

The role of folk, popular and improvisatory music in the lives of marginalised youth: rethinking music education for Canadian Inuit

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Abstract

Does a formal Western centric music education approach provide ethnic minorities with the kinds of cultural and social experiences they need to help them when their traditions and identities are threatened? The gradual loss of traditional cultures among rural communities is often a point of concern for many cultural groups. Whereas the historical role of music education has been to promote creativity, but as (or more) importantly to promote and preserve cultural traditions and values, this paper explores whether a Western centric formal music education might be less appropriate in communities populated by isolated, cultural minorities than practices that embrace local folk music, popular music and improvised music. These issues may have international implications, but this article pursues the cultural implications of music education practice as they pertain to the Inuit of Northern Canada. It explores the musical traditions of the Inuit and how the values of folk, popular and improvisatory music might provide a valuable educational context for the mitigation of some of the socio-cultural challenges faced by Inuit youth. The propensity for music to develop cultural identity and to encourage non-coerced, creative communication is explored. The paper suggests that a renewed devotion in music education to folk, pop and improvised musical traditions could serve as an important way forward for youth among rural ethnic minorities, in particular for Canadian Inuit.

Introduction

Canada's history with its aboriginal populations is among the darkest marks on the nation's generally positive international reputation. Centuries of mistreatment have left aboriginal people among the country's most marginalized people in almost all aspects of livelihood and wellbeing. A 2004 Inuit Health Survey conducted in Northern Quebec region of Nunavik indicated that only 22% of the population have completed high school; further, nearly 25% rate themselves as "high" alcohol consumers, 28% of adults were considered obese, nearly 7% had attempted suicide, 49% of women report having been victims of sexual assault and almost 60% of the population live on less than \$20,000/year despite high Northern living expenses (Qanuippitaa, 2004). Also, Inuit life expectancy is approximately 12 years lower than the Canadian national average (Statcan, 2008). In recent decades, the nation has begun to make more concerted efforts to help aboriginal people recover from the troubled history that has forced an often-tragic redefinition of their way of life. In particular, poor policy from federal and provincial governments has led to a distinct cultural loss among aboriginal people. Recapturing and preserving this culture is no small task. At the forefront of this effort today is the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" established in 2008 to both acknowledge and promote healing from the federal government residential school policies, that actively removed

young aboriginal children from their communities, abused and stripped them of the traditional culture in an effort to assimilate them into the “mainstream” Canadian population (Truth and Reconciliation, 2008).

This article will look at the role that music and music education could play in this effort. It will explore the resurgence of traditional music among Inuit youth in Northern Canada. It will further suggest that this resurgence of traditional music might be complemented in an educational context with improvised, folk and pop music in ways that enable young Inuit to come to grips with the socio-cultural struggles that they and their communities face on a regular basis.

The Historic Role of Music in Formal Education

Music has played a seemingly subtle but important role in formal education over the years. It has been used to reflect the artistic and cultural priorities that society wishes to impart to youth. I touch lightly here on Gramscian notions of hegemony and the ideological preservation and promotion of social structures and interactions. Gramsci argues that more than through force or military control, the marginalised masses are actively manipulated by state actors as they control the “ideological and moral leadership” of their people (Gill and Law, 1989, p. 476). He conceived that these ideological structures and interactions “have to be actively constructed and positively maintained” (Mayo, 2003, p. 43). Education plays an integral role here in that schools are designed to promote regional or national interests. The influences of Westernization and modernization, historically associated with colonization and proselytization, have continued in many ways through the “free market” and the global dominance of a capitalist economic system. The advent of information communications technology has further contributed to the reach and influence of capitalism. Consequently, the structure and delivery of formal education systems have come to “look remarkably similar worldwide” (Howley, 1997, p. 131).

Formal music education the world over has traditionally promoted the values and forms of Western music, supplemented more recently with a growing, but still marginal, inclusion of world, folk and popular music. Historical music education approaches have actively supported the formal goals of the overarching educational system: the dissemination of knowledge and values that are determined by policy makers to be valuable to the community at large. In music classrooms around the world (Oehrle, 1991; Ho & Law, 2009; Elliot, 1990) the music tradition and culture that dominates the content of most formal music curricula is the genre known generally as “art music” (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, etc.). I want to stress that I do not seek to undervalue the immense history of art music, but rather I want to present the role that it has historically played in formal music education classrooms and perhaps to identify how this role might be questioned in certain environments.

