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A Tale of Two Epistemes: *Music* in the Public Forum of Canada and in the Community Life of the *Nuu-chah-nulth* People

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Abstract

Following on the Canadian federal government's belated establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2008 to address the abuse inflicted on Indigenous peoples through the residential school system and its legacy, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education mandated in 2015 the embedding of local Indigenous knowledge into school curricula in all subjects by 2019. Drawing on our studies of how public school music educators in rural BC have already begun facilitating the embedding of local Indigenous knowledge and musics in K–12 classes, we use Peircian semiotic to compare the ways music is conceptualized according to the worldviews or *epistemes* evident in two contexts: in the public forum of BC, where political history and the marketplace have determined how music is widely conceived, and in the community life of the *Nuu-chah-nulth*, a First Nation people within BC. We suggest implications of our comparative analysis for the present and future practice of music education locally and globally.

Keywords

Indigenous knowledge, curriculum, cultural difference, epistemology, semiotic, music, music education

> I see … a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out.[1]
>
> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

School music education in British Columbia, Canada, has long been grounded in European art music and Canadian and American popular music, with the musics of "other world peoples" included only minimally since the mid-20th century.[2] But in 2015, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education, in consultation with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC),[3] mandated the embedding of local Indigenous knowledge into school curricula in all subjects by 2019 in order that all K–12 students in the province would henceforth be introduced to those perspectives (Province of British Columbia 2015). What led the province to put forth this mandate? For more than a century (from 1876 to 1996), Indigenous children across Canada were separated from their families and sent to residential schools under a national policy now publicly recognized as having been instituted "to eliminate Aboriginal people as distinct peoples and to assimilate them into the Canadian mainstream against their will" (TRC 2015, 3). The British Columbia Ministry of Education's 2015 mandate was initiated in response to the Canadian federal government's belated establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) in 2008 to address the abuse inflicted on Indigenous peoples through the residential school system and its harmful legacy.

In hindsight, it can be seen that the purpose of this assimilation was to separate Indigenous peoples from their lands and resources, to achieve cultural and physical genocide simultaneously.[4] In fact, land theft, social oppression, over-incarceration, enforced poverty, murders of Indigenous women, racist police responses, and the use of military force when Indigenous peoples attempt to protect their lands are ongoing in Canda and other culturally pluralistic, democratically governed Western nations to this day. Notably, most of British Columbia (BC) has now been acknowledged by the provincial government to be unceded land, traditionally under the jurisdiction of distinct First Nations; the treaty process was not begun until 1993. Ongoing treaty negotiations, legislation, and litigation to uphold Indigenous rights will ultimately determine the ownership of land, resource development, and the political authority of First Nations communities in BC.[5]

In the context of British Columbia, the embedding of Indigenous knowledge in music and other classes should not be construed as either a trivial act of recognition (Coulthard 2014) or a "settler move to innocence" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3). Embedding local Indigenous knowledge in schools is important because it will contribute to Indigenous resurgence (Alfred 2015), as First Nations and Métis students come to see themselves and their cultures portrayed in the curriculum in a positive light.[6] Embedding Indigenous cultural practices specifically in *music* classes is significant because it is through cultural practices such as music making that worldviews are expressed and experienced; thus, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students will be introduced to local Indigenous peoples' teachings and perspectives that have emerged from local landscapes (Basso 1996; Elsey 2013). While educational reform alone cannot effect political change, it can—over time—contribute to building the social awareness, license, and will that drive such change (e.g., in ways akin to those arising from activist Greta Thunberg's and others' advancement of societal changes to address global warming via environmental education).[7] As part of a multi-pronged approach, curriculum and other education policy changes—plus concerted efforts at all levels to implement them—can begin to address oppression in BC by countering racist and discriminatory attitudes and practices, fostering teachers' decolonizing mindsets and self-awareness, and creating "ethical spaces" for dialogue (Ermine 2007).

Recognizing that most BC music teachers would be unable to fulfill the Education Ministry's directive to embed local Indigenous knowledge in their teaching because they are largely unfamiliar with Indigenous cultural practices, we undertook a study in 2016—funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)—to explore the ways in which some public school music educators in rural BC had already begun working with Indigenous peoples to include local Indigenous knowledge and musics in their K–12 classes and schools.[8] Our intention was to learn from them about their experiences featuring or embedding Indigenous peoples' musics in their classes for the purpose of determining how school music education throughout the province—including instructional practices, curricula, and the preparation of teachers—could be changed. Our research brought us face to face with marked differences in conceptions, practices, and values surrounding *music* in the public forum of Canada (including K–12 schools) and those in the lives of the Indigenous peoples in the province, and it suggested to us that the practices and curricula of music education may need to change not only in BC, but in all culturally pluralistic nations that define

themselves as liberal, representative democracies (i.e., having a form of government in which power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system, guided by reason and principles of liberty and equality).

Incidentally, we recognize that liberal democracy is presently under threat in a number of world nations where political control has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of small elites. We also recognize that most of these "democratic" nations have participated in the subjugation of racialized "others"—including Indigenous peoples—through their colonial projects. Still, we uphold the *ideal* of representative democracy, supported by an educated and informed electorate, as meritorious and as the standard against which we believe all other forms of government should be judged.

