" (8), thereby naming the discomfort that persists when the host structure remains settler-governed. Robinson's argument therefore is about governance and form, not representation alone: he asks why the equation is not reversed, such that Western art music would be presented through Indigenous logics of relation and protocol (8).
- b) **Prioritizing Indigenous structures of meaning-making.** Robinson (2020) challenges the Western habit of treating music solely as an aesthetic object, sustained by what he calls "settler colonial proprioceptive ignorance" (256), and by inclusionary logics that fixate on Indigenous content while leaving Indigenous structure intact. As he puts it,

“Such inclusionary efforts bolster an intransigent system of presentation guided by an interest in – and often a fixation upon – Indigenous content, but not Indigenous structure” (6). Instead, he calls for a recognition of Indigenous onto-epistemologies where song functions as polity, collective memory, and medicine (8). The point he is making is that what non-Indigenous people consider as “what music is supposed to be” is not transferable into settler frameworks without consequences: when institutions translate Indigenous sound into settler categories of value, genre, authorship, and technique, they risk re-enacting the very onto-epistemic distortions that cultural genocide normalized. Decolonial praxis therefore requires an onto-epistemic reorientation of how settlers listen, speak about, present, and understand Indigenous musics.

- c) **Resisting feel-good reconciliation that lets settlers “go on with business as usual.”** Robinson (2020) critiques musical performances that produce feelings of “friendship” or *fait accompli* for settler audiences. He argues that these “reconciliation spectacles”⁵² and their affective sense of resolution allow settlers to feel “settled” or absolved, maintaining the colonial status quo rather than prompting substantive political action toward redress and structural–institutional transformation (230). Put differently, affect is not the measure of what is right and real: heightened feeling after performance can become a substitute for accountability, allowing settlers to misread emotion as repair. Robinson’s warning is that music can just as easily stabilize settler comfort as unsettle it, and decolonizing praxis must therefore refuse the “deceptive cadence” of closure.
- d) **Refusing “sound tourism” and demanding ethical sonic engagements.** Robinson (2020) condemns compositions that use Indigenous sounds to provide listeners with an exotic “ride” or experience of the “other” without engaging with the trauma or political reality of those communities. He specifically critiques works that romanticize Indigenous experiences (like dogsledding) while ignoring violent colonial histories (like the sled dog slaughter) (188). Robinson therefore insists: to engage with Indigenous musics, we must use “a practice of guest listening, which treats the act of listening as entering into a *sound territory*” (53; italics in original). This listening positionality resonates directly with the HRBA – especially its principle of participation with dignity. To be a guest is to acknowledge sovereignty. To listen as a guest is to enter into a relationship not only with sound but with place, people, and history – and therefore to accept protocol, limits, and accountability as constitutive conditions of encounter rather than optional ethical actions. Crucially, guest listening also refuses the settler impulse to “fix” meaning: incommensurability is not a defect to be remedied but a condition to be recognized, respected, and lived with (53–54).
- e) **Accepting refusal and limits as possible outcomes.** Robinson (2020) models decolonial protocol by insisting that not everything is available for settler access; refusal and incommensurability are not obstacles to be solved but ethical conditions that protect

⁵² See “The spectacle of reconciliation: On (the) unsettling responsibilities to Indigenous peoples in the academy” (Michelle Daigle 2019) for an in-depth study of this tendency to “perform” reconciliation.

Indigenous onto-epistemological sovereignty. He enacts this principle directly by including a moment in which non-Indigenous readers are asked to stop reading because the subsequent section is addressed exclusively to Indigenous readers (25). For the settler, this is a pedagogical interruption of entitlement: a reminder that decolonizing work begins by relinquishing the assumption that all knowledge is accessible, consumable, and available on demand. In this sense, refusal is not a negation of relation; it is one of the ways Indigenous jurisdiction over sound territory is asserted and maintained, and it compels settlers to practise accountability without possession.

This “sound territory” formulation also clarifies why the structure of governance and protocol is decisive in K–12 learning spaces that address Indigenous onto-epistemologies. When students perform Indigenous musics, the encounter does not remain within the classroom; it becomes a community-based narrative and produces experiential knowledge that in turn informs both present and future public opinion, attitudes, and relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The evaluative question therefore becomes whether the encounter is governed as protocol-centred practice – under Nation-specific consent and Indigenous authority, with accountability over time – or is managed as multicultural content under settler authority.

Robinson’s concept of the “palimpsestuous listener” further refines this idea: in listening to Indigenous musics – particularly those emerging from communities marked by profound loss through residential schools – settlers are asked to register both what is present and what has been erased. Such listening is not passive; it is ethical and disciplined. It requires accepting partial comprehension and the discomfort of not being centred – without rushing to resolution, extraction, or onto-epistemic *pinning*.

It becomes evident that music is not universal but rather an onto-epistemic living archive that is distinct across cultures – and that Indigenous musics serve legal, historical, and spiritual functions. This understanding is key and aligns with the central argument: that music is not merely an artistic category but a site where the struggle between cultural genocide and

resurgence is actively waged with the intent of redress and with an acknowledgement that some musical spaces may remain what Garneau calls “irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality” (quoted in Robinson 2020, 235) – a crucial “red-line” for decolonizing: certain spaces, songs, and protocols may rightly remain non-negotiable, non-shareable, or simply not for settler participation at all. Garneau’s point is that collaboration has limits: Indigenous Peoples need time and space to sort matters within their own communities, while allies, at the same time, must undertake their own preparatory and corrective work (in Robinson 2020, 235).

Accordingly, “good practice” in musical encounter must include the capacity to accept refusal as an outcome – an ethical and structural “no” that protects Indigenous authority rather than a problem to be solved through improved inclusion. This is especially so because the colonial urge is not only to look but to “penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit” (Robinson 2020, 236) – to convert Indigenous song, protocol, and presence into usable material for Canadian identity, much as settler Canada continues to convert Indigenous lands into extractable resources to enrich its coffers.

With these conditions now established, the question becomes empirical: when Indigenous-led or Indigenous-governed initiatives bring settler learners into contact with Indigenous musics, what substantively changes – knowledge, relationships, institutional practices, or only programming? The preceding assemblages built the plateau; now the question is whether it holds in practice.

In Canada, limited examples of case studies already exist, enabling us to get a glimpse of what decolonizing Canada through music could look like. They are promising and useful learning tools.

7.5 New Ways of Being, Being Rehearsed

Where Indigenous musics and worldviews are engaged respectfully and on Indigenous terms, promising effects can emerge: settler students and educators become more reflective about their roles, more aware of colonial power, and more capable of critical and accountable listening; Indigenous students and families may experience greater pride, recognition, and cultural affirmation when their own knowledges are treated as living and meaningful within educational spaces.

For settler Canadians, the reported effects include the creation of “more tolerant human beings” (Prest et al. 2021, 721), increased respect, and enhanced cross-cultural understanding. The process of respectfully integrating Indigenous musics into the music classroom already brought about promising “acts of resurgence by Indigenous participants, and truth and reconciliation by settler participants” (Prest 2023, 439). These mutually beneficial connections and conversations with the local Nations and Indigenous peers led settler students and teachers alike to reflect more critically on their roles (Prest and Vazquez-Cordoba 2024).

For Indigenous students and their families, these experiences were valuable in that they learned about their own culture in school which “contributed to their appreciation and understanding of their culture, fostered pride and self-respect in them, and contributed to greater cultural understanding among their family members” (Prest et al. 2021, 722). Importantly, there were no negative effects recorded for Indigenous or settler Canadian participants, their families, and teachers.

The experiential and physical learning described here, particularly through listening to and playing Indigenous musics, shows great promise in moving the Canadian learner – and therefore the future Canadian policymaker, politician, voter, and so on – from what Mignolo (2011) calls

the “imperial magic of ‘modernity’ sustained by the epistemology of the zero point . . . built on theo- and ego-politics of knowledge” (82) toward a worldview “grounded on geo- and body-politics of knowledge” (82).

The social and emotional impact on settler students of learning about Indigenous worldviews and experiencing person-to-person contact with Indigenous Peoples seems to be of great value for a vast array of decolonizing efforts (Rakena et al. 2024; Prest et al. 2021, 722–723). Arellano et al. (2019) found that settler youth had greater understanding of power dynamics of settler colonialism, settler privilege, and Indigenous dispossession when exposed to Anishinaabe ways of life through experiential learning – they understood that land sharing is central to Indigenous resurgence and Canadian reconciliation and restitution (409). A sort of “unsettling [of] the settler” (Arellano et al. 2019, 408) was taking place and healthy alliances were being forged. This type of experiential learning is akin to Battiste’s (2002) “direct learning” (15); knowledge is not a commodity but a dynamic process to be internalized and understood. Davis et al. (2017) described these interactions as a “rich source of learning and decentering for non-Indigenous Canadians” (407) propelling them toward “an uncomfortable but necessary *first* step in a lifelong and urgent journey of dismantling colonial systems and structures” (402; italics in original).

Strachan and Nickleson (2018) identified several key challenges in settler Canadian–Indigenous musical collaborative efforts inspired by the TRC’s Calls to Action: namely the risks associated with misinterpreting Indigenous perspectives on authorship, collaboration, and appropriation. For Indigenous students, Bang et al. (2014) argue that land-based education of Indigenous onto-epistemologies results in a re-centring or “re-becoming” (49) of the land itself.

For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have been living with the remnants of genocidal and colonial policies enacted against them and the resulting traumas in their different forms and depths. With the subsequent reduced capacity to somehow overcome these persistent scars, be they recent or generational, they are facing an existential challenge. Music and cultural rebirth in general can be powerful tools in establishing long-lasting solutions to the damage caused by these and similar policies.

What made these experiences so positive? Could they be replicated throughout Canada, for instance? It may not even be desirable for certain Indigenous Peoples yet, or ever. These outcomes do not prove that decolonizing had been achieved but they do suggest that musicking can become one of the sites through which more dignified and responsible relations are rehearsed.

Assuredly, further research and case studies will be needed.

The following chapter therefore proceeds from the understanding that the dissertation's central claims have already been assembled but not yet fully operationalized. Chapter 8 is the place where those claims take methodological form. It is where the dissertation moves from findings to framework, and from conceptual plateau to analytic instrument.

The goal: rehearsing a new Canadian identity.

