Being Métis: A music therapist's experience of ancestry, spirituality and reconceptualization

Kelsi McInnes

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair
Cynthia Bruce, PhD

_____ Examiner
Guylaine Vaillancourt, PhD

_____ Examiner
Stephen Venkatarangam, MA

_____ Supervisor
Cynthia Bruce, PhD

Approved by _____
Guylaine Vaillancourt, Chair, Department of Creative Arts Therapies

_____YEAR _____
Annie Gérin, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts

ABSTRACT

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Kelsi McInnes

The Métis people are a distinct Indigenous group within Canada who identify with their own customs, traditions, and ways of knowing that include spiritual practices. This research aimed to explore spirituality in relation to the Métis culture, as I, a certified music therapist, explored my Métis ancestry including history, artistic culture, healing traditions, and ways of knowing. The data consisted of personal journal reflections, free writing and poetry. The analysis focused on how this impacted me personally, spiritually, and professionally. A heuristic self-inquiry research methodology was used and conducted in accordance with the guidelines established by Moustakas (1990). Data was analyzed using Neuman's (2006) coding analysis methods. Findings elucidated three main categories of personal learning; learning from the outside-in, learning from the inside-out, and the extended journey. These findings have significant personal implications that will be discussed along with the clinical implications that the data analysis highlighted. Although there is a growing awareness of decolonizing methodologies and their place within educational institutions and government policies, literature on music therapy and the Métis culture is scant. Dr. Carolyn Kenny (1946-2017), a renowned music therapy pioneer and Indigenous scholar has provided a critical foundation that connects Indigenous ways of knowing to the music therapy research, theory, and practice. I aim to contribute to the literature through insights into my own spiritual well-being and by sharing the on-going intricacies and challenges of the Métis people of Canada, therefore implications for further research, education and training are discussed.

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Mamihcitotamowin

Dedicated to all of my ancestors. Thank you for your continual guidance and wisdom. Thank you for calling to me and hearing my song.

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Ninanâskomon.

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Chapter 1. Nakayaskamohtahiwewin (Introduction)

Significance of the Inquiry

Spirituality is a multilayered and intensely individual phenomenon. How one experiences spirituality is dependent upon many factors that include their upbringing, relationship and history with the practice of spirituality, and understanding of the customs and rituals connected to specific traditions. I am no different in this regard. I consider my relationship with spirituality a complex one. I have always considered myself a spiritual person. This has been shaped by positive relationships and experiences with persons of Christian faiths, in particular those within the Roman Catholic church during my upbringing, for which I am grateful, because I know this has not been the experience of many Indigenous people.

However, since my early 20's, I have been searching for a way to express myself spiritually, because I no longer identify with the religious affiliation, that being Catholicism, within which I was raised. There are elements of this faith that still resonate with me, such as prayer, believing in a higher power, sharing in a community, giving thanks, and engaging in acts of service. However, several of the doctrines within the church itself have been "deal-breakers" for my own moral code; and, I have a difficult time sharing this faith with my two young children knowing that I do not agree with the principles it promotes. I have detached myself from the church for its sanctimonious role in the genocide of Indigenous people, LGBTQ2S+ rights, and its stance on the feminist movement, particularly with regard to a woman's right to govern her own body.

This detachment from the church has produced a void in my spiritual routines and traditions and has called me to form a deeper connection with my Métis spirituality, including healing practices, music and art, ceremonial rituals and ways of knowing. For this to happen, however, I need to develop a more complete understanding of my own ancestry and the sacred ways of knowing. I am aware that I need to continue to explore this at a pace that is respectful of my own spiritual journey and appropriately aligned with the pace at which knowledge keepers feel I am ready to receive learning. I acknowledge I will learn only at this pace and not by what is required for the production of any document or study.

Importantly, all of this learning and exploration comes with awareness of the societal tensions around the increased practice of people self-identifying as Indigenous. According to Leroux (2019), white settlers, with little regard for the sanctity of the culture itself, are claiming Indigenous identity based on an Indigenous ancestor born between 300 and 375 years ago. Leroux's study seeks to increase awareness of the expanding "boundaries of whiteness in a way that was relatively inconceivable just twenty years ago" and the impacts this has on the Indigenous community (Leroux, 2019, p. 4). Leroux's research exposes the extent to which white settler colonialism undermines Indigenous rights. This happens through inaccurate claims of "Indigenous" identity and the creation of politically and socially charged land and territorial negotiations which expose the effects of colonialism and white supremacy that still exist today.

I bare this tension in mind as a Metis woman, continually exploring her heritage and identity with reverence and respect. I am highly aware that this process has taught me that as a profession, we need to centre and articulate a respect for the Indigenous roots that exist within our work and techniques. Yet, this must be completed carefully and with respectful intentions and within all levels of educational institutions and health organizations. This is a critical yet necessary step for all of our clients, our profession as a whole, and our own personal growth as clinicians.

Relevance to Music Therapy

As a music therapist, I must acknowledge that the understanding of Indigenous matters comes from a largely Eurocentric framework. In order to expand upon recent efforts to decolonize our ways of thinking as a profession and within educational institutions, we need to make space for the intentional integration of Indigenous work and ways of knowing in our professional community. There is a pervasiveness of Eurocentricity within our own profession, even though so much of our work has origins or deep connections to Indigenous ways of knowing.

For example, when music therapists speak about vocal toning or chanting, common music therapy techniques, a reference could be made to the sacred Vedic or Hindu chanting of India which dates back to 600-1200 B.C. (Rowell, 1992). At the very least, we could acknowledge past or existing cultures that use or have used toning or chanting in their healing traditions. By failing to acknowledge this when using the

technique within our own practices we are contributing to cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is when members of a majority group adopt the cultural elements or traditions of another culture, usually a minority group in an exploitive or stereotypical way. This disrespectful appropriation is often accompanied by a power imbalance, in favour of the majority group. At times a monetary benefit will favour the dominant culture with little to zero acknowledgement to the cultural source (Coleman, 2017). At times this happens in the field of music therapy as well. We use techniques and traditions from cultures all over the world, failing to name the sources from which they came. This is not to say that we cannot allow these techniques to benefit our clients, or even ourselves, but we have a duty to educate ourselves, our clients and our fellow professionals on the origins of these important traditions.

An additional example: music therapists often use djembes in their practices. Let us examine how different our practices would be if we were required to learn the history of this instrument and its significance to some African traditions before we used it in sessions. I believe that we would use it with increased reverence and therapeutic intent. For example, scholars Carter-Enyi, Carter-Enyi and Hylton (2021) share that it originates from the Guinea and Mali regions of West Africa, yet is often attributed to Ghana. The researchers also importantly discuss how the drum circle is a misrepresentation and partial appropriation of the African culture developed by North Americans (Carter-Enyi, Carter-Enyi & Hylton, 2021).

As music therapists who have a deep reverence for the therapeutic relationship that exists between ourselves and our clients, we must extend that same level of respect to the music we use, and the foundation on which it was built, by honouring it in our practice. If we do not acknowledge it, we run the risk of forgetting the past, thus taking it for granted and becoming a society of *entitled to have or use* instead of *compelled to honour*. This would come at great detriment to our clients, ourselves and our profession; and it is worth noting that this level of multicultural awareness is directly indicated in the Canadian Association of Music Therapists' Recommended Competencies (2016).

This research process has led me to call for the recognition of Indigenous music therapy scholar Carolyn Kenny's work as *Foundational Indigenous Works* in music therapy literature. Kenny's work is highly valued, but music therapy professionals often

separate its value from profound work with that of centering Indigenous ways of knowing. Music Therapy pioneer Carolyn Kenny (1946-2017) laid the foundation for our music therapy community allowing for a bridge to be formed between our two worlds with her poignant words and attentive eye, as she collaborated, supported and developed many friendships along the way (Woodward, 2018). However, despite the groundwork gifted by Kenny we still need to acknowledge that Indigenous ways of knowing are, in fact, foundational to our work in many clinical contexts. It is our duty to continue citing Indigenous ways of knowing, starting within our own theoretical frameworks. There are numerous overarching themes between music therapy and those of Indigenous cultures. We as a professional community are called to distinguish and credit the sources from which many of our foundations have been derived.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore my Métis ancestry and culture, and to analyze that exploratory experience using heuristic self-inquiry. I utilized deep introspective engagement after learning about and partaking in Métis healing practices, music and art, spiritual rituals, and ways of knowing. The overall goal was to develop a deeper understanding of Metis customs to enable a richer personal spiritual connection. Secondly, I aimed to share insights with the music therapy community to enrich the body of culturally relevant knowledge available to inform our work with Métis and Indigenous clients.

Research Questions

With all this in mind, I aimed to answer one primary and additional subsidiary questions through this inquiry. The primary research question being explored is: What is the experience of a music therapist exploring their Métis ancestry and culture? The additional questions used to generate data included: How does this experience influence spiritual and personal growth? How does this experience inform their therapeutic framework and music therapy practice? How can this experience support the reconceptualization of music therapy in Canada?

Researcher Identity

To situate myself for readers, I identify as a Cree-Métis woman and our kin comes from the St. Albert settlement area. I live and write this thesis on Treaty 8

territory, the traditional homelands of many diverse Indigenous nations including the Cree, Beaver, Dene and Métis people. I am a registered member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, living in Region 6. Throughout this study, I use the term Métis to speak of persons who identify with the Métis culture. At times, I use the term Indigenous in order to be inclusive of all Indigenous groups including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit/Inuk. Within these groups, however, it is important to note that there may be commonalities and distinct differences in traditions, culture and ways of knowing.

Key Terms

Métis - Founding peoples of Canada with mixed-raced parents and ancestries; blending North American Indigenous and European roots. The Métis people have a shared history and distinct culture that was shaped primarily within Canada's prairie region (Goulet & Goulet, 2006).

Music therapy - "Music therapy is a discipline in which Certified Music Therapists (MTAs) use music purposefully within therapeutic relationships to support development, health, and wellbeing. Music therapists use music safely and ethically to address human needs within cognitive, communicative, emotional, musical, physical, social, and spiritual domains." (Canadian Association of Music Therapists, 2020)

Elder - Sometimes termed the old ones, teachers or gifted people, who use their teachings, often passing down stories and customs in the oral tradition, for the good of the people in their community (Iseke, 2010).

Spirituality - Spirituality can be defined as transportive or transcendent or deeply moving, feeling larger than ourselves and for the most part connective to something beyond one's self (Nelson, 2011).

Cultural appropriation - When members of a majority group assume cultural elements or traditions of a minority group in an exploitive, stereotypical way. This often creates a significant power imbalance (Coleman, 2017).

Pre-colonial – In Canada, this refers to dates prior to 1500, when Europeans began making regular contact with the shores of what is now called Canada. The increased influence of Christianity religion rose after 1537 when Pope Paul III proclaimed that Indigenous persons are "truly human," not to be enslaved and are to receive the Roman Catholic faith (Storgre, 1992).

Structure of the Thesis

This heuristic self-inquiry has been divided into five chapters. The first one outlines the significance of the inquiry as it relates to me personally and to the profession of music therapy. This includes my statement of purpose, research questions and definition of key terms. Chapter two explicates current literature regarding Métis history, spirituality, and existing music therapy literature with overarching themes that aim to link music therapy and Indigenous ways of knowing. Chapter three explicates the heuristic self-inquiry methodology, delving into the design, delimitations, validity, which is upheld during heuristic research using qualitative measurement strategies, materials, data collection and analysis procedures. Results that emerged from the study are discussed and analysed in chapter four. The final and fifth chapter is an overview of the creative synthesis, including the process and personal analysis. Further limitations of the study, as well as personal, clinical and educational implications are discussed, with additional suggestions for future research included.

