

# Decolonized Listening in the Archive: A Study of how a Reconstruction of Archival Processes and Spaces can Contribute to Decolonizing Narratives and Listening

By Sofie Tsatas

## Abstract

In 2019, Stó:lō writer and scholar Dylan Robinson, and Tlingit curator and artist Candice Hopkins, created *Soundings: An Exhibition in Five Parts*, asking Indigenous artists and musicians to reflect on how a score can be a tool for decolonization. In response, Indigenous artists contributed scores in the form of beadwork, graphic notation, and more, effectively challenging traditional notions of western colonial music-making and performance practices. Drawing upon the exhibit *Soundings*, as well as Robinson's book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (2020), this paper seeks to understand how to decolonize archives in ways that impact the description, preservation, and settler experience of music created by Indigenous artists. Robinson argues that by increasing our awareness of and acknowledging our settler colonial listening habits, listeners can engage in decolonial listening practices that can deepen our understanding of how Indigenous song functions in history, medicine, and law. By centring Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship in archival settings, Indigenous musical records can be described and preserved according to Indigenous frameworks. I propose the use of content management systems such as Mukurtu and Local Contexts, as well as reparative archival description, to centre Indigenous frameworks and Traditional Knowledge in the archive. This paper also presents three case studies to demonstrate both the problematic aspects of current mainstream archival practices, as well as how Mukurtu, Local Contexts, and reparative archival description can work to centre Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship.

## Statement of Positionality

In writing this paper, I acknowledge my position as a settler and uninvited guest currently residing in Tiohtià:ke, the place known as Montreal, which is home to the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation of the Haudenosaunee, and is historically and presently known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I also acknowledge my role as a settler discussing Indigenous Knowledge and decolonization in this paper and the space I hold in doing so. For this reason, I will be mostly quoting and referring to Indigenous writers and

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scholars whose work I reflect on in this research. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how settler archivists working with Indigenous records and materials in colonial archival institutions can work to reconstruct archival practices, and as such, the writing is aimed primarily at this audience. Throughout this paper, I use the word “we” to refer to both myself and archivists who wish to reconstruct archival practices and work towards decolonizing archival approaches. In order to more fully understand ways in which we can decolonize archival practices, I recommend reading the works of the Indigenous authors cited in this paper.

## Introduction

In 1985, *Delgamuukw v. the Queen*, a land claim trial by the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en, sought for sovereignty of their territories in Northern British Columbia.<sup>1</sup> While much oral history was used throughout the trial, most significant was when Mary Johnson, Gitksan hereditary chief Antgulilix, sang a limx oo’y (a lament) “associated with her adaawk (formal, ancient, collectively owned oral history).”<sup>2</sup> As Robinson explains in *Hungry Listening*, the limx oo’y functions as Indigenous legal order and is considered a “documentation” of the law according to the Gitksan.<sup>3</sup> After the plaintiff’s counsel (Mr. Grant) announced that Mary Johnson would be singing this song as evidence in the trial, Justice McEachern responded:

Could it not be written out and asked if this is the wording? Really, we are on the verge of getting way off track here, Mr. Grant. Again, I don’t want to be sceptical [sic], but to have to witness singing songs in court is in my respectful view not the proper way to approach this problem.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Grant proceeded to explain the function of the limx oo’y, that it is a death song that invokes the history of the land claim. Justice McEachern allowed Johnson to sing the song in court. Following her invocation of history and law, McEachern responded:

All right Mr. Grant, would you explain to me, because this may happen again, why you think it was necessary to sing the song? This is a trial, not a performance...It is not necessary in a matter of this kind for that song to have been sung, and I think that I must say now that I ought not to have been exposed to it. I don’t think it should happen again. I think I’m being imposed upon and I don’t think that should happen in a trial like this...<sup>5</sup>

Despite the plaintiff’s counsel continuously describing the function of the song as Indigenous legal order, Justice McEachern refused to allow it as evidence or to even acknowledge the song as legitimate.<sup>6</sup> Rather, he saw it as an attempt to win him over, conflating the song as an “aesthetic

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<sup>1</sup> Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Hungry Listening*, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 44

performance” that does not belong in a court of law.<sup>7</sup> McEachern’s response is indicative of the lack of understanding of the song as anything other than aesthetic. In the settler courtroom, Gitksan legal order was not accepted as a form of legitimacy. Rather, according to Robinson, the song was viewed as an attempt to please the judge because he could only hear it through a western perspective of what songs should mean and in which contexts they should take place in, namely and solely as aesthetic performances. This is a blatant refusal of Gitksan law.<sup>8</sup>

In 2019, Stó:lō writer and scholar Dylan Robinson and Tlingit curator and artist Candice Hopkins began touring their exhibition titled *Soundings: An Exhibition in Five Parts*, which asks “How can a score be a call and tool for decolonization?” In response to this question, Indigenous artists contributed scores in the form of beadwork, graphic notation, written instructions, and other works that offer “instructions for sensing and listening to Indigenous histories that trouble the colonial imaginary.”<sup>9</sup> Or, ones that refuse colonial ways of composing and listening. Drawing upon the exhibit *Soundings*, as well as Robinson’s book *Hungry Listening* (2020), this paper seeks to understand how to decolonize archives in ways that impact the description, preservation, and settler experience of music created by Indigenous artists. *Hungry Listening* argues that by increasing our awareness of, and acknowledging, our settler colonial listening habits, listeners can engage in decolonial listening practices that can deepen our understanding of how Indigenous song functions in history, medicine, and law.<sup>10</sup> By centring Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship in archival settings, Indigenous musical records can be described and preserved according to Indigenous frameworks. This involves adopting a community-based archival approach that critically resists and refuses western colonial archival practices, and instead focuses on reconstruction in order to reflect an Indigenous worldview. To reconstruct, we must first dismantle. I echo the calls for action of Indigenous writers,<sup>11</sup> and propose a dismantling of mainstream archival practices when it comes to archiving Indigenous records and reconstructing those practices according to Indigenous-led approaches to record-keeping, including, but not limited to, reparative archival description. I specifically propose implementing content management systems such as Mukurtu and Local Contexts to archival practices as they centre Indigenous worldviews. This paper also provides three case studies to demonstrate both the harmful implications of current mainstream archival processes, and how Mukurtu, Local Contexts, and reparative archival description can be used to centre Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship. In this way settler archivists working in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Dylan Robinson and Candice Hopkins, “Soundings: An Exhibition in Five Parts,” Independent Curators International Exhibitions, 2019-2021, <https://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/soundings>

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, 46-47.