Chapter 8 The Degenociding Plateau

8.1 Rhizomatic Overtones – “Rehearsing Relation”

RHIZOMATICS (asks how the dissertation’s four analytic lines – Indigenous grounded normativity and protocol, decolonial reorientation, Human Rights Based accountability, and sounded cultural resonance – enter relation without collapsing their differences) = SCHIZOANALYSIS (asks where reconciliation narratives rupture between symbolic inclusion and accountable transformation) = STRATOANALYSIS (asks where institutions sediment colonial authority through curriculum, canon, administrative procedure, assessment, and managed inclusion) = PRAGMATICS (affirms what can be rehearsed – Indigenous authority, refusal, decolonial redirection, duty-bearing accountability, and altered listening) = MICROPOLITICS (asks where repeated rehearsal shifts settler habits, institutional routines, and public pedagogies from awareness toward durable obligation).

8.2 Prelude – Rhizomatic Modulations and Plateau Becomings

Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which becoming is the process of desire.⁵³

— *Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

The logical next step for this dissertation might have been to create another checklist – perhaps a better one – for decolonizing initiatives, and to name it degenociding for good measure. Yet such a move would risk returning this project to the very evaluative and administrative habits it has been trying to unsettle. To have any meaningful value, however, the type of analysis necessary to assess degenociding measures, their consequences over time, and their effects across multiple levels of Canadian life – from the pedagogical to the political, from the social to the institutional,

⁵³ From original French: « Devenir, c'est, à partir des formes qu'on a, du sujet qu'on est, des organes qu'on possède ou des fonctions qu'on remplit, extraire des particules, entre lesquelles on instaure des rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, les plus *proches* de ce qu'on est en train de devenir, et par lesquels on devient. C'est en ce sens que le devenir est le processus du désir » (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 334).

from the concert stage to the very structures of the State, from impacts on Indigenous communities to the obligations of duty-bearers and the benefits afforded to rights-holders – would require greater temporal distance. Only then could one use such a checklist to critically examine, prod, and ultimately judge an institution’s or performance venue’s Indigenous-content initiative against the interdisciplinary requirements so diligently assembled in the previous chapters.

As this study has shown, there is no shortage of such checklists, reminders, teachings, stories, testimonies, witnessings, refusals, critiques, interventions, calls, calls to action, letters, manifestos, essays, articles, reports, commentaries, frameworks, analytic models, principles, guidelines, recommendations, declarations, resolutions, protocols, agreements, covenants, conventions, charters, and treaties – a vast and growing archive of thought, warning, instruction, resistance, and reimagining, articulated with force and eloquence by Indigenous scholars and critics, Global South decolonial theorists, and human rights experts. Taken together, these texts constitute a compelling representation, forged across the ages, of what humanity can offer when it is at its best as a creative, dignified, and ethical force.

They are a model for the future, a guide toward *eudaimonia* described by Elliott and Silverman (2017) as “‘a good life,’ a meaningful life, a life of friendship with others, resilience, justice for others, health and well-being, happiness (in the deepest sense), personal meaningfulness, self-knowledge, and care for oneself, others, and the positive transformations of their communities – *and a good life, an ethical life, of teaching*” (74; italics in original). Degenociding proposes bringing these *eudaimonic* intensities together into a practice that can, to a certain extent, undo cultural genocide and carry us toward that future by rehearsing the

becoming of a better version of humanity that the aforementioned accumulated onto-epistemology makes imaginable and desirable.

It is worth restating Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) description of a plateau here: "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (22). This description continues to represent with unusual precision and resonance what this chapter seeks to do. The dissertation does not seek a final, totalizing account of whether degenociding can or cannot serve its purpose. Nor does it aim to confine the plateau by fixing in advance the only forms through which it may develop. Instead, it seeks to provide a clear and ethically bounded rehearsal framework through which multiple forces – Indigenous authority, protocol, refusal, responsibility, accountability, listening, pedagogy, human rights obligations, curriculum, and relational transformation – may be brought into relation without having to predetermine the end result. The goal is to establish the conditions under which meaningful, responsible, and structurally transformative relation might be rehearsed.

For this type of dissertation – and for me specifically – this framing is essential because the subject matter is neither abstract nor harmless. It concerns the ongoing structures of the settler state that sustain cultural genocide in Canada and, as a settler Canadian, I am in no position to prescribe or assess a project that concerns Indigenous Peoples so intimately. I can only suggest a course of action *for settler Canadians* – a Deleuze and Guattari-style "rupture" in dominant settler ways of doing – while affirming the right of each distinct local Indigenous community to determine whether, when, and how the degenociding process unfolds, including, importantly, whether it should proceed at all.

8.3 The Assembled Score: Thesis Counterpoints Resonating

What this dissertation offers in this chapter, then, is not another checklist but a four-part composition whose lines have been assembled across the preceding chapters and can now resonate together with continuous intensity. Taken together, these assemblages can bring into relation documented recommendations, critiques, and best-practice guidance across the dissertation's interdisciplinary fields – decolonial praxis, Indigenous voices, human rights discourses, and sound studies – including the normative directions established through UNDRIP, the TRC Calls to Action, the MMIWG Calls for Justice, and critiques of settler zero point onto-epistemologies. Thus, brought together in this way, they serve as the base material for a degenociding rehearsal and questioning: a structured way of asking whether an initiative shifts authority, transforms listening, supports Indigenous resurgence, and produces more than symbolic inclusion and reconciliation narratives.

When viewed as counterpoints (independent lines) of the same argument (degenociding), the assemblages begin the rhizomatic work naturally. Each has accumulated knowledge and conceptual Deleuze and Guattari (1987) “particles” (272) from its respective disciplinary field, and, despite their distinct mechanisms of inquiry, they have the capacity to converge upon the same degenociding problem: how to interrupt the ongoing structures, logics, and effects of cultural genocide, and how to reorient institutions, pedagogies, and encounters toward Indigenous authority, settler accountability, and structural redress.

As we have seen, each assemblage has a specific task. *Assemblage I* establishes the decolonial critique of coloniality, Eurocentric authority, and settler zero point onto-epistemologies. *Assemblage II* reinforces this critique with Indigenous authority, protocol, grounded normativity, consent, reciprocity, and refusal, thereby showing, importantly, that any

meaningful movement toward decolonizing must remain answerable to Indigenous law, relation, and decision-making. *Assemblage III* demonstrates that this movement is not only decolonially desirable but also consistent with an HRBA, where dignity, participation, cultural life, anti-discrimination, accountability, and culturally appropriate education become obligations for duty-bearers and entitlements for rights-holders. Finally, *Assemblage IV* demonstrates why music matters: not because music is inherently emancipatory but because, when governed ethically and relationally, it can become a site of storytelling, bridging, worldmaking, and teaching – the four “nodes” of *Assemblage IV A* – provided that the “(art)icles of listening” articulated in *Assemblage IV B* are observed.

Yet these assemblages do not merely sit beside one another as separate chapters. If we follow the lines of flight and the rhizomatic structures from which they emanate, we see that what begins in *Assemblage I*, as a decolonial critique of coloniality and Eurocentric authority, is already being altered by Indigenous refusal in *Assemblage II*, which introduces a set of constraints and ethical demands shaped by Indigenous protocol, grounded normativity, consent, reciprocity, and refusal. *Assemblage III* then demonstrates that human-rights-based obligations are already being deepened, redirected, or checked by Nation-specific protocol, not only as decolonial aspiration but also in ways that are consistent with the normative demands of human rights instruments and an HRBA. *Assemblage IV* finally demonstrates how and why musical resonance can become a powerful medium through which these forces may be transposed and “rehearsed” into sounded, lived, and embodied expression, while respecting Indigenous governance, permission, and protocol. In this manner, the assemblages do not simply accumulate; they resonate with one another. The knowledge produced here therefore emerges not only from each assemblage individually but from their vibration against one another, as a living

zone of continuous intensities – in dissonance or harmony, in tension or support, in emergence or refusal – thus approximating Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the plateau production.

Forces interacting in real time.

For this dissertation, my interest has been to see how this interdisciplinarity can best produce a method and theory that serve this “justice-desiring” research. As a violinist, a natural place of inquiry is my own experience in chamber music settings and especially in rehearsal. Here, I find an embodied knowledge and experience that could be useful. In the words of Janis Ian (2010), “As an artist I believe it is my job to try and make sense of chaos” (3). Though certainly not representative of chaos, a string quartet’s preparation of a Mozart quartet helpfully emulates the rhizomatic and interdisciplinary work being done in this dissertation and may offer a helpful example in imagining a lasting, harmonious, desirable, and resonant future in what is now called Canada.

8.4 String Quartet Cross-Referencing as Model Inspiration

The string quartets of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) are generally considered a major milestone in human creativity and a near-perfect realization of this classical music genre. Each voice has a very specific role to play, harmonically, structurally, and texturally, in the creation of the magic that is Mozart’s music. In performing and analysing his works, I have understood that each line does not merely “decorate” the others; rather, there is a plural coexistence of musical “particles” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 272): the bass can determine long-term harmonic direction, the inner voices can generate tension, colour, redirection, and balance, and the upper line can hold what listeners will most readily remember as the main message or theme of the event: the melody. By his late string quartets, Mozart had mastered the form, creating a texture

that is “kaleidoscopic in its variety but is at the same time carefully regulated by a network of textural and thematic cross-references drawing upon the resources of counterpoint, all in the service of a dramatically unfolding form” (Irving 1998, 43). The plateau-building undertaken here likewise depends on a similar logic of cross-reference.

For optimal performance of these works, technical brilliance, though necessary, is not enough. An ideal rendition depends on disciplined listening, proportional balance, mutual responsiveness, and the ability of each player to hear both function and relation at once. A string quartet flourishes not when one line dominates but when all four lines remain simultaneously distinct, interdependent, and ethically accountable to the total sound. When this occurs, the performers and listeners have the possibility of experiencing what could be called a musical *eudaimonia*.

Similarly, the four assemblages developed across this dissertation may be understood as four voices, four lines, or four forces that, I argue, must be brought into relation, prepared, balanced, and rendered mutually accountable before anything resembling a successful degenociding act can occur. My focus here is to think carefully through the conditions under which such an event might one day become ethically, politically, and relationally accountable – or even possible at all. Yet, because the present chapter remains deliberately pre-performative, the emphasis now falls not on the event itself but on the *labour* required before such an event could responsibly be imagined.

The degenociding plateau gathers the complex particles assembled in the previous chapters of this dissertation and carried here along lines of flight, so that they can begin to work upon one another. My analogy to the string quartet lies in the fact that such an ensemble does not begin with performance but with the preparation of multiple distinct lines that must learn how to sound

together without losing their particular function. Each player must prepare diligently, master their own line, understand the score, and arrive ready to listen and engage. Each instrumentalist has a distinct role to play, a deep relational accountability to honour, and a unique contribution to bring to the total sound. Yet no single line can determine the meaning of the whole on its own. Along with technical competency and analytic literacy, balance, responsiveness, disciplined attention, the ability to accept refusal, and the ensemble's collective capacity to sustain a deeply relational and continuous mode of attention are paramount.