In this inquiry, we compare the ways in which *music* and *music making*—or *musicking*[9]—are experienced and conceptualized according to the "ways of knowing" or "worldviews" tacitly held in two cultural contexts: the public forum of British Columbia, a province in the culturally pluralistic, democratically governed nation of Canada, and the lives and practices of the *Nuu-chah-nulth*, an Indigenous people of the province, as one of BC's constituent communities. We use pragmatist philosopher C. S. Peirce's notion of a *sign*, as described in his semiotic theory, as a conceptual tool to make explicit the axiological differences concerning music that we identified in the two cultural contexts, showing the dissimilarity of the values (ethics, aesthetics) concerning music that inhere in each. While there is no evidence to suggest Peirce was directly informed by Indigenous perspectives in developing his pragmatist philosophy, philosophy scholar Scott L. Pratt (2002) has demonstrated how certain aspects of thinking evident among Indigenous peoples in the northeast region of North America contributed to the thinking of those who shaped American pragmatism as a philosophy.[10] Notably, other scholars have used Peirce's semiotic to analyze and compare the worldviews and cultural practices of different cultural communities, including those of Indigenous peoples.[11] Like them, we intend to illuminate differences in two cultural contexts, not to suggest that one is superior to the other. More specifically, our illumination of these differences is intended to demonstrate the extraordinary difference between conceptions of *musicking* in the two cultural contexts in support of Indigenous resurgence. We conclude by making recommendations based on what we have learned for music educators in BC, Canada, and those in the schools of other

culturally pluralistic, democratic nations who also have interest in featuring or embedding Indigenous peoples' musics in their classes.[12]

Peirce's semiotic

Before we explore how *music* and *musicking* are experienced and conceptualized differently in the public forum of BC and in the lives and practices of the *Nuu-chah-nulth* people, we will explain how the semiotic theory of pragmatist philosopher C. S. Peirce's semiotic theory can help to make explicit the axiological differences concerning music in the two cultural contexts. In my 2010 book, *What's So Important About Music Education?*, I (Scott) drew upon Peirce's semiotic to show how a given musical artefact (as a *Sign*) could be conceptualized in different ways (as an *Object*) by persons of different cultural communities (who thus manifest distinctive *Interpretants*) according to their respective "ways of knowing" or "worldviews." This paper represents an extension of that work, and the diagram below shows this circumstance according to Peirce's semiotic:

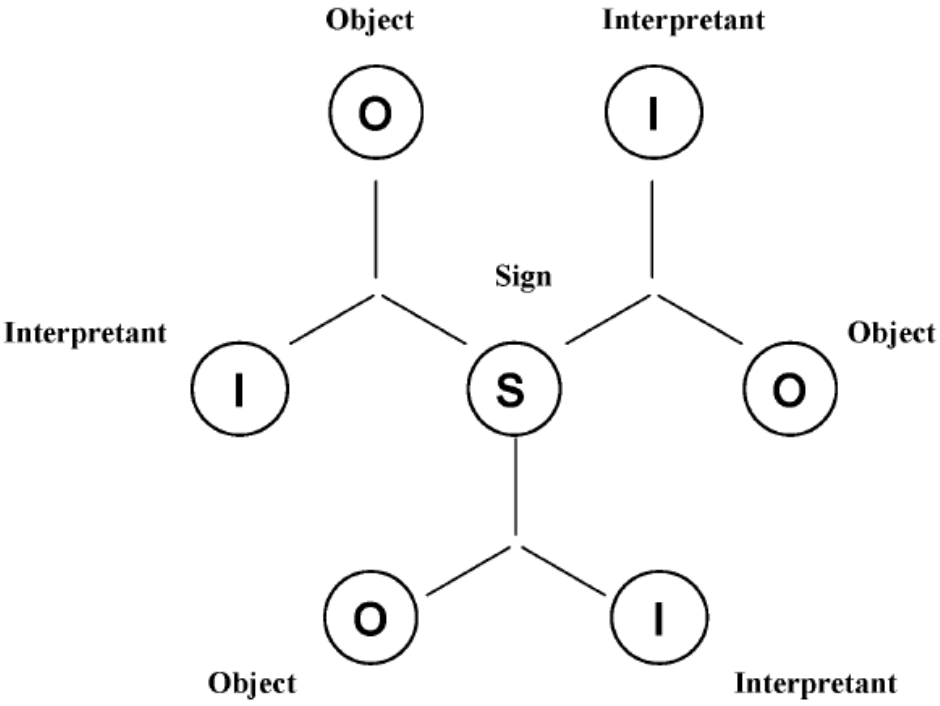

Figure 1. A Sign perceived and conceptualized differently by three culturally dissimilar individuals.