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer R. O’Neal, “From Time Immemorial: Centering Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in the Archival Paradigm,” in *Afterlives of Indigenous Archives*, eds. Ivy Schweitzer and Gordon Henry Jr., (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2019); Sandra Littletree and Cheryl A. Metoyer, “Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, 5-6 (2015); Robin R.R. Gray, “Repatriation and Decolonization: Thoughts on Ownership, Access, and Control,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Repatriation*, eds. Frank Gunderson, Robert C. Lancefield, and Bret Woods (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

mainstream archival institutions can work to decolonize the ways in which archivists and researchers listen to and understand Indigenous music in the archive.

## A Note on Language

The ways in which we write and say things have an impact. Language is critical and so, in this paper, the term *resurgence* is used in place of *reconciliation* when it comes to describing current and ongoing decolonial practices. Tharonhianén:te Barnes writes that reconciliation “implies that whatever injustice was committed is in the past – and is not happening today.”<sup>12</sup> It implies that organizations and governments are trying to atone for wrongs committed throughout history but not the ones currently taking place. On the other hand, resurgence offers “community-centered actions premised on reconnecting with land, culture and community.”<sup>13</sup> It is the action of giving up space for Indigenous communities to have control over their own livelihoods and culture.<sup>14</sup> Archival resurgence is the action of giving up space for Indigenous communities to have control over the potential preservation and dissemination of their records.

Additionally, when the term *ownership* is used, it refers to the ways in which settlers have assumed possession of the land. Alternatively, in discussion of decolonization and resurgence, this paper refers to Indigenous peoples as reaffirming *stewardship*, not *ownership*, over the land. Shawnee/Yuchi/Quapaw/Cherokee activist Melanin Mvskoke notes that there is a difference between the terms.<sup>15</sup> Stewardship refers to taking care of something. In this case, Indigenous peoples care for their land and culture and are the primary caregivers of it. Alternatively, settlers do not so much as take care of the land as they assert ownership and control over it. In other words, ownership is a western colonial construct and will only be used in this paper when describing western colonial contexts of archiving and copyright.

## Hungry Listening

### Concept

According to Dylan Robinson, “Hungry Listening” comes from two Halq’emélem words which he placed together: *shxwelitemelh*, which is the adjective for “white person’s methods,” and *xwelala:m* which is the word for “listening.”<sup>16</sup> The first word, *shxwelitemelh*, comes from the word *xwelitem*, which means “starving person.” Thus, “placed together, *shxwelitemelh xwalala:m* / ‘Hungry listening’ names settler colonial forms of perception.”<sup>17</sup> Robinson writes that his book “focuses on a range of encounters between Indigenous song and western art music (also

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<sup>12</sup> Tharonhianén:te Barnes, “Is It Too Late to Decolonize?” *Journal of School and Society* 7, no. 1 (2021): 111.

<sup>13</sup> Jeff Corntassel, “Re-envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-Determination,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 92, as cited in Barnes, “Is It Too Late to Decolonize?” 111.

<sup>14</sup> Barnes, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Melanin Mvskoke (@melaninmvskoke), “Indigenous peoples are stewards of our ancestral lands. We are not landlords,” Instagram photo, March 28, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CM-hnEArfeC/>

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-5.

called classical music or concert music) [...]. It examines how we listen to such encounters in the moment of their sounding, and how writing [music] allows certain moments of sonic experience to be heard while foreclosing upon others.”<sup>18</sup> Hungry Listening is a settler influence over how music is heard and engaged with. Robinson’s writing suggests that if we can acknowledge our Hungry Listening (our settler colonial listening habits), then we can begin to critically reflect on how we listen to and engage with music, effectively challenging colonial methods of music-making and performance.

Beginning in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, classical music organizations and composers began to collaborate with Indigenous artists, musicians, and singers.<sup>19</sup> One notable example is Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq performing with the Kronos Quartet in both 2006 and 2008. While the point of these collaborations was to signal an inclusionary performance practice, Robinson argues that “Indigenous performers and artists have been structurally accommodated in ways that ‘fit’ them into classical composition and performance systems.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, although these performances collaborate with Indigenous artists, the structure of these concerts are based in western colonial spaces and ways of music-making.<sup>21</sup> For example, the music ensemble on stage with the audience facing them and only clapping at socially acceptable moments are western colonial constructs of listening and performing. Performances of classical music in the settler state of Canada see Indigenous music as an *addition* to “concert music performance[s] or ontologies of music-making,” rather than as a structure or logic of that performance.<sup>22</sup> Tanya Tagaq stated that her experiences in performing with classical musicians felt like “being part of projects where my voice would be used as an ingredient in someone else’s stew.”<sup>23</sup> While these collaborations were initially intended to be inclusive, they often end up becoming a colonial endeavour against Indigenous logics and structures of performance and listening.

Similarly, Alexina Louie’s chamber ensemble piece *Take the Dog Sled* (2007), which was made in collaboration with Inuit throat singers Evie Mark and Akinisie Sivuarapik, integrates notated throat singing, despite the fact that throat singing is not traditionally notated. Rather, it relies heavily on improvisation, “a key aspect of throat singing as a game.”<sup>24</sup> Louie instructed the throat singers to begin and end at the same time as the musicians in the chamber ensemble, which disallowed “the distinctive and typical conclusion to the throat singing when one singer loses the game, resulting in laughter between the two singers.”<sup>25</sup> In essence, the classical rigidity of the piece did not allow space to centre traditional Inuit aspects. When the piece premiered in Toronto in 2009, the performance was structured in a western classical setting, where the throat singers neither faced each other, made eye contact, nor held each other’s arms to move together, which are all

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the music ensemble on stage with the audience facing them and only clapping at socially acceptable moments are western colonial constructs of listening and performing.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