The musicians, in essence, are deterritorialized from their individual "needs" and then willingly reterritorialized in the recreation of a new entity: the musical piece at hand. Nevertheless, even when the score is known and the physical and mental choreographies and directions are already determined, the performance – or reterritorialization – is never fully fixed in advance. At its strongest, it produces something more than the sum of its parts: an event, a force, a shared sounding that cannot – ever – be fully captured in words. It is exactly this type of disciplined, relational, and emergent becoming that I suggest the degenociding mechanism must sustain to fulfill its *eudaimonic* aspirations.

The string quartet offers not a metaphor of harmony (or reconciliation) already achieved but a method of becoming: rigorous in its demands, yet still open to tension, relation, uncertainty, refusal, imagination, and creativity as lines of flight toward new ways of thinking – and perhaps new forms of human flourishing. It is precisely because this type of performance is prepared and rehearsed, rather than consumed simply as content, that the string quartet's preparatory stages toward performance(s) become an appropriate figure for degenociding as becoming.

But why turn to Mozart to advance Indigenous resurgence goals? Another, Eurocentric attempt to solve an Abya Yala/Turtle Island conundrum? Here are my arguments for this perhaps unexpected – and certainly rhizomatic – turn.

Firstly, as a professional violinist with years of experience as a chamber musician, I consider my knowledge of the art form to be a contribution to this dissertation that is valid and defensible – not only in the abstract but in the concrete embodied knowledge I have accumulated through chamber music experiences: performing string quartets, studying scores, learning how each line functions, negotiating interpretation with fellow musicians, and inhabiting the disciplined relational work required for an ensemble to hold together. I have experienced, from within, what it takes for four distinct voices to remain accountable to one another while sustaining a coherent total sound, and how such coherence can shape a performance into a memorable event for an audience.

Secondly, as a non-Indigenous person, I am guided by Cree scholar Winona Stevenson's (1998) warnings about the Indigenous Peoples and settler relationship. She states:

We are Indigenous – of this land – with centuries-old relations, obligations, and responsibilities that dictate that we follow our own political paths toward the future. Others may choose to walk the trail beside us – to learn, as we are relearning, our ways and to support our goals – but in no way can we continue to allow others to lead us, to define our problems, and to impose their strategies and programs on us. (49)

Hence, I do not allow myself, nor have I attempted to model decolonizing using Indigenous semiotics and musics – about which I have little to no knowledge, for that matter – to make my argument.

Finally, as has been clearly stated from the start of this dissertation, decolonizing is about colonizer responsibility and action; it is not a metaphor. Using a Western social structure such as the string quartet to model the decolonizing plateau, I believe, is therefore defensible and a

propos in my work. The point is not that the string quartet explains Indigenous musics or worldviews. It does not. The point is that it provides an embodied and technically serious figure for what preparation, accountability, and relational work actually require of settlers.

On this basis, the sections that follow treat the degenociding composition as a string quartet in rehearsal, asking what each line contributes, what responsibilities it bears, how it constrains the others, and how together they may begin to form a meaningful, accountable, and transformative sounding. Mirroring the degenociding framework hierarchy, the cello line grounds the ensemble; the viola introduces friction, tension, and reorientation; the second violin binds aspiration to structure and accountability; and the first violin guides the sounding event into the memory of the musicking participants for maximum cultural resonance. Taken together, these lines offer a rehearsal framework for thinking how degenociding may be prepared in accountable relation.

You are invited to be part of this musicking event, to enter this *eudaimonic* archive as a living field of relation, where already-existing lines of critique, protocol, law, refusal, pedagogy, and musical possibility may be rehearsed, brought into resonance, and potentially give rise, somatically, to new ways of being and relating.

8.5 Rehearsal Preparation

Produce a deterritorialized refrain as the final end of music, release it in the Cosmos – that is more important than building a new system . . . the cosmic force was already present in the material . . . we have no system, only lines and movements.⁵⁴

— *Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

In this sense, the “score” for degenociding is already composed and assembled, even if it remains somewhat dispersed across the different fields I have examined. Yet, as discussed throughout this dissertation, the performance in question – the social, pedagogical, political, ethical, and onto-epistemic performance (or act) of degenociding Canada – has not yet taken place. What can nevertheless be modelled now is something prior to performance but no less indispensable: a logic of preparation, rehearsal, and even dress rehearsal for the degenociding performance itself. To do so, I turn to the pre-performance stages of a string quartet concert – and, more specifically, of a Mozart string quartet – as a methodological analogue through which to think degenociding in action before any public “sounding” can responsibly occur.

In 8.3, I established the plateau as a methodological field of intensities; here, I specify what each line must contribute before any credible rehearsal can begin.

8.5.1 Preparing the Assembled Score

The purpose of this chapter is limited and precise. I cannot claim that the concept of degenociding is fully known, nor can I pretend that this dissertation can fully predict what a degenociding future will “sound” like once it meets institutions, publics, classrooms, and concert

⁵⁴ From original French: « Produire une ritournelle déterritorisée, comme but final de la musique, la lâcher dans le Cosmos, c'est plus important que de faire un nouveau système . . . la force cosmique était dans le matériau . . . on n'a pas de système, on n'a que des lignes et des mouvements » (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 433). Interestingly, here Deleuze and Guattari are reflecting on the composer Robert Schumann's work.

stages or other public sites. Rather, I will demonstrate that if degenociding is to become more than an ethical aspiration, it must be prepared with the same disciplined intentionality, relational accountability, and openness to correction, experimentation, abandon, and risk that any serious chamber music concert preparation demands. Before a string quartet can step onto a stage, the players must arrive having studied their own lines, heard the implications of the others, learned how to respond to tension, and accepted that coherence can only emerge through repeated, accountable work. In the same way, before any social formation could be said to “perform” degenociding, the lines gathered across this dissertation must first be prepared, balanced, brought into relation, and tested through a logic of rehearsal.

Much like I imagine degenociding could be, the preparation for a string quartet performance is a difficult yet rewarding work of sounding the forces already gathered in the material through careful assembling, respectful and intensive rehearsal, attunement to relation and space, the gradual formation of a shared interpretive world, and finally the concert event as an opening or rhizomatic rupture into transformative possibility or becoming. The string quartet metaphor becomes this dissertation’s concrete model for making possible this approach: namely, *rehearsing change* and determining how this accountable process of becoming can be prepared. Its force lies precisely in the acknowledgement that the score is not the performance: the existence of gathered material, however rich and profound, does not exempt anyone from the work of relation, adjustment, listening, and disciplined preparation. A string quartet performance does not happen “magically” as a trope of prematurely achieved harmony or performative reconciliation but requires a method for thinking distinct lines in accountable relation. What I propose here, then, is to let the musical Deleuze and Guattari (1987) “particles” (272) start the work of degenociding, as “the cosmic force [is] already in the material” (350).

Each musician must arrive having done their own work, in essence “becoming” their line – a symbiosis between instrumentalist, instrument, and the musical composition representing the deep inner thoughts and expression of the composer. In essence, the musician has assembled the already formed musical idea of the composer, through movement and intention, into particles of sound. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the act of “becoming” as the act of extracting particles from various assemblages through a “process of desire” (272) or will. Preparation, in this sense, is not detached from the method; it is the first enactment of it. There has to be intent. Once the musician has done their due diligence, they have recreated, through this act of assemblage, what could be considered a sounded “entity” brought to a present from a past reality, more precisely, the moment the composer wrote down the music.

Furthermore, each musician must be mentally prepared to listen across difference. After all, no instrumentalist enters here without carrying histories, obligations, understandings, tonal qualities, timbres, and possibilities inherited from the assemblages that produced their uniqueness. Each participant will need to adjust their interpretation, without erasing their own line or entering into compromises that would render the performance superficial and flat. Only then can we hope to observe a productive onto-epistemic coherence emerging in this relation, rather than proclamatory and superficial acknowledgements or interpretations.

This is why the string quartet provides such a fruitful analogue for the work of this chapter: it allows the dissertation’s assembled lines to be treated not as static concepts but as a Deleuze and Guattari (1987) plateau of “continuous, self-vibrating . . . intensities” (22): relational forces that must be prepared, tested, balanced, interrupted, supported, and re-heard before any meaningful public sounding can responsibly occur.

8.5.2 Building Method and Theoretical Analysis

Here, we turn from concept to method and analysis. Two working propositions orient this section. First, if music can bear witness to histories and injustices by making audible what dominant structures try to silence and by demanding accountable, decolonial listening, then bringing such witnessing into public and educational institutions may clarify truths, catalyze acknowledgement of harms, and generate pressure for structural change. Second, if Indigenous musics are living and resonant mechanisms of Indigenous onto-epistemologies – including spiritual, historical, legal, and relational dimensions – then Indigenous-led musical spaces may restore Indigenous normative orders to civic life and deepen reparative commitments, including legal and policy change, thereby advancing decolonizing and a possible “return of the future” (Quijano 2002, 75). These propositions function as the conceptual premises that help determine how the rehearsal will advance – a return to this future in a planned and deliberate, evidentiary, and Indigenous-led manner. We are not determining the conclusion or result in advance; we are simply structuring the framework under which we will work.

Because this framework is inspired by a literature- and positionality-based synthesis, it is essential to attain a flexibility and almost improvisatory and instinct-based frame of mind. For this, each member of the ensemble must become – to use Deleuze and Guattari’s imagery – a presence emanating a continuous flow of vibrant particles. Nothing is taken for granted.

If Nation-specific authorization is not present, authorization is not inferred. If refusal conditions are not discussed, refusal is not presumed to have been respected. If durable accountability mechanisms are absent from the record, durability is not credited on the basis of institutional promises or rhetoric. If the encounter leaves no trace in changed listening, pedagogy, or relation, resonance is not assumed simply because affect was produced in the

moment. This approach is essential to the degenociding framework because it protects against false positives, symbolic reconciliation, white fragility narratives, and other forms of evasion as discussed in the previous chapters.

Therefore, considering these dangers, it is important to describe the four analytic lines themselves: the distinct functions each must carry, the roles each one must assume, and the criteria each brings to the rehearsal before the lines begin to interact more fully.

8.5.3 Quartet Mapping: The Four Analytic Lines

In this dissertation, the lines represented by the four assemblages have specific roles. Indigenous grounded normativity must establish the ethical and relational bass line. Decolonial critique must introduce tension, rupture, and redirection where colonial “harmonies” falsely reconcile encounter and relation. An HRBA must connect aspiration to duty, consequence, and reviewable accountability. Sound studies through musicking must attend to resonance, memory, and the specifically musical force through which new relations may become imaginable. Neglecting even one of these lines distorts the whole, resulting at best in deceptive cadences akin to performative reconciliation.