Chapter 2. Aciyayamihtâw – Review (Literature Review)

To have an understanding of Métis spirituality, one must understand Métis culture, healing ways, music and art traditions, and ways of knowing. Above all, one must have a sense of the history because this is the only true way to know the Métis people. This literature review includes an overview of the historical foundations of the Métis people, including the significant events that have shaped this culture. Elements of Métis healing practices are discussed along with features of music and art traditions. Next, spirituality is examined, both as a solo topic and as it relates to the Métis community. The last topics to be explored in the literature review are the overarching themes between Indigenous healing customs and music therapy. These are further sub-divided into three categories: *the foundation*; *the bridge,* and *the call to action.*

Métis Historic Foundations

The great Métis leader, Louis Riel (1844-1885) once said, "We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on." (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2020, our culture section). As a community of Métis people, then, we must continue to examine what has been shared about the Métis people and by whom that history has been shared and documented. We need to be the authors of our own stories. But, alas, who are the Métis people? Purich (1988) states that the Métis people are the descendants of the historic Métis, with origins tracing to the Red River Valley in Manitoba, Canada in the 1800's, with their mixed-raced parents. Blending North American Indigenous and European roots, Métis were also known as "michif" (a Métis language), and one of the literal translations from French is "half-breed." Although today, some consider this term offensive (Goulet & Goulet, 2006).

While some use the terms Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, Anishinaabe, Michif, and Métis interchangeably, it is important to note that the Métis people hold a unique place in Canadian history as the first people of mixed race, because by the late 1700's, the fur trade sparked the first union between European settlers and Indigenous women (Goulet & Goulet, 2006). According to Goulet & Goulet (2006), the two brought together elements from both heritages, and a new "Euro-aboriginal" sub-culture was born – the Métis people. The Métis people, the "children of the fur trade," were traders,

foragers, bison hunters, soldiers, farmers, artisans, musicians and healers (Goulet & Goulet, 2006).

In 1885, life changed drastically for the Métis people when Louis Riél was declared a traitor to Canada and executed (Weinstein, 2007). Weinstein (2007) highlights the continued mistreatment of Métis men, women, and children who were viewed as second class citizens in the eyes of the government, and in turn, by some Canadians of European descent. Following the aftermath of 1885, the Metis people were fraudulently swindled out of their land via scrip speculations, and many ended up living in extreme poverty along road allowances and railroad lines. The Supreme Court of Canada stated, "The history of scrip speculation and devaluation is a sorry chapter in our nation's history" (Metis Nation of Alberta, 2021, script section).

In an equally atrocious act, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to residential schools to be assimilated. Therefore, many Métis chose to assimilate, to hide their true heritage and call themselves French-Canadian or Scottish-Canadian. They also chose to practice their traditions in secret, or not at all. Essentially, some Métis people simply refused to pass their cultural practices onto further generations in order to protect them from racial discrimination (Weinstein, 2007). The Métis people, as a result, entered a period of *le grand silence* – the great silence, which led to decades upon decades of lost and denied family heritage and ancestry (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). Many children grew up not knowing their ancestry because languages and songs were lost, stories were not told, and dances were not danced.

Reclaiming Culture & Identity

On July 4, 1885, months before his execution, that renowned Métis leader, Louis Riel stated, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back" (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2020, our culture section). Currently the Métis people are entering a stage of rediscovery as many actively claim their ancestry once again. Statistics Canada indicates that between 2006 and 2010, the number of persons who self-identified as Métis increased by 51.2%, for a total of 587 545 (Government of Canada, 2019). This could be attributed to the fact that the racial stigma is lifting, and that Métis Nations and Associations have formed welcoming and encouraging programs for participants. They have also secured education funding and

hunting and fishing rights for their members. Notably, the average age of the Métis people who reported was 34.7 years (Government of Canada, 2019) which points to a movement that is being led by youth and young adults.

This surge in self-identification has caused mixed reactions from members of the Indigenous community. Some feel that claims to Indigenous identity are often undeserved because the Indigenous ancestor in question is so far removed, genetically speaking. Another common critique from some in the Indigenous community is that the person claiming Indigenous ancestry has not endured the harms that many have lived as Indigenous people and, therefore, have not earned the right to call themselves Indigenous.

Leroux (2019), a Métis scholar, states that this tension revolves around the "shifting politics of whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy" (Leroux, 2019, p. 4). He argues that Indigenous identity is problematically appropriated when a white French-descendent person with no apparent connection to an Indigenous territory or land locates an Indigenous ancestor born 300 to 375 years prior and goes on to claim "Indigenous" identity based on that distant connection. Leroux also states that, although commonly believed otherwise, a very small number of Indigenous women married French settler men during that time frame (2019).

Importantly, Leroux articulates the difference between Métis and métis, noting the capital M. He only uses Métis to refer to those with true, recognized Indigenous connections to their Plains Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux and Dene kin, and he acknowledges that most of these people still live in territories in parts of present-day British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Ontario, North Dakota and Montana. Leroux uses métis to refer to those individuals and organizations with no connection to the Métis people (2019).

Fiola (2015), another Métis scholar, cautions against this strict adherence to hierarchal categories and against policing one another's identity calling it "harmful colonial construction fuelled by assimilationist policies designed to divide and conquer us" (Fiola, 2015, p. 85). Fiola asserts the destructive impacts caused by government policy that have generated division among Indigenous communities themselves, noting how Canadian and United States governments went so far as to measure a person's identity through blood quantum, with the goal of decreasing the number of persons

receiving benefits. Fiola (2015) goes on to expose how colonial policies have affected the Métis community, in response, rendering the hierarchies meaningless. When Indigenous communities repair these divisions and return to their Métis Anishinaabe identities, it strengthens the ties of all Indigenous people and allows for healing (Fiola, 2015), particularly when supported by traditional healing practices.

Métis Healing Practices

Traditional forms of healing are essential features of Métis culture. These traditional practices include holistic medicines, guidance from Elders, and acts of ceremony; all in combination with personal spiritual practices with the Creator. These work in unison to create balance, which leads to physical health and mental wellness. Examples of traditional forms of healing in Métis culture include smudging, pipe ceremonies, song and dance ceremonies, and storytelling. A deep connection to and appreciation of the importance of natural elements to restore balance can be found in books, articles and research studies (Barkwell, 2018; Fiola, 2015, 2021; Ginn et al., 2021; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Hanson et al., 2020; Harrison, 1985; Iseke, 2010; Kenny, 2016; Leroux, 2019; Moore & Schiff, 2006; Payment, 2009; Wall Kimmer, 2013).

According to Barkwell (2018), the Métis community generally has a holistic approach to medicine when possible, and community members look for a balance in mental, emotional, physical and spiritual capacities. He shares an old Métis saying; “Let food be your medicine and let medicine be your food” (Barkwell, 2018, p. 3). For the Métis people, this means that there are healing properties in food, and one must consume things with care and attention. Additionally, he states that Métis women often performed the function of healer and midwife, which was passed down from grandmothers and respected Elders. They used wild medicinal plants such as sweetgrasses, herbs, berries, barks, leaves and seeds to make teas, salves, poultices, and liniments, along with foodstuffs that would provide vitamins, painkillers, digestive aids and anti-inflammatory agents, as well as having other uses (Barkwell, 2018).

Any knowledge of healing or ways of knowing essentially comes from an Elder, either directly, or passed down, since they are the experienced ones in all facets of traditional ways of being. As shared by scholar and educator Judy Iseke (2010), Elders, otherwise known as teachers or gifted people, use their teachings for the good of the

people in their community (Iseke, 2010). Iseke (2010) used an Indigenous narrative-like methodology to explore spirituality as a source of strength for Métis Elders. She interviewed Elders who said that when someone is unwell, their life is not in balance and there is little connection to the environment and little connection to the spiritual understanding of self (Iseke, 2010).

Ceremonies such as fasting, sun dance, smudges and sweat lodges help to create connection to spiritual practices, and "greater awareness of themselves as spiritual and physical beings" (Iseke, 2010, p. 95). Additionally, Métis Elders who are often Pipe carriers may help support healing by speaking of the medicine wheel, engaging in storytelling, and using and sharing sacred medicines (Iseke, 2010). Importantly, tobacco is gifted to Elders prior to learning from them; offered by individuals as a sign of deep respect. (Fiola, 2021)

There has been an increase in academic research that explores the effectiveness of traditional Indigenous healing methods (Barkwell, 2018; Fiola, 2015, 2021; Ginn et al., 2021; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Hanson et al., 2020; Harrison, 1985; Iseke, 2010; Kenny, 2016; Leroux, 2019; Moore & Schiff, 2006; Payment, 2009; Wall Kimmer, 2013). These studies provide compelling evidence about the important role these methods play in the healing of ancestral wounds and in the provision of support for the mental well-being of Indigenous people. It is vital to fully note their status as sacred and time-honoured traditions.

Research demonstrates the benefits of participating in traditional healing rituals, and it also links these important rituals to the creative arts. Schiff and Moore (2006) conducted a quantitative pilot study measured with pre-post experimental design that explored 39 participants' self-reported experiences of a sweat lodge ceremony. Findings from this study signified that there was an observable increase in spiritual and emotional well-being that was associated with their participation in those sweat lodge ceremonies. Archibald and Dewar (2010), completed a study of 137 Indigenous projects which examined the relationship between creative arts and healing. The survey results explicated that Indigenous healing practices are linked to Indigenous creative arts and culture, and when given the freedom to choose, "community based healing initiatives

overwhelmingly include some facet of the creative arts" (Archibald & Dewar, 2010, p. 23).

Métis Musical and Art Traditions

Music and art are an important means of expression and identification for Métis people (Troupe, 2002). Many unique qualities found in Métis art forms and music create distinctions within the Indigenous community (Troupe, 2002). Music and art traditions will be discussed as well as their importance in forming and maintaining Métis identity.

Métis music is frequently symbolised by the violin, also commonly known as the fiddle. European settlers brought this light, and easily transportable, instrument; and they combined First Nations song traditions with Scottish, European and French-Canadian music traditions (Harrison, 1985). Ethnomusicologist, Anne Lederman (1988), states that through this blending of two distinct types of music styles and musical traditions, the Métis people have created "a syncretic music, one which combines features of two separate traditions to form a new style" (Lederman, 1988, p. 1). Although it is not within the scope of this literature review to share all the findings of her research, she importantly highlights the distinct nature of the Métis repertoire, foot-tapping or "clogging", short violin bow strokes, syncopated rhythmic figures, and asymmetric phrasing. She also notes that both music customs have commonalities in musical texture, rhythm, melodic embellishment, pitch set, and contour (Lederman, 1988).

Métis dances are known as jigs. Jigs are a combination of First Nations plains dancing and Scottish and French-Canadian step-dancing, jig, quadrille steps, and reels (Harrison, 1985). These are individualized and distinct to each family and community (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). Square dances are also an important part of music traditions in the Métis culture, and they are often more complex than typical jigs because they require partners to follow the directions of the "caller" with added elaborate footwork from the dancers themselves (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). Perhaps the most well-known of the Métis dances is the Red River Jig, or as it is known in the Métis language of Michif, *oayache mannin* (Harrison, 1985). The first reference to this jig being played was in 1860 at the wedding of a Métis couple (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). Today, there are many festivals and competitions that celebrate these dances. Additionally, Métis musicians have composed and performed music in all

genres, from traditional fiddling and jigs to folk and to Indigenous electronic music. Often, musicians use their platform to share their message for equality and justice for the land and for members of the Indigenous community. Shining examples of this are renowned Canadian singers and multiple JUNO award winners Buffy Sainte-Marie, Tom Jackson, and Susan Aglukark. Aglukark, who received the Order of Canada for her advocacy work in 2004, shares "Music has been a way for me to give a voice to the silent struggles of my people and to create hope for a better tomorrow" (Governor General of Canada, 2004).