distinctive traits of traditional Inuit throat singing.<sup>26</sup> At another performance, Evie Mark was asked by a member of the audience about her performance and whether her throat singing was different from the way in which she would throat sing “at home,” to which Mark responded: “My grandmother would be angry if she saw us singing this way.”<sup>27</sup> Robinson makes the point that, similar to Tagaq’s performances with the Kronos Quartet, Mark and Sivuarapik were only seen as a cultural addition to a western classical music setting, where their bodies were constrained and the notation of the throat singing content was re-made into a western/colonial perspective. Mark’s and Sivuarapik’s throat singing was “remade in the image of the classical music ensemble, their voices [becoming] simply another aspect of the composer’s palette.”<sup>28</sup> In most cases, classical music performances are not grounded in Indigenous ways of music-making. Robinson writes that “Indigenous logics, as structures rather than content, are generally not considered in the everyday operations of music performance, compositional practice, and listening.”<sup>29</sup> In response to this, Robinson asks “what if classical music performance was presented using Indigenous logics? What if we were to consider the potential of concert music to serve one of the many functions that Indigenous songs do: as law, medicine, or primary historical documentation.”<sup>30</sup> How can we restructure these performances to allow for Indigenous logics and structures to thrive? We all carry listening privileges and biases that shape our positionalities. Robinson argues that we can better understand and listen if we are aware of and acknowledge our listening positionality, what he calls our “normative listening habits and abilities.”<sup>31</sup> Collaboration between classical musicians and Indigenous artists focus on the concept of “integrating” Indigenous music into a western classical structure of performance. However, this integration is actually a means of assimilation into colonial constructs of music-making, performance, and listening.<sup>32</sup> Robinson asserts that listening to Indigenous music “may become an act of confirming ownership, rather than an act of hearing the agonism of exclusive and contested sovereignties.”<sup>33</sup> Not only do these types of concerts assimilate Indigenous music to western ways of music-making and performance, but they also assert ownership over the collaboration, as we saw with Tanya Tagaq’s performance with the Kronos Quartet, and Evie Mark’s and Akinisie Sivuarapik’s collaboration with Alexina Louie.

In relation to his book, Robinson curated the exhibit *Soundings* with Candice Hopkins, asking Indigenous artists how musical scores can be tools for decolonization. From September to December 2020, the exhibition was featured at the Belkin Art Gallery which is located on the unceded, ancestral, traditional, and current territory of the Musqueam people. Their website for the exhibit states:

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

At the core of the exhibition is a grounding in concepts of Indigenous land and territory. To move beyond the mere acknowledgment of land and territory here means offering instructions for sensing and listening to Indigenous histories that trouble the colonial imaginary. *Soundings* activates and asserts Indigenous resurgence through the actions these artworks call forth.<sup>34</sup>

If Indigenous music and scores, such as the ones featured in the exhibit, were to be placed in an archive, how could we ensure their resurgence? How can we listen without asserting ownership? How can we listen while reaffirming that Indigenous peoples are the stewards of the land and their knowledge? How can decolonized listening be applied to archival spaces and processes? And lastly, how can we set up Indigenous music while adhering to Indigenous Knowledge and Ways of Knowing? By allowing Indigenous logics and structures to be centred in performances, we can actively dismantle our colonial listening positionality and reconstruct it to allow for us to listen in a decolonial way.

## Archives and Colonialism

Cultural Heritage and Memory Institutions are grounded in western colonial structures and processes that are harmful and problematic. Notwithstanding the countless Indigenous materials that were stolen and placed in archives, archivists and other information professionals then classified, described, and preserved these records according to western colonial practices, that, similar to classical and Indigenous musical collaborations, fail to centre Indigenous structures and/or logics. Jennifer O'Neal writes that archives:

...have served as sites of power over Indigenous history, culture, and lifeways, by controlling and disseminating our history according to the repositories' interpretation, often based upon the individuals (i.e., anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, etc.) who appropriated the materials, rather than by and with Indigenous communities.<sup>35</sup>

Archives are not neutral institutions, especially when they contain Indigenous records and materials obtained without permission or consent, and when they are disconnected from the community to which they belong.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the records and materials are archival captives.<sup>37</sup> This is further compounded when taking into consideration that oftentimes, many of the Indigenous belongings currently displayed in museums or archives have names, life, or the spirits of ancestors in them.<sup>38</sup> Robinson notes that "Indigenous people have intimate kinship with these beings. As such, the fact

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<sup>34</sup> Dylan Robinson and Candice Hopkins, "Soundings: An Exhibition in Five Parts," Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://belkin.ubc.ca/exhibitions/soundings-an-exhibition-in-five-parts/>.

<sup>35</sup> O'Neal, "From Time Immemorial: Centering Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in the Archival Paradigm," 48.

<sup>36</sup> Jennifer R. O'Neal, "'The Right to Know': Decolonizing Native American Archives," *Journal of Western Archives* 6, no. 2 (2015): 2-6.

<sup>37</sup> O'Neal, "'The Right to Know'," 2-6.

<sup>38</sup> Robinson, 87.



that they are ‘held’ behind glass, in drawers, in storage might be understood in terms of containment and confinement of life.”<sup>39</sup>

Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle notes the disinheritance associated with the appropriation of Indigenous oral histories. The ethnographers and historians who recorded and stole Indigenous oral history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries profited from Indigenous knowledge by writing books or articles and then donating the stories to museums or archives.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, western copyright laws also promote colonial concepts of ownership over physical works, which ensure that the copyright owner is the person who has recorded the knowledge, not the original knowledge keeper(s).<sup>41</sup> The following passages by Maracle describe in detail an example of what this disinheritance looks like:

During the colonization of Canada, both land and knowledge were appropriated – that is, expropriated without permission from the owners. On the one hand, we were separated from our knowledge, and on the other, Europeans were entitled to appropriate the knowledge associated with the use of items they purchased. For instance, Johnny Whiteman purchases [s\*\*\*\*] vine for his wife’s menopausal condition from Lee’s gramma. He copyrights the knowledge he acquires. Lee is sent to school and cannot access her gramma’s knowledge about [s\*\*\*\*] vine while away because she is separated from her gramma and someone else owns the copyright of the information. Gramma dies while Lee is in school. Johnny Whiteman publishes a book and includes the [s\*\*\*\*] vine knowledge of Lee’s gramma, and on her return from school Lee learns that in order for her to access her gramma’s knowledge, she must purchase Johnny Whiteman’s book. She is purchasing from the appropriator access to her inheritance.<sup>42</sup>

The universities of this country own most of our knowledge, and Indigenous people must buy it back as courses. Universities are [now using Johnny Whiteman’s book] in their coursework. Researchers at the university examine the humble [s\*\*\*\*] vine and find the “active ingredient” in it, name it in Latin, and claim to have “invented” it. Now more white men are benefiting from Lee’s gramma’s knowledge while Lee is separated from the possibility of isolating the active ingredient herself, because as yet she is not entitled to secure the research grant and engage in the process of isolation in the same way white men are. Now Johnny Whiteman, a group of researchers, the institution, and the public have benefitted financially from the theft of Lee’s birthright while Lee has been left out in the cold with no inheritance.<sup>43</sup>

These two quotations highlight the consequences of appropriation of Indigenous culture and personhood. Colonial settlers stole knowledge that once belonged to Indigenous communities,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Lee Maracle, *My Conversations with Canadians* (Toronto: BookThug, 2017), 101-07.

<sup>41</sup> Alexandra Mills, “Learning to Listen: Archival Sound Recordings and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property,” *Archivaria* 83 (2017): 112.

<sup>42</sup> Maracle, *My Conversations with Canadians*, 101-102.

