Improvising in-between: Youth Experiences with Co-Created, Intercultural Performance

by

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Abstract

Improvising in-between: Youth Experiences with Co-Created, Intercultural Performance

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In this thesis, David Lane explores how community-engaged, improvisatory approaches facilitate generative dialogue and co-learning among participants and facilitators engaged in three culturally diverse youth performing arts programs: Art Not Shame, Bridging Worlds Through Music, and CIRQINIQ. Lane looks at intercultural engagement from two perspectives: the troubled relationship between institutionalized authorities and community-based actors; and the interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of those engaged in the programming of his collaborating partners. The research design employs an emergent, multidisciplinary approach through which Lane enacts a diversity of roles including co-learner, workshop facilitator, and creative researcher. He integrates with and contributes to the regular programming of collaborating partners to interrogate and embody collaborative and creative ethics. His findings assert that improvisatory interventions must be contextually and morally framed and that the repersonalization of scholarly and creative engagements generates opportunities through which differences and tensions can be actively shared, embraced, and critiqued. When employed in a power-conscious and culturally affirming way, improvisatory approaches can serve as a foil to colonial, authoritative structures that persistently exclude and exploit underserved and aggrieved persons. He shares how relational and reciprocal co-creation can serve as a scalable intervention that can bring a humanized, truthful, and responsive praxis into relationships at interpersonal and institutional levels.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Paul Pambe. In some small way, I hope that this work honours his memory and contributes to the realization of Paul's dream to bring music opportunities and education to children and youth. Thank you, Paul.

Acknowledgements

Improvising in-between is only possible because of participation of my collaborators Art Not Shame (ANS), Bridging Worlds Through Music (BWTM), and CIRQINIQ. I am so grateful for the contribution, leadership, and compassion of Véronique Provencher and Rebecca Leonard (CIRQINIQ); Christie Ulicny, Pendo Limbe, Samuel Limbe, Paul Pambe, and Paul Malifa (BWTM); and Michelle Peek (ANS). Thanks to Tupiq A.C.T. (Minnie Ningiuruvik and Mina Maina Tukai), the Kativik Regional Government (Thomas Phillips), Artcirq (Maya Cook), Cirque hors Piste, Anza Kwa Imani Foundation, the Canada Africa Partnership Network, the Guelph Tool Library, Asmaha Heddi, Karin Kasudluak, and Johnny Kasudluak for showing what community engagement really looks like.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

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Inception

A simple conversation was not going to be an option. In 2017, I was working as a private research and evaluation consultant in Benin. I sat alone organizing my notes at a small wooden desk adjacent to the school's dusty courtyard. As dozens of Beninese school children flowed into the courtyard for their recess break, the solitary, white interloper did not go unnoticed. As this was a project site for an international NGO supporting play-based education, the students were not unfamiliar with visitors. They quickly congregated around the curious stranger sitting beside their play area and I had to decide how I should interact with these increasingly rambunctious young humans. With only our vastly differing dialects of French as a second language, asking one another questions and telling one another about ourselves was just not on the table. After exhausting our use of simple "bonjours!" and "ça va biens?", I asked, over the increasingly noisy crowd, "chanté?", "chanson?" The students enthusiastically obliged, some sang and clapped along while others danced. Still others looked on quietly and inquisitively.

When I offered to record their antics on my digital camera, the excitement and performativity only increased. After several minutes of being enclosed by the increasingly manic jostling, singing, and laughter, a teacher came to disperse the moderate chaos to which I had contributed. Though the interaction was relatively short-lived, lasting less than ten minutes, the performative and dynamic interaction was our means of testing and getting to know one another through our differences.

The smiling, inquisitive (sometimes fearful) faces of young people playing and co-creating, getting to know one another as they learn from one another is an image many people can fondly call to mind. As was the case in Benin, sometimes we are fortunate enough to document these moments and can call back to them for inspiration. I've never shared or posted the video that I captured that day, but it still serves as such a joyful reminder to me of that spontaneous interaction. Memories of such moments represent some of the most hopeful and joyful experiences I have had in my life and career. As I conceived of how to co-navigate the improvisatory, arts-based initiatives described in this dissertation, I became driven by a profound desire to provoke hope and joy through partnerships with communities, organizations, and programs in a diversity of environments. Relational and care-filled engagement serves as the grounding motivation in this work. My doctoral work offers a deep and critical reflection on the creative opportunities and change narratives generated from my collaboration with three culturally diverse arts-based organizations: Art Not Shame (ANS) in Guelph, Ontario; Bridging Worlds Through Music (BWTM) in Geita and Mwanza, Tanzania; and CIRQINIQ in Nunavik, Quebec.

Through this project entitled *Improvising in-between*, I explore how community-engaged, improvisatory approaches contribute to generative dialogue and co-learning among participants and facilitators engaged with the existing programming of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. The title *Improvising in-between* captures how our emergent and co-created relationships often manifest in the intermedial and interstitial spaces within and between the personal, social, and institutional environments that surround and integrate with our lived experiences. Throughout this project, I applied an emergent, multidisciplinary, and practice-based approach. I have conceived of intercultural and improvisatory co-creation from two broad perspectives: first, within the troubled relationship between institutionalized authorities and community-based actors; and second, through the embodied interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of collaborators in social and creative spaces.

When engaging with diverse and underserved community members, acknowledging the implications of my identity as a white, cisgendered, heterosexual male is an unavoidable necessity (no matter my honest anxiety about doing so). I have been fortunate to have success in navigating the systems that educated me. My education opened the doors that allowed me to live and work in a diversity of communities. Some of the opportunities my education has afforded me include those of a teacher and recreation advisor in Canadian Inuit communities, a graduate researcher and evaluation consultant in seven countries across East and West Africa, and an education researcher focusing on equity and inclusion for a school board in the Province of Ontario. Retrospectively, while my education afforded me these opportunities, my experiences in these communities over the years have contributed to a reframing of my thinking about the system that brought me there. Mine has been a journey of learning how to

check my entitlements, without retreating from accountability and responsibility, especially within spaces where injustice and harm are pervasive. As I conceived of *Improvising in-between*, I approached my collaborating partners by first sharing my goals and my multidisciplinary background. Collaboratively, we allowed the negotiated circumstances of our engagement to determine which roles I would then enact as opportunities presented themselves. Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to honestly reflect on how and when my identity and privilege have or might have impacted the relationships and the spaces in which and with which I've had the pleasure to engage.

While this work requires a grounding of hope, the pursuit of joy and change often emerges from a desire to confront difficulty and injustice. As Paulo Freire asserts, "There is no change without a dream, as there is no dream without hope" (Freire, 2021, p. 95). My own experience working in and with underserved communities serves as a paradoxical source of some of my own most joyful and hopeless feelings. As good storytellers do, Thomas King concisely captures this sentiment in the 4th of his 2003 Massey Lecture Series, *The Truth About Stories*, when he describes himself and his colleague as "hopeful pessimists" (2003, Lecture 4). Kari Grain (2016) offers further insights as she argues that critical hope allows us to engage with "the despairing events of our current historical moment along with the varied, often unjust histories of those involved, while also moving forward with the development of programs and partnerships that may well generate changes that decrease suffering and dismantle unjust structures" (p. 52). I humbly aspire to join the ranks of the many hopeful pessimists out there as I embody a cautious, attentive, but forward-looking spirit as an improvisatory facilitator, convenor, and co-learner alongside project collaborators.

I've aimed to maintain a determined hopefulness in my writing as an active resistance to the distress manifested through the contemporary, widespread, and contentious narratives about identity and discrimination. The voices of aggrieved communities have been amplified and undermined iteratively in public space through protests, marches, and rallies that have become pervasive in the age of a broadening and diversifying social media landscape. Since just 2010, we've seen a range of important social movements including the Arab Spring, Idle No More, Black Lives Matter, and Me Too. Each of these citizen-led movements has been met by opposing, reactionary forces within government, community, and interpersonal spaces (Blackstock et al., 2020; Fraihat & Yaseen, 2020; Kolhatkar, 2022). These conflict-filled and difficult dialogues are becoming increasingly accessible, with little to prevent them from reaching the eyes, ears, and minds of people in communities and spaces in most corners of the world. In these conflicted spaces, improvisatory scholars have argued that improvisation serves as a model for "how a resistant human subject comes into being" (Keizer, 1999, p. 119) and that improvised dissonances "can be highly productive" (Stewart, 2015, p. 215). Alongside our increasingly connected and politically polarized world, I ask, "How do improvisatory arts-based practices facilitate a generative dialogue of understanding among unfamiliar co-creators?" This question serves as the foundational inquiry of the *Improvising in-between: youth experiences with co-created, intercultural performance* (*Improvising in-between*) project.

Improvising in-between is implemented through the newly established graduate program in Critical Studies in Improvisation at the University of Guelph. In my research, I broadly conceive of improvisation as a practice of interpersonal and intrapersonal creation and responsiveness enacted in our specific circumstances and contexts. We improvise in real time,

using the skills and knowledge we have developed through each of our unique lived experiences.

In my opening paragraphs, I purposefully avoided describing my doctoral project using the term “research.” The overall scope of this work feels uncomfortable labelled strictly within a research context. I am a researcher. I have conducted this work within a post-secondary structure through which research outputs (loosely defined) are an expectation for the completion of my doctoral studies. However, what is strictly defined as the research of this project lives within contestable spaces. Just as this work explores the range of conceptualizations of improvisatory practice, I wrestle with how we understand ‘research’ within meaningfully community-engaged spaces, as we seek to ground our work in learning, relationships, and practice. Through *Improvising in-between*, I aim to balance a healthy cynicism toward institutional research structures with a recognition that many community-based groups understand and value research for its capacity to further strengthen the work they do. Living within these fraught relationships is an important space for the “hopeful pessimist” whose goals remain grounded in the hope and joy that co-creative practice elicits.