Another term to denote a "way of knowing" distinctively shared by the members of a community is *episteme*, which stems from the Greek word epistēmē [ἐπιστήμη], referring to a body of ideas or a system of knowledge; it is the root of the word *epistemology*. Although Vanessa Watts (2013) contends that ontology and epistemology are Western frameworks incommensurable with Indigenous thought, other Indigenous scholars have used these terms provisionally (Tuck and McKenzie 2015) or defined them according to their own perspectives (Kovach 2010; Styres 2017; Wilson 2008). In this inquiry, we use the terms as defined by Shawn Wilson (2008).[13] While Peirce had no particular interest in studying the differences in culturally distinct communities, ethnomusicologists have applied his semiotic as a tool for understanding and explicating aspects of music manifested in such communities according to their worldview or *episteme* (e.g., Turino 2008).

In his philosophical scheme, Peirce drew a distinction between the conceptions of reality held at a given time by a group of people (e.g., scientists working in a paradigm of "normal science"[14]) and true Reality, of which he held any human conceptualization to be inevitably imperfect and incomplete. Indeed, as Peirce (1931) noted, "knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy" (1.55). Further, he recognized, "[w]e perceive what we are adjusted for interpreting" (1891, 32; 1940, 305) according to the "habits of mind" (1935, 5.417) we have acquired through learning from our respective experiences.

Peirce advanced a conceptual vocabulary—a typology of signs—that is useful for describing cultural differences (dissimilarities in "habits of mind" between different groups of people), and the practicality of his typology has been recognized by cognitive scientists (e.g., Bruner 1990, 69). Specifically, Peirce asserted that anything registered in consciousness is conceptualized in one of three ways—i.e., as a type of Icon, Index, or Symbol. Here are his definitions of each:

> **Icon** – A Sign that refers to the Object it denotes merely by virtue of qualities of its own. (Examples include a map and the terrain it represents; an instance of onomatopoeia and the sound to which it refers.)
>
> **Index** – A Sign that refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of its being "really affected" by (or in physically contiguous relationship with) that Object. (Examples include smoke and fire; red litmus and acidity.)
>
> **Symbol** – A Sign that refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of a law or convention, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object. (Examples include a word or a sign language gesture and the concept each denotes.) (Peirce 1932, 2.247-2.249; examples from Goble 2010, 37)

Peirce's typology of signs provides us with a conceptual vocabulary for answering this question: How does "music" tend to be conceptualized (differently) by people in two contexts—i.e., the public forum of British Columbia, Canada, and the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community? Using the terminology of Peirce's semiotic, the question could be framed this way: How is the *music* or the *musicking* (as signs) undertaken by people of the two cultural contexts iconic, indexical, and symbolic of their respective epistemes?

Music and Musicking in the Public Forum of British Columbia, Canada

Political history and the marketplace have largely determined what music is most widely heard, the means by which it is experienced, and how it is conceptualized in the public forum of British Columbia, Canada. As the nation's most ethnically diverse province, with a population of 5.5 million people as of 2023,[15] BC is home to persons of more than 240 ethnicities,[16] speakers of more than 40 language groups,[17] and adherents of more than 9 large religious traditions.[18] Despite this extraordinary diversity, the majority of the music heard in the province's public forum largely reflects the historical influences of the cultural groups that first colonized North America. Western pop, art, and classical music, European and North American folk musics, and—to a lesser degree—jazz are predominant, although the distinctive musics of other cultural communities can now also be heard in private spaces and, more and more, via public media and in concert venues. In recent years, an increase in the number of people from Asia has brought greater prominence in BC to the musics of China, Japan, and other Pacific Rim countries.[19]

Thus, most of the music heard in the province's public forum is rooted in the tonal functional harmony of Western sacred, classical, and art music, and it is harmonically organized, as Christopher Small (1987) observed, "in meaningful sequences by means of which the listener is led forward in time, [their] expectations being frustrated and teased but ultimately satisfied by the final perfect cadence" (16). Only some members of BC society physically participate in the making of the music heard in the public forum, since professionals produce most of it. Musical works (scores or recordings) are owned by those who created them or by publishers or recording companies, and they are made available publicly for purchase. If one wishes to learn to make music in BC (and does not attend a school with a music

program or associate with a community in which *musicking* of some variety is a regular cultural practice), one can purchase an instrument from a local retailer and take lessons.

Much of the music experienced in the BC public forum has been pre-recorded in studios created for that purpose, and it is heard via various electronic media, especially radio, television, the internet, and related technologies (e.g., computers, portable mp3 players, digital streaming services). The sound of recorded music is ubiquitous in the public forum, especially in places such as stores and restaurants. While live public performances of music are plentiful, concerns have been raised in recent years about the increasingly high cost of tickets, which has had the effect of limiting physical attendance to persons with sufficient means.[20]

Following on the influence of the European philosophers of the Enlightenment era, whose ideas contributed to the principles upon which the current governance systems of Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and other democratic nations were founded, music in BC is generally conceptualized in aesthetic terms in the public forum; that is to say, it is regarded as one of the arts, considered according to its qualitative attributes and conceptualized most commonly as a marketable product of entertainment.[21] Correspondingly, musical works—including those of different religious and cultural communities—are usually considered intellectually (i.e., primarily as "art objects") in the public forum;[22] attention is seldom given to their distinctive cultural origins, the various social and emotional purposes they serve in their respective contexts, or their often politicized content.[23] In fact, differences in the musics of different cultural communities are generally characterized (reductively) in public as differences in "style" or "genre."[24]