<sup>43</sup> Maracle, 102.



without consent from the Indigenous peoples involved. Additionally, cultural genocide sought to disinherit communities from their traditional knowledge and livelihoods in order to ensure assimilation. Since western copyright laws maintain that the recorder of the information is the owner, this effectively also discredits Indigenous stewardship.<sup>44</sup> Western copyright laws are used against Indigenous communities in order to establish control and ownership.

The implications of western copyright laws imposed on Indigenous musical records has garnered some very critical discussions. In July 2016, Indigenous artists, scholars, and musicians gathered for a closed event called *Doing Sovereignties*, to discuss the misuse of Indigenous music by settler composers and ethnographers.<sup>45</sup> One such discussion that took place at this event focused on Canadian composer Ernest MacMillan's (1893-1973) "Three Songs of the West Coast," (1927), which are based on recordings of three different Nisga'a songs collected and transcribed by MacMillan and Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), a Canadian ethnographer. In this conversation, composers Mike Dangeli, Mique'l Dangeli, and Keane Tait "enacted Nisga'a protocol as part of the redress for this appropriation."<sup>46</sup> During the proceedings, Mike Dangeli stated:

What we have issue with is being written out of the history when composers use Western copyright against us. How can Western copyright supersede our law, though, when we've been potlatching these songs since time immemorial? These songs [...] have been changed to create something else, they have been made to fit into part of the 'Canadian mosaic.'<sup>47</sup>

Here, Dangeli points out the lack of recognition of Indigenous protocol and law in western judicial systems. The establishment of western copyright laws, and their application onto Indigenous communities demonstrates a colonial endeavour to assert power and ownership over Indigenous culture and law. Once that ownership is established, what was once Indigenous culture is molded and fabricated in order to "fit" into a western colonial framework.

Marius Barbeau and Ernest MacMillan are known for their ethnographic efforts in the settler state of Canada, where they traveled and appropriated the songs of Indigenous communities throughout the country and then either used or donated them to various archives and Cultural Heritage and Memory Institutions. Robinson writes that "thousands of Indigenous songs remain 'filed away' in the Canadian Museum of History and other museum collections, disconnected from the Indigenous communities, families, and individual hereditary rights holders to whom these songs belong."<sup>48</sup>

Barbeau was a Canadian ethnographer and folklorist who is considered one of the founders of Canadian anthropology. He conducted fieldwork in Indigenous communities, appropriating the music of the Tsimshian, Gitksan, and the Nisga'a. MacMillan was a Canadian conductor, composer, and organist. He traveled with Barbeau in 1927 to the Nass River region in British Columbia and

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<sup>44</sup> Mills, "Learning to Listen: Archival Sound Recordings and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property," 113; Maria Montenegro, "Subverting the Universality of Metadata Standards: The TK Labels as a Tool to Promote Indigenous Data Sovereignty," *Journal of Documentation* 75, no. 4 (2019): 738.

<sup>45</sup> Robinson, 161-62.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

recorded the music of the Tsimshian who were living there. MacMillan and Barbeau used these recordings in “Three Songs of the West Coast.” An excerpt from the introductory note to the score states: “The following three songs are reproduced, as nearly as our musical notation will allow, from records made on the Nass River in the summer of 1927.”<sup>49</sup> Here, MacMillan admits that western notation cannot capture the full essence of Indigenous song; however, the statement itself points out the Otherness of Indigenous music in comparison with western notation, where everything must be written down to be understandable and convenient.

The reason for their ethnographic endeavours was to collect songs that represented a “Canadian aesthetic.”<sup>50</sup> Since Indigenous peoples lived on the land that is now known as Canada for thousands of years before colonizers arrived, Barbeau and MacMillan viewed their music as the most authentic representation of what so-called Canadian music should sound like and so sought to incorporate it into their own works. Essentially, these composers’ “focus on the historical beginnings of music in Canada is underpinned by Canada’s ‘Indigenous foundation,’ permanently situating Indigenous music in the past rather than understanding its continuance.”<sup>51</sup> Similar to the ways in which western classification systems reduce Indigenous terminology to the past, so too does the concept of taking and using Indigenous song for authentic Canadian music. In this sense, Canadian musical identity was defined by Indigenous culture. Or, rather, *appropriated as Canadian*.<sup>52</sup>

MacMillan’s introductory note for the “Three Songs of the West Coast” score states that “the ancient melodies of the West Coast tribes, still surviving in the memory of the elders, seem to have little interest for the majority of the younger generation, and would without a doubt be totally lost in the course of thirty or forty years but for the energy and enthusiasm of a handful of collectors.”<sup>53</sup> He goes on to thank Barbeau for being one such collector. Most striking is the assumption that the younger generation of the community were not interested in learning their songs. Neglected in this statement is the fact that many Indigenous children were forced to attend Residential Schools during this time, where they lost access to their culture, language, and more. Even so, the assumption itself represents a paternalistic and authoritative perspective, which reads as justification, or self-promotion, of the inherent benefits of recording the songs. MacMillan goes on to state that if not for his and Barbeau’s efforts, these songs would be completely lost in just a few decades. The notion of wanting to “protect” or “save” Indigenous music can be seen as an example of white-saviourism, wherein white people feel the need to “liberate” non-white cultures from their own apparently inferior and uncivilized society. Jessie Loyer also discusses the emphasis on the personal even in public collections. For instance, archives and museums often name the collections

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<sup>49</sup> Marius Barbeau, *Three Songs of the West Coast*, arranged and transcribed by Ernest MacMillan (London: The Frederick Harris Co., 1927).

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, 154-155.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>53</sup> Barbeau, *Three Songs of the West Coast*.

after the person who “collected” the records.<sup>54</sup> So, to name the collection after the donor renders the records as belonging to that one person, effectively discrediting the records from their original owners and where they come from.

Another reason that settler composers felt the need to preserve Indigenous culture was because of the effects of the Indian Act of Canada.<sup>55</sup> From 1880-1951, the Indian Act of Canada prohibited Indigenous communities from performing their traditional songs and dances. Noncompliance with this order meant imprisonment. Specifically, section 3 of the act states: “Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the ‘Potlatch’...is guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be liable to imprisonment.”<sup>56</sup> This also included the Sun Dance and the Ghost Dance, which were banned in subsequent amendments of the act. Additionally, the Residential School system kept Indigenous children from engaging in their culture. They were not allowed to speak their own language or sing their own songs. Doing so often resulted in severe punishment and there are numerous reports of emotional, physical, and sexual violence that occurred in these schools.<sup>57</sup> Robinson writes that the prohibition “further compounded this feeling of precarity around the potential for large-scale cultural loss.”<sup>58</sup> He also states that “under duress of these policies that explicitly sought to erode Indigenous cultural strength and eradicate our systems of law, medicine, teaching, and historical documentation, our community knowledge holders were persuaded by ethnographers to have their songs recorded.”<sup>59</sup> Many Indigenous Nations saw these recordings as a way to preserve their culture. However, with western copyright laws stipulating that ownership falls to the recorder,<sup>60</sup> Indigenous communities inadvertently lost stewardship and control over works which were consequently donated to archives and museums, often without naming the Indigenous community members involved, and without their consent.