Métis artists are celebrated and accomplished in multiple additional art forms that include traditional beading, leatherwork, painting and wood carving. The Métis people are well known for the colourful finger-woven cloth sash that they wear at their hip or as a sash (Troupe, 2002). This *L'Assomption,* or *Ceinture Fléchée* (arrow sash), is beautiful and functional. It is used to represent who they are, but it also serves many other functions when needed. A few examples of the sash's versatility include it being used for a towel, belt, or winch (Metis Nation of Alberta, 2021).

Another piece of functional art for which the Métis people are revered is their beadwork. Adorning moccasins, jackets, mitts and vests, this intricate beadwork, usually of flowers or related greenery, was often used to identify items of clothing as well. Each family or individual would have a style or pattern that was represented on their clothing. In times of hunting, for example, one would often leave a mitten with the hunted animal to indicate who it belonged to, so if anyone were to come along, they would know which family it belonged to (Metis Nation of Alberta, 2021).

Métis artists are represented today in visual arts, theatre, television, movies and music. There is a movement to ensure that Indigenous persons in the media are represented accurately and appropriately. Smith (1999) describes a dominant society where Indigenous people have been denied rights and dignity by mainstream civilization, as white supremacist misconceptions view Indigenous people to be uninventive, uncreative, unimaginative, and unable to produce anything of value. "Indigenous people are beginning to use a variety of new media technology to confront those hegemonic beliefs and narratives, a process that is slow, ongoing, and not without challenges" (Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2007, p. 8).

Spirituality

Métis spirituality is a complex topic that is rooted in a multi-faceted history, interpretation, and after-effect (Nelson, 2011). The definition of traditional spirituality will be examined and the formation of Métis spirituality through history will be explored. This will include the role of the revered two-spirit kinsfolk. The term "spiritual" is generally applied to any experience in which humans are connected to an unseen world, and it defies scientific explanation and measurement (Nelson, 2011). It can be transportive, transcendent, or deeply moving, and it gives one a sense of feeling larger than oneself. It also, for the most part, gives one a sense of being connected to something beyond one's self (Nelson, 2011). The essence of the word comes from the Latin word *spiritus*, which means "breath of life" (Nelson, 2011). However, it can also have a variety of other meanings such as the living soul, a ghost of a person, or the energy within a person, animal or being. It can also refer to the divine when spelled with a capital "S", as in the Holy Spirit (Nelson, 2011). It becomes easy to see how spirituality can be difficult to concisely define when the word itself can have a plethora of meanings.

A spiritual experience is a personal experience, and each individual will have varying feelings of how it influenced them (James, 1982). James (1982) explains that this is why there are so many varying doctrines, creeds, and structures of religious organizations because they were established by people and based upon their interpretation of their spiritual experience. Nelson (2011) acknowledges that this may be due to the fact that while individuals of a group may find themselves in a spiritual experience at the same time, their experience is still their own.

Notably, given the resemblances to the definition of spirituality, spiritual experiences are also referred to as peak experiences. The psychiatrist Maslow (1971) described the peak experience as one of interconnectedness, awareness and connection to something greater than oneself, with an overwhelming sense of harmony and unity, however mythical it may seem. In Maslow's words, they are "transient moments of self actualization" (Maslow, 1971, p. 48).

The complex history surrounding Métis spirituality may lead Métis people to have a challenging relationship with their personal beliefs around religion and spirituality (Fiola, 2021). Importantly, the impacts of colonization through missionaries and

residential schools disrupted, and at times eliminated, the traditional spiritual practices of Indigenous persons in Canada (Widder, 1999). This led to forced Christian influences and the elimination of familial belief systems. However, with some Métis families these Christian influences were already blended into their family traditions, by choice, earlier on.

Métis spirituality can include a variety of elements from Indigenous customs, such as a strong connection to nature, to the land, and to all of its living creatures. Spirituality is shaped by personal experiences and the region in which a person lives. For a long time in history, there was a general acceptance of and appreciation for both belief systems within Métis families. With the original union of an Indigenous woman and a man of European descent, there appeared to be no great difficulty blending the two belief systems. Widder (1999) states, "In Métis families, Native spiritual beliefs, Roman Catholicism, Indian and French names, among other things drawn from both Native and French cultures, all give meaning to the lives of family members" (Widder, 1999, xviii).

Métis spirituality was *syncretic*, (Payment, 2009). This means that its very nature was formed by the integration of the two varied belief systems it merged. Payment (2009) states that the people of the Métis culture believed in God and the Great Spirit, in miracles and divine intervention, with the addition of spirit helpers and foretelling as it blended elements from both birth parent's cultures.

Widder (1999) points out that with the addition of missionaries and missionary schools, this perceived early balanced blend of the cultures was uprooted; and many Indigenous and Métis people were persuaded to assimilate to Christianity – usually Protestant or Catholic. Fear-mongering tactics and discouragement to continue Indigenous customs were regularly used by the church (Fiola, 2015). Refusing to assimilate resulted in facing harsh persecution for their actions, having to practice in secret, or being forced to relocate to areas with fewer government controls, i.e. sparsely populated areas or reserves (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). However, many chose to continue to keep their Indigenous heritage, or blended features of both (Widder, 1999).

Fiola (2015) highlights the existence of previous Canadian laws forbidding spiritual practices such as sweat lodge, Sundance, potlatch, and pipe ceremonies. Today,

there can still be a stigma attached to sacred ceremonies, as those not familiar, or comfortable, with the ceremonies may view them as heathen-like or uncivilized. “The personal healing that can come from ceremonies, indeed the healing of our ancestral wounds, is threatened by these stereotypes that inhibit Métis participation in ceremonies” (Fiola, 2021, p. 5). Fiola (2021) points out that the stigma associated with participating in ceremonies may come from the general public, but also from within the Indigenous community itself.

Métis spirituality is a complex combination of Indigenous traditions and customs combined with practices of the Catholic or Protestant churches (Fiola, 2015; Widder, 1999). For some, Metis spirituality focuses on giving thanks to God the Creator, to one’s ancestors, and on honouring the beauty and sacred balance found within nature. Before entering ceremony, smudges using special medicines are often performed to cleanse and prepare the person, objects, or space (Fiola, 2015). Some Métis also participate in drumming circles, pipe ceremonies, Sundance, and sweat lodges (Fiola, 2015).

The wellbeing of Métis people has been attributed to a “connection with spirituality, including Indigenous and Roman Catholic traditions of wellness and healing” (Ginn et al., 2021, p. 457). Ginn et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative structured survey with 29 members of the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3 (Calgary area). Themes of connection were prevalent in the analyzed data. These included connection to Métis ancestry, land, community, and tradition. The researchers observed that many of the participants blended aspects of both Indigenous and Christian customs and traditions. The results of the study demonstrate that the blending of customs and traditions that happened historically continues to happen today. The Indigenous identity post-colonial influence forced a drastic shift in how Indigenous culture was viewed, not only by members of the dominant cultural group, but also by members of the Indigenous community.

Pre-colonial Indigenous communities honored their two-spirit members, which is an umbrella term for people who today identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or any individual within the 2SLGBTQ+ community (Fiola, 2021). However, the traditional definition of two-spirit captures deeper and more spiritual components that are not easily communicated through Western constructs. Cameron (2005) states that two-spirited people were highly valued members of the community, “occupying positions of

honour and communal value" (Historical context section, para. 1). Today, the term two-spirit is still considered sacred Indigenous terminology reserved for Indigenous persons; and using it otherwise can be viewed as a form of cultural appropriation (Cameron, 2005).

Music Therapy and Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Music therapy as a professional practice developed in Western countries, starting in the United States of America (Aigen, 2014). The music therapy profession has been built, in part, by utilizing the knowledge and traditional healing principles of various Indigenous cultures. This has not been widely or explicitly acknowledged by our profession, but strong connections exist that are deserving of attention. Therefore, the following sections will explore the overarching thematic connections between music therapy and the Métis-Indigenous culture.

The Foundation – Dr. Carolyn Kenny

Music therapy literature that specifically centres the work of Métis people is scant. In fact, only one study was located: a Master's theses from Bell (2016). Bell (2016) explored her own Métis ancestry in relation to professional implications.

While Indigenous perspectives are limited in music therapy literature, Carolyn Kenny's ground-breaking work forms a foundation that demonstrates how vital Indigenous ways of knowing can be to the development of music therapy theory. The late Carolyn Kenny, a renowned music therapy pioneer and Indigenous-First Nations scholar brought Indigenous knowledge to the centre of music therapy research and practice (Kenny, 1982, 1988, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2014). Kenny's work is critical to the centring of Indigenous ways of knowing; and while we value her work significantly as music therapists, we don't always link that value to the Indigenous ways of knowing that she brings to our profession.

Kenny's seminal work, *Music & Life in the Field of Play* (2006) is especially vital to the mobilization of Indigenous knowledge in our profession. What Kenny so eloquently asserts in her writings is the need to view the world through a new lens, to deconstruct established knowledge hierarchies, and to recognize that another culture's *way of knowing* can be just as valid as what is accepted by today's modern *standards* (Kenny, 2014). Kenny (2014) accentuates the importance of her relationship with Mother

Earth and ancestral knowledge; she spoke of her admiration for the beauty and order of the natural world and her deep reverence for Elders' guidance. She importantly highlights that traditional knowledge shared through oral tradition from generation to generation, is as important as scientific knowledge.

Kenny applied traditional knowledge easily and integrally to her music therapy framework. She saw music itself as an energy system and realized the high significance of art when it comes to healing, and she stated that a perfect balance would blend both science and art (Kenny, 2014). In fact, when she developed the Field of Play theory (1989, 2006), she linked the first field, the *aesthetic*, to the Navajo ideology that asserts if we move toward beauty, we move toward wholeness (Kenny, 2014). These Indigenous principles guided and shaped Kenny's efforts throughout her career, and she always made reference to their importance in her work. Kenny offers this important thought regarding Indigenous influence as we advance and grow as a profession;

> Modern Indigenous peoples represent this tribal identity. But is there a possibility of re-membering the essential spiritual principle of the interdependence of all things embedded in our ancient tribal memory? Are we here to control or to *sustain* and *be with* (Kenny, 2002, We Are All Connected section, para. 1)

The Bridge – Acknowledging the Overarching Themes

There are important existing connections between music therapy and Indigenous ways of knowing and healing practices. Music therapists can draw on these connections to facilitate culturally relevant healing for Indigenous clients. However, great care must be taken to ensure we are acknowledging vital connections to Indigenous cultural customs and not misappropriating Indigenous healing traditions. In each of the following three theme areas, music therapy scholars demonstrate how relevant Indigenous ways of knowing are to current music therapy approaches. While the literature is not exhaustive, there are important connections to highlight.

Themes of Consciousness

Themes of consciousness are prominent in specific music therapy approaches and also in Indigenous healing practices. They relate most often to the healing that occurs when entering altered states of consciousness. An altered state of consciousness refers to

when a person is deeply focused on their inner experience which is qualitatively different from one's normal, everyday state (Tart, 1969).