The formal education model begins at a young age with a canon of children’s songs and melodies that often transcend language. A small set of basic melodies is often translated into a variety of languages, and used in many countries around the world. For instance

the simple melody from Mozart's *Twelve Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, Maman"* that has come to be known in English as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" is now sung in many countries. Translations are sometimes direct or change the nature of the song completely. In English alone the same piece forms the melody for popular English children's songs "Baa, Baa Black Sheep" and the "Alphabet Song". Incarnations in other languages include: "Ah! Vous dirai-je Maman" in French, "Tuk tuk, Tuk tuk" in Inuktitut, "Funkel, funkel kleiner stern" in German and "Yi shan, Yi shan" in Mandarin. Songs in this children's canon can be seen as having two distinct purposes in a formal music classroom setting. First, it promotes and preserves a number of social and cultural values; second, they lay a musical foundation for the learning of Western music.

Children's music can project, often imperceptibly, a set of cultural themes that reflect certain values and perceptions in a very particular way. These songs elicit senses of joy and fear, of "good" and "bad", of "right" and "wrong". They have not only the power of word, but of tone and movement. While we are rarely deliberately attuned to the content of these songs, it is not uncommon for them to include an "ominous demonization of the foreign and the unknown, where figures embodying outlandish exaggerations of racial or ethnic difference are represented as the central menace to the child" (Davis, 2005, p. 54).

Well known children's songs, the various musical incarnations of Hansel and Gretel, for instance, have exaggerated and vilified witches to generations of children. Historically, the ethnic association of witches with Gypsies and Jews has helped to reinforce these social stereotypes in younger generations (Rosenberg, 1960; Hancock, 2009). Even the well known canon of Christmas carols have been used to engrain the values of Christianity, at times contrasting them to the purest evil of all, the devil himself. Among my favourite carols is "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," a carol that suggests that it is Christ that can "save us all from Satan's power". This is a strong and potentially rather impressive message to be conveyed to young people. These songs, and the moral messages they convey can, often without us having noticed, communicate strong cultural boundaries, ethnically, religiously and geographically, in young children. These notions are not simply communicated through lyrics, as during Nazi tyranny authorities promoted the "racialised contrast of the allegedly Dorian mode of 'Aryan' music with repellent and alien chromaticism of 'Jewish' music" (Davis, 2005, p. 50). Indeed even the tone of a piece could carry important and potentially dangerous ethnic and racial implications. These examples are not to imply that all children's music carries negative or dark messages, indeed many tend to spread messages of joy and caring. It is important to note, however, that in many cases there are clear social messages both "positive" and "negative" found in much of the music written for children.

Beyond the "messages" these songs portray, they establish a certain technical and instrumental musical facility in students. Educators choose simple songs specifically for their melodic, rhythmic and eventually their harmonic characteristics. These skills are often reinforced through specific teaching methodologies, perhaps the most popular being that of Zoltan Kodaly. Austrian composer and musician Kodaly is among the world's most influential music educators, building on his legacy, music educators have developed what is now known as the "Kodaly method" (OAKE, 2010). Since his death editors have

published *The Selected Writings of Zoltan Kodaly* (Kodaly, 1974). His methods are often considered logical, and in the vein of results-focused education priorities. It has been shown that through the Kodaly methodology “children’s singing – particularly pitch – improves; rhythmic skills improve significantly from year to year; music literacy develops; and children can perform music in increasingly complex parts” (deVries, 2001, p. 24). Children learn these skills and priorities through rehearsal and performance, and they lay the groundwork for the development of a formal, western music knowledge base. This base contributes to the anointed value placed on art music. As students progress through a carefully constructed and graded system, music class becomes reflective of most other disciplines within a formal school system. Western music curricula have become largely graded and goal-oriented. Each age group is identified as having certain capacities, such that they are encouraged to meet certain skill levels based on their years of schooling. Many music educators feel the pressure to adhere to rigid, results-based approaches, such that the music education discipline can justify its relevance in the face of threats from budget cuts which consistently target arts education ahead of other disciplines. Benhatn (1982, p.47) argued that in order to defend music it is necessary that music teachers be prepared to defend their programs with a “written integrated curriculum” and a “strong fiscal argument”. Many music educators seem to face this same predicament on a yearly basis. This graded, results-based music education model is now supported and promoted by many universities and conservatories where “music specialist teachers have themselves been trained within the Western classical tradition, in which music-making is dominated by the ‘professional’ career model” (Lamont et al., 2003, p. 230).