Returning to the effects of colonialism in Cultural Heritage and Memory Institutions, most Indigenous records are catalogued and classified either according to western colonial constructs that make no sense contextually for Indigenous communities, and/or they are catalogued and

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<sup>54</sup> Jessie Loyer, “Collections Are Our Relatives: Disrupting the Singular, White Man’s Joy That Shaped Collections,” in *The Collector and the Collected: Decolonizing Area Studies Librarianship*, eds. Meagan Browndorf, Erin Pappas, and Anna Arays (Library Juice Press, 2021), 4, <https://mru.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/mru%3A793>

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, 149-150.

<sup>56</sup> Gail Hinge, “Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975,” Vol. 2 of Consolidation of Indian Legislation (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1985), 93, as quoted in Robinson, 150.

<sup>57</sup> Please see the following for more information: “Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part I: Origins to 1939,” [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_1\\_History\\_Part\\_1\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_1_History_Part_1_English_Web.pdf); “Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part II: 1939-2000,” [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_1\\_History\\_Part\\_2\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_1_History_Part_2_English_Web.pdf); “Canada’s Residential Schools: The Inuit <sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> cont. and Northern Experience,” [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_2\\_Inuit\\_and\\_Northern\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_2_Inuit_and_Northern_English_Web.pdf); “Canada’s Residential Schools: The Metis Experience,” [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_3\\_Metis\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_3_Metis_English_Web.pdf); “Canada’s Residential Schools: The Legacy,” [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_5\\_Legacy\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_5_Legacy_English_Web.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, 150.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Mills, 112.

classified using derogatory and problematic language. According to Sandra Littletree (Diné) and Cheryl A. Metoyer (Cherokee), classification systems such as Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are severely limited in “the retrieval of Native language materials, Native American topics,” and Traditional Knowledge.<sup>61</sup> And this is not just inherent of LCSH, but of all western created classification systems, including the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) and the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) systems.<sup>62</sup>

While there are newer classification systems meant to fix and remove certain flaws in order to “increase the universality of subject description with the system[s],” these modifications are actually “prevailing Eurocentric categories and knowledge systems that are fundamentally incommensurate with Indigenous ways of thought.”<sup>63</sup> The action of modification is also grounded in western colonial constructs of understanding and ordering the world. This is similar to the way in which Indigenous musicians and singers are invited to perform with classical music ensembles and symphonies. Since the structure of those performances remain rooted in western colonialism, the result is the maintenance of Eurocentric musical ideas. Littletree and Metoyer further note that “Indigenous systems of knowledge are often based on observations of patterns in nature and the ability to predict outcomes in nature, which is often different from Western ways of viewing the world.”<sup>64</sup> Western classification systems rooted in colonial ways of thinking and doing, therefore, both neglect and disregard Indigenous protocols and systems of knowledge, further perpetuating harm and upholding institutional and cultural power structures.

## Archives and Resurgence

Despite the western colonial foundations of cultural heritage and memory institutions, some archives have begun to engage in decolonizing approaches and practices, such as engaging with literature on the topic, and/or action-oriented solutions including implementing and changing current policies. According to J.J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell, to effectively decolonize the archive, a radical praxis needs to be implemented, one which is “committed to dismantling structures and systems of oppression and domination.”<sup>65</sup> This means challenging and changing the ways in which records are archived as well as the structure of the archive itself.<sup>66</sup> It also requires alignment and solidarity with Indigenous communities and their ways of record-keeping.<sup>67</sup> In essence, archival spaces and practices need to be reconstructed in ways that support and centre Indigenous notions of stewardship and record-keeping, repatriation, and the Land Back

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<sup>61</sup> Littletree and Metoyer, “Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project,” 642.

<sup>62</sup> For more information, see Alissa Cherry and Keshav Mukunda, “A Case Study in Indigenous Classification: Revisiting and Reviving the Brian Deer Scheme,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5-6 (2015)

<sup>63</sup> Alissa Cherry and Keshav Mukunda, “A Case Study in Indigenous Classification: Revisiting and Reviving the Brian Deer Scheme,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5-6 (2015): 550.

<sup>64</sup> Littletree and Metoyer, “Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective,” 646-647.

<sup>65</sup> J.J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell, “‘To go beyond’: towards a decolonial archival praxis,” *Archival Science* 19 (2019): 71-72.

<sup>66</sup> Ghaddar and Caswell, “‘To go beyond,’” 72.

<sup>67</sup> Ghaddar and Caswell, 73.

movement.<sup>68</sup> In the following section I outline some archival management systems and protocols that aim to challenge mainstream practices.

### The Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM)

In 2006, nineteen Indigenous and settler archivists, historians, librarians, curators, anthropologists, and museum workers came together at the University of Arizona to create the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM). The purpose of the gathering was to identify “best professional practices for culturally responsible care and use” of Indigenous materials and records in settler repositories.<sup>69</sup> The group drafted protocols that rely on professional ethics codes and international declarations as their framework.<sup>70</sup> The PNAAM website writes:

The contributors encourage you to explore, comment upon, and adopt the best practices which can be accomplished by your institution or community. Intended to foster increased cooperation between tribal and non-tribal libraries and archives, the *Protocols* are presented as goals to which we can all aspire.<sup>71</sup>

PNAAM was created as a way for Indigenous and settler archivists to work together to ensure that archival methods of record-keeping and preservation adhere to Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship. This included advocating for community- and participatory-based archives in both archival education and practice.<sup>72</sup> The Protocols foster transparency, respect, and integrity for how Indigenous records are archived in settler and mainstream archives.

PNAAM contradicts many conventional archival practices, mainly relating to open access and ownership.<sup>73</sup> While many archivists have successfully foregrounded PNAAM, some have yet to do so, and others disagree entirely, citing concerns related to its guidelines of access, use, and repatriation.<sup>74</sup> Some archivists feel uneasy about limiting access of certain Indigenous records to the public (though many of these records were most likely never intended to be accessed by anyone outside of the community); about stewardship policies that directly contradict western notions of copyright and ownership; and about the possibility that some records would have to be returned to their communities.<sup>75</sup> As O’Neal asserts, however, it is time that archivists begin centring and doing the work that PNAAM recommends.<sup>76</sup> She makes the following urgent call for decolonial work to move forward with respect for historically marginalized Indigenous people:

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<sup>68</sup> For more information: <https://landback.org/>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, “Home,” <https://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/index.html>

<sup>71</sup> Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.