Themes of consciousness are common in some specific music therapy literature. Kenny (1989, 2002, 2014) speaks at length of consciousness in *The Field of Play* theory. She explains that when a ritual is established, the consciousness begins to open into a space of innovation and play where new thoughts and patterns can emerge. Kenny (2006) states that within the aesthetic dimension, senses are stimulated by sound, colour, pattern and texture, etc. It is here that beauty is perceived, and an intimate link is formed between the self and the world. This is where healing and change can occur, as "consciousness is the gateway to change" (Kenny, 2006, p. 95).

Helen Bonny (1986, 2001, 2002) similarly centred consciousness when conceptualizing *The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music* (GIM) and explained the importance of working with non-ordinary states of consciousness and promoting peak experiences in GIM sessions. The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) is defined as:

> a music-centered transformational therapy in which a client listens to specifically programmed classical music in a relaxed state. The music acts as a catalyst to evoke, develop and transform images, memories and feelings from deep levels of consciousness. With the help of the therapist, the GIM experience can lead to integration and healing on physical, emotional, spiritual levels (Association for Music and Imagery, 2022, Frequently Asked Questions section, Core Elements of Guided Imagery and Music).

Themes of consciousness that are directly related to drumming and its capacity to induce altered states of consciousness have been explored by several researchers (Szabó, 2004; Rouget, 1985). Szabó (2004) examines the altered states of consciousness that are similar to hypnosis. This state, he says, influences subjective experiences through association (Szabó, 2004). Rouget (1985) completed an extensive analysis on literature in the area of music and trance. Rouget included cultural structures, of which there are many, concluding that "music's physiological and emotional effects are inseparable from patterns of collective representation and behaviour" (Rouget, 1985, n.p). Both Szabó and Rouget share important work related to drumming, indicating that the drumming itself

allows the individual to enter the altered state of consciousness where healing and transformative work can be achieved.

Drumming is an integral part of the Indigenous healing ceremony. Singing is often accompanied by instruments such as drums, rattles and shakers. Sweat lodges ceremonies often have drumming, singing and vision included in the ceremony. These ceremonies are performed in order to restore order and balance in the intended participant's life as guided by Elders and spirits, as described by Elder Steve Kejick (2009) of Shoal Lake First Nation Band 39, in a video titled *Rights of Passage*. As articulated in findings from a pilot experimental design study by Schiff and Moore (2006), 39 participants indicated that after taking part in a sweat lodge ceremony they often experience an altered state of consciousness (Schiff & Moore, 2006). The results indicated a measured change in spiritual and emotional well-being, as a result of their partaking in the ceremony (Schiff & Moore, 2006). Importantly, the protocols of the study, as related to the actual ceremony were safeguarded by Elders involved in the research to ensure that the sacredness of the customs was upheld (Schiff & Moore, 2006).

Experiences where there are altered states of consciousness may be presented in different terminology in the Indigenous or Métis culture, as they may be called visions, dreams or messages from the spirits. An important distinction is that these experiences directly inform social interactions about individual healing between Indigenous people (Goulet, 1998). Goulet (1998) offers firsthand accounts of immersing himself in the Dene, First Nations, way of life, where he experienced many visions and dreams, which Elders interpreted as messages from the spirits. Fiola (2021) reports that vision quests are a frequently mentioned ceremony sought out by the participants in her study, which examines Métis spirituality through a Métis-based research focus and from an Indigenous ceremony perspective rather than that of Christian religions. When seeking out visions or messages, it is important to note that participants may invite these from the Creator in a variety of ceremonial experiences which may be individual, or group based.

Themes of Ritual/Ceremony

Ritual is a strong thread woven through music therapy and traditional healing. Ritual is important in music therapy because it focuses the intention of the music, and of the therapist themselves. The act of ritual itself has been explored by Carolyn Kenny

(1989, 2002, 2006, 2014), in ways that are reflective of her traditional ways of knowing. She highlights that it is an ancient and earth-based principle, reflective of the earth cycles, sun and moon phases. Kenny speaks to their importance to creativity and invention, stating that the repetition of rituals encourages ingenuity (Kenny, 1989). Kenny (2006) also establishes the importance ritual has in its purpose for facilitating the death and rebirth process essential to therapy. Kenny identifies many patterns of tension-resolution in music, and death-rebirth myths (Kenny, 2006).

Kigunda (2004) also explores the importance of ritual and the role of the music therapist in the music therapy-ritual dynamic. Importantly, Kigunda (2004) works from two complementary positions. First, he centres the cultural ritual and examines how music therapy can enhance it, rather than viewing it from a Eurocentric perspective and seeing how it can be adapted to suit the European framework. Kigunda (2004) looks to discover what music therapy has to offer traditional rituals and health practices, not take away from it. The second strategy offered by Kigunda (2004) is to explore strategies to make the development of music therapy elements more successful. Kigunda (2004) suggests culturally complimentary musical styles, forms of musical social interaction, or musical values (Kigunda, 2004). This directly relates to Young's (2016) perspective on multicultural musical competence, which is an evolving process that is "not a stagnant or rigid concept, but rather an ongoing process; a multifaceted evolving way of being" (Young, 2016, p. 128). Having an awareness of the cultural implications as they relate to ritual, which oftentimes include music, would positively impact the therapeutic relationship.

Ritual, or *ceremony* as it may be more commonly known in Indigenous circles, holds a special role in the Metis-Indigenous way of life. There are many rituals available to Métis persons if they so choose to partake, including the more well-known rituals, such as offering tobacco, smudging, and sweat lodge (Fiola, 2021). There are other rituals such as wiidiigewin (union of souls), ceremonies surrounding the birth of children such as "Feet Touch the Earth" and "Walking Out" ceremonies for young children as they learn to walk, and mourning and feasting ceremonies (Fiola, 2021).

Acknowledging the significance of ceremony and ritual in music therapeutic frameworks can instill a sense of reverence in approaches and interactions. In essence, it

is a way to honour the beauty within ourselves, clients, the Creator, Mother Earth and the connectedness between them all. Of course, this ritual does not have to be elaborate. Professor and Scientist Wall Kimmerer (2014) offers this wise advice, "What else can you offer the earth, which has everything? What else can you give but something of yourself? A homemade ceremony, a ceremony that makes a home" (Wall Kimmerer, 2014, p. 38).

Themes of Nature

"Stay close to the earth" (Kenny, 2014, para.10). This is profound advice from Indigenous music therapist and scholar, Carolyn Kenny. This may be one of the strongest emerging links between music therapy and Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous people have a deep connection to the earth. Kenny (2006) states, "We have an intimate relationship with the land. It humbles us. Our knowledge comes from the land. Our spirit comes from the land. The land is our Mother. It is the source of our nourishment, our strength" (Kenny, 2006, p. 173). In *The Field of Play* theory (Kenny, 1988) and in Kenny's (1982) *The Mythic Artery*, there are various references to elements of nature such as rivers, streams, ravens, wind, forest, trees, and beaches. Her work is rich in imagery, symbolism and metaphor expressed through the use of natural elements. Kenny states, "In traditional societies there is an intimacy with the land. The land is our Mother. We rely on the land for nurturing and strength, for knowledge, for sustenance" (Kenny, 2006, p. 152). This is one of the least examined links as it pertains to clinical practice and client wellness.

Witherspoon (1997), a professor of Native American studies, echoes this concept. He shares the philosophy of the Navajo people who believe that beautifying the earth is a moral obligation, and part of beautifying it means keeping it in balance. People are responsible to think and speak on behalf of the elements. When the earth or people are unbalanced, then healing must take place, often through ceremony. This interplay between the earth and the self is essential for "good" to take place (Witherspoon, 1997).

Music therapists support balance in important ways; and this work is often in ways that support wellness, health or what is often termed medical soundness by health professionals. It is important, however, to sustain connections to the earth for Indigenous clients, and to do so in a way that does not risk cultural appropriation. When we take

nature out of the equation, we are taking a fundamental piece out of human existence. Jenkins (2004), a professor of history and religious studies, states that "Westerners have simply lost the power to see the natural world, to understand the sanctity of places and natural projects that is so characteristic of the Native" (Jenkins, 2004, p. 201). This loss of ability to see the natural world is problematic because it belittles ritual practices of Indigenous people and allows for cultural appropriation to run rampant.

This loss of sustained connection to the earth for wellness, in combination with a *New Age* way of thinking, can lead to continued cultural appropriation; new age philosophy is generally when Eastern and Western religions are combined with a "desire to rediscover ancient beliefs and practices" (Boyce-Tillman, 2000, p. 158). Although with no malicious intent, this trend that sprouted in the 1960's and 1970's (Boyce-Tillman, 2000), has detrimental impacts on many cultures, perhaps more deeply felt when businesses and organizations claim methods, ways of thinking or tactics as their own (Boyce-Tillman, 2000). This results in businesses or organizations removing the history and sources from which they originally came (Boyce-Tillman, 2000). For example, Szeto (2021) reports that for over sixty-five years, the city of Vernon, British Columbia held the copyright of the mythical creature, *n x̌ax̌aitkʷ*, or Ogopogo, as it is known to white settlers and tourists. The city of Vernon granted publishing rights to an author, which the Syilx Nation felt was unjust, as the mythical animal, *n x̌ax̌aitkʷ,* held spiritual significance to their people and was not meant to be a tourist attraction or book character. The Syilx Nation won the vote to have the copyright transferred to them after they stated their case, showcasing the cultural appropriation at play (Szeto, 2021).

It is notable that Canadian music therapists are increasingly educated on the importance of balancing ecological concerns as they relate to health and wellness and to consider the interplay between the environment and mental wellbeing (Seabrook, 2020). Music therapist and scholar Deborah Seabrook (2020), for example, asserts that we must acknowledge the impact of climate change on the music therapy community and on music therapy clients. She also argues that, "moving towards Indigenization and decolonization in music therapy could contribute to social justice, anti-oppression, and reconciliation work in the discipline" (Seabrook, 2020, p. 5). Seabrook presents a view of eco-music therapy within Canada, and she calls on music therapists to take action

because ecological health is directly related to client health. Therefore, she argues, the climate crisis is relevant to music therapy (Seabrook, 2020).

Themes of Archetype and Myth

Archetypes and myth have been used for healing in Métis-Indigenous customs and therapeutic settings in music therapy circles (Jenkins, 2004; Kenny, 2002). Although, it is important to note that therapists need to be cautious and only use the knowledge of archetypes and myths with extensive training and guidance and with great awareness of their origin and history. This ensures a high standard of ethical care for clients and ensures that cultural appropriation of archetypes and myths is not occurring.

Archetypes and myths are integrally connected to ritual and story and cannot be disconnected from nature and the land without risking cultural appropriation. Carolyn Kenny often speaks of her Indigenous roots in her work (1982, 1985, 2002, 2006, 2014). Kenny's (2006) focus was on "how to make a bridge between contemporary music therapy practice and traditional Indigenous healing practices" (Kenny, 2006, p. 166). She specifically highlights the need for the connection to nature and the earth, and she speaks of the interconnectivity between earth and the spirits who live upon it, and the wise stories from the Elders or *Old People* as they are traditionally known (Kenny, 1985). She states that myths need to be the source – where there are no myths, then the ritual is vacant (2002). Indigenous spirit guides and animals, archetypes and myths of the Indigenous or first nations culture have not been shared openly, specifically within the music therapy community because of the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge starting in the 1970's (Kenny, 2002). This is due to the fact that this information is sacred to those in the culture who are protecting it. American academic, feminist and activist against violence Smith (2005) states:

> When dominant society disconnects Native spiritual practices from their landbases, it undermines Native people's claim that the protection of the landbase is integral to the survival of Native peoples and hence undermines their claims to sovereignty…The message is that anyone can practice Indian spirituality anywhere, so that there is no need to protect the specific Native communities and their lands that are the basis of these spiritual practices. (Smith, 2005, p. 121-122)

Therefore, one must address conversations relating to sacred knowledge with respect and caution and from a place of reverence and deep respect (Smith, 2005).