From the beginning, I have been motivated to engage in research and practice that begins and ends with community as the focal point and as the driver of the work. Through this dissertation, I discuss different conceptions of community, but most frequently will discuss community as it relates to the identifiable social groups that are represented and supported by my research collaborators (ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ). These communities have found themselves connected through location, identity, and/or common cause and in the context of *Improvising in-between* often identify as members of aggrieved and underserved populations.

Reflecting on my identity in intercultural space

I began to reckon with the consequences of unjust systems when I took my first job as a teacher with ᑲᑎᕕᖅ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᓕᕆᓂᖅ - Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (the school board) in the Nunavik Region of Northern Quebec. As a fresh-faced, recent graduate with a Bachelor of Music Education, not yet 25 years of age, I took a full-time time job teaching Inuit students enrolled in an 'Individual Pathways of Learning' program. The classroom was designed for students that had been placed into an alternative learning environment due to them having been rather casually labelled as having behavioural and/or learning challenges. I was grossly unprepared and unqualified to support these students. It was apparent that if I didn't begin building relationships and trust, I was going nowhere. With little else in my toolkit at the time, I turned to music as means through which to engage the students. We had music playing during our lessons, I offered introductory guitar lessons, we created raps over a rhythm track, and I used music lyrics to teach vocabulary and spelling. These strategies did not reach every student in the same way, but music became an indispensable component of our learning environment.

My experience as a young man, still very much a learner, whilst holding the title of 'teacher,' planted seeds for the thinking and relationship-building practices that continue to inform how I work. In the years following my first teaching experience, I completed a master's degree at the University of Guelph exploring community-based development programming in Uganda. Contemporaneously, I was first introduced to improvisation studies through the work of the university's Improvisation, Community and Social Practice project (ICASP), which later evolved into the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI). The founding of the Institute became the driver behind the inception of the Critical Studies in Improvisation

graduate program at the University of Guelph. IICSI frames musical improvisation "not simply as a musical form, but, perhaps more urgently, as a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body" ("About IICSI", 2021, Overview). My own music education, teaching experience, and subsequent work in program planning and research seemed to congeal within this emerging and malleable field of critical studies in improvisation. *Improvising in-between*, like IICSI, has broadened its elaboration of improvisation beyond musical practice, to embrace a wide range of artistic and social practices. As my intercultural experiences outside the academy (such as being a consultant in Benin and a teacher in Nunavik) taught me, improvisation can emerge even when we aren't looking for it. We necessarily improvise creatively and responsively as we negotiate and learn within spaces that are new and dynamic.

In the intervening years, I have had the fortune to engage in a number of consulting and advisory roles internationally supporting community development initiatives in a wide range of sectors. These experiences have impressed upon me an inclination for pragmatic and empathetic ways of being and knowing. As I engaged in more and more intercultural spaces, I found myself often confronted with the challenging reflection upon my own positionality. This became increasingly evident in my troubling roles as a researcher and evaluator who desired to meaningfully collaborate with community while holding the position of someone who is accountable to authoritative, institutional expectations. For decades, Black, Indigenous, and African scholars have persistently highlighted the harmful colonial and supremacist foundations of many academic, research practices (hooks, 2003; Kalua, 2009; Robinson, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon (2017) argue, "Without a much deeper analysis

of whose knowledge, how that knowledge was gathered and how transformative change is encouraged . . . public engagement in knowledge sharing simply reinforces the existing colonized relations of knowledge power" (p. 7). Institutional structures serve as a complicating hurdle to the realization of a project grounded in honouring and respecting the inherent expertise and authority of research collaborators within their own spaces and practices.

The work of responding to these barriers and developing meaningful partnerships within and across underserved and aggrieved communities begins in relationships of trust. My existing connections to programs in Nunavik, Africa, and through IICSI served as the starting point for identifying and establishing meaningful partnerships. Initial conversations and negotiations with partners began from a place of familiarity. The core partners in this research emerged through an iterative outreach that began in dialogue around common values and common purpose.

Engaging with partners

I first approached representatives of the Inuit social circus program CIRQINIQ through former colleagues at the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) in Nunavik.[1] KRG staff encouraged me to engage directly with the program coordinators and instructors (Rebecca Leonard and Véronique Provencher) who expressed enthusiasm about the potential partnership and research outcomes. The CIRQINIQ Program was first initiated in the Nunavik Region in 2009 through a partnership between Cirque du Monde (a social circus initiative developed and promoted through Cirque du Soleil) and KRG ("Community", 2021; "Kativik Regional Government", n.d.). The program is now independently run through KRG's Recreation

[1] Kativik Regional Government website: https://krg.ca/en-CA/

Department (“Recreation”, 2021). CIRQINIQ engages Inuit youth using “circus techniques together with educational and social intervention to help youth at risk with their personal and social development by nurturing their self-esteem and trust” (“Kativik Regional Government”, n.d., para. 1). CIRQINIQ engages in a range of programming from circus skills training (e.g., juggling, clowning, aerials, acrobatics) to leadership training for emerging Inuit circus instructors to the co-creation of intercultural circus performances in communities across the Nunavik region which combine circus arts with Inuit cultural traditions (such as storytelling, katajjaq, and songs).

When identifying prospective partners in East Africa, I first sought to reconnect with a youth performing arts organization with which I had had the pleasure of engaging during my graduate research in Kampala, Uganda. I was disheartened to learn that the organization (In Movement: Art for Social Change) had closed its doors, a reminder of the precarity of these opportunities for youth in an East African context. I became aware of Bridging Worlds Through Music (BWTM), a small community-based, music education program based in Tanzania, through my role as the chair of the board of directors of the Canada Africa Partnership Network (CAP Network).[2] In my initial conversations with BWTM’s founder and director, Christie Ulicny, we quickly found common values and purpose. In 2014, Christie led a partnership between Toronto’s Regent Park School of Music and the Rich Hill English Medium and Nursery School in Geita, Tanzania to collaborate on a simulcast web concert (Skinner, 2014). At the conclusion of this partnership, Christie continued the relationship with the Geita community to form BWTM.

[2] The CAP Network is a Canadian charity that bridges Canadian communities of support to community-based projects throughout Africa. BWTM is one of the affiliate projects of the CAP Network.

This free music education program focuses on empowering "young people through musical and creative expression" focusing on "essential skills such as teamwork, cooperation and creative problem solving" with "a commitment to inclusion, gender parity, and opportunities for individual growth" ("Our Story," n.d.).

Somewhat counterintuitively, the establishment of a partnership within the City of Guelph, where I and IICSI are based, came together last and was directly impacted by the 2020-2021 COVID-19 Pandemic. Through personal and IICSI contacts, I had initially reached out to staff at the local school board. As families and schools found themselves struggling with evolving and uncertain circumstances, it became largely unreasonable to pursue research efforts in public schools. Like so many other initiatives during the pandemic, a re-assessment of plans became necessary, and I was fortuitously directed to Art Not Shame (ANS). Through its existing connection to the IICSI network, I was able to speak with board and staff members to determine how this collaboration would work for them. The alignment of ANS's programming with the other partners' work and the way their community-engaged purpose complemented the ethical principles of *Improvising in-between* were apparent in our initial discussions. ANS is based in Guelph, Ontario offering community-engaged, arts-based programming for youth and young adults across Ontario. Their programming emphasizes a commitment to equity and engages with communities of individuals who embody "complex histories and relationships to trauma, loss, privilege, and oppression" ("Who We Are," 2021). Through "building supportive and transformative social spaces," ANS aims to speak back to "systemic forces that perpetuate cycles of shame and the undermining of self-worth" ("Who We Are," 2021). ANS's multidisciplinary approach offers creative programs and workshops that engage participants

through a range of art practices including visual art, music, movement, and creative writing. In this dissertation, we will hear and learn from ANS's two collaborative community mural projects, Art in Hard Times and Art in a Just Recovery.

Throughout these collaborations, I have had the opportunity to actively engage with programming and in spaces which offer empowering, improvisatory opportunities for participants to generate and mobilize stories of change by bringing together and sharing their arts-based practices. Each program has applied improvisation both actively and reactively through their social and creative practices, and throughout this dissertation I will explore how these have manifested intentionally and necessarily in each program. I describe the ways I've engaged with my collaborating partners and provide details on the nature of their work and practices most fully in Chapters 4 and 5. A commitment to meaningful community-engaged principles drives the outcomes of my research by first prioritizing the interests and wellbeing of the community-based participants and facilitators engaged through *Improvising in-between*. The second priority of this work is to mobilize learning and practices to the benefit of like-minded community-based initiatives. Finally, I hope the lessons learned and shared through this initiative will contribute to the creative and social justice initiatives being mobilized through the field of critical studies in improvisation.