Correspondingly, music classes in most BC schools and universities emphasize students' development of skills on Western instruments and/or voice in order to enable them to participate in solo or ensemble performances of Western popular, classical or art music, folk music, and/or jazz. Where most music teachers (especially those in universities and conservatories) advance the teaching of Western music as an art or a form of entertainment, a much smaller group of teachers who have interests in non-Western musics (and are informed by perspectives from ethnomusicology) have begun wrestling with the culturally inclusive concept of musicking championed by praxial philosophers.[25] The pervasiveness of Western music concepts in the public forum of BC regularly presents challenges for music educators owing to the province's great cultural diversity, as, for example, when some parents raised in non-Western traditions discourage their children from

joining their local school's concert band and question its value;[26] cultural diversity in the province surely contributes to the difficulty of justifying the place of music in the schools. Still, some graduates of BC schools who learned to make music in their school music programs have gone on to professional careers and large-scale commercial success, including opera singer Ben Heppner, jazz singer Diana Krall, and pop singer-songwriter Sarah McLachlan.

Music and Musicking Among the *Nuu-chah-nulth*[27]

The Indigenous peoples who have lived in the western part of Vancouver Island, BC since before the colonization of North America began chose collectively in 1978 to call themselves by the name *Nuu-chah-nulth* (*nuučaanuɬ)*, meaning "people all along the mountains."[28] Comprised of fourteen groups or nations, each led by a *ha'wiih* (hereditary chief),[29] the *Nuu-chah-nulth* have a long history as a strong ceremonial culture in which feasting, accompanied with songs, dances, and dramatic enactments of stories, has been a central part of their collective lives.[30] In the 2016 Census, 4,310 people in BC identified as having *Nuu-chah-nulth* ancestry, and 275 people reported the *Nuu-chah-nulth* language as their mother tongue;[31] they are among the 270,585 BC residents who identify as "Aboriginal"[32] (5.9% of the province's total population).

The *Nuu-chah-nulth* conceptualize their *musicking*—which involves drumming, singing, chanting, and the shaking of rattles—in ways quite different from the ways the musicking of most others is conceptualized in the public forum of Canada. Among many differentiating features, they make their own instruments from materials they collect in the forests and beaches of their natural environment. They take into consideration how the environment influences the sounds of the drum, the movements of the dancers, and how one might receive and compose songs (Clutesi 1969). Further, drumming and singing are central means of acquiring knowledge, ways of experiencing the interrelationship of physical and spiritual domains, and practices for expressing the reciprocal connections among all living beings (Atleo 2004). For example, the Wolf Ceremony, a celebration they undertake in winter, serves to impart knowledge about heroism, life and death, and the teachings of *Nuu-chah-nulth* Elders to the members of the community.[33] Singing songs is an important means by which community members communicate and derive meaning and understanding in their lives; the *Nuu-chah-nulth* thus regard music as a unique path to learning on its own terms (Atleo 2004).

The *Nuu-chah-nulth* may present a song as a gift to an individual, a family, or another community to strengthen alliances and relationships; they do so via performance, not usually using any written notation or recordings. Who sings particular songs also depends on the type of song being sung. Songs are part of a complex web of relationships, as they serve to establish and maintain an unseen but natural unity among the community members and with all that exists in their collective experience (Atleo 2004). Thus, they hold many of their songs to be sacred, set apart; they collectively maintain that no one may share them with people outside the community unless the one who "owns" the song (e.g., the family, the chief) grants special permission. Further, when a *Nuu-chah-nulth* person sings a song, they normally acknowledge who owns it, indicating whether it is a specific person or family or if it is a community song, and they either describe how they received permission to sing the song from the song owner or affirm that it is a song that has been shared openly.

The *Nuu-chah-nulth* maintain a holistic conception of Reality, *hišukniš ċawaak*—pronounced *heshook-ish tsawalk* and meaning "everything is one"—in their now-endangered language (Atleo 2004, 2011), and it is the basis of their musical practices. Unlike Western scientific conceptions that prioritize reason, *hišukniš ċawaak* places equally high value on spirit, emotion, intuition, and experience as legitimate sources of knowledge. It highlights the unity and interdependence of physical and spiritual domains, and it entails all beings' obligation to live together in mutual recognition, responsibility, and respect; the *Nuu-chah-nulth* actualize this perspective through ceremony and other personal practices (Armstrong 2007; Atleo 2004, 2011).[34]

Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) emphasizes the relative uniqueness of the epistemes embodied by Indigenous peoples, including the *Nuu-chah-nulth*. He explains that, for them, "Reality *is* relationships or sets of relationships.... An Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology" (73). The community's conceptual vocabulary thus reflects the greater importance they ascribe to relationships than to things. According to linguist Saroj Chawla (1991), certain aspects of Indigenous people's languages—specifically their recognition of a distinction between real and imaginary nouns, the "formless" nature of intangibles and mass nouns in their languages, and their treatment of time as continuous (i.e., as having a circular or cyclic form)—dispose them toward perceiving Reality holistically and its parts as being relativistically interrelated. In this way, they are unlike speakers of European languages, who tend to "fragment

reality" cognitively and conceptualize time linearly (i.e., with past and present leading to a real or imaginary future goal).[35] Correspondingly, Indigenous axiologies—i.e., systems of values (ethics, aesthetics)—are built upon relational accountability, necessitating that Indigenous people act toward one another—and toward other people, animals, plants, and the earth itself—with respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