In this string quartet mapping, the cello line represents the structural ground of grounded normativity and kinship listening; the viola line represents the pressure of decolonial tension, surprise, and reorientation; the second violin represents connective duty-bearing, consequence, and accountability; and the first violin represents clarity, cultural resonance, and the melodic force through which an encounter may endure in memory.

Table 8.1 Rehearsal Preparation for Degenociding: Four Analytic Lines

Analytic line	Assemblage	Primary function in the framework	Guiding question
Cello	Indigenous Voices	Ensures that the encounter is grounded in Indigenous authority, Nation-specific protocol, consent, reciprocity, and refusal. Establishes the relational ground on which all other lines depend.	Is the encounter grounded in Indigenous authority through Nation-specific protocol, consent, reciprocity, and refusal?
Viola	Decolonial Praxis	Ensures that the initiative interrupts inherited settler-colonial narratives and traditions of authority, knowledge, and relation, rather than merely restaging them in revised or inclusive language.	Does the initiative interrupt settler-colonial authority, knowledge, and relation rather than repackage them?
Second Violin	Human Rights Based Approach	Ensures that obligations, protections, structures, and accountability mechanisms become durable, reviewable, and evidence-based rather than remaining rhetorical or symbolic.	What durable duty-bearer obligations, protections, and accountability mechanisms follow?
First Violin	Sound Studies	Ensures that what becomes audible and memorable contributes to altered listening and relational habits that support accountable degenociding action.	Does the sonic force move toward accountable change, or stop at affect?

The four voices are read cumulatively rather than as interchangeable indicators – just as a string quartet must be heard as a relation among lines rather than as isolated melodies. Read together, the four voices allow the framework to discern whether degenociding movement appears present, partial, contradicted, absent, or indeterminate. In this sense, the musical analogy is clearly methodological: just as a string quartet must be heard as a relation among lines rather than as isolated melodies, the documented encounter must be assessed as a relation among structures, protocols, obligations, and resonances.

What follows is a more precise account of what each of these lines must bring into the plateau before the rehearsal itself can begin. To keep the framework clear, each voice is treated

in the same order: first its musical function, then its analytic role, then the preparatory work it must undertake, the question it asks, and finally the conditions and indicators through which its contribution can be assessed.

8.5.4 The Cello Line – Indigenous Grounded Normativity and Protocol

If the rehearsal is to begin anywhere, it must begin with understanding the line that establishes the ground on which the others can stand. In string quartet terms, by carrying the bass line, this grounding function belongs to the cello. Interpreted here as representing Coulthard's grounded normativity, it determines the structure of the encounter and shapes its movement and direction both harmonically (vertically) and horizontally (through the chord progressions structured over the bass notes). It requires understanding and accountable listening – akin to kinship listening – from the other members of the group if the ensemble is to function, resonate, and flourish. This line also often resolves “upper-voice” disputes,⁵⁵ by determining the actual long-term harmonic progressions and goals of the encounter (Kamien and Wagner 1997, 2).

Within this dissertation framework, the cello carries the Indigenous line as the structural ground that anchors the encounter over time and shapes the kind of relation it can sustain. Its contribution is foundational. It tests whether the event is actually grounded in Indigenous authority, protocol, and relational terms, or whether those elements remain superficial, symbolic, or imposed by settler–Indigenous power dynamic framing. Through this line, essential requirements and adherence to grounded normativity, kinship listening, consent, reciprocity, refusal, and the extent to which the encounter is governed on Indigenous terms rather than

⁵⁵ An interesting parallel is intended here on how Indigenous onto-epistemologies could help find solutions to contemporary settler-state conundrums.

merely referencing them, are analysed. This voice identifies the deeper ethical and political basis on which the rest of the encounter either holds or fails. As the first line of assessment, it establishes the conditions under which all other findings must be read.

The preparatory work of this line is therefore to secure the grounded normativity beneath the performance before anything else is allowed to rise. It must determine whether permission is real, whether refusal remains enforceable, whether the community governs the terms of access, and whether the encounter rests on a relation capable of sustaining anything more than appearance.

Guiding analytic question: What kinds of listeners, relations, responsibilities, permissions, and limits does this musicking encounter cultivate, and are they grounded in Indigenous methodological authority through Nation-specific protocol, consent, reciprocity, and refusal?

Within this line, the following conditions become decisive: explicit approval and guidance from the specific community; Indigenous control over outcomes; written, Nation-specific consent and governance protocols; recognition of musics as law and historical record rather than aesthetic add-ons; refusal of integration and tokenization into settler or multicultural schemes; non-extractive reciprocity including recording and circulation limits, community veto, revenue-sharing, and cultural safety; and respect for distinct ontologies such that no pan-Indigenous template is imposed where each Nation is self-determining.

Indicators of success include signed protocols, decisions ratified by community authority, structure-level changes in who decides what, Indigenous control over space, format, and audience terms, and locally specific methods that are documented and followed. If this line does

not hold, the quartet cannot genuinely begin, because the ground of relation has not been secured.

8.5.5 The Viola Line – Decolonial Reorientation and Border Thinking

Mozart's love of the viola is well documented; he found its sonority rich and complex, a sound-space fertile with possibility (Rosen 1997, 264). This characterization resonates with my own experience as a chamber musician, where the viola line often carries complexity, surprise, tension, subversion, new colour, unexpected chromaticism, and harmonic reorientation – akin to border thinking, if you will. Symbolically, moreover, the viola carries the alto clef, a distinct and comparatively minoritarian clef in relation to the more common treble or bass clefs.

Within this framework, the viola carries the decolonial line as the inner voice that introduces narrative frictions capable of interrupting complacent harmonic flow. Its contribution is diagnostic. It asks whether the initiative actually interrupts the inherited grammar of settler authority, or whether it merely restages colonial structure in revised, more inclusive language. Through this line, the analysis makes visible Eurocentric universals, symbolic recognition, settler zero point onto-epistemologies, and inclusionary schemes that leave the power dynamics fundamentally intact. This voice matters because, as a second line of inquiry, it tests whether the initiative does more than perform decolonizing theatre – whether it actually unsettles and redirects inherited zero point onto-epistemologies.

The preparatory work of this line is therefore to refuse false consonance. It must locate where the encounter has been prematurely harmonized by institutional language, where symbolic recognition has been mistaken for change, and where inherited colonial normativity must be disturbed so that another movement becomes possible.

Guiding analytic question: How does this musicking initiative interrupt and reconfigure settler-colonial terms of knowledge, authority, and relation, and does it meaningfully shift the governing framework toward Indigenous-authorized and pluriversal ways of knowing rather than merely repackaging colonial structures?

Within this line, what must be worked against includes comfortable colonial innocence, defensiveness and fragility, “feel good reconciliation,” “deceptive cadences,” and the return to “business as usual.” What this line must cultivate includes attention to location-specific onto-epistemologies under Indigenous-determined terms, and only where local Indigenous Peoples are interested and willing to share. Indicators of success include reduced defensive responses, application of corrective actions, and evidence that institutional habits have actually shifted rather than merely absorbed critique into well-intentioned words that mostly remain in “*arrested* reality” (Milani 2015, 152) as part of the vocabulary of the settler state. In quartet terms, this is the line that prevents the rehearsal from mistaking surface agreement for structural transformation and from allowing majoritarian comfort to stand in for minoritarian justice.

8.5.6 The Second Violin Line – HRBA and Durable Accountability

By carrying a supporting role, the second violin line often connects the first violin melody to the lower foundational voices of decoloniality and grounded normativity. As “connective tissue,” it also takes accountability to heart as a duty-bearer, holding the ensemble answerable to structural realities such as meter and tempo.

Within this framework, the second violin carries the Human Rights Based Approach line, foregrounding what obligations, structures, and accountability mechanisms are changed, adopted, or reinforced. Its contribution is normative and institutional. Through this line, the

analysis translates the event into the language of dignity, participation, cultural life, non-discrimination, culturally appropriate education, and duty-bearing responsibility. This voice matters because, as a third line of inquiry, it prevents the analysis from stopping at symbolic or affective levels by asking whether any durable obligations, institutional shifts, or reviewable consequences follow from the encounter.

The preparatory work of this line is therefore to ensure that aspiration does not remain suspended in rhetoric. It must connect what the other lines open to the institutional and legal changes required to sustain them, translating relational possibility into structures that can endure, be reviewed, and be held to account.

Guiding analytic question: What concrete duty-bearer obligations, protections, and accountability mechanisms are evidenced in this event, and do they uphold the dignity, participation, cultural life, non-discrimination, and culturally appropriate education of rights-holders – or leave those obligations unmet?

Within this line, the institutional work includes core K–12 inclusion of Indigenous musics and histories; co-design with Nations and rights-based assessment frameworks; policy language protecting autonomy and refusal; teacher training and mentorship with Indigenous educators; and funding structures that support Indigenous leadership and long-term implementation. Indicators of success include presence across grades, Indigenous-led and Indigenous-assessed learning outcomes, school policies and timetables, certified cohorts of trained teachers, classroom practices aligned with protocols, and co-created outputs whose resurgence outcomes are defined by the specific Indigenous community or communities of the territory in which the program is being implemented. In quartet terms, this is the line that ensures what has been opened ethically

and politically does not remain aspirational but becomes durable, reviewable, and institutionally answerable.

8.5.7 The First Violin Line – Clarity, Memory, and Cultural Resonance

By carrying the “tune,” the first violin guides the listening journey and discussion as primary storyteller. The quality and clarity of the story and the memorability of the melody will determine the cultural “resonant overtones” of the encounter. Because this dissertation argues that music can help imagine new futurities on colonized lands through decolonizing mechanisms, the first violin initiates the conversations and narrative terms that ensue.

Within this framework, the first violin carries the sound studies line as the leading melodic voice, foregrounding memory, cultural resonance, and durability, including whether participants in musicking retain the melodies or whether they are forgotten. Its contribution is specifically musical and pedagogical. Through this line, the analysis focuses on music as storyteller, bridge, worldmaker, and teacher, while also remaining alert to the risk that affective force may be mistaken for decolonial change. This voice matters because, as the fourth line of inquiry, it keeps the framework focused on the specifically musical mechanisms through which an encounter may endure in memory, alter listening habits, or guide action.

The preparatory work of this line is therefore to shape what will actually be heard, remembered, repeated, and carried forward after the sounding itself has ended. It must ask not only whether the music moves but what kind of movement it generates: whether it merely stirs affect, or whether it alters the listener’s habits of attention, relation, and future action.

Guiding analytic question: What does this musicking encounter make audible, felt, memorable, and culturally resonant, and does that sonic force move participants toward

accountable, Indigenous-governed shifts in listening, relation, and action rather than stopping at affect or symbolic inclusion?