<sup>72</sup> O’Neal, “From Time Immemorial,” 46.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

<sup>74</sup> O’Neal, 46.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

After years of colonization, assimilation, termination, and restoration, Indigenous communities have waited far too long to reconnect with these collections and to provide the missing Indigenous context and traditional knowledge required to treat those collections respectfully and in accord with the cultural, spiritual, and epistemological needs and concerns of Indigenous people.<sup>77</sup>

### Mukurtu Content Management System (Mukurtu CMS)

In 2007, archivists Kimberly Christen and Craig Dietrich worked with Warumungu community members to create the Mukurtu Content Management System, an open-source platform “flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse communities who want to manage and share their digital and cultural heritage in their own way, on their own terms.”<sup>78</sup> Mukurtu CMS consists of applying Traditional Knowledge (TK) protocols to archival records in order to centre Indigenous stewardship and notions of record-keeping and preservation. It began as a community archive named the Mukurtu Wumpurrani-kari Archive. The name Mukurtu, chosen by elder Michael Jampin Jones, is the Warumungu word for “dilly bag,” which is used to safekeep and guard sacred materials.<sup>79</sup> The name is meant to “remind users that the archive, too, is a safe keeping place where Warumungu people can share stories, knowledge, and cultural materials properly using their own protocols.”<sup>80</sup> Mukurtu CMS is an open-source platform meant to be implemented by both mainstream and community-based archives that hold Indigenous materials. It is currently maintained at the Centre for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University.

### Local Contexts

Local Contexts is a management system similar to Mukurtu CMS, created in 2010 by archivists Kimberly Christen and Jane Anderson. It is a knowledge management platform made up of Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Biocultural (BC) Labels, which helps archivists and users identify specific conditions associated with Indigenous records and materials. Local Contexts was created to “enhance and legitimize locally based decision-making and Indigenous governance frameworks for determining [stewardship], access, and culturally appropriate conditions for sharing historical, contemporary and future collections of cultural heritage and Indigenous data.”<sup>81</sup> The TK Labels are used for attribution, access, and use rights, while the BC Labels are used for provenance, transparency, and integrity.<sup>82</sup> While not legally binding, the labels challenge western colonial constructs of copyright and ownership of Indigenous records.

### Traditional Knowledge Labels (TK Labels)

One of the core features of both Mukurtu and Local Contexts are the TK Labels, which are used to identify protocols for access and use of Indigenous materials. This includes both third-party owned

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>78</sup> Mukurtu CMS, “About,” <https://mukurtu.org/about/>

<sup>79</sup> Mukurtu CMS.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Local Contexts, “About,” <https://localcontexts.org/about/about-local-contexts/>

<sup>82</sup> Local Contexts, “TK Labels,” <https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/>; Local Contexts, “BC Labels,” <https://localcontexts.org/labels/biocultural-labels/>



and public domain materials.<sup>83</sup> There are three types of TK Labels. The first, Provenance Labels, are used to identify the primary cultural authority, or stewards, for the records.<sup>84</sup> The second, Protocol Labels, are used to identify the traditional protocols associated with a particular record. They invite users to respect and adhere to these protocols.<sup>85</sup> The third and last type of TK Labels are Permission Labels. These point users to appropriate usage of the records.<sup>86</sup> For example, some records are only meant to be accessed by Indigenous community members and so non-members should not (as dictated by the protocol) access the record.

The following case study provides one example of how current archival practices can be reformed through use of these frameworks.

## Hungry Listening and Resurgence

### Case study: “Tsimshian music – dance song”

The metadata and description of “Tsimshian music - dance song” by Marius Barbeau, housed in the Marius Barbeau fonds at the Canadian Museum of History collection, is an example of problematic archival practices.<sup>87</sup> In particular, its description and preservation are representative of western colonial ways of record-keeping.<sup>88</sup>

According to the description of the record on the Canadian Museum of History webpage, the recording’s provenance belongs to the Marius Barbeau fonds, suggesting that the songs originated with him and not within the Indigenous community. Additionally, the Rights & Access field states that the museum is the copyright owner and therefore responsible for determining the recording’s reproduction. Nowhere in the description does it acknowledge that this recording was stolen or that the Tsimshian community has any sort of connection to the record other than performing in it.

There is also a lack of a title for the song. The Notes field indicates that the title is based on the content, most likely Barbeau’s notes. The lack of a proper title, other than how Barbeau conceived of it in his notes, perpetuates the erasure of Indigenous culture and song in archives and museums. Not only did Barbeau and MacMillan record, transcribe, and steal the music of Indigenous communities, they both effectively stripped the songs of any Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, culture, and personhood. The result of such description is the westernization and white-washing of Indigenous culture to *fit* into a Canadian aesthetic. Robinson states in *Hungry Listening* that “Indigenous performers and artists have been structurally accommodated in ways that ‘fit’ them into classical composition and performance systems.”<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Indigenous records and materials

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<sup>83</sup> Mukurtu CMS.

<sup>84</sup> Local Contexts, “TK Labels,” <https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., <https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., <https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/>

<sup>87</sup> Tsimshian Music - Dance Song Recording, 1927, VII-C-180b (39), Marius Barbeau fonds, Canadian Museum of History Collection, Gatineau, Quebec, <https://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/archive/3262764>

<sup>88</sup> To view its descriptive information, please visit: <https://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/archive/3262764>

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, 6.



are appropriated, taken, and stolen by white ethnographers, historians, anthropologists, etc., to “fit” them into a western narrative.