In an interview with Guy Louie, a *Nuu-chah-nulth* drummer from the Ahousaht First Nation, we heard that learning to drum and sing took place historically via a form of apprenticeship in *Nuu-chah-nulth* communities; owing to the relatively small size of the community at present, he now holds a weekly class to provide opportunities for members to learn drumming and singing.

Comparison

Returning to our main question, in what ways are *music* and *musicking* (as *signs*) experienced and conceptualized differently in the two contexts—i.e., in the public forum of British Columbia and in the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community? Figure 2 presents selected characteristics or aspects of *music or musicking* (as signs) according to the epistemes or worldviews held in common by those in the two cultural contexts, organized by Peirce's typology.[36] These characteristics might be best considered as general differences, or as points along a continuum, since some of them are evident (to a greater or lesser degree) in both contexts. Indeed, every sign has the potential of being simultaneously perceived and conceptualized in different ways by different human interpretants. These qualifications notwithstanding, the differences in conceptions of *music* or *musicking* in the two contexts reveal axiological dissimilarities (i.e., differences in values) that inhere in the two contexts.

Sign relationship to episteme	***Music* as conceptualized in the public forum in British Columbia, Canada**	***Musicking* as conceptualized in the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community**
Icon	*Object* orientation (e.g., *music*, printed score, CD or mp3 recording)	*Relational* orientation (*musicking*, ceremony, social gathering)
	Usually mediated electronically (via radio, television, audio recording device, computer)	Usually unmediated.[37]
	Concept of time manifested in *music* is linear	Concept of time underlying *musicking* is circular
Index	Instruments manufactured by others, elsewhere; dissociated from natural environment	Instruments produced by oneself or with other community members, with materials drawn locally from the natural environment (land)
	Money as the medium of exchange for music/songs (physical)	Gifting as the medium of exchange for music/songs (oral)
Symbol	Aesthetically impressive (listening; image oriented)	Pragmatically efficacious (doing / action oriented)
	Intended to be interpretively open (i.e., "accessible to all")	Interpretation normally closed (i.e., fully comprehensible by and usually accessible only to community members)

Figure 2. Selected aspects of *music/musicking* (as a *sign*) according to the two epistemes.

Some might say that the characterization of the two epistemes we present here is somewhat inaccurate or artificial, since members of the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community in fact have access to and participate in the public forum, so they could be considered members of both communities (although, since they represent such a small part of the population, the *Nuu-chah-nulth* are not highly visible in the public forum). One striking difference between the two contexts is the high degree to which the effects of musicking are mediated in the BC public forum (i.e., via various technologies), whereas musicking is almost entirely direct in the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community.[38] Musicking is clearly recognized as having pragmatic efficacy and great importance within the *Nuu-chah-nulth* community. By contrast, its value is often challenged in the public forum of British Columbia, as when it is time to allocate funds for school music programs.

Analysis and Recommendations

Some readers might suggest that the research we have undertaken is no different from what ethnomusicologists typically do: that is, study and describe the musicking of a community to come to an understanding of its relationship with the people who engage with it. But, in fact, there is a major difference: Unlike most ethnomusicologists, we analyzed and compared the musical practices of two communities for the specific purpose of determining how their epistemes might coexist—and be conceptualized and presented differently—in school curricula. Historically speaking, the musics of small communities have generally been subsumed into larger societies—even democratic societies—with minimal substantive change to the episteme of the larger community. Moreover, dominant groups in these democracies have contributed to the subjugation of racialized "others" through their ongoing colonial projects, and the community-held meanings of the music or musicking of those "others" have been diminished or lost entirely in the public forum (and thus not considered at all in school music classes).[39] But, in this extraordinary case, the larger society (i.e., as represented by the provincial government) has mandated not only that the music, but also the worldview or episteme of the smaller community, be embedded in the larger community's educational curricula.

As far as we are aware, a curricular mandate such as the one advanced by the BC Ministry of Education in 2015—specifically, to purposefully embed the knowledge (i.e., the *epistemes* or worldviews) of Indigenous communities into all subjects in the schools of a culturally pluralistic, democratically governed province, state, or nation, each according to the community on whose land the school is situated—is without historical precedent. Indeed, the BC Ministry of Education's mandate has huge societal implications, and the consequences for instruction in all subject areas remain to be seen. So, how might music educators decolonize the curriculum and impartially represent the two very different epistemes—and support their meaningful coexistence — in music classes in the province's schools?