Within this line, the practical work of listening includes critical and decolonizing listening – becoming unsure of “what LISTENING is” (Robinson 2020, 47); a guest listening posture that treats listening as entering another’s sound territory; orientation on sovereignty and protocols before participation; participants who can articulate and honour boundaries; experiential learning to build empathy, respect, and awareness of settler–Indigenous power dynamics; co-designed activities with community; trauma-informed facilitation; and documented competency gains based on community-validated learning.

Indicators of success include evidence of changed listening language, the participants’ ability to articulate and honour boundaries, reduced defensive responses, Indigenous-determined and documented competency gains, community-validated learning, and ongoing relationships, resources, and policy follow-through. Pitfalls to avoid include listening as consumption, entitlement to access or record, fragility, one-off spectacles without learning continuity, and the return to “business as usual.” In quartet terms, this is the line that carries and makes heard the relational, decolonial, and HRBA work the other voices have made possible, while refusing to let resonance itself be mistaken for transformation.

8.6 Rehearsing the Degenociding Quartet

If life is a circular, instead of a line, there really is no performance, and all of the joy, the knowledge and continuous rebirth, comes from the repetition of rehearsals as individuals, and as communities. It is through these collective studies that we ignite the knowledge and practices we need to replicate life or to build anew.

— Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *INTERFERE*

Throughout what follows, the string quartet remains the musical representation of rehearsal, while the degenociding framework parallels the ethical, political, and pedagogical processes that this scene helps bring into analytical focus. The disciplined relations of quartet rehearsal – listening, adjustment, disagreement, recalibration, and collective responsibility – offer a clearer way of thinking about how degenociding might be prepared, tested, and brought toward public enactment and Canadian identity shift.

In preparation, each concerned subject, having established the character of their line, arrives at rehearsal ready for interference, support, dissonance, and recalibration. Here the plateau begins to resonate as a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities, rather than as four adjacent monologues that do not listen to each other.

In chamber music, rehearsal is the site where the work happens and where conversation, rejection, and accommodation unfold. Phrasing is tested, entries are corrected, balances are recalibrated, assumptions are challenged, and the ensemble members learn whether the interpretation they imagined in isolation can still hold true in relation. Refusal belongs equally to this process. A tempo can be rejected. A bowing can be refused. A dynamic shape can be questioned. A line that overwhelms the others can be rebalanced. A seemingly acceptable reading can be dismantled because it does not honour the score, the style, or the presumed truths of the musical composition.

For this reason, rehearsal becomes the proper culminating image for this dissertation's argument about the degenociding process. If this process is to mean anything, it must be rigorous, intentional, and accountable, and always open to correction.

Rehearsal asks who leads, who authorizes, who sets the limits, whether refusal remains materially possible, whether settlers are actually being changed in durable ways, and whether institutions are becoming more accountable instead of simply more eloquent in their performative reconciliation and land acknowledgements. Rehearsal, therefore, becomes the place where the dissertation's conceptual particles begin to exert pressure upon one another, where rejection becomes indispensable, where disagreement remains ethical and productive.

In rehearsal, the cello may stabilize or interrupt what the first violin seems to suggest; the viola may expose that the second violin's institutional language is moving too quickly toward coherence; the first violin may reveal that a formally sound structure remains inaudible, forgettable, or pedagogically weak; the second violin may show that ethically powerful resonance has not yet become durable obligation. Here, lines of flight are continuously being encouraged, checked, redirected, or dampened by the simultaneous sounding of the others. What one line opens, another may deepen, discipline, complicate, or refuse.

Rehearsal, then, becomes the stage where accountability, protocol, tension, obligation, and resonance are tested until the total sound becomes coherent enough to bear public consequence, without ever pretending that coherence means closure. Rehearsal without the possibility of refusal would not be rehearsal at all; it would be enforcement masquerading as collaboration.

8.6.1 Entering the Rehearsal Room

In quartet terms, this opening marks the moment when musicking begins before any actual sounding of the work. The players arrive each carrying their own “particles” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 272) comprised of different histories, habits, temperaments, and degrees of preparation, but they gather with a shared purpose and with the seriousness, curiosity, and goodwill necessary for common work. Before questions of phrasing, balance, interpretation, or disagreement can take place, there is first the quieter ritual of readiness: cases are opened, bows tightened, and attention slowly gathered into common focus. This process ends with the giving of the “A” by the cellist, an act that is symbolically and methodologically significant as it becomes the first act of reconciliation toward a common acoustic world, a shared pitch of relation, and a disciplined willingness to bring their instruments into tune with one another. Though each musician must tune individually, it must always be done in relation to a sound that is shared.

Even this process involves compromise. A low “C” string on the cello or viola, for example, does not settle in exactly the same way as the upper strings of the violins, because thicker and lower strings vibrate differently and produce a different overtone profile. The note that sounds right in isolation may therefore require slight adjustment in order to belong fully within the shared sonority of the ensemble. What emerges here is therefore the first harmony – not yet the music itself – but the shared understanding or “preamble” that the rehearsal and music can now begin because a preliminary accord, however fragile and provisional, has been sounded into being.

This general process offers a compelling parallel for degenociding: the work begins not with proclamations but with listening, calibration, and the effort to ensure that difference can enter relation without forfeiting coherence and in preparation for responsible action. In other

words, before policy, pedagogy, institutional change, or public performance can occur, there must first be orientation: a willingness to listen, to calibrate, and to enter relation without demanding zero point onto-epistemic expectations. Degenociding cannot begin with acknowledgement alone. It begins, rather, with disciplined attunement: with the recognition that different histories, obligations, and positions must be brought into meaningful relation if a collective future is to sound at all.

8.6.2 First Rehearsal – Finding Common Ground

In quartet terms, the first rehearsal is where the ensemble begins to discover how its four players may actually relate in practice. This is not yet the stage of refinement but of encounter. As explained in 8.4, each musician comes having studied the score and formed initial convictions yet must now test those convictions in the presence of others. Questions begin to surface immediately: What tempo is logical and sustainable? What character does the work suggest? Where must one line lead and another yield? What can be shaped freely, and what must remain more regular, as dictated by the score?

Discussions and debate are fruitful here, but so is forward movement: many musicians will agree that the first rehearsal is often the right time to play through the work, even with errors, hesitations, and disagreement, so that the ensemble may at least reach the end and come away armed with an initial sense of where it stands as a group, what work remains to be done, and where the more challenging parts lie that will need the benefit of time to build coherence and meaning. It is also here that seemingly small decisions – bowings, fingerings, pacing, cues, and emphases – begin to be provisionally set, not because they are final but because shared work requires some initial points of coordination.

In degenociding terms, this stage corresponds to the earliest collective effort to establish workable terms of relation. Canada does not “perform” degenociding at this point; rather, it begins learning how not to overreach, how not to confuse aspiration with transformation, and how to identify where the deepest difficulties actually lie. This is where the questions of Indigenous authority, protocol, consent, reciprocity, refusal, decolonial thinking, Human Rights Based responsibility, and public pedagogy first come into relation, without yet pretending to have been resolved.

The practical decisions of the first rehearsal also have a useful political parallel: just as an ensemble must settle recurring matters of execution in order to move forward coherently, so too early degenociding work depends upon careful decisions about language, framing, jurisdiction, and institutional responsibility. These are not minor preliminaries – they shape the entire form of what can later be enacted as a plateau.

What this first rehearsal makes possible, then, is not yet harmonious agreement but a first workable relation: a provisional common ground from which more demanding forms of disagreement, correction, and collective responsibility can advance with intent and “the process of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 272).

8.6.3 Second Rehearsal – Unsettling the Reading

By the second rehearsal, each musician returns having reflected on the first encounter, now carrying stronger preferences, new questions, and more deliberate ways of persuading the others toward what they have come to hear in the work. At the same time, each also returns marked by the comments, hesitations, and proposals of the others, and is therefore newly prepared to accommodate, revise, or become accountable to the directions the group has only tentatively

begun to discover or decide upon. Here the lines begin to challenge one another more openly. Everything is unsettled; everything is second-guessed. The musicians probe more deeply into the meaning of each phrase, each gesture, each entry, and each articulation, so that personal preference does not overshadow the composer's intent, while still allowing the interpretation to become something the ensemble has genuinely built together.

The greatest musicians do not simply reproduce what is already known; they seek to bring something new, defensible, and original into public hearing – they are masters of border thinking. That originality must nevertheless remain answerable both to what is written in the score and to what has been carried forward as oral and embodied knowledge through generations of performance. Yet even that inherited knowledge must itself be questioned, because tradition, however valuable, can also sediment into habit and begin to deform what the composer may have intended.

In degenociding terms, this is the stage at which inherited settler narratives must be unsettled. The parallel is not that the musicians themselves are enacting colonial domination but that the rehearsal process provides a model for exposing how normalized habits can masquerade as truth. Just as a quartet must learn to tell the difference between faithful tradition and unexamined convention, so too degenociding requires Canada to distinguish between genuine repair and the repetition of comfortable reconciliatory tropes. Colonial habits, token gestures, and performative reconciliation must be interrupted precisely because their familiarity can make them appear adequate when, as we have seen in the previous chapters, they are not. Here, grounded normativity asks whether the terms of relation remain accountable to Indigenous authority and land-based onto-epistemologies; decolonial critique presses against inherited interpretive comfort; an HRBA asks whether what is emerging can become durable and

answerable to the most vulnerable; and the musical line asks whether the work can become audible, memorable, and capable of altering public feeling and understanding. The point of this stage is therefore not to settle the reading but to unsettle it productively so that whatever eventually holds together will be both newly imagined and responsibly grounded.

What this second rehearsal accomplishes, then, is to show whether the agreements reached so far can actually hold. It is the stage at which the ensemble – and, in parallel, the polity – begins to see more clearly what comes from habit, and what can truly stand.

8.6.4 Third Rehearsal – Recalibration, Accountability, and Trust

In quartet terms, the third rehearsal is often where the ensemble begins to hear its internal imbalances more honestly. One line may be too dominant, another insufficiently present; one player may still be clinging to an earlier idea, while another may not yet have fully entered the shared conception that is emerging. What seemed convincing in fragments may not hold across the whole. Rehearsal at this point becomes the labour of recalibration: of adjusting balance, deciding on emphasis, and learning how to remain in relation while doing so.

This is not simply a technical matter but can be personal and vulnerable, as it requires humility, trust, and the ability to relinquish comfort and even some personal convictions for the sake of a more disciplined and convincing collective result. The ensemble therefore begins to become accountable not only to the score but to one another.