Dissertation outline

This dissertation is presented in six chapters, with a range of multimodal research-creations and supporting documents shared in seven appendices. This opening chapter presents the conceptual framing and the broad philosophical and methodological approaches used in this research. Chapter 2 is a multidisciplinary literature review that explores resources

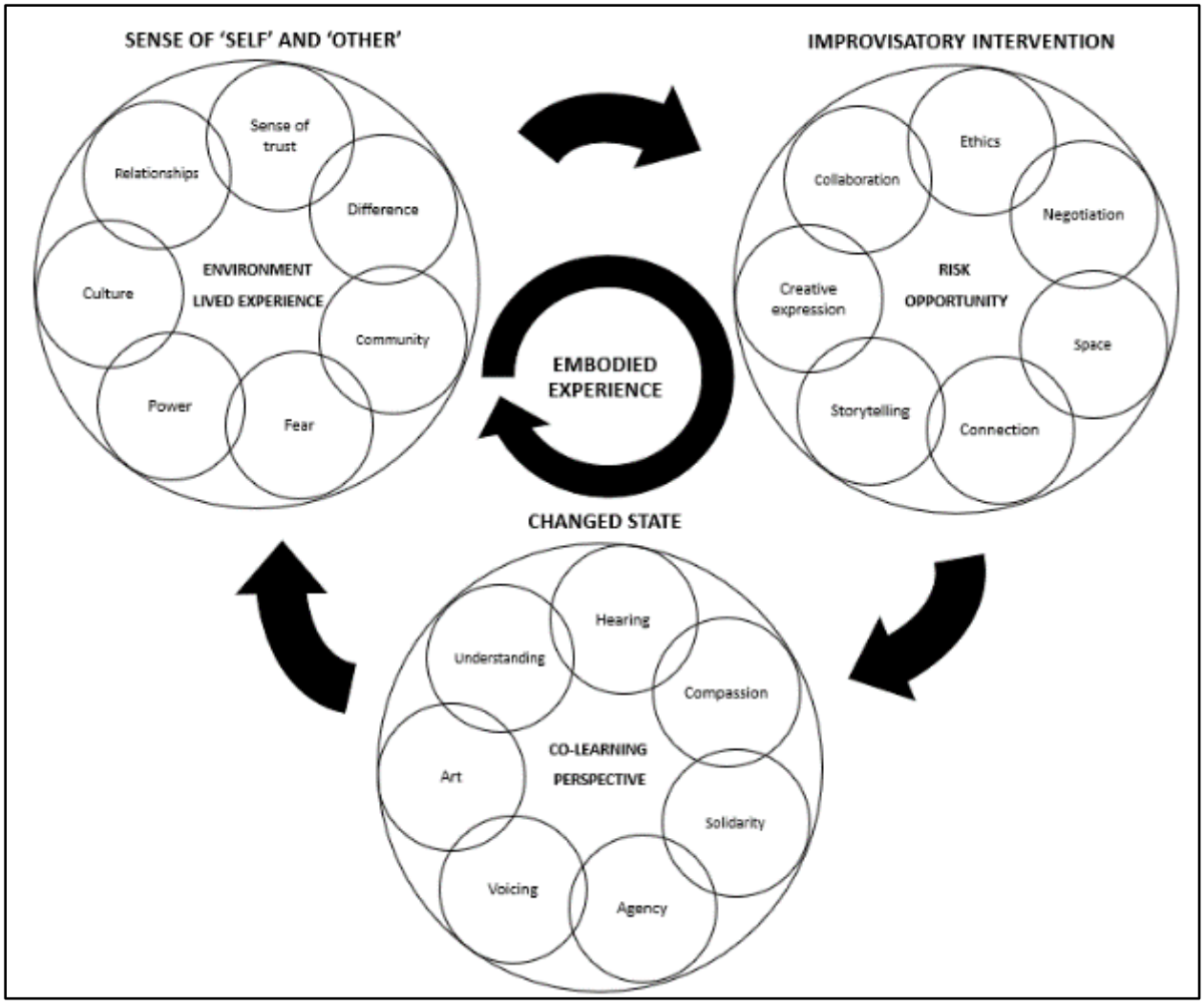
that support the conceptual, ethical, and practical foundations of this project. Chapter 3 includes a deep reflection on the university-community partnership practice and the extent to which the creative and ethical aspirations and principles set out in my conception of this work could be meaningfully realized through the academy and related institutionalized structures. Through this, I reflect upon when and how we might consider community-engaged and improvisatory interventions as vehicles that may permit us navigate our experiences of tensions and contradictions. In Chapter 4, I reflect on the extent to which my conceptual framework (story of change) has served as a useful lens through which to interpret the intercultural, creative practice explored in this project. In reflecting on my own conceptual thinking, I rely largely upon researcher-led social science approaches to data collection (i.e., journaling, document review, interviews, and group discussions) and analysis (i.e., thematic coding and ethnographic narratives). In Chapter 5, I share a series of co-created, narrative case studies through which a range of lessons from and experiences with partner programming are shared. In the final chapter (Chapter 6), I reflect on the wide-ranging lessons from this project before shifting my thinking forward to the prospective work to come. In this concluding chapter, I respond critically to the overarching research questions presented in Chapter 1 before turning my attention to some hopeful objectives and calls to action for those sympathetic to and supportive of co-creative work with aggrieved and underserved communities. The appendices include a series of partner-facing multimedia outputs such as lesson plans, photographs, and video recordings. These works were curated with and for collaborators and each have been shared with the expressed permission of collaborators.

Conceptual framework

Throughout this work, I explore if and how the practices implemented by me and my collaborators are catalysts for change among the communities and the participants engaged with them. In the early phases of *Improvising in-between,* I developed a conceptual framework to guide my thinking. The framework is presented graphically in Figure 1 as an iterative cycle of conceptual relationships. Through the framework I conceive of how, through improvisatory, co-creative opportunities, our embodied selves experience changes in perspective through co-learning, which ultimately result in new and transformed relationships in our lived environments. The framework might be characterized as a 'change story,' a 'theory of change,' or as one friend simply described it, 'a bunch of Venn diagrams.' My conceptual framing is grounded in broad multidisciplinary thinking but draws heavy influence from phenomenology and social systems theory (Bailey, 1994; Crossley, 1995; Gallopin, 2003; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). It serves as a dynamic reference point designed to help focus my own reflective work and to communicate my conception of improvisatory practices as generative and transformative in intercultural spaces. I have found the framework to be useful and practical, but I caution anyone from interpreting it as a generalizable model. This story of change represents one way of thinking about, categorizing, and communicating the countless interrelated and ever-changing elements of this project. In Chapter 4, I reflect on how the elements of the framework manifested over the duration of the collaborations that were realized through *Improvising in-between*. In my critical reflections in Chapter 4, I carefully consider what was missing in my initial conceptual framing.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework - Intercultural Improvisation



The framework is presented in three phases: 'sense of self and other,' 'improvisatory intervention,' and 'changed state.' At the center of the framework are the embodied experiences of all participants, including youth participants, partner coordinators and facilitators, and myself as the project convener and researcher. Building on the phenomenological thinking that has emerged from Merleau-Ponty's influential writing on embodiment, this work acknowledges the important relationship between the body (including

the mind) and the social environment. As concisely argued by Crossley in his writing on Merleau-Ponty's work, “the social is embodied and . . . the body is social” (Crossley, 1995, p. 44).

As it is an iterative cycle, when filtering ideas and experiences through the framework one might choose to begin at any phase (or even multiple phases at a time). Within each phase, I have incorporated a range of intersecting and interacting concepts that characterize some states and actions associated with that phase.

The conceptual framework as a narrative

Although I don’t consider the cycle to have a starting point, it is simplest to understand this improvisatory change story by starting with the ‘sense of self and other.’ In this conception I assert that ‘sense of self and other’ emerges from one’s environment and lived experiences. Our ‘sense of self and other’ further forms and is formed by our relationships with our environments and through our experiences. In the ‘improvisatory intervention’ phase, I conceive of co-creative engagements as opportunities, but ones that come with inherent risks. As we facilitate opportunities and manage risk, I argue that we must infuse our collaborative and creative practices with ethical engagement. In the final phase of the cycle, I characterize a ‘change state’ as one where co-learning and new perspectives have manifested. Here is where I assert that new experiences of agency, ways of knowing, and ways of being have been realized. From a ‘changed state,’ we can begin the cyclical narrative again. Throughout this dissertation, my conceptual thinking was quietly at work in the background, as I explore senses of self and others, improvisatory interventions, and changed states with my collaborators.

Research questions

To further guide implementation and reflection throughout *Improvising in-between*, I developed a series of critical questions to support my investigation of the improvisatory and collaborative practices embedded in the conceptual framework. I prepared two sets of questions to explore concepts of improvisation in distinct, mutually reinforcing ways. Through the first set of questions, I interrogate how improvisatory practice can and does appear (both purposefully and spontaneously) in the ethical, collaborative, and emergent program design and social practices of my research collaborators and through the work of critical and creative scholars. Through these questions, I place a particular focus on the unique and oftentimes troubled intercultural relationships that exist within and between institutional and community-engaged spaces. This interrogation opens the door for exploring improvisatory research design, building on a range of participatory and community-engaged research principles, and the work of arts-based and artist scholars who have been engaging in creative and practice-based research for many years (Caines, 2021; Candy, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2021; McIntyre, 2008; Smith & Dean, 2009).

Through the second set of questions, I focus on exploring intercultural change narratives which have emerged from the youth and other collaborators engaged in the improvisatory, arts-based activities mobilized through the programming of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. The enactment of improvisatory practice through collaborators' programming took the form of play-based and expressive workshop activities, improvised music jams, improvisatory circus performances, and co-created artworks (such as community performances and public murals), as well as impromptu relational and care-filled praxis that materialized between co-creators. In

Chapter 6 of this dissertation, I revisit these questions and the overarching research question posed in *Improvising in-between*: "How do improvisatory arts-based practices facilitate a generative dialogue of understanding among unfamiliar co-creators?"