At present, we can envision several possible future scenarios. In the first, despite all our efforts—and those of others—to provide teachers with resources for embedding Indigenous musical practices and worldviews into their classes (via presentations at professional and academic conferences, educational workshops, published materials, and other means), teachers would largely ignore the mandate and continue teaching as they presently do, emphasizing the musics that continue to predominate in the public forum of BC and continuing to exclude Indigenous

musical practices and worldviews from their classes. In a second scenario, teachers would respond to the provincial mandate by including Indigenous musics on a token basis, giving them only minimal attention, and not substantively attending to the worldview they reflect. A third possibility is that teachers would seriously undertake the embedding of Indigenous musical practices and worldviews in their classes, but the pervasive influence of the values advanced in the public forum of the larger society via mainstream media would nullify the effects of their efforts. (Indeed, what transpires concerning music in the public forum at present is largely about economic trade, very little about other types of relationship.) In a fourth scenario, teachers would successfully embed Indigenous musical practices and worldviews into their classes, and the government of the province would take steps to support an ideological or epistemological change by mandating corresponding changes in all media. However, neither of the first two scenarios would appear to be acceptable, and, on the short term at least, neither of the latter two scenarios—while possible—seems likely to be realized.

Thus, we believe that the best and perhaps most realizable scenario is a fifth one, in which teachers *give attention to the epistemes of the people with whom each of the musics they introduce in their classes originated,* including those of Indigenous communities, as a regular part of their instruction, so students can participate in informed, critical, public discussion about the cultural content of the curriculum. In highlighting the ways in which musical practices give expression to what people know to be "real" and represent important means by which they come to know it (Wilson 2008), teachers can give students the conceptual tools needed to critically analyze their own assumptions and biases. Indeed, when music teachers do not give attention to the epistemes of the people with whom the musics they introduce originated, assuming them to be tacitly understood or treating them as irrelevant in their classes, they contribute to making the value and import of those musics—and the people who make them—invisible, while also inherently validating the comparatively reductive "commercial product" conception of all musics as "art" or "entertainment," which is tacitly supported in the public forums of Canada and BC. In consideration of the increasingly diverse cultural composition of school music classes in BC schools, and in recognition of the fact that every music (i.e., musical practice) is—in discernable ways—an audible, tangible manifestation of the episteme embodied by the people with whom it originated, we believe the study of cultural epistemes must now become a part of music education in democratic societies.

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Such episteme-informed studies will entail students' learning to *musick* in ways consistent with the practices of the community with whom each music they study originated, learning the cultural traditions of which that *musicking* is a part, learning the stories traditionally associated with it (with consideration for how the episteme is manifested in the community's original language, as possible), and, above all, learning and reflecting on the meanings each practice, song, or piece holds for the members of that community. Further, integral involvement of culture bearers from each tradition in classes will make it possible for students to experience each musicking practice as a living tradition, having pragmatic efficacy for one or more persons with whom they are personally acquainted.[40]

In these ways, students will be enabled to think *critically* and *for themselves* about the different cultural forms of musical engagement that surround them, and they can be empowered to discover the merits of different peoples' musical practices and worldviews, including those of the Indigenous peoples on whose land their schools are situated, on the terms of those peoples.[41] Only when students are educated—i.e., intellectually, emotionally, and physically enabled—to grasp the relationships between a given music and the episteme it manifests will they be able to grasp the importance of different musics and musicking practices in the lives of the culturally different people who comprise their society, comprehend the role of musicking in the community life of the *Nuu-chah-nulth* (and/or other peoples culturally different from themselves), and take steps toward realizing a future characterized by greater equity and respect for Indigenous peoples and their cultural practices in the province of British Columbia and, ultimately, for all peoples and their cultural practices worldwide.

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Notes

[1] Dickens, C. (2020). *A tale of two cities: Authoritative text, context, criticism* (R. Douglas-Fairhurst, Ed.). W. W. Norton & Company, 277. (Original work published 1859.)

[2] Historian Nancy F. Vogan (2017) observed that, in Canadian music education after the end of World War II (post-1945), "an interest in multiculturalism led to an expansion of repertoire to include music of other cultures as well as music of native [*sic*] peoples" (133). This point is borne out in the references to music of different cultural communities in British Columbia curriculum documents for Music Education produced since that time.

[3] See http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/AGREEMENT-Bilateral-Protocol-BC-FNESC-2015-06-19-SIGNED-FINAL.pdf

[4] See Prest, Goble, Vazquez, and Tuinstra (2021), Prest and Goble (2021a), and Prest and Goble (2021b) for more detailed explanations of the ways in which historic and ongoing colonial practices and attitudes inhere in educational systems, language mistranslation, academic disciplines, and research practices.

[5] A First Nations' perspective on ownership of land and the political authority of First Nations communities on life in the province is presented on the *First Nations land rights and environmentalism in BC* website: http://www.firstnations.de/indian_land.htm

[6] Indigenous students in BC presently comprise 12% of the total student population. See https://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/OAGBC_Ab-Ed-Progress_RPT.pdf

[7] Swedish activist Greta Thunberg (born 2003) began her mission at age 8 to lower greenhouse gas emissions and make the world more sustainable after

seeing videos and films on starving polar bears and pollution in her school classes. See: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2021/sep/25/greta-thunberg-i-really-see-the-value-of-friendship-apart-from-the-climate-almost-nothing-else-matters and https://www.grunge.com/167878/the-untold-truth-of-greta-thunberg/?utm_campaign=clip.