Educators in many disciplines have often noted the powerful influence that music has on students. The very music to which individuals listen may help them to personally define their peer group or even their ethnicity. It has even been suggested that the music to which an individual is exposed early in life can “alter the ratios of culture and identity across a range of emotional indices, from the individual through the interpersonal to the social” (Davis 2005, p. 53). Interestingly, the music that many youth identify with tends to come from the pop and folk disciplines. These disciplines, however, still play a backseat role to the more formal art music disciplines. Consequently, what is evident in many music classrooms is that a “good deal of ... school music seems to be unsuccessful, unimaginatively taught, and out of touch with pupils’ interests” (Lamont et al., 2003, p. 229). While the dominance of art music may be gradually changing, the walls of music classrooms the world over are still much more likely to be adorned with the faces of classical and romantic composers and with orchestra instruments than with folk, pop or even jazz musicians and instruments. Consequently, students are often learning about music and on instruments with which they may have little contact throughout their non-school lives. This is especially the case in a rural or non-western environment where access to western art music outside of a school setting is often extremely limited. In the small, isolated Inuit communities in the Nunavik region (to be discussed later) many students could not name orchestral instruments, let alone having actually had the opportunity to see or play them. Kratus effectively illustrates the dichotomy of formal music and non-formal music settings. He describes in-school music as “group oriented”, “classical” and “composed by others”. Conversely out-of-school music tends to be

“personal”, “nonclassical” and “homemade” (Kratz, 2007, p. 47). Given music’s influence in transmitting cultural and social values, this formal education is not free of consequences, both positive and negative. In a setting where the formal education and musical influences come from an external, dominant culture, the focus and approaches of formal music education should be carefully scrutinized.

Culture at Risk

The nature of globalisation and modernisation in today’s world has greatly increased interaction and interdependency among nations, cultures and indeed communities throughout the world. Where historically colonialist and imperialist nations served a dominant role, a similar role may be attributed to a relatively small number of large multinational corporations and organisations. As described by Davis and Cobb (2009) mergers and the establishment of multinationals are often meant to eliminate interdependency such that an organization can exercise control over a market sector (Davis and Cobb, 2009, p. 6). This centralisation of power results in the control of the distribution of the majority of the world’s resources through a relatively small portion of the population, thus creating a dependency of the powerless on the powerful. As such, it is frequently the task of those without adequate resources to adhere to the socio-political demands of the powerful few if they hope to gain access to a greater share of corporate and governmental funds. Those funds are much needed for the development of their communities. Thus, an environment is created by which rural, ethnic minorities are almost exclusively not a part of the controlling economic global powers, but are now in increasing contact with them. Centralisation of power and resources more often than not creates an environment in which rural, ethnic minorities become marginalised or removed from control or access to resources. These groups are forced more and more often to compromise or adjust their ways of life in order to access much needed resources.

Ethnically distinct rural communities often live with different value sets that contribute to a dissimilar way of life from those of the dominant global powers. These traditional values and ways of life form distinct cultures can be found in communities the world over. They are often developed in very unique, context specific environments, and are often not readily transferable into a “modern” or urban context. As noted above, such communities rarely share equal access to the consumption of the world’s resources, making the inhabitants of rural and isolated communities, often among the most marginalised people of their respective countries. Several historical and modern movements by controlling parties (i.e. colonialism, prosthetization and assimilation policies) have forced these communities to abandon their traditional ways of life. The destructive nature of such movements, in more recent decades, has been recognized. Communities and organisations are beginning to make concerted efforts to recapture aspects of culture that have been lost through the generations (these efforts are reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007). In light of the historical and contemporary challenges faced by rural minorities, progress toward social and cultural stability has become an extremely elusive prospect. To put this issue into perspective I present below, a discussion of the Inuit people of Northern Canada.

The Inuit of Northern Canada

The Inuit people of Northern Canada make up a very small portion of Canada's entire population. While there are many similarities between Inuit and other Aboriginal communities, the Inuit are ethnically and culturally distinct from the larger aboriginal population that forms Canada's First Nations. The Inuit people have lived primarily in the Canadian Arctic for generations. They have ancestral relatives that form a diverse circumpolar community in other Arctic regions such as Alaska, Greenland and Russia. It has been suggested that, "no other living culture has maintained such a continuous and consistent way of life for such a long period of time over such a large territory" (ITK, n.d., p. 4). They have survived mainly as a nomadic hunter-gatherer society until European missionaries entered the arctic regions in earnest in the early 1900s. A century of missionary contact, assimilation policies and natural resource development have brought great change to the lives of the Inuit. The mayor of one small Inuit community described to me that what took European culture hundreds of years to develop was imposed upon the Inuit in a matter of decades.¹ The consequences of imposing European culture upon Inuit communities is troubling: overcrowded housing, substance abuse, suicide rates, domestic violence, education and health are all at drastically different and concerning levels when compared to the majority of the Canadian population in Southern Canada, who are of predominantly European descent.