The description is ambiguous in terms of which community the recording belongs to. While the “title” of the song is “Tsimshian music – Dance song,” the Cultural Group field states: Tsimshian and Nisga’a. Further, the subject terms are inconsistent, and do not mention Tsimshian. Ethnographers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century tended to group the Tsimshian, the Nisga’a, and the Gitksan together, often using the names interchangeably, despite them being separate communities. Regardless of the recording’s title, it is possible that this song might not even be Tsimshian. According to the interactive Native Land Map,<sup>90</sup> the Nass River area in British Columbia where it was recorded is the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territory of the Nisga’a and the Gitanyow Lax’yip. However, it is important to keep in mind that other Nations could have traveled there at any time. Research into the singer of the song, Frank Bolton, found that he was an elder from the Gwinwok Village of the Nisga’a, further compounding the confusion of community origins.<sup>91</sup> These factors reveal historical gaps in consistent archival practices, namely a lack of reparative archival description, which entails remediating and contextualizing outdated language and information in archival description.<sup>92</sup>

It is important to note that, for some Indigenous Nations, while songs may serve an aesthetic purpose, other uses may include law, medicine, and historical documentation.<sup>93</sup> Robinson asks: “When songs are not firstly songs but forms of doing (healing, law, and sovereignty), how does this ‘doing’ change on their transfer from an oral to material medium?”<sup>94</sup> He further challenges the reader to consider another question concerning the classification and preservation of such materials:

If the presentation of Indigenous material culture behind museum glass constitutes a kind of ‘life support,’ as Mique’l and Mike Dangeli note, then this chapter asks what it means when the songs and voices of First Peoples are held in the archive in other material forms from wax cylinders, to reel-to-reel tapes and mp3s.<sup>95</sup>

Recordings such as these in the Marius Barbeau fonds at the Canadian Museum of History collection, which have been digitized, are held captive in mediums not meant to sustain life, furthering the disconnection from the communities to which they belong. Going forward, archivists may wish to ask themselves how these records ended up in the archive to begin with and what they can do to either return or decolonize their approaches to preserving the records. In either case, consulting with the Indigenous community to whom the records belong is a must.

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<sup>90</sup> <https://native-land.ca/>

<sup>91</sup> Lynda Jessup, “Tin Cans and Machinery: *Saving the Sagas and Other Stuff*,” *Visual Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (1999): 54.

<sup>92</sup> Yale University Library, “Reparative Archival Description Working Group: Home,” <https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=1140330&p=8319098>

<sup>93</sup> Robinson, 46-47.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

## Decolonized Listening

In their article, “Repatriation and Decolonization: Thoughts on Ownership, Access, and Control,” Robin R.R. Gray describes their experience in implementing an Indigenous community-based research project to better understand the processes and implications of reparative archival work. The case study in the article concerns a collection of Ts’msyen songs in the Centre for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University, which were recorded and collected by Laura Boulton from 1941 to 2 and are now housed under the Laura Boulton Collection of Traditional and Liturgical Music. Columbia currently retains the rights to the Laura Boulton collection and the Ts’msyen songs in it. The university decides whether the songs can be transcribed, published, and/or analyzed, meaning that they effectively manage access and control over this aspect of Ts’msyen cultural heritage.<sup>96</sup> As in the Barbeau example, the university has yet to acknowledge “the legal, cultural, or moral rights of Ts’msyen, nor the rights of any other Indigenous community, whose knowledge, history, ceremonies, and creative expressions were captured by Boulton.”<sup>97</sup> In their conclusion, Gray remarks on the importance of historicizing and contextualizing when it comes to repatriation.<sup>98</sup> They further remark that institutions must be open to giving up control of Indigenous records and collections should that be what the community wishes.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the findings of Gray’s research project indicated that “the Ts’msyen songs caught up in the Boulton collection should not be in circulation, should not be accessible to the public, and should not be considered research material for non-Ts’msyen interests.”<sup>100</sup> Because western laws were not devised with protection for Indigenous cultural heritage in mind, Gray believes that any decisions or concerns regarding their culture should be up to the Ts’msyen.<sup>101</sup> Similar practices of repatriation should be considered for future handling of the Indigenous songs in the Marius Barbeau fonds at the Canadian Museum of History, as well as all other mainstream archival institutions holding Indigenous records.

Given both Robinson’s work and Gray’s article, how then could decolonized listening be applied to the recording in the Barbeau fonds and the archival practices rooted around it? Similar to the ways in which Indigenous artists are made to “fit” into classical performances where western concepts of music-making and listening are centred, the “Tsimshian music – dance song” recording and its description in the online museum collection is representative of an Indigenous archival holding that is forced into a western narrative and perspective. The description itself can influence the way a listener - or by extension, an archivist, researcher, or learner - hears the song. Because the description was written according to the notes of Marius Barbeau, it is inherently a settler perception, rather than an Indigenous one. However, one approaches the recording, a settler, or hungry listening, form of perception pervades its existence. Its description and preservation maintain settler concepts of listening to and understanding music. It conveys to the listener that the colonial endeavours that Barbeau and MacMillan enacted in order to “collect” and transcribe this song are justified and normalized. Alternatively, if we were to remediate its description to account for the inconsistencies and its outdated and offensive language, and if we were to further work with the Indigenous community in determining and assigning potential Traditional Knowledge labels and protocols to the recording,

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<sup>96</sup> Gray, “Repatriation and Decolonization: Thoughts on Ownership, Access, and Control,” 725-26.

<sup>97</sup> Gray, “Repatriation and Decolonization,” 726.

<sup>98</sup> Gray, 735.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

we could effectively begin to dismantle its settler forms of perception in favour of an Indigenous framework. For example, archivists may contact and work with the Indigenous Nation to whom this recording belongs before adding the TK Attribution label to it. This label is used to let the user know who the correct custodians, owners, and sources are of the record.<sup>102</sup> The most important factor, however, is to ensure that stewardship and management of the song be determined by the community from which it comes.

The following case study demonstrates how archival practices can be reformed in order to reflect an Indigenous worldview.

### [wəʔ m̓i ct ǵpəθət tə ʔniməʔ - Diamond Point](#)

One of the original questions in this paper is: if Indigenous music and scores, such as the ones featured in the *Soundings* exhibit curated by Robinson and Hopkins, were to be placed in an archive, how could we ensure their resurgence? Diamond Point's *wəʔ m̓i ct ǵpəθət tə ʔniməʔ* (2020), originally featured in the *Soundings* exhibit at the Belkin Art Gallery, consists of images of paddles on banners.<sup>103</sup> In September of 2020, a performance of the piece was given at UBC campus by Coastal Wolf Pack, a Salish song and dance group. The banners with the two images were hung and repeated on lampposts on Main Mall St. The images on the banners "refer to the annual Coast Salish Canoe Journeys."<sup>104</sup> The gallery website describes the piece as follows:

Bringing to mind a group of paddlers announcing themselves before coming ashore, [or asking permission], and awaiting a welcome according to protocol, the paddles are raised in symmetrical precision. Coast Salish design elements on the paddles indicate who the travellers are and where they have come from and are incorporated here in keeping with the teachings of Point's ancestors. The alternating heights of the paddle shapes drawn upon turbulent waves serve to activate the design, and through repetition, transform a walk through the installation to a rhythmic journey of water.<sup>105</sup>

Diamond Point writes of their work: "This visual display is an act of communication between two communities, an abstract representation of cultural significance in Salish tradition, and symbolizes a journey of healing."<sup>106</sup>