[8] According local Indigenous protocols in BC, when people meet others for the first time, they share their place of origin and familial relations so that everyone might understand their kinship ties. A person's location in a web of relationships is usually prioritized over their job title. We follow this protocol here:

I (Scott Goble) grew up in Seattle, Washington, USA, a city named for *Siʔaɬ*, who was chief of the *Dkhw'Duw'Absh* (Duwamish) tribe when Europeans first began settling in that area in the mid-19th century. I lived on the Tulalip reservation during summers throughout my youth, beach seining Puget Sound for salmon alongside my grandfather with the Coast Salish people of the Tulalip (dxʷlilap) tribes. My heritage is mixed Norwegian, English, Dutch, and German. I currently live and work in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on the territories of the Musqueam (*xʷməθkʷəyə̓ m*), Squamish (*Skwxw.7mesh*), and Tsleil-waututh (*səlilwətaɬ*) peoples.

I (Anita Prest) was born and raised in Montreal, a place named *Tiohti.:ke* by the *Kanien'keh.:ka* people who are its custodians, part of a larger swath of unceded land in Quebec. My grandparents immigrated to Canada from the city of Crema and three small villages in the Le Marche region of Italy at the turn of the 20th century. I currently live on the territory of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and *Xʷsepsəm*/Esquimalt) peoples, also known as Victoria, BC.

[9] Philosopher Christopher Small coined the neologism *musicking* in his 1998 book of the same title to direct attention toward the processes involved in *making music* (i.e., as actions) and away from the product *music* (as an object or thing).

[10] More specifically, Pratt explains that four distinguishing commitments of American pragmatism—interaction, pluralism, community, and growth—were "attitudes" present in the thinking of the Pokanoket, Haudenosaunee, Shawnee, Seneca, and other Indigenous peoples, particularly the Narragansett, who share a language family—Algonquin—with the Delaware, Pequot, Massachusett, Penobscot, Abenaki, Micmac, and Ojibwe, among others. He illustrates how their thinking came to have direct influence on European settlers, including Roger Williams (founder of the religiously "free" Providence Plantations, which eventually became the U.S. State of Rhode Island) and Boston-born Benjamin Franklin (one of the "founding fathers" of the U.S.). Further, he traces Franklin's Indigenous-informed influence on Charles Sanders Peirce and on William James, whose writings advanced pragmatism as a philosophy. (Pratt 2002)

[11] See, for example, Daniel (1987), Turino (2008), and Rachman, et al. (2019).

[12] Our concurrent intent is to advance semiotic as a basis for making K–12 school music classes a context in which any peoples' musical/cultural traditions can be experienced, explored, and understood on their own terms.

[13] Kovach (2010) states, "Within research, epistemology means a system of knowledge that references within it the social relations of knowledge production. It is different from ontology, in that ontology is concerned with the nature of being and reality … [T]he term epistemology most closely approximates the 'Self-In-Relation' (Graveline 2000, 361) aspect inherent to Indigenous knowledges" (21). Styres (2017) writes, "… epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge … Ontology … considers the nature of being or becoming" (49). Wilson (2008) defines ontology as "the theory of the nature of existence, or the nature of reality … Ontology is thus asking, 'What is real?'" (33). He defines epistemology as "the study of the nature of thinking or knowing … Epistemology is thus asking, 'How do I know what is real?'" (33).

[14] See Kuhn (1962).

[15] BC Stats. (2023). *Quarterly population highlights*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/quarterly_population_highlights.pdf

[16] Statistics Canada, *2016 Canadian Census of Population*. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=59&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=british%20columbia&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Ethnic%20origin&TABID=1

[17] Ibid.

[18] British Columbia Humanist Association. *2013 BC Religious and Secular Attitudes Poll*. https://www.bchumanist.ca/2013_bc_religious_and_secular_attitudes_poll

[19] The number of immigrants to BC from Asia has increased markedly since 1997, when the government of the People's Republic of China resumed exercising sovereignty over Hong Kong, marking the end of British administration there.

[20] See, for example, Harmsen (2024).

[21] I (Scott) investigate the influence of the European philosophers of the Enlightenment era, whose ideas contributed to the principles upon which the current

governance systems of the United States and other democratic nations (including Canada) were founded, in Chapter 4 of my book, *What's So Important about Music Education?*, titled "Conceptions of Music in the United States" (111–57).

[22] Succeeding the precedent set by the *Bill of Rights* (1791) in the United States, musicking, as a form of expression, is legally protected in Canada by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982).

[23] Historically speaking, the concerns and interests of cultural, ethnic, and religious communities have generally been bracketed (at least theoretically) in the public forum of Canada in deference to the "common good" for all citizens, as determined through societal debate and legal referendum.

[24] See Goble, J. Scott. 2010. Not just a matter of style: Addressing culturally different musics as social praxes in secondary school music classes. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 9 (3): 7–34.