Archetypes and myth are utilized within therapeutic settings in some music therapy circles as reported in scholarly writings (Bonny, 1973, 1986, 2001, 2002; Dukic, Parncutt, & Bunt, 2019; Kenny, 1982, 1985, 2002, 2014; Kroeker, 2019). For instance, in Bonny's GIM method, archetypes and myths are central to the method which are part of the imagery process evoked by the combination of working with non-ordinary states of consciousness, the music listening experience and the guidance of the therapist.

Bruscia (1998) states that music is experienced as an archetypal form whenever the meaning of the music stems from the collective unconscious. The music re-creates the universal experiences, which radiate from the "inherited, collective psyche of the species" (Bruscia, 1998, Music as archetype section). Further, Bruscia (1998) shares that these archetypal experiences may be referential and depict myth (e.g., the hero, the wisewoman), or may be nonreferential and are considered naturally nonverbal, energy-based experiences (e.g., conflict, harmony) (Bruscia, 1998).

These themes related to consciousness, nature, ritual and archetypes are prevalent in both Indigenous circles and some modern music therapy frameworks as mentioned previously, although the latter has often viewed and utilized them within a largely westernized lens. Like so many of the tools we utilize in our everyday life, we do them a disservice by not acknowledging from where they originated, boiling them down to their basic existence when we could be celebrating their nuances if we only took the time to open our minds and seek out their beginnings, not separating their core from their limbs as it were. Kenny (2002) speaks to the consideration of culture and traditional music therapists, who are music therapists with training that a typical music therapist would receive in order to practice, Kenny asks us to consider the following:

> If music therapists are to seriously consider culture and if any of us are hoping to bring traditional music therapists into an honest and respectful post-colonial discourse with professional music therapists, we must hear more than the voices of non-indigenous academics. This is a feature the landscape truly craves. (Kenny, 2002, Ritual Criticism section, para. 5)

The Call to Action

Music therapy literature is scant from a Métis specific perspective. However, Carolyn Kenny has laid an extensive foundation and extended a vital bridge between the Indigenous world and the music therapy profession. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) calls health professionals to bring Indigenous ways of knowing to the centre of their work. It is up to the individuals to recognize this call and to ensure they are grounding their own music therapy frameworks from a place of decolonized knowledge.

Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan (2017) have edited a book that includes chapters from a variety of perspectives, including people that identify as Indigenous and Muslim, persons living with a disability, LGBTQ2S+, etc. The overall goal of the book is to highlight that the world is becoming more "culturally pluralistic" (Whitehead-Plaux & Tan, 2017, p. xi). They similarly point out that stereotypes and misinformation continue to challenge how individuals are viewed in the world. The authors of each chapter offer their own individual perspectives and they aim to provide readers with new information that can stretch mindsets and challenge current conceptualizations of colonizing processes and internal frameworks. Key chapters and authours include: *The cultures of Native Americans / First Peoples : the voices of two Indigenous women scholars* (West & Kenny), *Survivor culture* (Miller, Lane & Whitehead-Pleaux), *Music therapy in the South Asian-American diaspora* (Swamy*), Discovering Arab/Middle Eastern culture* (Kavaliova-Moussi), *African-American perspectives* (Reed & Brooks), *The culture of disability* (Humpal), and *The cultures of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning communities* (Hardy & Whitehead-Pleaux) (Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan, 2017).

To be socially just, we need to react to the calls for greater justice that are emerging in the literature. These calls are most clearly articulated by Kenny (1982, 1985, 2002, 2006, 2014), but they are also present in other works (Hadley & Norris, 2016; Seabrook, 2020; Whitehead-Plaux & Tan, 2017; Young, 2016). The music therapy profession requires a continual influx of music therapy literature that challenges the Euro-centric status-quo in order to decolonize and re-establish Indigenous centred learning and ways of knowing in our therapeutic frameworks.

In closing, after examining the literature surrounding the history, healing customs, music and art and spirituality of the Métis-Indigenous culture, and continuing to analyse

the overarching themes of consciousness, ritual/ceremony, nature, and archetype/myth, it is clear that the knowledge available on the subjects is building. This research hopes to provide insights into the music therapy profession and allow for increased Indigenous ways of knowing to come into the centre of our work. Doing so with respect and awareness of the Indigenous history within Canada.

Chapter 3. Chipatahike - Method (Methodology)

Research Design

According to Douglass and Moustakas (1985), "Self-experience is the single most important guideline in pursuing heuristic research" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 46). It is through self-experience that I explored my Métis ancestry and culture; which in turn, influenced my spiritual, personal and professional growth. There is potential for additional impact on the music therapy community, as I strive to reconceptualize music therapy from within a Métis ways of knowing framework.

Utilizing a heuristic self-inquiry research methodology, this research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines established by Moustakas (1990). The six stages as outlined by Moustakas (1990) include the initial engagement phase, the immersion phase, the incubation phase, the illumination phase, the explication phase, and the creative synthesis. As the sole participant and researcher, I aimed to provide a clear description of my experience as it emerged through data collection and analysis.

Delimitations

The Métis culture was explored specifically within the Indigenous community. The term Indigenous includes First Nation, Métis and Inuit/Inuk, and Métis is the specific Indigenous community with whom I directly identify. However, some broader, shared experiences within the collective Indigenous community will also be discussed within this research.

Validity

Validity is upheld during heuristic research using qualitative measurement strategies that are maintained by the researcher. Moustakas (1990) states that the question of validity is one of meaning and asks: "Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience?" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14).

Materials

Research materials included a personal journal for ongoing reflections after experiences. Journaling was completed on a password protected laptop computer or in a sketching journal. Additional materials included sweetgrass, sage and matches for

smudging, Métis and Indigenous history and culture books, and a laptop for writing and online learning, and/or a smart phone or tablet for connecting with the Métis community on social media or websites. (Note: This research was completed during the 2021-22 Covid-19 pandemic when many public health restrictions were in place, therefore in-person gatherings were not offered or recommended at this time). Painting supplies such as a canvas, paintbrushes and paints were used for the creative synthesis, as well as a tablet and stand. Additionally, various software, such as Canva ®, iMovie ® and GarageBand ® were utilized to edit and combine the multi-media elements into its finished version. Additional music therapy literature specific to Indigenous knowledge and music therapy literature that incorporated themes of nature, ritual, archetypes and consciousness.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

A heuristic self-inquiry was used to study these questions. As the primary researcher and sole participant, deepening self-awareness was key to the overall data collection and analysis process. Awareness about my own experience was not the only focus; however, I also sought awareness of my assumptions, beliefs, opinions, values, and preconceived notions. Additionally, I worked to maintain awareness of the fact that my own experience cannot take place without acknowledging the corresponding experiences of others around me.

Moustakas developed phases to guide the heuristic researcher and investigation (Moustakas, 1990). Phases are highly specific in intent and allow for outcomes as depicted. A brief description of each phase follows along with a description of what transpired in each phase.

The *initial engagement phase* is where the primary topic or critical question presents itself. This question emerges out of intense passion or deep concern because the topic holds significant interest to the researcher. Ultimately, the question develops out of this concentrated engagement (Moustakas, 1990). Early on in my master's studies, I knew that I wanted to engage the topic of Indigenous studies; however, the research question did not come to fruition until after consultation with professors, instructors, peers and my thesis advisor. My own spirituality had been struggling for quite some time and embracing my Métis roots had allowed me to make some strides. This struggle, along

with my concerns over a need for increased representation of Indigenous literature in music therapy, led me to my final topic. I engaged specifically with seminal work that draws on Indigenous knowledge and themes, theoretical work where there are key overlaps, and emergent work in the Canadian context.

The *immersion phase* finds the researcher experiencing the topic and exploring the question at every moment since all environments and settings provide new opportunities for further awareness. This allows the researcher to gain a new level of understanding which grows considerably in this stage (Moustakas, 1990). The *immersion* phase began on August 15, 2021 and lasted for eight weeks, until October 15, 2021. During this time, I was highly aware of Métis concepts, happenings, events, literature, thoughts and any preconceived notions. I embarked on a journey to absorb any and all information that related to my research question(s). After experiences that I found particularly moving, I wrote journal entries to document my thoughts. At times, these writings were descriptions of my reactions to the events or experiences, and at other times, they were free verse writing or poetry.

In the phase of *incubation,* the researcher removes themselves from the intense focus of the topic and research question, as a retreat for potential sub-conscious workings to clarify and "extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 12). The *incubation* phase was a 2-week period starting October 15, 2021 and ending October 31, 2021. In this time, I withdrew from all Métis culture, experiences and reading, focusing my mind and efforts in other areas of my life. I continued to work as a music therapist and recreation department manager. If Métis related topics were brought up in work or conversation, they were appropriately addressed.

The *illumination* phase leads to a new understanding or breakthrough of awareness, as it occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to implicit understanding and intuition (Moustakas, 1990). In November 2021, I commenced the process of *illumination.* I analyzed the data, which consisted of journal entries, free writing, and poetry, using Neuman's (2006) coding analysis methods. During analysis, I searched for themes and central paradigms to emerge from the content. Initially, I reviewed all journal entries, and typed them all into the computer and highlighted

keywords and phrases. During this process, a number of categories and subcategories emerged. After taking a closer look to address any outliers or redundancies at play, a final set of themes was developed. This was guided by continually coming back to the data, through investigation and analysis.

Crafting a comprehensive picture of all major themes that have surfaced in the awakened unconscious is the centre of the *explication* phase (Moustakas, 1990.) As the data and the subsequent categories and subcategories are continually examined, one seeks to engage the data and have a better understanding of what it means in relation to the research question (Moustakas, 1990). On November 14, 2021, I started the process of confirming many of these understandings as I moved through the *explication phase*. Initially frustrated by the timing of the research in relation to world events, the results ended up proving more enlightening than I initially anticipated. This will be covered in detail in Chapter 4.

In the *creative synthesis*, which is the final phase, the researcher is invited to put the central themes into a creative art expression. Options may include, but are not limited to, stories, poems, paintings, music compositions and improvisations, drawings, sketches, multi-media, etc. (Moustakas, 1990). This phase began on December 4, 2021 and was completed on December 18, 2021. In that time, I produced a multi-media art display that combines time-lapse painting, photography and poetry, and song writing. This art piece highlights the journey I have felt as a Métis person and now the sense of belonging I have come to experience within my culture. This multi-media art display will be the focus of Chapter 5.

Chapter 4. Ohcipayin (Results)

In this study, I set out to explore my experience as a music therapist researching my Métis ancestry. I aimed to generate an understanding of how that experience shaped spiritual and personal growth and to explore how it informed my therapeutic framework and music therapy practice. Additionally, I aimed to understand how it could support the reconceptualization of music therapy within an Indigenous ways of knowing framework, including, but not limited to, tacit knowledge and a comprehensive awareness of Indigenous history in Canada. The results, which are very personal in nature, led to a variety of reflections and they generated multiple themes that emerged over time.

At the beginning of the research process, I found myself frustrated with the timing of the research because it was mid-pandemic and I was working as a manager in a long-term care healthcare setting. It was frequently in outbreak status, so work-stress was at an all-time high. There were fewer than normal in-person cultural gatherings to attend, and when I could attend, I was hesitant to expose myself to potential infection because of where I work and out of concern for my young family. Many of the opportunities held online were during work hours or during bedtime routines, so I often felt like I was "missing out." However, once I accepted that I would make it to what I could, I let the frustration go and the learning began. All of these elements became relevant during the analysis of the data. It revealed highly personal thematic content, which as a private person I grappled with sharing at times. It also exposed layers of struggle and resistance related to pandemic restrictions and family commitment.