In degenociding terms, this stage marks the movement from promising language to accountable structural change. It is where the words must be translated into durable action; where obligations must be clarified rather than merely invoked; and where imbalance must be corrected before it falls back within settler-determined limits of transformation and redress. The

comparison to rehearsal is especially useful here because degenociding cannot depend upon affective persuasion alone. What sounds hopeful must be tested for durability and accountability. This is also the stage at which resistance to change becomes especially visible. Just as some musicians may struggle to relinquish inherited interpretive habits, settler institutions and publics may resist new ethical demands and attempt to fall back into familiar arrangements. This recalibration of Canadian identity therefore becomes a labour of the willing: the disciplined work of remaining in relation while rebalancing the terms of life on these lands.

What this third rehearsal makes possible, then, is a form of relational accountability: the point at which those concerned – whether quartet musicians or the settler-Canadian public – begin not merely to sound promising but to earn trust through correction, rebalancing, and – to echo the Deleuze and Guattari plateau – “continuous” answerability and “intense” commitment.

8.6.5 Fourth Rehearsal – Finalizing the Terms of Collective Sounding

In quartet terms, this is the point at which the four players begin to function less as adjacent musical viewpoints and more as a genuinely coordinated ensemble experiencing deeply embodied, almost choreographic, synchronicity. At this stage, one of the central questions becomes precisely this: what new interpretation is the ensemble bringing to the work, and, in parallel, what new ways of being are being proposed and rehearsed through this collective act? By now, major interpretive decisions have been tested sufficiently that they can begin to settle into a shared conception of the work. This does not mean that the music has become static or closed; rather, it means that the ensemble has clarified the terms under which freedom and discipline can coexist. The relation among the parts becomes more embodied, less tentative, and more capable of producing a dependable outcome. It is here that the pathway toward

performance is no longer merely imagined but begins to take discernible form. What matters now is not only what each player intends individually but what the ensemble can responsibly sound together.

In degenociding terms, this stage corresponds to the point at which separate ethical and analytic claims begin to cohere as collective practice. Indigenous grounded normativity ensures that the terms of relation remain answerable to Indigenous authority, protocol, consent, reciprocity, and refusal. Decolonial critique prevents the process from settling prematurely into inherited colonial comforts or falsely resolved institutional forms. An HRBA provides durability, accountability, and reviewable structure. The musical and affective dimension allows the identity work to become socially resonant, memorable, and transformative. The question here is no longer only what each line contributes in isolation but what kind of shared future is becoming thinkable and “rehearsable” through their interdisciplinary interaction. The analogy to degenociding is sharp at this point because this is where preparation begins to resemble public enactment: the terms of collective action have been refined enough that they may soon be carried onto the world stage.

What this fourth rehearsal makes possible, then, is a collective and recognizable form of identity: not ever complete, as it will always be “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22), but a sufficiently clarified and embodied relation through which the shared act can begin to take dependable shape and become the basis for ruptures that give birth to lines of flight into new ways of being.

8.6.6 Dress Rehearsal – A Glimpse of Public Sounding

In quartet terms, the dress rehearsal offers the clearest pre-public glimpse of the work as an integrated whole. The music is not yet performance proper, but it is no longer merely exploratory – it is already carried as embodied knowledge, ready to be enacted with greater force and flourish when the public arrives. The four lines have been studied, challenged, corrected, and sufficiently embodied that the quartet can now carry the work with coherence, force, and expressive confidence. What is rehearsed here is not the final product but readiness: a provisional but persuasive demonstration that the ensemble can sustain the interpretive world it has built.

In degenociding terms, this final rehearsal stage does not claim to be a “culminating point” – it does not suggest that Canada has somehow arrived at full redress. Rather, it offers a prefigurative glimpse of what a more accountable collective sounding might look, sound, and feel like in a “rebooted” Canada. The importance of the dress rehearsal lies precisely in this threshold condition: the work has not ended, but it has become sufficiently integrated to show that another way of proceeding is materially imaginable. Degenociding, in this sense, is rehearsed into readiness. What becomes perceptible here is the possibility that a different Canadian future could be carried forward not only as concept but as disciplined, embodied practice.

At this point, the work can now be read in two registers. First, it asks what an encounter forms; that is, what kind of listening relation, ethical posture, institutional orientation, permissions, and limits it cultivates. Second, it asks what the encounter produces; that is, what consequences follow in terms of authority, protocol, accountability, pedagogy, memory, policy, or durable structural change. This distinction is innate to the degenociding framework as it is

concerned not only with what an initiative appears to mean but also with what it authorizes, what it teaches, what it changes, and what remains after the event.

The string quartet image is not meant to metaphorize results but to clarify why the method cannot be limited to intention, representation, or affect. As Dylan Robinson (2020) and others have gone to great pains to explain, a musicking encounter may sound admirable, appear inclusive, or generate a compelling symbolic effect, yet still leave the governing relation unchanged. The method therefore asks whether an initiative is structurally grounded, decolonially reorienting, duty-bearing and accountable, and musically capable of producing durable consequences. A strong showing in one line does not cancel weakness in another. Cultural resonance cannot compensate for weak protocol, weak authorization, or weak accountability; nor can progressive rhetoric substitute for substantive shift in the architectures of the settler state.

This commitment to what the record actually shows is central to the framework's denegociding function: it preserves analytical clarity by keeping evaluative claims proportionate to the record. It does not accept "reconciliation" as a claim simply because an institution uses that word but instead asks whether the encounter is structurally grounded, decolonially reorienting, duty-bearing and accountable, and musically and culturally resonant in ways capable of producing durable effects. The task is therefore to ask whether the encounter produces Indigenous-defined benefit, whether it shifts settlers and institutions from awareness to obligation and from initiative to response, and whether that shift becomes durable and reviewable.

What this dress rehearsal makes possible, then, is not arrival or performance, but the clearest pre-public demonstration that another way of sounding together has become materially imaginable.

8.7 Overtones of the Future: Rupture and Return

What this rehearsal has made possible is not a superficial relation without durable transformation, nor the realization of a Canada in the process of degenociding but rather the construction of a disciplined, relational, accountable, and musicking-based practice of preparation through which rupture may begin to open toward transformative and more just ways of being together. Such an approach reframes cultural genocide not as an irreversible and closed chapter from the past but as a possible site of ethical and rights-based obligation and state-level structural transformation and redress.

In doing so, this approach can generate lines of flight that reach beyond Canada, across other settler-colonial contexts where Indigenous Peoples continue to confront ongoing structures of dispossession – including the fictions and doctrines, such as *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery, through which dispossession continues to be authorized and maintained.

More specifically, Chapter 8 has established the degenociding plateau as a pre-performance field of ethical, methodological, and political intensities. It has identified what each line must bring before collective action can responsibly proceed. It has shown why Indigenous grounded normativity must function as the governing bass line; why decolonial critique must interrupt false coherence; why an HRBA must secure durability and accountability; and why musicking must remain answerable for what it makes memorable and socially consequential.

In this sense, the goal of this dissertation has become, through genuine rhizomatic exploration, not the construction of yet another checklist-type assessment tool but the rehearsal of the conditions under which another way of being might become sounded and incorporated into embodied knowledge on these lands. Indeed, music enables this embodied inquiry. Snowber (2016) artfully captures how embodied knowledge is developed through the arts: “when our cells dance we allow our body to become a muse. The body becomes a place of inspiration for creativity” (88). This creativity is essential in advancing the flourishing of new, more dignified, human-rights-based, and degenocided Canadian relational ontologies of care.

By bringing Indigenous grounded normativity, decolonial critique, an HRBA, and musical worldmaking into sustained relation, this chapter has attempted to gather the dissertation’s four assemblages into a single chamber-musical logic without collapsing their differences, and to show how degenociding might be prepared rather than reconciled performatively: how it might be listened for, tested, and carried into public life without mistaking aspiration for transformation. It has also shown that these lines must not merely coexist conceptually but must be intentionally prepared and then brought into accountable relation through a process that remains open to correction, refusal, and recalibration. It does not replace Indigenous community judgement. It does, however, make something newly available: a disciplined framework for distinguishing between reconciliation as rhetoric and degenociding as structurally grounded practice. It follows directly from the dissertation’s wider insistence that Indigenous Peoples must not again be positioned as objects of reform under externally determined terms.

Degenociding can only function ethically where it remains secondary to Indigenous self-determination, Nation-specific authority, and community-defined readiness. As already discussed, Indigenous scholars, such as Glen Sean Coulthard, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson,

and Audra Simpson, repeatedly caution against the dangers of outsiders attempting to lead Indigenous Peoples, define the terms of the problem for them, or impose strategies. For that reason, each Indigenous Nation must retain the prerogative to determine the point of departure, the terms of relation, and the conditions under which any new relationship may proceed.

What the rehearsal ethic of the string quartet makes possible is precisely the kind of ethical and relational work that is needed for decolonizing. As the “becoming” of a Mozart string quartet takes shape through well-thought-out rehearsals leading toward performance and the shared sounding and reception of the composer’s message through the musicking act, so too may a similar process guide the development of a decolonizing Canada. Just as the musical notes on a musical score need human intervention, will, and desire, to bring them to life, the written findings of the four assemblages likewise require human intervention, will, and desire – as well as study, correction, and accountability – to be brought into lived and just ways of being.

Like a plateau, this dissertation does not terminate here but continues to resonate toward new lines of flight. The future remains to be (re)discovered. What this rehearsal has tried to do is clear a path for Quijano’s (2002) “return of the future” (75) – or “*back to the future*” as one might prefer to say.

Back, because the onto-epistemological orientations indigenous to these lands were never absent in themselves but were violently interrupted, displaced, and overwritten by colonial encroachment. To go back, then, is not to seek a simple restoration of a lost past but to help bring the trajectory of life on these lands back into relation with the grounded ways of knowing, being, listening, and governing that had long oriented them before colonization forced them off course.

Future, because just as the performance of a Mozart string quartet always lay in Mozart’s future from the moment the ink was set on paper, the future of humanity on these lands is not

something distant that does not concern us and that can be deferred to the next generations but a responsibility that embraces a different temporal understanding and ethic: one that understands that decisions made now are in relation to those who came before, those living now, and those yet to come. It is a pan-generational way of being that understands that time cannot become an alibi for postponing action.

If the long arc from 1492 to the present has been a genocidal deviation that forced the trajectory of life on these lands off course, then degenociding represents the work of undoing that error as far as possible and of steering collective life back toward the future *that should have been*. What may emerge from such work is a renewed and redirected unfolding of collective life – one in which the path ahead is reoriented toward forms of relation, responsibility, and coexistence that these lands had always already made possible but that Canada continues to invisibilize. What remains, then, is readiness: the sense that another sounding has become imaginable, and that the task ahead is to enter this new stage, with discipline and accountability, beyond rehearsal into new ways of being.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Music as the Fundamental Bass of Identity

You have an ID (identity) problem when the land doesn't recognize you anymore.