In her intriguing article in the *Peabody Journal of Education*, Betsy Annahatak, former Director of Education Services for the Kativik Regional School Board, describes her journey from a traditional Inuit upbringing through to her success in post-secondary education. Annahatak's description of the collision and turbulent amalgamation of two worlds is a powerful window into the perspectives of the modern Inuit: "The tensions that young Inuit, and even we as adults, live through in this time of culture and language contact with another culture are tremendous" says Annahatak (1994, p. 13). The reconciliation of two worldviews—the European and the Aboriginal—has been an ongoing struggle for the Inuit. To characterize these struggles Annahatak quotes Inuit elders regarding the changes that schooling has brought to their communities: "Inuit lifestyles has been [sic] diminished and affected... Following more of Qallunaat (non-Inuit) ways" says one elder. "Now (children) do not want to listen, reject Inuit ways, and do not want to obey. Their children do not obey their parents anymore. They helped each other in the past, by helping the poor... Qallunaat (non-Inuit) and Inuit culture are not the same, that's all" says another (Annahatak, 1994, p. 16, 17). Having worked as a teacher for more than three years, in the very community in which Annahatak grew up, I can attest that these issues are still as relevant now, more than 15 years later, as they were in the mid-nineties. Annahatak concludes that "Once students face the questions of who they are now and where they are going, it is within the real life stories of elders that they can make meaning of our culture and of themselves as Inuit living in the present" (Annahatak, 1994, p. 17). We will pursue this in the proceeding sections of this article.

¹ The author, David Lane, worked as a music teacher in an Inuit village in the Northern Quebec region of Nunavik between 2006 and 2009.

In recent years some progress has been made in acknowledging the failures of the past and efforts towards cultural rejuvenation have been initiated. Perhaps the most dramatic occurrence was the establishment of the Nunavut Territory in 1999 via the Nunavut Act.² The vast majority of the territory is of Inuit descent. However, Inuit culture still faces daunting challenges, including an increased influence of Canadian and American mainstream media and the necessity of a Euro-Canadian centric education for the purposes of employment. As discussed above, the economic and cultural influence of Southern Canada has changed the nature of Inuit culture such that it has created an environment by which education has become an important factor in terms of individual and family wellbeing. Income, like never before is an important part of Inuit life, as it is in the rest of Canada. By all accounts the education system is filled with overwhelming challenges, but there seems to be an acknowledgement even amongst many Inuit for the important role that Euro-Canadian centric education plays in the present and the future of Inuit communities.

In the face of these challenges, powerful movements to protect and promote traditional culture have emerged through the resurgence of traditional Inuit music. In the Inuit region of Nunavik in Northern Quebec an encouraging resurgence of Inuit traditions is evident as young adults have begun to amalgamate their traditional language and music with popular music creating an emergent culturally specific musical community that has captured the interests of the young and old. After many years of emulating gospel and country music in their native Inuktitut, modern rock, Hip Hop and other popular genres are becoming more and more accessible to young Inuit.

Contributing to this movement is music teacher Mary Piercey of the Inuit hamlet of Arviat, which is located on the western shore of the Hudson Bay in the Nunavut Territory. Piercey was hired to implement a music program at the community high school. As a reflection of the community's needs and desires, Mary set out to develop a program that brought traditional music into the classroom. In so doing she was tasked with bringing Inuit "values, world view, language, social organization, knowledge, life, skills, perceptions and expectations" (Elliot, 2007, p. 77) into her classroom. Piercey successfully engaged her students with community members and successfully contributed to a rejuvenation of such musical traditions as throat singing, A-ya-ya singing and drum dancing. Her achievements have led her to believe that these efforts "can create and foster community identity, cohesion and development" (Elliot, 2007, p. 78). In still another community, the far North Hamlet of Iglulik has embraced contemporary and traditional music through music camps (modelled after successes of some of the territory's other communities). As project coordinator Andrew Morrison puts it, "There's a real sense of pride when students learn their favourite AC/DC song or learn to throat-sing like their grandmother did" (Rogers, 2011). Again, in a workshop conducted in the small Inuit village of Kangirsuk, Quebec in 2008, members of the aboriginal Hip Hop group Tumivut aimed to "encourage youth 'to believe in themselves'" (George, 2008). Also reaching hundreds of Inuit youth is the Hip Hop dance group calling themselves *Blueprint for Life* whom engages in "Social Work Through Hip Hop"