To be able to fully engage myself in Indigenous ways of knowing felt like a gift to myself. A gift to my sense of sense and to my own spiritual journey. Completely immersing myself in my Métis culture felt timely and right. Analysis of the 8-week journal entries from the *Immersion* period produced three core categories, with two to four subcategories. See Table 1 for an overview of the categories and subcategories of the explication phase. The main categories and subcategories engage with learning sources and opportunities, both internal and external, as well as the extended journey that included the personal connection, commitment and spiritual development that has taken place during the research.

Table 1: *Overview of Categories and Sub-categories*

Category 1: Learning from the Outside-In
Subcategory 1a: Learning and re-learning
Subcategory 1b: The sacred land
Subcategory 1c: Community impressions
Subcategory 1d: Guilt, privilege, loss and reclamation
Category 2: Learning from the Inside-Out
Subcategory 2a: The Self: Early memories and sense of knowing
Subcategory 2b: Family history and discovery
Category 3: The Extended Journey
Subcategory 3a: Sense of belonging and commitment
Subcategory 3b: Creative expression: connection and validation
Subcategory 3c: Spiritual connectivity

1: Learning from the Outside-In

This first category focuses on the sources of learning, connections and opportunities available, which assisted me in exploring my Métis ancestry. They came from external sources and were found in literature, online, from the land, within the community and within events and history.

1a: Learning and re-learning

Learning about my Métis culture and history was overwhelming, and at times, unsettling. Yet, this process led me to important realizations about how to embrace multiple and diverse opportunities to learn. Learning drew my attention to critical analysis issues such as cultural appropriation. Beginning with an external search for resources, including scholarly literature, I found a substantial number of books and articles regarding Métis and Indigenous history. The availability of Canadian scholarly journals in areas such as history, education, and social work is growing, particularly from Universities that offer programs in Indigenous studies. Many Canadian websites and online platforms are sources of information, and I found myself utilizing many of these more than I thought I would.

My initial vision for how I would learn during this phase was that I would consult in-person with people in my Métis community. Perhaps I would join a drum circle or

attend Métis celebrations? Due, however, to Covid restrictions and other factors, that did not happen. However, I found many other ways to connect with my Métis community. I read articles and spoke to friends and those in the Métis community. I paid attention to how Métis and Indigenous persons were perceived and projected in the media, and I carefully observed how those in my own circle spoke, including myself. I took advantage of learning opportunities and engaged in conversations when they presented themselves, and I allowed my mind to really explore the nuances of being part of a dynamic culture with such a rich yet complicated history. I joined dozens of Métis and Indigenous groups on Facebook and Instagram and in the evening, I would look through the pictures and read the forums.

Quietly, I would observe the conversations happening. There was a mix of people; some of whom grew up Métis and Indigenous and others who discovered their connection to the culture later in life. I closely watched the dynamics among the members. Some were resistant to "new" Métis persons or persons who joined who were not Métis at all. Some welcomed everyone wholeheartedly. My journal entry read, *Many, many people, state they feel like they have "one foot in two canoes" and this resonated with me. It is a way of saying that you can belong in two places at once.* This also highlighted the very real tensions that exist around claiming Métis identity and reconnecting with one's heritage (Fiola, 2021; Leroux 2019).

These online forums ended up being a significant piece of learning for me. I did my best to choose credible sites, linked to reputable sources. There was an underlying current detected that indicated that sacred knowledge, such as learning how to smudge, learning specific prayers or learning about ceremonies, requires a certain level of commitment, over an extended period of time, in order to earn this knowledge. Then it will be gifted in time. If sacred knowledge is used without commitment, then this is a form of cultural appropriation. I had already known and sensed this; however, it was a clear and welcomed reminder and this really stayed with me. This was a reminder of my commitment to tread softly on this journey.

This important process of discovery has reminded me to embrace all avenues of knowing as they come: all *teachers* as they come to me, in all forms. My teacher may not be my own grey haired kôhkom, meaning Grandmother, [pronounced: KOOH-gom],

(Apihtawikosisan, 2021) and that is fine. I will embrace all my teachers as they come. My own children have taught me as they learn from the Elder at their school as part of their Indigenous Elder-in-Residence program. I have learned about Métis and Indigenous teachings from my younger cousins, older cousins and friends. Some perhaps were unlikely sources when I started out, but all provided me with insights that I am grateful to have gained.

1b: The sacred land

With a renewed perspective that came from the research, I connected with the sacred nature of the land. This altered capacity enabled me to process and express emotion in a way that felt deeper and more connected to a higher power than it had in a very long time. The theme of the sacred land came to fruition as elements of nature were consistently noted in journal entries. These were either thoughts of gratitude or focused archetypes, often emerging in refrains of poetry. In the journal entries, I often wrote about how the land and my connection to it brings me a feeling of peace and allows me to feel grounded. I attribute these intense feelings of connectedness to Mother Earth as a deepened form of spirituality. I journaled this free-verse poem:

In nature I am able to release tension, anger, fear –
allowing the wind to carry it away.
I can turn my face up to the sun
and allow it to warm my skin.
And in turn, my heart,
filling me with the goodness of the earth.
The sparrows know my sorrows
and are there to console me,
and the blue jays always appear
remind me to keep pursuing what I love.
We walk along beside one another,
the birds and wind and I.
They sing their sweet songs to me,
I listen carefully.
The earth beneath my feet,

it gives me pause.

I'm filled with wonder.

1c: Community impressions

This research process generated a much greater awareness of the breadth and diversity that exist within the Métis community, outside of that found in the formal membership of the Métis Nation of Alberta. It also produced an awareness in me of the complex ways people identify with and speak about their identity and heritage. For myself, I carefully and intentionally seek out connections within this community.

I make a point to speak of my Métis heritage, ensuring that others can hear the pride in my voice. I am surprised how many others, whom I have known for so long, share with me that they are Métis or Indigenous. We have free flowing conversations about being Métis or Indigenous, the gifts that it brings, the challenges that our ancestors faced, and the trials that are still present in our communities. I sense a feeling of comfort or connection between us, and it has led to some critical moments of advocacy for Indigenous persons in the workplace and in my personal circle. I am surprised by how many times I have to stand my ground and be a source of education for others. I feel empowered to do so, though, by that necessity and by the community connections I have made.

The phenomenon of Métis families hiding their ancestry and later rekindling their connection to their Métis heritage is common, even within my own circle. Two families I grew up with are also Métis. I began to understand that the pull to discover more about my ancestry and culture is intrinsic, it feels so much *bigger than myself.* This journey inserts voice and analysis into our collective lives. Interestingly, one member from each family has a master's or is pursuing a PhD in Indigenous related studies. I connect with their innate drive to learn more about their ancestral roots.

This process highlighted the importance of collectivity for me. Individual experiences are enhanced by the encouragement of a caring community and many experiences are not meant to be solitary but shared with others. The community leans on one another, teaches, supports and helps them to grow. Just like the trees of a forest, that grow close to each other, leaning on one another during storms for stability, their

branches steadying one another with intermingling root systems for support in the ground. I, too, have found a forest of supportive beings to encourage this journey.

A close friend of mine is Treaty First Nations (maternal side) and Métis (paternal side). This research experience has opened up a dialogue for us that we did not have before. We have discovered an opportunity to unite through the shared experience of reconnection to our Indigenous roots. Although we knew our ancestry, we did not talk about it much. Now, we have started to share resources and teachings with one another. She too is pulled to discover the knowledge that was lost to her family when her Grandmother was forced into the residential school system and traditions were never passed down to her Mother.

Being on this journey for knowledge with my friend, with our children in tow, with true intentions and sound hearts, I learned that the shared experience brings people together and strengthens our bonds. We feel the same in many ways, yearning for more, but respectful and patient. I journaled about this: *So, what if we lean on each other? We talk about attending events with our kids and learning together… I look forward to that.*

1d: Guilt, privilege, loss and reclamation

It was deeply challenging to uncover the depth of the trauma inflicted on children and families impacted by the genocide of Indigenous people in Canada, and this generated feelings of sadness, guilt, privilege, and loss. During the immersion phase of this research, on September 30th, 2021, Canadians acknowledged *Orange Shirt Day*, (Orange Shirt Day Society, 2019) which has become the *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* (Government of Canada, 2021). This is a day to recognize that "Every Child Matters" in the spirit of truth and reconciliation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) has issued ninety-four calls to action that apply to all levels of Governments, churches, child-welfare workers, educators, healthcare providers, and businesses. They call all Canadians to acknowledge the harms inflicted upon Indigenous peoples and work towards ensuring that the horrors of the residential school system will never be repeated.

In the months before, the unmarked graves of hundreds of Indigenous children were found at abandoned residential schools across the country, and these discoveries confirmed the fears of many communities and families - that their loved ones perished at

the hands of the people running the schools and churches. This made September 30th a particularly difficult day as many came together to mourn so many lives lost.

Métis families who are part of the "le grand silence," are people who are rediscovering their Métis heritage because previous generations did not pass down traditions out of fear of persecution (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021). Often this rediscovery is accompanied with guilt. This guilt comes from the recognition of the privileges associated with being able to pass as white or as being of strictly European descent. The trauma that was inflicted on those during the time was unimaginable and I empathize and recognize the difficult decisions made to protect their families. Too many experienced the horrors of the residential schools' genocide. Thousands and thousands of Indigenous, First Nations, Métis and Inuit children never returned home. With a government mandate to "kill the Indian in the child," (Hanson, et al., 2020) they succeeded in the darkest way possible.

For children who did return home, family life could be very difficult. Their familial language may have been erased, so there was possible isolation when they returned to their communities. Their parents, in many cases, had also endured the trauma of being sent to residential schools which many times led to generations of families whose parents did not have direct guidance and models of how to raise a family. That being said, there are many stories of healing and love within Indigenous communities, where people came together to rebuild and strengthen ties once again despite the odds. Indigenous families are well-known for having close bonds with aunties, uncles, cousins, and family Elders, all who often step in and assist in raising children.

Indigenous people have a history defined by unspeakable acts of genocide. Yet, they also have a history of enduring determination and resilience. The more research I did, the more emotions I felt all at once… sadness, anger, confusion, empathy, distrust, pride, and love. I felt sorrow for all the families who missed out on learning from their ancestors, and I also realized the breadth of this. This experience was the same for thousands and thousands of Indigenous persons. Countless First Nations, Inuit and Métis persons were never given the chance to learn from their direct relations.

This was echoed in conversations I had with other Métis or First Nations persons, who feel a disconnect from their culture due to the burden of residential schools,

fraudulent land scripts, and/or government restrictions on Indigenous customs and traditions. In the aftermath, it became very clear that so many of the sentiments are the same. One cannot learn from the generation before if they were never taught the customs and traditions. This journey has opened, for me, a dialogued with my Métis family and First Nations friends who have the same thirst for ancestral knowledge. With this comes the realization that we must search outside of our own immediate families for this knowledge. Importantly, I now know that this is alright. Having to seek out this knowledge does not make us less Métis or Indigenous. It does not make our children less Métis or Indigenous. Our ancestors remain the same. Our roots remain the same. This realization has been liberating. I continue to strengthen existing friendships, form new connections in the Métis-Indigenous community, and learn from Elders to guide me on my path.