[25] David Elliott is the most prominent praxial philosopher of music education to promote the concept of *musicking* (or "*musicing*") in his writings. See especially Elliott (1995).

[26] Personal experience recounted by a graduate student of one of the authors.

[27] Our choice to focus on the *Nuu-chah-nulth* episteme or worldview in this article stems largely from our having become acquainted with members of *Nuu-chah-nulth* communities on Vancouver Island, as well as our appreciation of what we learned from reading two books written by Umeek (Richard Atleo) (2004, 2011).

[28] Chiinuuks (Ruth Ogilvie) (1998) clarifies that *Quu'asminaa* was the original name of the *Nuu-chah-nulth* peoples (before 1960), and it includes the *Makah* nation who reside in the state of Washington, USA: "The name '*Nuu-chah-nulth*' refers to the people west of the mountains on Vancouver Island. Elder Moses Smith of Ehattesaht protested the development of the name *Nuu-chah-nulth* as it means 'people all along the mountains.' This definition was seen to be limited in its scope as we are people of the land, sea, mountains, and sky. *Quu'asminaa* … refers to the original obligation of our people to the *hahuuthlii* or the territories, which includes the land, sea, mountains, and sky." (1)

[29] However, some *Nuu-chah-nulth* nations are made up of more than one group of families. For various reasons, including responses to government policies, amalgamation of smaller groups has taken place, thus resulting in more than one *ha'wiih* for a specific nation. (See George 2003.)

[30] Notably, the *Nuu-chah-nulth* took their ceremonial practices underground during the Potlatch Ban, instituted by the Canadian federal government through an amendment of *The Indian Act*, from 1884 to 1951. (See Cote 2010.) Since the ban was lifted, reclamation of ceremony, song, and dance has flourished.

[31] The *Nuu-chah-nulth* language is presently listed as endangered by the Endangered Language Project. http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1717

[32] The term *Aboriginal* is no longer used by the Canadian government; the term *Indigenous* (favoured by Indigenous peoples) is now used in official documents, including census material.

[33] Arima, Eugenio Y. 2006. *Nuu-chah-nulth* (Nootka). In *The Canadian Encyclopedia,* ed. B. Graves. See: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/nootka-nuu-chah-nulth

[34] Note that we do not claim to have gained a full and complete grasp of a *Nuu-chah-nulth* worldview ourselves from conducting the research for this article, nor do we expect that the information we have provided here will be sufficient for others to do so. Instead, we hope that interest in the information we have provided will motivate readers to learn more.

[35] See Prest and Goble 2021a.

[36] A more thorough explanation of how different musical practices each manifest the episteme of the people with whom it originated is presented in my (Scott's) book, *What's So Important about Music Education?*, Chapter 3: "A Pragmatic Conception of Musical Practices: 'Music' as a Sign of Worldview" (45–110).

[37] Notably, in recent times, some *Nuu-chah-nulth* have on occasion shared songs and dances openly via electronic media in ways consistent with the practices that prevail in the BC, Canada, public forum (e.g., Louie 2019): For example, the *Maaqtusiis* School Feast in 2019 can be seen on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wONPjZGt250. (*Maaqtusiis*, in the Nuu-chah-nulth language, is one of the principal settlements of *Ahousaht* First Nation, located off the west coast of Vancouver Island in BC. *Ahousaht* is a small community predominantly composed of *Nuu-chah-nulth* people.)

[38] Insofar as school music education provides students with opportunities to experience the musical practices of different peoples and learn about the cultural contexts from which they stem and the meanings they hold for those peoples, it provides them with an alternative perspective on the universalizing conception of music advanced via mass media and other social means in the public forum of

BC. Further, it must be noted that each nation and each family has different protocols and "ways" or practices that govern them or their *muhdii* (house).

[39] In recent years, numerous scholars have investigated instances of racialized subjugation by dominant groups in different world nations with respect to musicking and music education, and many are continuing to do so. For example, scholars who contributed articles to the September 2019 issue of ACT (Volume 18, Issue 3) studied aspects of colonialism's effects in Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Venezuela. Each scholar encourages readers to question whose knowledge and values have been or are being or legitimized in their respective situations and describes or proposes ways in which intercultural communication might facilitate the healthy sustenance and co-existence of different musical-cultural traditions therein.

[40] A more complete account of ways music educators can facilitate students' learning of Indigenous peoples' musicking traditions "in a good way" (i.e., as we learned from the public school music educators in rural BC who had begun working with Indigenous peoples to include their local knowledge and musics in K–12 classes and schools prior to our 2016 study) can be found in Prest, Goble, Vazquez, and Tuinstra 2021.

[41] In indicating that students can learn to think critically about the different cultural forms of musical engagement that surround them, we do not mean to suggest that they should be encouraged to challenge the merits of the different peoples' cultural traditions they study. Instead, they can become empowered to grasp how the musical practices undertaken by peoples of different cultural traditions (as manifestations of their epistemes) have pragmatic efficacy for those who engage with them and then consider how that efficacy is enhanced, diminished, or transformed by influencing factors (e.g., mass media use and control, environmental changes, social and political shifts).