Research questions on emergent and collaborative project design and engagement

- In what ways do existing structures perpetuate imbalanced institutional-community relationships?
- To what extent do improvisatory research design principles (i.e., those manifested through emergent, participatory, and community-engaged practices) serve as vehicles through which to challenge colonial and oppressive structures?
- Within community-university partnerships, what roles might an ethical community-engaged scholar need to fulfill (e.g., a translator, a buffer, an advocate) and how might an improvisatory ethic be enacted in these roles?
- What existing fissures and emerging opportunities are available within institutional spaces that permit for meaningful empowerment of and reconciliation with aggrieved communities?
- Within what spaces are community-based, non-academic voices legitimized and honoured within institutional structures, and how might an improvisatory approach help facilitate this?

Research questions on improvisatory and intercultural learning and change

- What differences can be observed in how cultural/personal identities or narratives are expressed by participants in diverse improvisatory environments?

- How does familiarity with fellow improvisors/co-creators affect the nature of how participants express themselves?
- How does familiarity with fellow improvisors/co-creators affect the nature of how participants interpret the creative expression of their co-participants?
- How do the environmental/contextual/cultural differences between communities affect the nature of participants' creative expression?
- Did intercultural exchange result in a change in awareness/perceptions about others with whom participants were not previously familiar?
- Did intercultural exchange result in a change in awareness/perceptions about participants' own identity, community, or culture?
- Are any of the observed/reported changes likely to affect participants' choices and relationships going forward?

Like the conceptual framework, my research questions are informed by a systems thinking approach, which can be broadly understood, as Gallopin describes, as "a way of thinking in terms of connectedness, relationships, and context" (2003, p. 7). Systems thinking serves as a binding agent for how I've framed the intersectoral and multidisciplinary relationships and practices at play throughout *Improvising in-between*. In my work, I actively seek to resist a normalized inclination in academic writing for specialization, and narrow, prescribed research outputs. This resistance is affirmed through the social systems thinking that underpins my conceptual framework. As Bailey (1994) has argued, "Only systems theory, among all the specialities in sociology, seems to hold realistic promise of an integrative framework necessary to combat what many see as excess fragmentation or overspecialization

(hyperspecialization if you will)" (p. 39). In complex environments, where sustainable change might be realised, systems thinking to support conceptual framing is useful. As Gallopin (2003) further asserts, "A key feature of the systems approach is the recognition that outcomes are not necessarily predictable since our activities may 'force' a system into a whole new form of behavior . . . never seen before" (p. 22). This provokes notions of how we might improvise through this unpredictability. As explored in the project design, methodology section and the literature review (Chapter 2), *Improvising in-between* prioritizes sustainable, community-facing initiatives in practice-based settings. Within these spaces, I argue that narrow, disciplinary specialization is not compatible with the myriad of immersed and intersecting experiences and circumstances that are encountered.

Partners and partnership development

At the heart of this work are the existing practices, knowledge, and experience of those engaged with the arts-based programming of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. Throughout this thesis we will hear how each organization brings their own engaged and creative approaches to supporting young people within their own communities. My hopes and interests as an improvisatory convener, facilitator, and researcher are given life through my collaboration with these organizations. My work draws inspiration from the history and ethics of socially engaged arts and applied arts practices that have "existed for centuries" (Badham, 2010, p. 96), and the artists and scholars who seek to "make space for creative material and process-focused research outcomes" (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2015). While my pre-existing relationships helped to initiate communication with partners, the trust building and relationship phase involved iterative conversations designed to centre the realities and the values of each partner and their

practices. During the spring of 2020, the initiation of my community-engaged research with collaborators coincided with the global COVID-19 Pandemic. Consequently, it was necessary to delay the relationship and partnership building phases. The project partners all work in vulnerable spaces and needed time to adjust to the heavy disruption to their lives and to the management of their programming before being able to invest time and energy into exploring new initiatives and new relationships.

My approach to partnership development in *Improvising in-between* is informed by the principles of community-engaged scholarship. In 2021, Simon Fraser University's Community Engaged Research Initiative (CERi) released its Community Resource Handbook (Mahoney et al., 2021). CERi's ten guiding principles complement the participatory, emergent, and practice-based approaches discussed later in the project design and methodology section.

CERi - Community-engaged Research Ethical Principles:

1. Harm and Risk Reduction
2. Community Participation
3. Community Benefit
4. Action Orientation
5. Power Examination & Active Redistribution
6. Anonymity, Confidentiality & Privacy
7. Communication, Transparency & Trust
8. Attention to Context
9. Focus on Relationships
10. Collaborative Analysis & Dissemination

(Mahoney et al., 2021, pp. 14-15)

As further elaborated in Chapter 2, this project takes key practical and ethical research guidance from the First Nations Information Governance Centre's OCAP® principles and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre's USAI Research Framework. While these principles and practices were developed specifically to guide research by and within Canadian First Nations communities, I find the decolonizing foundation of these resources offers informative guidance in wider intercultural spaces. Through *Improvisation in-between* I lean into the OCAP® principle of "control." Under OCAP®, "The principle of 'control' asserts that First Nations people, their communities and representative bodies must control how information about them is collected, used and disclosed" (FNIGC, 2014, p. 5). The work of empowering project partners and participants with agency and an authoritative voice within academic, scholarly spaces requires a persistent and insistent effort. From the USAI framework, I rely heavily on the concept of "inter-relationality" which the framework defines in a research context as "historically-situated, geo-politically positioned, relational, and explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is generated" (OFIFC, 2012, p. 5).

All three partners in *Improvising in-between* have a deep commitment to situated practice. As we worked through the relationship building and planning phases, it became more and more apparent that the partners shared core fundamental beliefs and practices, but also given their unique contextual and experiential circumstances they had a significant amount to learn from one another. It is through the practices of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ that the creative and collaborative engagement of youth in arts-based programs and workshops explored in this research was realised. While opportunities for youth in each program to

actively engage with one another did not materialize, it remains my hope that the learning mobilized in this research will support and inspire collaborators across each project.

Our partnership maintained an emergent negotiation in terms of how engagement practices and knowledge products would develop throughout the project. As an intervener and convener, I tried to emphasize the establishment of trustful relationships with a firm commitment to participant wellbeing and mutual benefit. The needs and interests of different actors within the partnership were not the same but remained complementary. The organizational needs were diverse but could be broadly categorized in three areas. For some, the development of curriculum and structure was a prioritized need, while evidence-based advocacy research was prioritized for others. Finally, the development and sharing of social justice and anti-oppression practices was the priority for some partner representatives. The differing interests and needs of partners help to highlight how intersecting and competing priorities need to be continuously negotiated within complex community contexts. Through the collaboration with partners, I reflected on the important interplay of practice, relationship, creativity, and opportunity. As de la Pena et al. (2017) assert, “Innovative techniques can strengthen meaningful relationships between communities and designers, help revitalize participatory design as it breaks barriers to collective creativity, and open doors to possibilities that are yet unimagined” (p. 2).

The ethical and collaborative practices guiding this work also integrate meaningfully within co-learning environments. A co-learning lens in a research space blurs the lines, usefully I would argue, between community-engaged research and pedagogy. Research in a social space is inherently built on the goals of knowledge generation and sharing, which becomes difficult to

distinguish from a pedagogical goal. A learning environment built on research, and a research approach based on learning, force us to question where one ends and the other begins. As described in the inception of this chapter, the very foundations of this work have emerged from my entirely unplanned experiences as a fledgling, co-learning teacher. From this foundation I have often found pedagogy and community-engaged research to be far more complementary than disparate. Both education and research are ultimately modes of learning. Educators and researchers are committed to facilitating learning and knowledge sharing, while students and research participants are the active contributors through which co-learning is realized.

The critical pedagogy lens of Paulo Freire, and those who have followed him, can also be thoughtfully applied to our engagement and research practices. Just as Liz Przybylski (2020) challenges and struggles with the notion of the marked research subject and the unmarked researcher in her work on hybrid ethnography (p. 8), Freire advocates for challenging "the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Further to reconciling the teacher-student contradiction, we can also benefit from Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. This was exemplified through the work of Tanaka et al. (2007) who gathered the reflections of non-Indigenous teachers in a community-based Indigenous pedagogy. The teachers identified "the development of a sense of responsibility for personal learning within the context of a learning community" (Tanaka et al., 2007, p. 100) as a salient theme emerging from their experience. This thinking is equally as informative for researchers as it is for educators.

Research design and methodology

Research design

To interrogate the dynamic and indiscrete social systems (Bailey, 1994; Gallopin, 2003) and spaces explored through *Improvising in-between*, my research design draws from a multitude of complementary research practices. The research and writing that emerge from this project fall most broadly under the diverse conceptual and practical umbrellas of phenomenology and ethnography. Notions of embodiment, and experiential and relational notions of self and other, are deeply grounded in phenomenological thinking. This thinking broadly builds from Merleau-Ponty's assertion that "Perception . . . is an embodied experience. It is sensational" (Crossley, 1995, p. 45). This foundation grounds many of the of research design and methodology choices in my work.

The experiential and storytelling elements that I explore in *Improvising in-between* are broadly grounded in ethnography. The use of narrative and story is an important foundation of ethnographic work. In their book *Ethnographic Worldviews: Transformations and Social Justice,* Rinehart et al. usefully remind us that "Our stories find expression—not only in traditional and transgressive forms of prose, poetry and narrative, but also in drama, dance, music, visual and moving image forms" (Rinehart et al., 2014, p. 2). It is through these stories that Art Not Shame, Bridging Worlds Through Music, and CIRQINIQ consistently create and share their work.