— *Leroy Little Bear, Land: The Blackfoot Source of Identity*

European Baroque theory offers an interesting reflection on how music can truly take flight in a meaningful and profound way. The structural framework of a Baroque piece is embodied in the *basse fondamentale*, more commonly known as the *basso continuo*. As both a musical device and guiding principle, it represents the fundamental harmonic foundation – its grounded normativity, if you will – underpinning the entire musical structure, while leaving space for wide flexibility in improvisation. The French Baroque composer and music theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) states:

This Fundamental Bass, the sole Compass of the Ear, the Musicians unseen Guide, which hath ever directed him in all his productions, though he hath been unaware thereof; yet no sooner doth he hear it named, than he beholdeth it as his rightful possession.⁵⁶

Similarly, Rameau's contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) is said to have warned that a poorly constructed *basso continuo*, rather than serving “the glory of God and the permissible delight of the soul,” would instead result in a “rather devilish bawling and screeching” (Lutz et al. 2010, 37).

In the context of this dissertation, we have asked: What *are* the foundations of the Canadian soundscape? What serves as its ethical “Compass”? What has become so naturalized

⁵⁶ My translation of: « Cette Basse fondamentale, l'unique Boussole de l'Oreille, ce guide invisible du Musicien, qui l'a toujours conduit dans toutes ses productions, sans qu'il s'en soit encore aperçû, mais dont il n'a pas plutôt ouï parler, qu'il l'a regardé comme son propre bien. » ⁵⁶ (Rameau 1737, iij)

(the “unseen Guide”) as to escape questioning? What is, in the end, the *basse fondamentale* of Canadian identity, and does it truly – and ethically – find resonance on these lands today? Is it, ultimately, a *devilish bawling and screeching* dissonant deterritorialization?

As established in the Prologue of this dissertation, for the Armenian ancients, music was far more than an artistic expression: it represented ultimate truth and provided a sonic pathway toward reconciling or overcoming humanity’s primordial and continuing sin, shaping the destiny of humanity through its very sound. In other words, it was a path of *reconciliation* through *truth* (Mahé 2018, 84–85). Specifically, Mahé (1997) notes that the Armenian theologian, philosopher, and poet Yovhannés Erznkac’i (13th–14th century) claimed that music possesses this power because, like human beings, it has both spirit and body (399). Thus, by virtue of its incorporeal nature, music is able to penetrate the ear as a form of medicine and thereby affect the body’s dispositions and humours (399–400) – indeed, it has the power, by means of pure and harmonious tones, to influence, even transform the listener’s soul (402).

Despite this inspired and rather convincing ancient metaphysical view of music and sound, I do not claim that listening or playing music alone can *change the world*. Such a claim would exaggerate both the power of music and the broader capacities of art in general. However, to dismiss its potential outright is equally reductive – Erznkac’i was certainly on to something.

It is nevertheless important to note that music and the arts in general have the capacity to inspire educators and students toward questioning their place and role, and indeed privilege, in society (Oringel 2002; Westheimer 2015, 112). The influential work of Maxine Greene on educational philosophy delves deeply into the possibilities the arts provide to the learner. The extension into the *imaginary* and *possible* that the arts provide is exactly what the student needs to “move beyond what he has learned by rote” (Greene 1973, 172) and enter the realm of “wide-

awakeness” (Greene 1973, 162), leading often to acts of “questioning and confrontation” (Greene 1973, 281–282).

Musicking is, for most people, an experiential listening practice of that wide-awakeness; for performers, it is a training space for building consensus; and for it to have its greatest effect, it must ensure that all voices have an opportunity to be expressed and to be heard. As Wilson-Raybould (2022) writes:

At the heart of learning is listening to and telling new stories. In particular, we need to tell a new story about how we arrived at this moment in history in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. This story needs to be reflective and inclusive of all of the experiences that have shaped the Canada of today, and it needs to transform the narrative of exclusion that has been predominant. (179)

Wilson-Raybould indicates that for true reconciliation work to happen, certain conditions must be met: it has to challenge, elevate, and advance Canadian society – it is not comfortable (279). This requires a resetting of the foundations Canada is built on and cannot be summed up in occasional events or actions (Wilson-Raybould 2022, 281, 287). It must ask: “How do my actions support Indigenous nations in their rebuilding work?” (Wilson-Raybould 2022, 287).

That question brings us back to the chapter title. If identity has a bass line, then the ethical issue is not only what Canada says about itself but what actually continues underneath the saying: what grounds its institutions, what harmonies it normalizes, what histories it suppresses, and what futures it permits itself to hear. A decolonizing Canada would require more than the addition of Indigenous “content” to an otherwise unchanged national score. It would require a change in the fundamental bass itself: a re-grounding of public life in relations that are accountable to Indigenous authority, historically truthful, and structurally transformative.

This storytelling requires a certain amount of courage, no doubt, but as the great American poet Emily Dickinson writes in “The Gleam of an Heroic Act” (1915), no great act goes unpunished:

The gleam of an heroic act,
Such strange illumination –
The Possible’s slow fuse is lit
By the Imagination! (29)

Read through a degenociding lens, the heroic act is for Canadians to be morally and ethically decisive in the narratives they espouse about themselves. Such bravery then lights up the senses to see what was invisibilized, “sparking” possibility and forward motion, enabling us to envision alternative worldviews, futurities, beyond the imposed limits of coloniality.

9.2 The Usefulness of Degenociding

We will have a generation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children that do not have to recover from their childhood; who can be proud of who they are; that have all of their rights recognized; and a generation of non-Indigenous kids who never have to say they are sorry.

— *Cindy Blackstock, Reflections on Reconciliation after 150 years since Confederation*

What can degenociding then bring to the question of building an ethical Canadian identity: one that does not ignore what the land has been telling its Indigenous inhabitants for millennia? As we have determined here, it does not offer a definite solution, but it suggests a path toward responsibility, humility, and redress. Degenociding gives settlers, institutions, educators, and policymakers a clearer way to understand that cultural genocide is not simply a past event to be regretted – or as Blackstock (2018) says to be sorry for (see epigraph) – but an ongoing structure that demands active, ethical, and reviewable forms of redress. Here, degenociding is useful because it shifts the discussion from symbolic reconciliation to accountable transformation. It

directs attention away from occasional gestures and toward the deeper questions this dissertation has insisted on asking.

Who governs the encounter? Whose protocols structure it? What forms of listening does it cultivate? What obligations follow? What changes endure after the event?

Degenociding refuses the easier path of inclusionary tactics that have left settlers—Indigenous relations in constant quagmires; instead, it embraces the redistribution of authority, the restoration of Indigenous-defined space, and the alteration of the terms under which Canadians learn, listen, and relate. Without fear.

Degenociding is also useful because it allows the legal and the ethical to be brought together through the embodied knowledge generated by musicking. Through an HRBA, degenociding clarifies responsibility not only in moral terms but through duty-bearing obligations tied to dignity, participation, cultural life, accountability, non-discrimination, and the development of the capacities of both rights-holders and duty-bearers. In this way, it offers a language through which settler responsibility can be understood not as an almost punishing redemptive performance but as a natural and positive matter of concrete relational and institutional obligation.

Embodied learning shapes how we feel and experience the world; policy that forgets this will miss how change actually takes root. Every experience leaves a mark on us and develops what can be called body intelligence – gut feeling. Music could open up a holistic view of the self and the society we live in as Canadians. It could help us understand that dignity requires taking responsibility for patterns that have put some people above others. One way to undo this is to attack cultural genocide head-on with degenociding.

As this dissertation has emphasized, Indigenous scholars repeatedly caution against premature action, externally imposed strategies, pan-Indigenizing frameworks, and any attempt by outsiders to define the terms of Indigenous futures – as well-intentioned as they may seem – within continued uneven power dynamics (Robinson 2020). Ermine (1995) similarly warns us that this knowledge or “flame . . . is too weak to be shared but if we all are still and respect the flame it will grow and thrive in the caring hands of those who hold it. In time we can all warm at the fire. But now we have to nurture the flame, or we will all lose the gift” (111). These cautionary pleas must be heeded and must inform how projects such as degenociding are conceived and carried out. Each Indigenous Nation has the prerogative to determine “point zero” of this new relationship. Degenociding is only meaningful where it remains subordinate to Indigenous authority, community readiness, Nation-specific protocol, consent, refusal, and self-determined process.

While it must remain Indigenous-led, degenociding should only be seen as a framework that enables settler responsibility. It takes the settler from awareness to obligation, from metaphor to action, and from reconciliation performances to accountable, relational, embodied, and grounded practice. Under those conditions, it can help orient education, cultural policy, and public life toward more ethical futures. These ethical futures, in turn, would undoubtedly benefit Indigenous resurgence and agency.

9.3 Limitations and Future Research

This dissertation has advanced degenociding as a conceptual and normative framework through which music, Indigenous resurgence, decolonial critique, and human rights obligations may be brought into sustained relation. Yet the work remains, by design, preparatory. It is a rehearsal of

terms, thresholds, and possibilities, not a final adjudication of what degenociding must become in every context. The limitations of the present study therefore point directly toward the lines of inquiry that future research must pursue.

Most immediately, future work could test, refine, and complicate this dissertation's claims through community-grounded and Nation-specific research. Because this project has been literature-based, it has necessarily remained at the level of conceptual synthesis, discourse analysis, and normative argument. What remains to be explored is how particular Indigenous communities, educators, artists, students, and institutions might receive, revise, reject, or repurpose the framework proposed here. Such work would need to proceed under Indigenous governance and according to community-defined protocols. The question would no longer be simply whether degenociding can be theorized through music but how, where, under whose authority, and toward whose benefit it may or may not be enacted.

A second line of future research concerns pedagogy. This dissertation has repeatedly returned to K–12 education as a crucial site through which settler identity, denial, responsibility, and relation are formed. Further study could therefore examine actual curricular models, classroom practices, teacher education programs, and policy frameworks that attempt to place Indigenous musics and worldviews in more central and accountable relation to public education. Such research could ask what forms of musical encounter support durable shifts in understanding, what institutional arrangements sustain or undermine those shifts, and how refusal, consent, reciprocity, and protocol might be materially protected in educational settings.

Third, future work could extend the degenociding framework beyond music while remaining faithful to the dissertation's central claims. If music has served here as a particularly powerful site of rehearsal because of its embodied, affective, mnemonic, and relational

capacities, parallel work could ask how similar degenociding logics might operate in literature, visual arts, theatre, dance, museum practice, public commemoration, sports, and civic ritual. The point would not be to dilute the specificity of music but to consider whether the framework developed here has broader applicability across other cultural domains where settler identity and public memory are shaped.