2: Learning from the Inside-Out

In this section, I explicate the sources of learning and connections available to me as I explored my Métis ancestry. All of the following are considered internal sources including myself, my family and my ancestors. Their critical role in my learning process will be discussed at length.

2a: The Self: Early memories and sense of knowing

Some of the most powerful insights from this process came from within; perhaps surprising in some ways, but a finding that drew me back to a vital defining childhood experience as a way of understanding these insights. My connection to the land is more powerful and life-giving than I knew. Also, perhaps, more significantly, this vital connection has, and is being, passed down to my children; something I have observed as I walk through nature alongside them.

Early memories of my childhood include a lot of time playing in nature. I often played alone and walked through the trails in the trees. I have very distinct memories of talking to the trees and water, the wind, the sun and Mother Earth. I have a memory, *or was it a vision?* of knowing that I had Indigenous roots when I was very young. I was in the yard, and the wind was blowing my hair, I was running with my dog and looking for frogs. I was having a perfect day. And I was so grateful. I remember standing up, closing my eyes and feeling the wind on my face. *And I knew.* I reflected on this experience: *I*

knew that all living things had a spirit within them as a child. Is this ancestral knowledge? I was quite young at the time. Was this my ancestors or the spirits speaking to me? I think so. I am grateful that I was quiet enough back then to listen.

I have learned to trust my innate sense of knowing, to quiet the doubt that creeps up in my mind. I have discovered that my profound connection to the land emerges in my improvisations and music-making. As with a heightened musical experience, a person can enter an alternate level of consciousness, and this often happens for me during improvisations and free-form song writing. Within these music-making experiences, I am often found in nature or connected to some element of nature. Nearly all of the songs I write have elements of nature included in them and the connectedness I feel to Mother Earth is very grounding and peaceful. When I do not spend enough time outside, I find myself growing anxious and irritable. There is a sense of knowing within me that calls me to be in nature.

I have noticed the same in my own children. After a few minutes in the trees, any sour moods fade away and my sweet natured children return to me. I wrote this poem after a walk in the woods with my children:

The trees whisper to us as we walk beside them.
Their little hands in mind.
They return to me as our feet pass over the grass.
Thank you to the wind for the sweet air it brings.

The sun shines on our skin, keeping it warm.
The stories flow from their lips.
We stop to throw stones in the water.
The ripples cast out circles.

Can you hear the blackbird sing?
What's your favourite song it brings?
I knew you'd help to calm our waters.
A mother can turn to Mother Earth.

2b: Family history and discovery

Family history and discovery has been the most surprising and moving result of this research process. It has strengthened connections between us as family, and it has strengthened ties between us and our ancestors. My cousins, my mother, and my aunt have explored our ancestry, and these have deepened our family connections.

My cousin, Shelley, discovered that our relative, Malcolm Norris (1900-1967), (my great-great Uncle) was a highly influential figure in Métis history. He was the vice-president of the first Métis Nation of Alberta, then named "*Association des Métis Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest,"* which was established in 1932 (Metis Nation of Alberta, 2021). Many of the books on Métis history that I read spoke of Malcolm Norris (Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Harrison, 1985; Purich, 1988; Weinstein, 2007). He was a lifelong member and supporter of the Métis people and an activist, fighting for the rights of the Métis people, usually centred around land rights, education and poverty (Weinstein, 2007). He was an impressive orator in English, French and Cree, often being the spokesperson for the Métis association (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2021). I so wished I could have met him. I believe we share the same fire.

This has powerfully impacted my journey because it renewed my spirit and strengthened my resolve to keep exploring my ancestry and culture. I believe Norris would not have dedicated his life to the advocacy of Métis rights and advancement of the Métis people if he did not want future family generations to learn about and carry forward the traditional teachings and knowledge of the Métis people. Norris' story deeply resonates with me. Somehow it was lost along the way. We do not know the circumstances around that. Maybe we will never know. However, we can start to pick up the pieces and learn once again.

I've learned to ask the questions to get the answers I need because family bonds provide meaningful avenues of connection. After my cousin discovered our ties to the Red River Valley, our family connection felt deeper because we now know so much more about our history. Prior to this, there was a gap in our knowledge which is now being filled with rich history and culture.

Additional historical sources found by family members indicate that we are 11th generation Canadians. It has been empowering to learn our ancestors' names. This knowledge shifts and strengthens our ties to one another, our community and one's self.

3: The Extended Journey

In this category, I acknowledge and explain that this journey is an ongoing process. My exploration of ancestry has impacted how I experience the world in profound ways. Similarly, and perhaps most importantly, it has shaped my sense of belonging,

connection, and spirituality; and in response, it has prompted me to offer creative expressions of my experience.

3a: Sense of belonging and commitment

I will always be a beginner, because the Creator has more to teach me than I could ever learn. But, perhaps good students always know there is more to learn. This deepening sense of belonging was inevitably complicated by the work that continually needs to be done to dismantle oppression, both internally and in the world in general. I have a commitment to continue to learn about my family ancestry, Métis culture, ways of knowing, and to the important work of unlearning colonial and oppressive ways.

I have given myself permission to take my time to engage in deeper learning. I have a sense of belonging. I feel more connected to my community and my family. I feel better equipped to have conversations with others regarding Indigenous matters and to stand up against injustice because I have a better understanding of the issues.

In my reflections I wrote: *I found a sense of belonging. Not with specific people as I thought I was going to, but within myself*. I made a connection with people whom I found within the literature, within history, and most importantly, within the history of my own family. I learned about the ways of knowing within my culture. I wrote: *I know that I am treading rather softly on this journey*. I hope this shows my reverence and respect for those around me, including my ancestors.

3b: Creative expression: connection and validation

Art allows for connection between people in a very meaningful way. Métis artists use their platform to make their voices heard, and I listen. Many times, throughout the Illumination phase, when I felt connected to an artist, they felt like kin. They would share their world with me, and I would admire their artwork – their beading, their painting, their music. And I was so grateful for their creative expression. This is such a rich culture where artistic expression is highly celebrated.

In the Illumination phase of Moustakas heuristic inquiry (1990), I spent many hours admiring the works of Métis artists, including visual artist Christi Belcourt (2021), JUNO winning musician Celeigh Cardinal (2020), and many others. As a creative person myself, I felt very connected to their artistic contributions and continued to seek out more Métis individuals in the art world. I was pleasantly surprised by how many Métis artists

there were and how many there were of renown. I also made a commitment to myself to continue to seek out more Métis and Indigenous artists.

My own creative expression was validated by increased engagement with Métis art forms. This included my personal attraction to references of nature in my song writing. I used to be highly aware of it and tried to avoid the references because I thought my song writing would be oversaturated with descriptions of nature. Now I embrace the creative process because I see it as my connection to Mother Earth, my spirituality and my creative expression and connectivity with the culture itself.

During the Illumination phase, I found myself journaling instead of song writing. This was surprising because I consider myself, primarily, a musician. Again, themes of nature and Mother Earth were prevalent. Song writing often happens very quickly for me; the melodies come quickly, and lyrics are often repeated structures, built upon the chosen melodic framework. Sometimes, I get caught up in the excitement of the sounds and before I know it, the song is written. I hardly remember the experience. However, writing poetry normally has a slower pace. It feels more intentional, more grounded, more of an intentional experience. I slow down and choose my words with more intent. There was a feeling of sacredness or ceremony within which I could support deeper and more intentional reflection.

3c: Spiritual connectivity

Like many people, I wrestle with my spirituality. I have learned many things as a Catholic; many things I will always appreciate and carry with me. However, there are many aspects that I am increasingly rejecting. The connection of the church to genocide, child abuse and residential schools, the doctrines around a woman's right to govern her own body and the church's views on LGBTQ2S+ rights, in particular, have been in tension with my own moral code. I learned that I cannot have a harsh set of doctrines dictate my spirituality. In fact, that turns me away further. Anytime a religion made any person feel mediocre or less-than because of who they were, it cemented my personal stance, in order to feel a spiritual connection, I need openness, time to process, gentleness and a grounding connection with nature.

During this process, as I searched for a deeper sense of spirituality, there were important times when I found it. They included: time spent in nature; time spent while

smudging or in prayer or meditation; time spent in song or listening to music; and time spent writing poetry. A journal entry I wrote in relation to taking time for reflection speaks of allowing time for prayer or meditation. It has many elements of nature within it and includes a gentle reminder to listen to the natural world as it is there to guide us.

Stay a while.
Build a fire.
Breathe it in.
Let it out.

See the wolf moon.
It shares its wisdom.
Listen closely.

Stay a while.
Build a fire.
Breathe it in.
Let it out.

If I can listen to the wisdom that is found in Mother Earth and be patient with the process, my spiritual journey will continue to take me down enriching paths of discovery. Discovery of ancestral knowledge, tucked safely away, only to be revealed when my guides know it is time for it to be presented. I feel connected to God the Creator in a way that I haven't in a very long time. I feel the presence of my ancestors all around me. And for this I am grateful. *Ninanâskomon*. All my relations.

I still yearn for a deeper knowledge of Indigenous traditions. Perhaps I always will. This internal tension has generated a search for a spiritual belonging. Informed by a deeper understanding of Métis spirituality and rituals, it calls me to carry on. I have always considered myself a spiritual person; I have a belief system that there is a higher power and that our ancestors play a great role in our time on earth. I may not understand exactly what that means, but my exploration into my Métis ancestry and culture has provided me with insight that has begun to fill a spiritual space. One of the main reasons for this research was to discover new ways to connect with my ancestral spirituality. This journey has allowed me to feel more spiritually connected than I have in a very long time. When it comes to the spiritual side of the Métis ways of knowing, you cannot learn these things from a book. However, there is an intrinsic way of knowing that guides me to believe that I will find all the answers I need as I require them.

I have become aware that I grapple with having an innate sense of knowing while also feeling I can never learn enough. This inherent tension comes from knowing that the more I learn, the more there is to learn, that the more we are in connection, the more connections we will make. This is not a journey that will have a beginning or an end.

All of these insights and analysis have given me a new perspective on my relationship with my Métis family, community, and self; and I have a deeper awareness of how I connect with my spirituality. I examined learning sources from outside of myself, including those found in history, literature, the community, and the land. Next, I turned inward and discovered how my own sense of knowing, ancestral knowledge, and family held vital keys to my learning. Finally, the journey of exploration continued by examining my spiritual connectivity, sense of belonging, commitment to learning, and creative connection. This creative connection to the world will be further explored in a creative synthesis where I will use a culmination of my experiences of the study and construct them into a creative expression.

Chapter 5. Mâmiskôtamakew (Discussion)

The final stage of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry is to complete a creative synthesis. This is an accumulation of the research and processes, where all are creatively conceptualized. The final chapter of this thesis describes the process of the creative synthesis and includes an imbedded file of the final project. Limitations and implications of the study are also included. Finally, suggestions for further research are offered.

Creative Synthesis

The connection to nature was an ever-prevalent theme throughout the research process, both personally and within the Métis culture. Nature themes always came through during poetry writing and in any visualizations that accompanied meditations. When working to encompass the research experience creatively, it felt natural to use a metaphor of nature to share my experience. At the beginning of the research, I knew that I had a strong desire to create a multi-media project that included both visual paintings and digital photography.

On the day scheduled for the painting portion of the project, I arranged for my children to go with their Grandmother so I could have uninterrupted time. I had limited time to accomplish my goal which was an uneasy feeling. When I took my kids to my Mother's, I talked with her about painting. She is a very talented painter, although she is humble about her talents. She lent me brushes and paints, and we talked about the process and about how I would achieve my goal. I felt really fortunate to have her to lean on for so many reasons.