### [American Ledger \(No. 1\) - Raven Chacon](#)

Dené artist Raven Chacon's "American Ledger (No. 1)," another piece featured in the *Soundings* exhibit at the Belkin Art Gallery, is a conceptual graphic score that is meant to be performed by "many players with sustaining and percussive instruments, voices, coins, axe and wood, a police whistle and the striking of a match."<sup>107</sup> In October 2020, the piece was performed outside of the

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<sup>102</sup> Local Contexts, "TK Attribution (TK A)," <https://localcontexts.org/label/tk-attribution/>

<sup>103</sup> For photos of the score, please see: <https://belkin.ubc.ca/events/diamond-point/>

<sup>104</sup> Belkin Art Gallery, *wəʔ m̓i ct ǵpəθət tə ʔniməʔ*, composed by Diamond Point, <https://belkin.ubc.ca/event/>

<sup>105</sup> Belkin Art Gallery, *wəʔ m̓i ct ǵpəθət tə ʔniməʔ*.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Raven Chacon, "American Ledger (No. 1)," accessed October 30, 2022, <http://spiderwebsinthesky.com/portfolio/items/american-ledger-no-1/>

University of British Columbia's music school by the Symphonic Wind Ensemble. A banner of the score was hung on the exterior of the music building for the ensemble to read. Chacon describes this piece as the creation story of how the United States of America was founded. In it, he depicts acts of violence, the enactment of laws, the construction of cities, and "the erasure of land," through the graphic notation and sound of the piece.<sup>108</sup> The instructions for the piece involve the use of many players (any number, musician, and non-musician alike), percussive or other sustaining instruments, coins, an axe, a police whistle, voices, and a match. The piece, consisting of seven lines of instructions, must be at least thirteen minutes long, with each line a minute or longer. Chacon describes each line as follows:

"Line 1 is for both percussive and bendable tones.

Line 2 begins with a warbly long tone crossfading into waves of harmonic or dynamic increases. X = chop wood.

Line 3 is for police whistle(s). Other instruments may join.

Line 4 is for coins to be thrown. Two instruments may accompany.

Line 5 is a line.

Line 6 is a grand decelerando ending with the striking of a match.

Line 7 is for acknowledging groupings of 5's and 4's. Chop wood. End with everyone and everything."<sup>109</sup>

Just like Diamond Point's piece, *American Ledger (No. 1)* is meant to sound different each time. *wəʔ n̄i ct ǫpəʔət tə ʔniməʔ* and *American Ledger (No. 1)* are just two of many examples of a pieces of music grounded in Indigenous structures and frameworks of music-making and performance. Hungry listening, or western colonial structures and frameworks, would demand that we transcribe the scores into a western musical style, by transcribing the music on to a five staff score, adding a key signature, time signature, and other additional instructions that would erase the Indigenous logics and structures behind it. Hungry Listening would also demand that the archival description of the songs be written according to a settler narrative, similar to what was done with the recording of the "Tsimshian music – dance song." This could mean changing the title of Point's piece to an English name and confining both songs to one recording. If the songs are meant to sound either greatly or slightly different each time, how does that impact the way it is heard and seen if there is just one recording of it in the archive? While the instructions for Chacon's piece are familiar for those used to contemporary musical performance, a Hungry Listening positionality would only allow the listener, and the performer, to set up the performance once again as a classical composition, with the audience watching silently until the call for applause. Just being in a concert hall rigidly separates the performer(s) from the audience.<sup>110</sup> In terms of archival practices, if each piece is meant to sound different each time, how can archivists best describe this in the record's description?

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<sup>108</sup> Chacon, "American Ledger (No. 1)."

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, 177.

If these songs were to be placed in an archive, best practices would include archivists describing them according to the composer's discretion. In this case, the archivists would consult with Point and/or Chacon to determine how best to describe the records. Regarding their preservation, working with the composer to assign protocols, such as TK and BC Labels, would effectively work to help decolonize the archival practices surrounding the records' holding. This would ensure an Indigenous framework based in Indigenous logics of record-keeping, stewardship, and resurgence. Such a framework might allow individuals to listen to the records with a decolonial ear, where their settler forms of perception, their Hungry Listening, is challenged. In comparison, the way in which "Tsimshian music – dance song" was archived is based in a western narrative that discourages decolonial listening. By setting up Diamond Point's *wəł m̓i ct q̓pəθət tə ʔniməł*, and Raven Chacon's *American Ledger (No. 1)*, according to Indigenous frameworks, where the Indigenous logics behind them are maintained, and by ensuring that both Point and Chacon and their respective communities maintain stewardship and management of their works, this can allow for a decolonial and Indigenous-led foundation, where western concepts of archival practices are challenged and reconstructed.

## Conclusion

Some may be inclined to draw a line between the capacity of "traditional" Indigenous songs to function as law, medicine, teachings, and primary historical documentation, while understanding more recently created Indigenous songs in contemporary popular genres as not holding such functions. I am hesitant, however, to draw such a sharp line between these categories. For this assertion would imply that Indigenous music composed today, and in contemporary genres, carries less of the teachings, histories, and laws that our older music does. While it may be the case that Indigenous contemporary music does not explicitly claim to enact law, provide healing, or convey knowledge (locations and practices for hunting, for example), my belief is that this knowledge is still present to varying degrees even when not made explicit.<sup>111</sup>

Decolonizing our listening habits means challenging the ways in which we conceptualize music. Western colonial constructs of listening position music as an aesthetic product for consumption, a view that negates the broader social meaning inherent in many examples of Indigenous music. Western archival practices are fundamentally rooted in colonialism. Nonetheless, there are frameworks that archivists can use to help decolonize the ways in which Indigenous music is described and preserved. This includes implementing reparative archival description and practices, as well as content management systems that centre Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and stewardship, such as Mukurtu and Local Contexts. It is important to ensure the stewardship and management of the records belong to the Indigenous community to which they belong. By centring Indigenous knowledge and stewardship, we can work to decolonize how we listen to Indigenous recordings in the archive. "Tsimshian music – dance song," is an example of a record stripped of its Indigeneity because of the colonial way it was taken, described, and preserved. However, if we

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 46.

apply management systems that actively work to foreground Indigenous knowledge systems, as in the Mukurtu and Local Contexts examples, then we can begin to challenge the way in which the record was described and preserved, and consequently, the way in which we listen to it. Further, if we apply these same Indigenous logics to Diamond Point's *wəʔ mi ct ǫpəʔət tə ʔniməʔ*, and Raven Chacon's *American Ledger (No. 1)*, two of the original songs from the *Soundings* exhibit, we can maintain the Indigenous knowledge and stewardship behind them. In this way we challenge our settler colonial forms of perception and can begin to listen to music outside the confines of colonialism.

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