As a complement to the ways in which systems thinking challenges disciplinary specialization, I also draw from an amalgam of collaborative and creative research strategies including participatory action research (PAR), emergent research design, and practice-based research. The practical guidance of these approaches complements the collaborative,

relational, and improvisatory action mobilized through *Improvising in-between*. They individually and collectively embrace a responsive flexibility that aligns with the ethical principles to which my work aspires. PAR is defined by the context in which the research action occurs and is often inclusive of the following characteristics: “a collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem;” “a desire to engage in self- and collective reflection;” “a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action;” and “the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process” (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1). The flexible and reflective nature of PAR aligns neatly with emergent research design principles. Emergent research design is built on the practical notion that designs and methods will need to be responsive and adjust to evolving real-world situations and contexts. This approach “allows for ongoing changes in the research design as a function of both what has been learned so far and the further goals of the study” (Morgan, 2012, p. 246).

In creative research, scholars have used a diversity of terms and conceptions to describe a range of complementary creative, enacted approaches, including practice-based research, practice-led research, research-creation, and arts-based research (Candy, 2006; Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012; Smith & Dean, 2009). My own engagement with and exploration of arts practice employs arts-based research methods to explore and express a range of social and cultural ideas (Leahy, 2020) while also engaging in research-creation through which “The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms)” (SSHRC, 2021, May 4).

The overall project design of *Improvising in-between* can be understood as an iterative and responsive journey, committed to an allied effort to learn and benefit from co-creative research praxis. My conception of collaborative research design strives to be sympathetic to the relational and political environments in which I am working. As an improvisatory scholar, I draw from and respond to these methodological approaches practically and generatively as they support the co-learning and co-creative ethic of my research. The interrelated nature of PAR, emergent design, and practice-based research is discussed more fully in the literature review in Chapter 2.

As a final consideration in the design of this research, I conceive of how the project will explore the change narratives that emerge from the improvisatory engagement. Capturing change narratives in this research relies mainly on a retrospective approach whereby participants, facilitators, and I reflect on experiences and observations through personal stories of change (this is inspired by the 'most significant change approach' described in the 'Documentation Methodologies' section below). The emerging change narratives explore how change is perceived and communicated.

Data collection and documentation methodologies

In this section, I organize the mixed research methodologies employed in this project into three overarching categories: creative media documentation, narrative case studies, and researcher-led social science data collection. This categorization is not meant to silo these methods nor to suggest that they will remain segregated from one another. Presenting them separately simply helps to envision how each might be employed. In practice, I've found that elements of each strategy have integrated with and reinforced the others.

Creative media documentation

Through creative media documentation, I make use of co-creative digital methods that allow participants and partners to actively generate and express their own experiences and creations. Throughout *Improvising in-between*, collaborators engaged in three digital media practices: photo storytelling, digital storytelling, and social media.

The photo storytelling in *Improvising in-between* is inspired by the photovoice method. Photovoice is a community-led ethnographic approach that has gained broader use in research practice, aided significantly by the increased accessibility of digital photography through digital cameras and smart phones. In her guide to the method, Sutton-Brown (2014) succinctly describes photovoice as an approach that "interrogates contextually based meanings from an insider perspective as a means to generate new insights into our socially constructed realities and cultures" (p. 170). Photovoice is used in many culturally diverse international contexts, as exemplified by the work of UK-based PhotoVoice which catalogues more than 30 photovoice initiatives in 12 countries, with the goal of using "ethical photography to promote positive social change" ("About PhotoVoice," 2021, landing page). In the book *Design as Democracy* (de la Pena et al., 2017), Chelina Odbert and Joe Mulligan describe their use of photography in the Kibera community of Nairobi, Kenya (*Piga Picha* or Community Camera as they call it). They describe how photography can be "disarming" and how it allows participants to "swap roles for a minute and redistribute 'authority'" (Odbert & Mulligan, 2017, p. 59). They further laud how the Community Camera serves to "set the stage for a more open, collaborative, and fun design process" (Odbert & Mulligan, 2017, p. 59).

The increased availability and affordability of digital devices has also increased opportunities for amateur artists and community-based groups to generate audio and video recordings (Przybylski, 2020). Consequently, digital storytelling programs and models that provide a platform for underheard voices can be employed more easily in spaces where these strategies were previously inaccessible. The University of Guelph's Re-Vision Centre for Art and Social Justice uses digital storytelling as it "investigates the power of the arts, and especially story, to open up conversations about systemic (rather than individualized) injustices in health care, education, and the arts sectors" (Re-Vision, 2021, landing page). Re-vision's Academic Director, Carla Rice, and Managing Director, Ingrid Mündel, argue that digital storytelling contributes to the "qualitative lexicon by providing innovative new approaches not only for chronicling marginalized/misrepresented experiences and critically researching selves, but also for scaffolding intersectional alliances and for imagining more just futures" (Rice & Mündel, 2018, p. 1).

Quebec-based Wapikoni has mobilized their digital storytelling model through their work with Indigenous communities (mainly in the province of Quebec). Their innovative approach includes the use of a recreational vehicle as a fully equipped mobile video and recording studio that travels to communities. Through their in-community workshops they "Provide the tools, equipment, spaces and professional mentors directly to communities to create short films and music recordings" with the aim of contributing to "social and societal transformations at the personal, relational and collective levels by facilitating connections, recognition and collaboration" ("Our Vision", n.d.). The commitment to community-based voicing and social justice found in the practices of photovoice and digital storytelling integrates

seamlessly with this work's conceptual and ethical frameworks. Therefore, these models and methods strongly inform the ways I have mobilized similar strategies with the collaborators in *Improvisation in-between*.

As a low cost and familiar vehicle, social media platforms offer self-driven opportunities for partners and youth to share their creations. In her work exploring hybrid ethnography, Przybylski (2020) asserts that "As internet access and social media engagement have ballooned, being connected is not a special condition for the digitally literate, but a common feature for increasing numbers of people" (p. 79). For some youth, popular platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube offer additional creative features that participants may use as their means of expressing themselves in a mode that is widely recognized and available to them and their peers. It is important to be conscious of the risks associated with social media use, which include privacy, cybervictimization, and mental health risks (Nesi, 2020; Palfrey, 2016). As I will share in later chapters, however, social media and other digital tools, when used carefully, offer exciting accessible communication and engagement opportunities for collaboration and co-creation.

The ability to access and share digital creations was an important ongoing consideration during *Improvising in-between*. It is my continuous goal that collaborating facilitators and program participants have ongoing access to multimedia outputs and that they are encouraged and empowered to reflect upon them and share them at their own discretion. Accessing and sharing digital creations through digital platforms allows for collaborators to interact with multimedia outputs. These platforms can help facilitate opportunities to review creations privately before they are shared more broadly. The availability of creative outputs on publicly

accessible, web-based platforms (i.e., websites and social media) means that creators need to be empowered to engage with the digital works both in terms of sharing, revising, and/or removing them from public view. Through *Improvising in-between* creative outputs (and other narrative outputs) have been shared via private cloud drives (i.e., Google drive), collaborators' personal emails, personal online messaging applications (i.e., Facebook messenger and WhatsApp), and/or group social media pages (i.e., YouTube and Facebook).

Narrative case studies

Through the development of case study narratives, I intentionally focus upon emergent stories as a supplement to those which may or may not have arisen from the more purposeful research methods applied in this research. My development of these narratives was inspired by a collaborative, qualitative method called the 'Most Significant Change' technique (MSC). Developed by Rick Davies and Jessica Dart (2005), this technique is popularly used by many international non-governmental organizations. The approach emerged from an identified need in monitoring and evaluation practice to mobilize meaningfully participatory change narratives "emanating from the field" (Davies & Dart, 2005, p. 8). The approach is collaborative by design. Stories of change are gathered and shared back in community as "various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussions about the value of these reported changes" (Davies & Dart, 2005, p. 8). Several of the case study narratives were developed in collaboration with representatives of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ with whom I co-devised and discussed stories of change provoked by relationships and creative experiences encountered throughout *Improvising in-between*.

It is crucial to consider the agency and wellbeing of youth participants before, during, and after any collaborative, creative research collection. It is not always appropriate to document the creative, self-expressive activities and experiences of young research participants. The decisions related to documenting project activities and sharing narratives is necessarily an ongoing negotiation. The knowledge that one's activities are being documented or recorded impacts the nature of the decisions one might make. In some instances, documentation represents an empowering and creative opportunity for participants to express themselves and share their ideas, experiences, and creations in a way that gives them pride and agency. In other cases, documentation can cause participants to become inhibited and uncomfortable, restricting their engagement in a co-creative space. My own insatiable curiosity and the consumptive demands of scholarship need to be carefully managed in these spaces. I am careful to temper my own ambitions that could easily slip into what David Garneau (2012) characterizes as a colonial, academic "drive to see, to traverse, to know, to translate (to make equivalent), to own, and to exploit" (p. 32). Garneau further challenges us to question beliefs in Western scholarship "that everything should be accessible, is ultimately comprehensible, and a potential commodity or resource, or at least something that can be recorded or otherwise saved" (2012, p. 32). Meaningful relationships and communication with participants are needed within these spaces. In collaboration with trusted facilitators and community members, I strived to work openly and collectively to enact documentation practices which facilitated agency and empowerment for participants as a first principle of my data collection approach.

Researcher-led social science methods

While I feel the term is rather impersonal and technical in the context of this work, for concision I use the term 'data collection' here to refer to the range of documentation approaches used to record the knowledge, experience, and practice discussed in this section. The researcher-led data collection in *Improvising in-between* is qualitative and grounded in phenomenological principles. I grounded and contextualized the qualitative data collect collection during collaborative programming and fieldwork through a wide-ranging literature and document review. My qualitative data collection included field notes/journaling, communications records, participant observation, interviews with facilitators, coordinators and participants, and group discussions with participants. An overview of data collection phases and methods is described in Table 1.[3]

The conceptual framework and project design/methodology discussed in this chapter were prepared and supported by the literature review presented in Chapter 2. It includes a multi-disciplinary exploration of scholarship and practice including anti-oppression and decolonization; collaborative and ethical research design; identity, storytelling, & the performing arts; intercultural dialogue and space; and improvisatory, arts-based social change. To supplement the academic literature, I also review and discuss policies, practices, and outcomes of partners and other practice-based initiatives to contextualize this community-focused work (found in Chapters 3 and 4).

