

Final Response

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In our music classes, there is typically a predominant focus on classical music from the Euro-Western world. We teach from method books with standard notation and use Euro-Western instruments paired with Euro-Western musical compositions. Essentially, we are promoting and instilling “specific cultural values and standards based on particular ethnic, class, and gender backgrounds”(Chávez, 2019, p. 122). We must put an end to this notion that Euro-Western music is at the top of the pyramid and that all music learn from it in order to be successful in the music world. This indoctrination of Euro-Western music is simply another example of coloniality which asserts its power over other cultures and people (Chávez).

Instead of pretending like we are not still continuing to indoctrinate our students into this narrow vision of what music is and should be, we should be putting our efforts into decolonizing these notions to shift these ideas towards change. We need to focus on rethinking our relationships and “challenging existing colonial ideas about property and ownership by asserting native perspectives” (Chávez, 2019, p. 120). The only way to begin this process is by listening. Listening and allowing Indigenous people to tell their stories so that they are heard and understood by us.

Discussions about Indigenous culture and decolonization were particularly important to me as I live only a half hour away from Bkejwanong (Walpole Island), a First Nation reserve in South Western Ontario. A lot of children from Bkejwanong come to school off the reservation because of the poverty of Bkejwanong Kinomaagewgamig (Bkejwanong elementary school). Additionally, there is no secondary school in Bkejwanong, so students have no other option but

to leave the reservation everyday to go to secondary school. These Indigenous and First Nation students have the choice to attend either the public schools or catholic schools in Wallaceburg (approximately 10 minutes from Bkejwanong) or in Chatham (approximately 30 minutes from Bkejwanong). Personally, I will be teaching at Christ the King elementary school in Wallaceburg next year, one of the catholic schools within the St. Catholic District School Board. Based on the class list I received from my principal, I know that I will have at least two Indigenous students in my classroom starting in September.

One of the main responsibilities I have as a teacher to make sure that all of my students feel accepted and included in my classroom. This is especially important when it comes to students from minority groups such as black, asian and Indigenous children who may not feel included when they first arrive. I want to make it clear that I do not aim to “save” these students as if I perceive them to be underclass or disadvantaged compared to the other students in the classroom (Bradley, 2012). My goal is to break down barriers of race, gender, and class by acknowledging the value of varied cultures and knowledge that each student brings to our classroom.

I have been grappling with how I will achieve inclusivity within my classroom by implementing decolonization ideas into everyday routines and the curriculum. One way I would like to achieve this is by storytelling and oral history (Chávez, 2019). Reading books about Indigenous history or inviting Indigenous peoples into the classroom to share their stories and culture with us. By reading these stories and having in person communications, it enables conversations that shift our perceived ideas about people and cultures that are different from our

own. It will also prompt questions to which hopefully we can find answers to together as a class collectively.

Working with Indigenous and local community partnerships is also something I would love to initiate doing within my school. Chávez argues that by having Indigenous people come into our schools to teach we are “ceding ownership of representation of their pasts and ways of understanding” (as cited in Atalay, 2004, p. 4). Collaborating with these partners will not only expand our knowledge on Indigenous cultures and beliefs, but hopefully build community between people from Bkejwanong and our school.

One final idea that I am still grappling with is the ideals of that Catholic church and how they are imposed on our students who do not identify as catholic. We must indoctrinate the beliefs of the Holy Bible, go to church, teach our students the rosary and say our prayers in the morning and before meals. How are students supposed to feel included when catholicity is not their belief system and they must pretend to follow something different? How am I, as a teacher, able to make them feel included in regards to religion without receiving complaints from parents or trouble from administration? Overall, I know that I have a long way to go into making my classroom and inclusive environment for all my students. However, I am conscious about the role that I play in shifting the ideas that we have ingrained in our minds to create a more just and inclusive society.

## References

- Bradley, D. (2012). Good for what, good for whom?: Decolonizing music education philosophies. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*.
- Chávez, L., & Skelchy, R. P. (2019). Decolonization for ethnomusicology and music studies in higher education. *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education*, 18(3). Retrieved from <http://act.maydaygroup.org/volume-18-issue-3/act-18-3-chavez-and-skelchy/>