² In 1993 the Government of Canada established the Nunavut Act, which put in place the legal framework that paved the way for the establishment of the Nunavut Territory in 1999.

(<http://www.blueprintforlife.ca/>). Be it a new phenomenon or founded on older traditions, music is reaching and capturing the Inuit people (particularly the youth) in very powerful and interesting ways.

Throughout the predominantly Inuit regions of Nunavut and Nunavik, music festivals of all shapes and sizes have begun to spring up. Larger festivals in the regions more populated centres, such as the Alianait Music Festival in Iqaluit and the Arpik Jam in Kuujuaq, are now being complemented by smaller festivals in the regions' villages and hamlets such as the Arctic Char Festival in Kangirsuk and the Innumarit Festival in Arviat. Having attended one of these festivals and having met artists who have performed at various festivals, I can attest to the impressive diversity of music that is on display. With this knowledge available, is it time for music educators and school board decision makers to embrace and promote this artistic and cultural reality?

Improvisation, popular and traditional music in the classroom

Above, we discussed the nature of formal music education, the issue of cultural loss and the rather distinct communities within which there are troublesome social concerns, but powerful musical traditions. I reiterate that in no way do I advocate that we turn away from or devalue Western art music, I simply wish to highlight here the power that may lie in the alternatives. Lamont et al. (2003) capture this sentiment effectively when they note, the “paradox is that although music is an increasingly important part of the lives of many people, exerts an immense influence on many aspects of their behaviour, and seems to be central to the identities of many school pupils, the ‘problem of school music’ remains” (p. 231). We have already addressed the great influence that music can have on young people, as well as the liberating and empowering nature that culturally distinctive music can have on marginalized populations. I wish now to suggest that the formal Western model of music education might be supplemented or even supplanted, in a rural or ethnically distinct context, by one that elevates improvised music, folk music and even popular music to a more prominent role in the music classroom. For example, Elliot argues that “[m]usic educators have powerful means—music making and musical communities—of raising students’ social consciousness by choosing music past and present that addresses issues of social justice and injustice” (Elliot, 2007, p. 88). It makes sense that music has a place in these rural environments, but perhaps our Western-centric art music approaches might not be the model that is most applicable in Inuit classrooms.

Studies in music improvisation have demonstrated how the unique characteristics of improvised music encourage creativity, social interaction and personal expression. Music improvisation in the case of Inuit is neither bounded by the ideas of free sonic improvisation or the harmonic and modal traditions of jazz music, as described by Pavlicevic (2000, p. 271). In this cultural environment I would include the ideas of creatively exploring new musical styles and the musical creation outside of the notated tradition of Western music. In a community where social identities are challenged or the sense of self is confused (as we often see among Inuit youth), improvisation might serve as a powerful educational and social tool that deserves some attention. Kanellopoulos’ view on music education is pertinent to the ongoing discussion between music and

education articulated in this paper: “music education practice is a form of—a broadly conceived notion of—political practice insofar as it creates situations where specific meanings are produced, attitudes built, identities shaped, and hierarchies of musical and social values constructed” (2007, p. 97). Improvisatory environments have been credited with the ability to create equitable interactions among participants. This notion can be associated with Paulo Freire’s concept of dialogical pedagogy, which is based upon establishing a sharing of feelings and ideas in an unstructured, non-hierarchical environment, which can in turn promote new learning on the part of the student and “instructor”.