[3] To see some samples of the emergent and oftentimes abandoned plans and research guiding documents, including journal notes, interview/discussion guides, email correspondence, workshop plans, and a letter of invitation, please see Appendix G – Emergent and Collaborative Research Documentation.

Table 1

Data collection phases and methods

Data collection phase	Methods
Documentation of collaborative and partnership development process	- Records of steps taken, forms prepared, and communications that occurred in the planning phase
Participant/community profiles (demographic and biographic)	- Organizational documents, observations, interviews - Reports/publicly available resources (annual reports, web-based documents, social media)
Documentation of workshop activities	- Participant observation, journaling, audio/visual recording - Participant-led documentation (photo-voice, digital storytelling, creative products)
Participant reflection	- Conversational free-dialogue, semi-structured interviews, group discussion
Documentation of knowledge and awareness of project participants	- Verbal (interviews, group discussions) - Documentation – note taking, audio/video recording
Participant-created artistic outputs	- Participant/partner developed creative works as generated through partner-led programming - Shared at the discretion of participants/partners, supported, and curated by David Lane

Analysis and knowledge sharing

As the convener and researcher of *Improvising in-between*, I serve as the coordinator and manager of the data collection, but also as an advocate for partners and participants to be active contributors to the generation and documentation of project outputs and creations.

Analysis of findings and learnings in meaningfully participatory and community-engaged work is a shared and negotiated process. The selection of methodologies such as photovoice, most significant change, and participant-generated creative outputs have built-in participant analysis and validation, in that creators and storytellers decide which creations and stories are shared. For researcher-led methods that involve gathering information from participants (i.e., interviews, observations, recordings), analysis and validation with participants pose a greater challenge. I shared materials back to key collaborators (in raw and analysed forms) for their feedback and contribution as an enactment of the ethical principles that informed the development of this dissertation.

In this work, I recognize the realities and barriers within academic spaces that limit opportunities for community-based co-authorship (Castleden et al., 2010). Within academia socially engaged scholars encounter the persistent challenge "to level power imbalances and evenly distribute credit and risk in the research process" (Sarna-Wojcicki et al., 2017, p. 716). In response, I have actively worked to include strategies for affirming and encouraging participant self-voicing. In this dissertation, I've tried to highlight community contributors who have been essential in making *Improvising in-between* a reality. While it is my name at the top of this thesis, I am conscious of and grateful for the fact that this work has been built because of the knowledge and skills that my collaborators were willing to share with me. In *Hungry Listening,* Dylan Robinson (2020) calls for "openness toward including those who are not granted legitimacy or status within the systems of work we participate in" (p. 238). The creation of collaborative spaces for community-based authorship within the dissertation and other

knowledge and creative outputs responds to this call. Community-based contributions and voices are weaved throughout the dissertation but are most fully realized in Chapters 4 and 5.

This academic dissertation represents one aspect of the wider community-engaged objectives of this project. I feel a level of unease about how this dissertation is positioned within a community-engaged effort as most of my collaborators will have limited direct engagement with it. The expectations and requirements associated with an academic dissertation feel paradoxical to the true spirit of this work, which aims to facilitate relationships and share learning, practices, and experiences within the community of practice. In response to this, I am committed to an ongoing discussion with my collaborators to explore a parallel set of knowledge and creative outputs which are designed to align with the needs and interests of my collaborating partners and other community-based practitioners, with the goal of broader knowledge mobilization and supporting community-facing practice. As the language in the dissertation will not be accessible to all research participants, it remains my priority that they be able to access stories, lessons learned, and creative outputs that result from this work. Prior to the submission of this dissertation, I shared back relevant aspects of this dissertation and the creative outputs that are included in the appendices with key collaborators for their reflection. They have been supportive and encouraging throughout this process as I've tried to honour their work and the contributions of the communities with which they work. I remain grateful to my collaborators for their ongoing support and collaboration throughout this research.

Chapter 2: Intercultural Literature Review

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A multidisciplinary review

In this chapter, I highlight a multiplicity of literature and resources that have helped to frame and support the collaborative work mobilized through *Improvising in-between.* This project has the simultaneous advantage and challenge of pulling from a rich, interrelated, multi-disciplinary foundation. I have weaved scholarship on critical studies in improvisation throughout the literature review. This emergent field is explored most significantly in the section titled 'Improvisatory, arts-based social change' (p. 62). There is a rich historical, contemporary, academic, and community-based foundation of practice and scholarship that feeds and vastly expands upon the concepts and disciplines discussed herein. Some disciplines and theoretical frames explored in this review include (not exclusively) critical studies in improvisation, sociology, participatory planning, community development, feminist theory, social learning theory, post-colonial studies, ethnomusicology, critical race theory, theatre studies, practice-based research, arts-based research, and community-engaged research. This review does not comprehensively explore each of these fields but selectively draws on them in

meaningful ways to explore the complex nature of intercultural, improvisatory research with underserved children and youth.

Anti-oppression and decolonization

Inequity and injustice are ubiquitous. I write from the position that few people believe that our societies, our systems, our institutions are entirely equitable and fair (even if these notions are defined and understood differently in diverse community and cultural contexts). If we begin with an acknowledgement that inequity and injustice exist, we are positioned to explore how they are experienced and perpetuated. In this section, I will explore literature that sheds light on systems of power that have not only been demonstrated to have caused inequities and discrimination but are built to systemically perpetuate them.

Many conceptions of systemic oppression are grounded Antonio Gramsci's writings on hegemony. In his *Prison Notebooks,* he describes hegemonic forces as perpetuated by "intellectuals" who serve the interests of a "dominant" political class to propagate "manipulative" and "coercive" systems at the expense of the agency and consent of oppressed populations (Gramsci, 1999, p. 145). His writings have broadly informed many of the writers cited in this review. Gramsci highlights how obscure, often misunderstood legal, educational, and populist machinations underpin systems that reward adherence to, and discipline within, hegemonic systems that are sustained by inequity.

For many who are oppressed by these structures, the obvious and harmful hypocrisies they observe are sometimes expressed as teetering on the knife edge between fear and laughter. Thomas King reflects on the nature of these structures in his 2003 Massey Lectures, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. "Racism is a funny thing you know," King states,

"dead quiet on occasion, often dangerous, but sometimes it has a peculiar sense of humour" (King, Lecture 2). That quiet, dangerous racism as a source for humour among oppressed communities is reflected in the knowing and exasperated response of Australian poet and activist Bobbi Sykes to the academic notions of postcolonialism, "What? Postcolonialism? Have they left?" (qtd in Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 24). A recognition of hypocritical contradictions between academic rhetoric and the lived experiences of oppressed people might seem laughable in aggrieved communities. That is, when it doesn't bring them to tears.

These contradictions and hypocrisies rear their ugly heads with regularity in any concerted reckoning of racist and colonial structures. When the 'Black,' 'lesbian,' 'warrior poet' Audre Lorde (1984, pp. 41-42) expressed her lived reality, she describes how her own contradictory states of being are defined through historical and systemic injustice. She expresses how her Blackness makes her simultaneously "highly visible" yet still "rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism" (Lorde, 1984, p. 42). In too many cases, her visibility makes her vulnerable rather than affirming her humanity and affording her a sense of agency and dignity. It is from a place of recognition and affirmation of these lived realities that we can begin to engage and negotiate interculturally. As a white, cisgendered, heterosexual (cishet) male, experiences of identity-based oppression are largely foreign to my lived experience. It is necessary for me to consider, just as Peggy McIntosh does in her own writings and reflections on white privilege, that "My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture" (McIntosh, 1989, para. 6).

Oppressive structures (to which Gramsci alludes), while experienced personally (as by Lorde), are also perpetuated at a societal level. It is worth noting here that I will often use the terms oppressive, racist, and colonial selectively and somewhat interchangeably. This is not to obscure any nuanced differences but to acknowledge the fundamentally interrelated nature of these social scourges. In their work on decolonizing knowledge and participatory research, Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon reflect on the legacy of systemic epistemicide, "the killing of knowledge systems" (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 6). For many Indigenous people, this work begins with "the dispossession of people of access to their land," leaving oppressed, colonized communities severed from the very source of their knowledge, spirituality, and means of living (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 7). To understand how these acts of dispossession and epistemicide can occur, we might look to the often-devastating reflections in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies.* She painstakingly describes how the dehumanizing, patronizing, and exploitative mindset of colonizers dismissed the value of Indigenous knowledge based on the view of Indigenous ways of life as "primitive" and characterized by an inability to use their "minds" or "intellect" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 25). Thomas King reflects further on the delegitimization of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews, in favour of extractive, utilitarian Western knowledge practices. He highlights the repressive and Eurocentric assertion that "books are quantifiable, whereas oral literature is not" (King, 2003, Lecture 4). The damage wreaked by the extractive and exploitative nature of Western knowledge systems is explored deeply in Dylan Robinson's book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. He reflects on the painful knowledge that dominant Western educational, cultural, and

research practices are grounded in a worldview that "actively dispossesses knowledge from Indigenous knowledge holders" (Robinson, 2020, p. 104).