As I prepared to paint on that day, I smudged the room and my tools with white sage, washing it over all parts of myself, asking for a clear mind, eyes to see the goodness in others, a kind heart, and creative hands to express all that I had learned over the past few months. I felt I needed that smudge that day more than I had ever needed a smudge before. Work had been particularly difficult in the days leading up to, and including, my creative synthesis day and it was weighing heavily on my mind. I asked my ancestors and the spirits to take away the negativity that felt heavy on my shoulders so I could be creative. I prepared my space by laying out the brushes, paints, water and my canvas and marking its spot on the table. I set up the iPad on its stand, so that it hung face-down, directly over top of the canvas, which lay on the table. I organized the lighting so that

each digital picture that the iPad took was even, although the sun was changing throughout the day.

Then I sat and looked at the canvas. In time, a wolf looked back at me. As I painted, I took pictures of the process every few minutes, or when there was enough of a change in the picture to be recognizable. In the end, I had a painting of the face of a grey and black wolf, with sky blue eyes. The face in front of a bright cyan blue background. The wolf has only the right side fully painted, and the left is swiped away in paint brush strokes of black, grey and white.

Image Description: A grey and black wolf, with sky blue eyes on a cyan blue background. The wolf has only the right side fully visible, as the left side is swiped away in paint stokes of black, grey and white. The artists signature, Kelsi McInnes, is located in the bottom right corner.

Next, I edited these pictures and used software called Canva ®, iMovie ® and GarageBand ® to create a multi-media video combining the photos, special effects and

the following poetry with composed music and poetry recitation and singing. (See Appendix A). The title of this multi-media project is *Resilient Sister Wolf*.

Grey hair and gentle touch
Can you see your kôhkom now?

I'll teach you how to braid your hair
And bake your bannock bread

I waited for you to come my way
I'm so glad you found me now

We waited for you to find this path
The spirits lit the way

Sister wolf she howled for you
Brother crow he cawed

We whispered and we knew you'd come
Like the rising of the sun

Rest your head and close your eyes
The tears you cry are also ours

So many years we've longed for you
Waiting in the stars

Passing down the stories now
Feel it in your bones

The moon it shines on for us
And you and yours to come

It was fascinating to me how quickly this poem was written and how much emotion was expressed while writing it. All other poetry I had written during the study had been written at a slower pace, however this poem flowed swiftly. I had a physiological reaction to the writing as well including shivers at the back of my neck and shoulder and happy tears of connection and peace. It was a very cathartic experience, really, and I finished the poem feeling very light.

Resilient Sister Wolf signifies a journey with the Métis people. It tells my story as a Métis woman. It is the journey of the Métis people as a nation. The journey is resilient like a wolf yet complicated in the swiping away of tradition and culture. It is beautiful

and majestic yet blurred by stereotypes and misinformation. It is dark like the history of what happened to the Métis-Indigenous people yet bright with the future of those who want to embrace their honoured traditions. There is a story to hear, if only we all stop and listen.

Assumptions and Limitations

There were three key assumptions that formed the foundation of this study. First, I assumed that Métis history and healing customs, music and art traditions, and ways of knowing are an important part of past and present Métis culture. I also assumed that the Canadian music therapy community has limited resources and knowledge regarding Métis music and culture. Finally, I assumed that the Canadian music therapy community wants to learn more about Métis culture.

Potential limitations of this research included that English was the primary language for literature and written sources; however, there are some phrases or words that were shared in other Indigenous languages, including: Cree, Ojibwe, Salteaux and the Métis language of Michif, a language combining the dialects of French, Cree or Ojibwe (Goulet & Goulet, 2006) that were translated to English. There was, therefore, potential for some meaning to have been lost in translation. Due to the duration and length of the master's thesis and the deeply personal nature of this methodology, it is improbable that this exploration encompasses the full breadth of this topic. Additionally, this being my first research study of this extent utilizing this methodology is a potential limitation; however, I do bring extensive professional experience as a certified music therapist. Importantly, the unpredictable and fluid imposition of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions meant there were limited opportunities to access specific cultural experiences.

I would like to address some factors that affected the research and what I would do differently given the opportunity. As my connection to the spiritual world grew only after significant research and time in ceremony was completed, I would establish a ritual near the beginning of the Immersion phase, perhaps a regular smudge and a prayer or song to finish the day. I would do these at random or when I felt they were needed; however, I did not have a regularly set time. In retrospect, I feel this may have helped to guide the process and offer a sense of grounding during the study.

Next, studying any culture within such confined parameters is extremely challenging. The breadth of history alone would have been enough to fill the requirements for the thesis. Additionally, an Indigenous methodology may have been more appropriate since I was studying Indigenous ways of knowing and being. There are many Indigenous methodologies, including Metis-specific methodologies (Fiola, 2021) which I would explore for future research.

Although I had excellent encouragement with dependable family, friends and peers, it is suggested to have regular supervision and/or counselling with a trusted source of support. While I'd like to say I was exempt from bringing my work stress home with me, I would be remiss. I found balancing the research, home-life and full-time work in the healthcare setting highly stressful which likely, at times, took away from my research experience.

Personal Implications

Family bonding. This research has allowed me to feel closer to my immediate family, my own children and Mother, as well as my extended family who also share in this Métis ancestry. While learning new facts about our family history or the Métis culture, it felt natural to share them with my family. This became a source of connection for us and we have continually bonded over the knowledge shared.

Knowledge and insight. This increase in knowledge produced remarkable insight about the Métis culture. It also supported important learning about other Indigenous cultures and traditions. One can only truly understand a culture and its people when they have decolonized knowledge and history as a foundation. The insights gained allowed me to have an increased appreciation for the people of my community, their resilience, and their passion for life.

Sense of belonging. Through the research, discovery, and connections made, I have found a deeper sense of belonging within my Métis culture. This stems from a sense of validation within myself and acceptance of my own place within the history and future of the Métis people.

Spiritual awareness. Allowing myself the space and time to process my past relationships with organized religion and to begin to restructure the idea of spirituality has given me a newfound awareness of my own spirituality and the qualities that I

embrace as sacred. It has renewed my spirit in many ways, reaffirming my spiritual connection with nature, music and art – confirming that for me, these give me strength, hope, joy and a sense of connection to a higher power.

Potential Clinical Implications

Cultural awareness. As clinicians become more informed about any culture, they increase their understanding and thus, their sensitivity which allows for a deeper therapeutic relationship to form. This understanding includes being aware of all aspects of a client's being including their spirituality, ways of knowing, language, norms, and traditions. It is also important to be aware that each person's experience of their culture is an individual experience. One person's lived experience cannot be a general representation for all persons within that culture. Stereotypical generalizations are damaging to client-therapist relationships and must be avoided in order to achieve best care practices (Stuart, 2004).

Advocacy. Being an advocate is a necessary part of a professional therapeutic relationship. Make space for Indigenous voices to emerge and be heard. Reference Indigenous knowledge when you see it. Learn Indigenous knowledge from Indigenous sources. Be an ally to Indigenous people in Canada by learning complete history of the Indigenous people of Canada and reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) Calls to Action.

Self-Care. Nature offers us models of balance in order to maintain wellness. When we fall out of balance with the earth, then our spirit suffers. We must learn and practice self-care techniques so that we can offer our clients sessions that are of quality. In order to do that, we must be functioning well mentally, physically and emotionally. Taking time to connect with nature, being in mediation, prayer, playing music and creating art have been personal means of self-care that I have found effective during this research experience.

Education and Training

Given the geographic expanse of Indigenous persons living in Canada, it is vital for additional Indigenous education to be offered within all music therapy programs. All persons living in Canada would benefit from increased knowledge on the subject of Indigenous culture and history. It is especially important to learn about the genocide of

Indigenous people committed through the residential school system. The truth and reconciliation calls to action are also vital sources of learning and they call us to learn about the impact residential schools have had on Indigenous-settler relationships. Without a clear understanding of Indigenous history and the impacts ancestral trauma continues to hold on Indigenous families, it is difficult to form a healthy client-therapist relationship, as there are still stigma and mistrust that must be dismantled and repaired. If the therapist were to come to the table with an open and educated mind, this would speak to the willingness to collaborate and move forward for the client's well-being.

Additionally, it is important that as a profession we have access to information such as using terminology such as Two-Spirit appropriately, and only with Indigenous individuals of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. As clinicians we need to be current and relevant with issues that matter most to our clients.

As a profession that shares many commonalities in healing customs, we are called to bring Indigenous ways of knowing to the centre of our work. Doing so with respect for and sensitivity to the unique and complicated history of Métis peoples, as they, like many Indigenous communities, have many stereotypes to dismantle, from both white settlers and within our own community. This increased mindfulness will not only help to expand the consciousness of the Eurocentric trainings of the music therapy beginnings but will allow for further decolonization of practices going forward.

Research

There is a need for more research to be conducted with Indigenous knowledge at the centre. Therefore, there is an abundance of opportunity for potential research in this field. Again, there needs to be increased work around cultural appropriation, especially around the sacredness of some ceremonies and the caution that would need to be used to ensure that there is no violation of any terms. All studies would need to pass the stringent guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy: Ethical Considerations for Research Involving Humans, Ch 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis People of Canada* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018)

This experience of exploring my Métis ancestry has resulted in some significant transformations in my life. This research has produced a knowledge that has reshaped my own understanding of the Métis people in history and particularly those within my own

family. Not only do I feel a deeper connection to my own family, community, and culture, but to my spiritual self as well, feeling closer to the Creator and Mother Earth after this experience of learning.

Concluding Remarks

My exploration of my Métis ancestry has taught me about honour. To honour my innate connection to the earth. The beauty and balance that I witness in Mother Earth is a direct reflection of my own spirit. It is imperative that I strive for balance as a way to honour, not only myself, but all my relations and ancestors. My exploration has taught me to honour the ancestral knowledge around me, and within me, and recognize the obligation I have to pass this knowledge on in this world. To dismantle barriers and rebuild anew, always learning and re-learning in the spirit of advocacy and growth. Finally, my exploration has taught me to honour my spirituality. It is a personal relationship with the Creator and Mother Earth, and it will grow into whatever it was intended to be. Spirit guides and Elders are here to support me on this journey.

With everything we have learned, we must acknowledge there is still much work to be done in Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, where education and awareness need to remain at the forefront. I recognize that each person's individual journey plays an integral role in deconstructing the established Eurocentric paradigms. This will continue in my own practice as I expand my own therapeutic framework. The call to action remains for the music therapy profession to support reconceptualizing music therapy with an Indigenous ways of knowing framework. The music therapy community in Canada plays a significant role in this as they continue the decolonization of music therapy educational and training programs. I am filled with hope that as healers, music therapists can be pivotal players in the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing within their homes, work organizations, and places of learning.

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Appendix A

Multi-media Creative Synthesis Project Link:

Resilient Sister Wolf

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hxpbz7fUq-CzhUIV3kTxb_O5ZXVSoNHt/view?usp=sharing

Appendix B

Resilient Sister Wolf
By Kelsi McInnes

Grey hair and gentle touch
Can you see your kôhkom now?

I'll teach you how to braid your hair
And bake your bannock bread

I waited for you to come my way
I'm so glad you found me now

We waited for you to find this path
The spirits lit the way

Sister Wolf, she howled for you
Brother Crow, he cawed

We whispered and we knew you'd come
Like the rising of the sun

Rest your head and close your eyes
The tears you cry are also ours

So many years we've longed for you
Waiting in the stars

Passing down the stories now
Feel it in your bones

The moon it shines on for us
And you and yours to come