A fourth avenue lies in institutional and legal analysis. The Human Rights Based Approach developed in this dissertation could be taken further through focused studies of ministries of education, school boards, arts councils, museums, festivals, conservatories, and publicly funded cultural institutions. Such work could ask what it would mean to move from symbolic inclusion to durable obligation; how Indigenous-defined benefit could be built into policy, governance, and remuneration structures; and what kinds of institutional redesign would be required for accountability to become more than a reconciliatory performance.

There is also significant comparative potential. Although this dissertation has remained primarily focused on Canada, many of the dynamics traced here resonate across other colonial states. Future research could examine the possibilities and limits of degenociding in places such as Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, the United States, and the Nordic states, while remaining attentive to the distinct histories, legal formations, and Indigenous sovereignties proper to each context. Comparative work of this kind would help test whether the framework proposed here is contextually transferable, where it must be radically modified, and where it may fail.

Finally, future research must remain open to the possibility that some of the most important responses to this dissertation will take the form of refusal. That, too, would be instructive. If degenociding is to avoid becoming another settler-authored abstraction imposed upon Indigenous realities, then it must remain answerable to critique, revision, non-adoption, and rejection. The

future of this work therefore lies not in securing conceptual closure but in remaining porous to correction and accountable to relations it cannot itself control.

Like a plateau, then, this dissertation does not culminate in finality. It leaves behind a scored but unfinished rehearsal space: one in which new lines of flight may be sounded, interrupted, redirected, or deepened. What matters is that the dissertation has tried to make a certain kind of future more audible: a future in which music may help carry settlers beyond recognition and regret toward responsibility, relation, and forms of public life more worthy of the lands on which they are lived.

9.4 Degenociding for Possible Futures

Reality in its entirety is not to be exhausted by what is immediately at hand, for an overwhelming part of this reality is contained in the form of a still latent, unuttered future Word.

— Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notebook No. 5* (1869–1870)

This statement from Dostoevsky's *Notebook No. 5* (1869–1870) (quoted in Bakhtin 1984, 90) occurs in his notes titled *On Shakespeare*, reflecting the Russian novelist's awe and admiration for the English playwright. Dostoevsky understood Shakespeare's greatness in the sense that much of the meaning embedded in his works remains to be revealed to humanity in the future. Great works and time-matured onto-epistemologies carry unending reservoirs of innumerable lines of flight, symbolizing the depth and lifeforce of human reality and possibility. In essence, reality is not confined to what is visible; much of what constitutes it is potential, unspoken, or unsung, yet nonetheless *real*.

As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, Indigenous musics, worldviews, and knowledges are invisibilized, historicized, and museumized in an attempt to deny Indigenous futurities. Dostoevsky's idea offers a compelling philosophical counterpoint: reality includes

those “latent, unuttered” onto-epistemologies and futures that coloniality refuses to recognize. Yet, as this dissertation shows, Indigenous musics and the onto-epistemologies they contain are living, enduring, and future-bearing expressions of Quijano’s (2002) notion of a “return of the future” (75). They remind us that much still remains to be heard, understood, and discovered, since within these musics lies that *Cave of Treasures* of the ancient scribes, resplendent with the “shrines of a nation’s soul” (Lemkin [1959] 2013, 172) – shrines that are future-bearing and capable of sounding worlds into being.

At its core, the degenociding model aims to reverse the process of coloniality – to unsettle it by re-centring knowledge systems, practices, and modes of being that colonialism and colonization continue to suppress. Degenociding not only *delinks* from Eurocentric zero point onto-epistemologies but also *(re)links* to Indigenous and pluriversal ways of knowing, opening pathways of coexistence and reciprocity, and thereby not only enabling meaningful and truthful reconciliation but also providing a higher quality of education that is no longer only content-based but about transforming worldviews. In this sense, it also answers another of Quijano’s calls, that of “epistemological reconstitution” (Quijano 2007, 176–177), which can only be achieved independently – outside the “same frame of mind that created the problems” (Walsh, Mignolo, and Segato 2024, 17).⁵⁷

The shift this dissertation suggests is one of discourse: *from decolonization as restitution to degenociding as re-worlding* – to actively dismantle genocidal structures that silence Indigenous

⁵⁷ For example, as a classically trained musician, I would have to retrain my listening habits to begin to learn to appreciate the purpose, aesthetics, and meanings of Indigenous musics before forming an informed understanding of them. In other words, Indigenous musics cannot – should not – be understood within the framework of Eurocentric musical analysis.

voices and futures. This dissertation brings two worlds together through rhizomatic lines of flight onto a polyphonic plateau understood as a “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 22), orchestrating potential futures grounded in Indigenous understandings of cyclical temporality, ancestral presence, and future kinship responsibilities.

Likewise, I argue that by opening independent spaces for Indigenous musics and worldviews to speak, find voice in, and define the Canadian narrative, the coloniality of power is diminished, and the dignity of the original soundscape and relationship reterritorialized. In the case of Indigenous musics, for example, one can learn to listen “through a different ear” rather than listening through the lens of Western aesthetics and semiotics, thus engaging with the aforementioned new ways of knowing. This decolonial pluriversality (allowing for several independent ways of knowing), if successful, may lead to a “return of the future” (Quijano 2002, 75), a future that Quijano, and others, feel ought to have been but was derailed by colonial encroachment.

Indigenous musics could function as a privileged site of degenociding. They carry embodied, relational, and place-based onto-epistemologies that coloniality works to silence. By listening to and learning from these musics on their own terms, settlers and states are confronted with cultural survivance that resists erasure, while Indigenous communities reclaim their role as knowledge holders. Thus, degenociding through music is both dismantling – the exposure and undoing of cultural genocide – and generative: it creates living structures where suppressed “latent, unuttered” knowledges can sound again, guiding ethical and sustainable futures.

9.5 Degenociding Boldly

Until the philosophy which hold one race superior / And another / Inferior / Is finally / And permanently / Discredited / And abandoned / -Everywhere is war - / Me say war.

— Bob Marley and The Wailers, “War”

Conflicts obtain and are solved without war where and when truth and objectivity in parenthesis reign and there is no enemy to be destroyed and universal truth to be defended and imposed. A world in which truth in parenthesis is accepted as universal is a world guided by pluriversality as a universal principle. In a pluriversal world founded on truth in parenthesis, there is no place for war.

— Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*

Though this dissertation draws on my reading of Indigenous, Global South, and allied scholars, and seeks alignment with international human rights principles, it is nevertheless important to clarify that any “findings” I put forward here are to be understood as propositions to *settler Canadians* – pathways toward more ethical, active, and vulnerably engaged participation in social justice efforts aimed at degenociding Canada. These propositions are grounded in what I argue to be a posture of vulnerability and humility – one that is essential, edifying, illuminating, and ultimately, deeply joyous. Sium and Ritskes (2013) write: “Settler narratives must speak stories of embodying colonial violences and complicity in the ongoing settler violence(s) against Indigenous peoples” (v). Accepting the violent past on which Canada is built, I believe, can serve as a powerful motivator to shape research goals and policy making aimed at contributing to responsible and substantive decolonial action – at the personal level as well as the societal levels – toward more fundamental and meaningful change: change that supports Indigenous futurities and ensures adherence to human rights norms.

If the premise of degenociding gains traction in communities across Canada, or elsewhere, it must only proceed with the approval of the local Indigenous People(s), as this condition is implicit at the very root of the concept. For example, as Walter (2016) and others caution, pan-

Indigenizing Indigenous worldviews is both unethical and reductive: “there can be no pan-Indigenous ethical guidelines translatable across First Nation peoples” (91). Each Indigenous community must be approached as a self-determining entity (UNDRIP 2007, articles 3 and 4), and the “final arbiters of their own histories” (Lawrence 2002, 24).⁵⁸

These considerations continue to shape the methodological foundations of my work. My commitments are grounded in an ethic of humility, relational accountability, and an unwavering respect for Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge systems. I do not claim neutrality; rather, I aim to contribute to the growing body of work led by Indigenous and allied scholars who challenge colonial onto-epistemic dominance and envision alternative paths forward. In response to what Fanon (1963) describes as Europe’s self-denial – through the logic of colonization – of “humility and modesty but also solicitude and tenderness” (235), this dissertation seeks to reclaim those very qualities as essential foundations for ethical engagement and dignified relational progress with Indigenous Peoples.

In essence, I see degenciding as a grassroots counterpart to the political work of decolonization and the onto-epistemic work of decoloniality. Approaching colonialism through genocide changes the ethical stakes by directing attention to the harms that continue and to the relationships that require repair, even reconfiguration. In Canada, this involves asking settler Canadians to reconsider how they understand themselves in relation to the country’s history, its present institutions, and the colonial power relations from which they continue to benefit and that

⁵⁸ Both the ICESCR (Art. 1) and the ICCPR (Art. 1), to which Canada is bound, recognize the right of all peoples to self-determination. Furthermore, Canada has committed to aligning its laws with UNDRIP through the enactment of the UNDRIP Act of 2021. UNDRIP recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination in Articles 3 and 4.

continue to mire reconciliation work in a quagmire. Recognizing genocide as part of Canada's continuing historical and cultural inheritance can also provide a basis for concrete educational, cultural, and institutional measures aimed at redress. Such measures could strengthen Indigenous authority and resurgence while enabling future generations to inherit a more truthful collective memory and more dignified relationships with Indigenous Peoples and the lands on which they live. Ultimately, this approach is not a fixed roadmap but an evolving and rhizomatic practice – one that must remain attentive, responsive, and accountable to Indigenous Peoples and their visions for sovereignty, justice, and futurity.

In a world that still too often treats might as right, degenociding may offer dominant powers an occasion to reassess their priorities and to work, however imperfectly, toward making right the measure of might. Here “might” does not refer to a coercive force but to human capacity: the ability to cultivate the conditions for human capability and collective flourishing. The “overtone” of “might” would include qualities such as ethics, dignity, relationality, and accountability – principles articulated in human rights instruments and in Indigenous ways of knowing and being – that, taken together, orient power toward sustaining life rather than dominating it.

In that sense, degenociding is not only a response to cultural genocide in Canada. It also speaks to a wider human condition still marked by hierarchy, domination, denial, and the violent defence of supposedly universal truths. As Bob Marley and Walter Mignolo remind us in the epigraphs above, the logic of superiority and inferiority keeps the world in a state of war, while pluriversality opens the possibility of a world in which there is no enemy to destroy. Degenociding may therefore contribute to peace by refusing such hierarchies at the level of listening, relation, education, memory, and public life.

To take this leap into the unknown and to go beyond “what is immediately at hand” to begin listening to the “still latent, unuttered future Word” will take courage and determination; or to quote the famous captain, will require us “to boldly go where no one has gone before!”

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