While the cultural and contextual consequences of colonialism can differ dramatically across the globe, eerie and disturbing similarities also emerge. In Fetson Kalua's writing on African identity, he echoes the patronizing and white supremacist notions described and experienced by Indigenous writers (King, 2003; Robinson, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). He notes the repeated use of terms by European explorers such as "'innocent', 'simple', 'children', [and] 'savages'" (Kalua, 2009, p. 27) to describe the Africans they encountered on their travels. The supremacist dismissal of humanity, knowledge, and ways of life by colonial forces resonates across many oppressed and underserved communities.

When researching in intercultural spaces, it is not just uninformed, but potentially deeply harmful to ignore the ongoing influence of power and historical context. Tuhiwai Smith asserts ominously that research "is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary…" which "raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful" among Indigenous people (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 1). Such distrust is grounded in historically exploitative and dehumanizing research practices, perpetuated in often subtle, unrecognized ways. As Hall and Tandon highlight, "Higher education institutions today exclude many of the diverse knowledge systems in the world, including those of Indigenous peoples and excluded racial groups, and those excluded on the basis of gender, class or sexuality" (2017, p. 6). These issues vary across academic disciplines. While the liberal arts tend to be characterized as progressive, in his book *Music and Identity Politics,* Ian Biddle highlights a defensiveness among systemically affirmed academic authorities. He describes how the resistance in the field of musicology to the

influence of non-academic knowledge, based on claims of impartial "autonomy" and "technical analysis," serve to reinforce "hegemonic forces," further marginalizing diverse life experiences and ways of knowing (Biddle, 2012, p xvii). In their exploration on co-authorship in academia, Sarna-Wojcicki et al. (2017) emphasize not only the dismissal of diverse knowledges but, just as damagingly, "the failure to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of non-academic collaborators" (p. 720). Colonial thinking serves as the basis for the academy to decide whose voice will be heard, effectively dismissing alternative ways of knowing as they are judged "not to be a credible source of knowledge" (Sarna-Wojcicki et al., 2017, p. 720). Robinson acutely describes the harm of this dismissal as violence in the form of practices that continue "to eradicate Indigenous epistemologies, languages, and forms of perception" (2020, p. 140). These consumptive and extractive research practices, Robinson explains, dispossess Indigenous knowledge holders of their cultural, sacred, and personal knowledge in the name of "knowledge mobilization" (2020, p. 140).

Post-secondary research and educational structures align with the knowledge systems and practices that inform colonial models of grade school. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is recognized as a seminal text on the systemically oppressive principles upon which many (mainly colonial) education systems are structured. Freire asserts that education systems mold children and youth in a manner that mirrors a societal framework in which youth's "perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression" (1970, p. 45). In spite of his influence on modern educational scholarship and practice, a lack of acknowledgement and sometimes overt resistance to these ideas have been perpetuated in the instructional learning and pedagogical practice within the Canadian

education system. In his editorial essay in the book *Looking Forward: Challenges to Music Education*, published in the year 2000, Dr. Brian Roberts bemoans, "As long as minority groups exercise their 'rights' by displacing the majority, schools will never function as a healthy socializing agent" (2000, p. 9). I could dissect the specious and racist claims in this statement but will rather focus on this quote for the unfortunate truth being expressed about the nature of Canadian education (and echoed in diverse ways in other systems across the globe). The Canadian system of education was designed, and is facilitated, by a majority dominated populace that is ill-equipped or unwilling to understand the adverse effect of schools as "socializing agents" for students and families whose cultural background and lived experience differ from the majority.

One can look to Canada's residential school system to see the terrible harm perpetuated by a system realized within a supremacist and myopic colonial lens. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's investigation into Indigenous residential schools concludes that the atrocities committed against children and families is directly attributable to the fact that "The policy of colonization suppressed Aboriginal culture and languages, disrupted Aboriginal government, destroyed Aboriginal economies, and confined Aboriginal people to marginal and often unproductive land" (TRC, 2015, History – Part 2, p. 579). In her research on children as activist artists in the United States, Danielle Marie Kohfeldt describes how the patronizing nature of colonial structures becomes amplified when considering the broadly applied notion of childhood innocence. She highlights how this view of innocence and ignorance contradicts and dismisses the knowledge and lived experience of diverse, intersectional, and underserved youth. Diverse children and youth embody knowledge and

maturity that in many ways their 'educators' cannot understand or refuse to acknowledge (Kohfeldt, 2014).

Despite the deeply influential role of educational institutions, children's and youth's "submersion in the reality of oppression" (Freire, 1970, p. 45) extends beyond their walls. Tuhiwai Smith calls our attention, in a pre-social media world, to colonial media influences on Maori children and youth and the role of television, as it "imports American culture and educates the tastes of the young" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 96). These colonial influences and communication vehicles have only expanded in the intervening years with the broadening reach of social media.

I value my privacy. In most circumstances, I am granted both the permission and means to maintain this privacy. This is not a privilege shared by all and it is a privilege that I must acknowledge. At times I may need to consciously subvert my own privilege to engage across cultures in spaces where trust needs to be built, and where co-learning with aggrieved persons is a goal. In her popular 2009 TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie holds a mirror to our positionality. She states, "It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power" (Adichie, 2009, 9:25). Adichie's words further challenge academics, like me, to reckon with the knowledge that "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie, 2009, 10:00). An acknowledgement of this power highlights the necessity of taking a reflexive stance on positionality as an important step in any anti-oppressive and decolonizing effort. In the field of critical studies in improvisation, Tracy Nicholls further emphasizes this necessity when she notes that "in improvisation, it does, and will always matter who is speaking" (2012, p. 78).

While the need to acknowledge power and explore how to ethically wield it is evident, specific means through which privileged scholars can respond to this need are less evident. I find it helpful to reflect on Lawrence Grossberg's question, "how can we involve fractions of the empowered in something other than a masochistic, guilt-ridden way?" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 88). While a certain level of guilt is understandable and sometimes even warranted, we might benefit from transforming that guilty energy into responsibility and dedication. We can strengthen our efforts to embrace and enact decolonizing concepts by challenging the troubling "contrast between an unmarked researcher and marked other" (Przybylski, 2020, p. 8). We can accept that in community-engaged research there are roles for us that are appropriate and supportive within an underserved and oppressed community. But just as importantly, we must also accept that some roles and interventions, well-intentioned though they may be, are not ours to enact. Some interventions contribute to the very harmful relationships and practices we would hope to disrupt, and that acknowledgement needs to be infused into our intercultural thinking. As Tuhiwai Smith stresses, for Indigenous people "the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a form of resistance" (1999, p. 35). Robinson takes this moral imperative a step further. He effectively asks non-Indigenous researchers, storytellers, artists, and archivists to check our entitlements in accepting that some knowledge, some stories, some ceremony may need to be inaccessible to non-Indigenous people (2020, p. 25). Robinson's writing engages with the emergent and fragile context of Indigenous-settler relations within the lands now known as Canada. His guidance on intercultural awareness and our own reflexive practice as researchers and practitioners can serve as an important foundation for the

exploration of the participatory, ethical research designs and methodologies explored in the next section.

Participatory and ethical research design

When engaging with diverse communities, especially those that have been oppressed and discriminated against, empowering research and program design are fundamental aspects of any ethical and effective collaboration. In order to enact principles that seek to resist systems built on racist and colonial foundations, a design that engages purposefully in reflexivity, collaboration, and social change is necessary. As I continue to immerse myself in collaborative and ethical principles and practices, I am struck by the wisdom shared by Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz who remind us that "the most well-intentioned actions of accompaniment will fail if they do not include preparation for complex and contradictory realities and if they do not infuse ideas and activism with ethical judgment and wisdom" (2019, p. 40). This wisdom comes with an implied expectation that in meaningful intercultural engagement, we must take on the responsibility of informing ourselves. We are simultaneously called to be honest and to demonstrate "humility and generosity" (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 97) as we honour the experience and wisdom of those with whom we collaborate.

Indigenous people in the lands now known as Canada have spent painstaking emotional energy in asserting their own sovereignty and ethical practices in response to the harmful colonial research practices that have exploited and scarred their communities. Indigenous organizations have developed and shared Indigenous-informed research principles and frameworks succinctly and clearly. The First Nation Information Governance Centre released the OCAP® principles in 1998. These clear principles offer a helpful framework for discussions

for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people engaged in research or cultural work.[4] The acronym OCAP® stands for ownership, control, access, and possession (FNIGC, 2014). The principles serve as a useful starting point for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers as they commit to "use and share information in a way that brings benefit to the community while minimizing harm" (FNIGC, 2014, p. 5). When engaging with an Indigenous community, researchers and cultural actors can begin their engagement with a clear agreement that all information (such as data, stories, and art) belongs to the community from which it has emerged. The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) elaborates on these principles through their USAI Research Framework. The USAI acronym stands for Utility, Self-voicing, Access, and Inter-relationality (OFIFC, 2012). The framework explores not only Indigenous rights to direct and control research related to Indigenous people; it actively reflects on Indigenous ways of knowing as a basis through which decolonizing research is built. USAI describes Indigenous knowledge as "participatory, historical, and political" (2012, p. 1) and clearly indicates that principled research under this framework "takes place in communities, is driven by communities, and speaks the language of identity, in people's own voices and on their own terms" (p. 4). A particularly informative principle within the USAI Framework is that of inter-relationality, which emphasizes that "All knowledge and all practice are situated within all relations; there is no objective knowledge or neutral praxis" (p. 10). As a principle, this statement forces us to reflect carefully on our research and creative practices, to investigate our own notions of impartiality.

[4] It is important to understand that OCAP® principles were designed to oversee formalized relationships between First Nations communities and outside agencies. Use of OCAP® principles outside these formal relationships must be considered as guidance and advice, not as an application of the principles.