The Inuit people have a strong history of traditional music, which played a very important role in Inuit history before their ever increasing contact with the Euro-Canadian population. The Inuit traditions of A-ya-ya singing and drum dancing have traditionally incorporated a degree of improvisation. A-ya-ya singing is so named for the repetitive use of the syllables “A-ya-ya” often traditionally led by an elder and performed communally among families or small community groups. Drum dancing is performed using a drum called a “qilaut” which is held by a handle in one hand and played by striking the drum in and upward and downward motion often while dancing in a circular motion. While these days throat singing is primarily a rehearsed tradition, some older traditions and now some modern incarnations, include elements of improvisation. Throat singing was traditionally a form of musical game for Inuit women while men were out hunting. The winner is the one who outlasts her opponent during the face-to-face practice of throat singing. The guttural nature of throat singing requires a lot of air causing competitors (or performers) to become light headed. It is quite common for a throat song to end in the laughter of one or both participants. Throat singing is primarily a performance art now. It has lost some of its original competitive qualities. Improvisation in the context of Inuit musical experience often involves a call and response, learning environment. Music is often unbounded from strict time signatures as the message of the music will sometimes take precedent over what would, in Western music tradition, be typically bounded within a repetitive three or four beat pattern. It is the combination of this Inuit musical tradition with new art forms that this article heralds as a new, dynamic improvisatory practice.

These traditional musics are being amalgamated in new and inspiring ways with Hip Hop, freestyle rap, rock and breakdancing, allowing youth to navigate the collision of cultures in powerful ways.³ One need only do a quick “Youtube” search to begin to see the extent and the success with which many Inuit youth are combining the contemporary and the traditional in new and brilliant ways. A search for “Inuit throat singing and beat boxing” will bring up several videos of young women merging beat box beats with traditional Inuktitut songs and throat singing almost seamlessly. Search “Inuit drum dance and hip hop” and you’ll find youth who perform Hip Hop dance moves, some wearing traditional Inuit clothing while incorporating traditional drum dance beats and steps. While all this happens at the community level more accomplished Inuit artists are creating powerful and polished assimilations of styles as professional or semi-professional performers: from

³ Some Inuit artists who are successfully merging these styles include: Tanya Tagaq, Beatrice Deer, Elisapee Isaacs, Tumivut, First NR and Kaiva

the throat singing and contemporary music performed by Tanya Tagaq and Beatrice Deer to the haunting contemporary Inuktitut songs of Elisapee Isaacs. Young men are embracing Hip Hop, such as the First NR who rap exclusively in Inuktitut or Tumivut and who have used Hip Hop and modern music technology to create inspired pieces that include traditional Inuit throat songs.

My experience in a music classroom with Inuit youth is that their response to formal art music is distanced at best and outright resistant at worst. By providing them with the opportunity to engage with music that reflects their lives and experiences, teachers have an opportunity to allow many marginalized youth to confront the challenges they face creatively and openly. When youth and children relate to the music in which they are engaged, when they feel music reflects their experiences, new social and musical opportunities emerge. To expand upon Annahatak's conclusion above, the encouragement of improvisation and its potential for bringing traditional music together with more modern, even popular music can have a powerful influence on Inuit youth. Music is already helping youth to reconcile their traditional identities with the increasing Euro-Canadian influence from the south. Perhaps it is time to begin to give these opportunities some serious attention.

Conclusion

This article suggests that traditional and popular musics already play an important role in the lives of youth from marginalized Inuit populations. The use of innovative and improvisatory music education can have a powerful effect on the socio-cultural challenges faced by Inuit youth. I feel that music education needs to embrace this and that the socio-cultural implications addressed above might be explored further by scholars and educators alike. Many of the challenges and hardships faced by rural, marginalised youth (like many Inuit) are a result of historical, social and political factors over which they have little control. Inuit communities are still dealing with overcoming challenges of domestic violence, substance abuse, low rates of education and poor health indicators. A turn towards folk, popular and improvised music could provide a sense of control and understanding that can empower youth to face the social challenges and the cultural confusion that they confront on a daily basis.

The formal music education model that has been promoted throughout Canada for generations seems to lack the cultural appropriateness needed in Inuit communities, and I would venture to say, in a number of other non-Western settings as well. The use of a traditional Western music education model could serve to exacerbate cultural issues that have plagued communities for generations, further contributing to a cultural confusion that negatively impacts youth and eventually contributes to the marginalisation of rural communities as a whole. Educating students in the art music tradition, with which they can not relate in daily life, is questionable under any circumstances, but when that music might serve to marginalise the value of more local, culturally reflective music, these questions become more important and more serious. A syncretic approach to traditional music, popular music and improvisation provides a place where children and youth can embrace and reflect upon the world around them. This allows them not only to appreciate

music, but to actively use music in such a way as to help them function emotionally and socially within a culture that is troubled. Youth can begin to embrace their community's past through traditional music mediums while also embracing modern social issues through popular music and improvisation.

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