These principles, clearly developed and articulated by Indigenous groups in the lands now known as Canada, also resonate with broader participatory principles in the context of other fields of community-engaged and community-development practice. UNICEF's *Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement* contains language resonant with the OCAP® and USAI principles, though broadened for a diversity of global contexts. UNICEF 'Core Community Engagement Standards' that align the with OCAP® and USAI include 'Empowerment and Ownership,' 'Inclusion,' and 'Building on Local Capacity' (UNICEF, 2020, p. 9). The very different position from which the UNICEF guidance is written frames its standards in terms of how empowered, external community-engagement practitioners and researchers might mobilize. The UNICEF standards that focus on 'Two-way Communication' and 'Adaptability and Localization' (UNICEF, 2020, p. 9) connect with the participatory and emergent project design principles discussed later in this section.

Community-engaged research practices, which include institutional systems and actors, must contend with power imbalances in terms of both resources and influence. In the *Community-Engaged Scholarship Review, Promotion & Tenure Package* prepared by Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, an institutional-community gap is implied when they describe community-engaged scholarship as "the application of institutional resources to address and solve challenges facing communities through collaboration with these communities" (Jordan, 2007, p. 3). While circumstances will dictate the nature of control in these circumstances, it cannot go unacknowledged that even within the context of a good faith effort to address and solve challenges, the control of "institutional resources" is often a contentious point of engagement in these relationships. When the Community-Engaged

Research Institute at Simon Fraser University suggest in their *Community Resource Handbook* that "Community partners are co-researchers and leaders from onset" (Mahoney et al., 2021, p. 11), we might find ourselves as practitioners in the awkward position of not being empowered to grant control of "institutional resources" to our community partners. In such cases, opportunities for the community partner to direct and lead is restricted before the partnership is even initiated. We continue to have a lot to gain and learn from community-engaged scholarship but must also continue to be aware of, and be honest about, the systemic barriers that continue to challenge the realization of these principles from within the framework of institutional structures.

Participatory and collaborative development practices have been researched and implemented for decades. A popular framework for conceptualizing citizen participation was presented by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, which presents eight levels of participation from non-participation in the form of 'manipulation' and 'therapy' to tokenism, including 'informing,' 'consultation,' and 'placation,' to citizen power gained through 'partnership,' 'delegated power,' and 'citizen control' (Arnstein, 2019, p. 26). Arnstein's now somewhat outdated work was re-adapted by Roger Hart in 1992 in his guide to children's participation published through UNICEF. Hart expands upon Arnstein's ladder by infusing participatory notions with an understanding that "Young people's participation cannot be discussed without considering power relations and the struggle for equal rights" (Hart, 1992, p. 6). A reflection on power also resonates throughout social justice and anti-oppression practice, as exemplified in Kohfeldt's (2014) discussions on the intersectional experiences of youth and the relative powers of community actors and authoritative institutions.

Working within social, economic, and cultural frames where unequal access and control is the status quo means that actions which might serve to push ethical, community-engaged practice up the ladder from tokenism to citizen control require a concerted effort to work against the established systems. In their book *Design as Democracy,* David de la Pena et al. express their belief that “Sustainable projects emerge with real partners because all can take credit for the knowledge base of collaborative work" (2017, p.74). Here, like Arnstein and Hart, de la Pena et al. begin to characterize what a partnership really looks like. Hall and Tandon infuse some optimism (in spite of systemic barriers) about institutional change when they cite a growing demand from post-secondary students for “transformative and real-world learning opportunities that value community and alternative knowledge . . . that provide an important space to create how we want to be together” (2017, p. 17). These demands and beliefs represent opportunities for community-engaged practice but require project design and implementation practices through which they can be realized.

There are numerous research models and designs that are built upon the principles of critical theory and participatory practice. Models which align both ethically and practically with intercultural work in underserved communities include participatory action research, emergent design, and practice-based research. I contend that while the focus of each of these defined approaches differs, their fundamental bases are complementary and become integrated when put into practice. This is a view reinforced by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt in her writing on action research. She describes the multi-faceted nature of participatory-action research (PAR) as “a holistic, integrative concept that incorporates related concepts and values such as participation, collaboration, communication, community of practice, networking, and synergy” (Zuber-

Skerritt, 2015, p. 6). PAR has further been characterized by the fact that "The definitions practitioners and participants use are always in flux and oftentimes contested" (McIntyre, 2008, xii). A PAR approach has also been used as empowering model of youth engagement. In youth participatory action research (yPAR) "Children are active participant researchers . . . which disrupts conventional participant-researcher and child-adult roles" (Kohfeldt, 2014, p. 32-33).

Complementing the in-flux and contestable nature of PAR approaches, Hammersley (2022) says of emergent research design, "There are practical, as well as philosophical, reasons for treating research design as an emergent process. All manner of practical contingencies may arise that force researchers to consider what they are focusing on and/or how to go about investigating it" (p.61). In improvisatory work, our practices are necessarily emergent. Though not synonymous, I assert that conceptions of emergent research design and improvisatory practice are intimately complementary and intertwined (Merz, 2002; Zenk et al. 2023). Denner et al. (2019) describe emergent approaches as a means of negotiating power and trust in research-practice partnerships. They highlight how in their work, "changes involved working together to iteratively refine the research questions and methods, moving from distinct to more blurred researcher and practitioner roles and increasing mutual understanding of both research and practice" (Denner et al., 2019, p. 4). This negotiation not only characterizes key aspects of emergent research design and PAR approaches, but also actualizes a contesting of the "unmarked" researcher and "marked" researched as noted earlier from Przybylski's (2020) work.

In their book *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* Hazel Smith and Roger Dean emphasize the fluidity of research and practice within creative spaces.

For Smith and Dean (similarly to the nature of PAR) any clear definition of practice and research is blurred. “Research, therefore, needs to be treated, not monolithically, but as an activity which can appear in a variety of guises across the spectrum of practice and research” (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 3). In creative spaces, artists and academics have actively explored ‘practice as research’ as an approach to strengthen participation and to allow space for alternative knowledge. In her work on practice-based research in the creative arts, Linda Candy seeks to broaden the scope of what constitutes research and research data. Inherent in her work is a negotiation through practice about what knowledge will be incorporated into the research and practice paradigm. For Candy, “Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions” (2006, p. 3).

In *Creating Together: Participatory Community-based, and Collaborative Practices and Scholarship Across Canada*, Conrad and Sinner (2015) highlight a multitude of arts-based and community-focused arts research practices. In their national scan, they “situate multidisciplinary arts research practices as sites for critical conversations central to defining, exploring, and investigating current practices” (Conrad & Sinner, 2015, p. xiv). Like many scholars, I am continuously searching for methods and strategies that align with my experience applying creative, engaged practices. My inclinations are echoed by Chapman and Sawchuk (2012), who assert, “the role of intuition and ‘feeling’ presents itself as one of the strongest reasons why those who pursue research-creation are committed to the methods they promote” (p. 12). We gravitate to these methods, as Caines (2021) argues, by a desire “to see

what the work is about, and often aim to develop unique working processes that are not always transparent or transferable" (Caines, 2021, p. 327). These strategies align well with my inherent rejection of narrow disciplinary specialization. In practice-based, creative research approaches, "the theoretical, technical, and creative aspects of a research project are pursued in tandem, and quite often, scholarly form and decorum are broached and breeched in the name of experimentation" (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012, p. 6). As an improvisatory scholar, I filter conceptions of methodology and research design through the lens of the reciprocal, responsive ethic that is enabled by improvisatory practice. These practices engage with collaborators and environments actively and dynamically allowing for lived and emergent experiences to be an essential part of the way we co-create. As Caines asserts, "Broadly speaking, an improvisatory methodology requires that researchers first see who is there, and exactly what they offer and need, and then utilize a process of active, 'straining for more', through interdependent and expansive listening" (Caines, 2021, p. 330).

If we reflect on the OCAP® principles, we must determine how the knowledge and cultural products are to be explored, and how creative/practical/research outputs are shared. Who shares them and in what format? Within a post-secondary, peer-reviewed context, existing standards (such as the Vancouver Protocol) impose restrictive definitions for acceptable authorship (Castelden et al, 2010; Sarna-Wojcicki et al. 2017). While the limits on authorship in many cases might be considered conservative and protective of notions of academic rigour and expertise (Heble, 2017, p. 7), nuanced considerations also highlight risks to community-based contributors. These risks emerge in the forms of potentially harmful consequences related to the sharing of cultural or community-based "intellectual property" and

authors' claims (even from within the community or group) to represent the broader community (Castleden et al., 2010, p. 29). Regardless of these challenges, there persists a recognized need for alternative approaches to authorship which are committed to "the distribution of credit, responsibility, and authority in the cocreation of knowledge by professional scientists and nonacademic collaborators" (Sarna-Wojcicki et al, 2017, p. 740). I am intrigued by the inclusion of the term 'cocreation' in the writing by Sarna-Wojcicki et al. 'Co-authorship' in their work was explored mainly through the lens of environmental science, but their work clearly demonstrates the cross-disciplinary nature of co-creation within any participatory research frame. Returning to an Indigenous context, Castleden et al. found that within community-based, participatory Indigenous research initiatives, "researchers identified co-authorship as a benefit, contributing to community pride, capacity, and credibility when their co-created knowledge is recognized in places of power (academe)" (Castleden et al., 2010, p. 29). Given the barriers and the risks facing under-represented and oppressed voices, Dylan Robinson has called upon non-Indigenous, settler writers and creators to reflect upon authorship that does not "require Indigenous people to shoulder the burden of decolonization" (2020, p. 253). At this time, models of ethical engagement and collaboration are further along than the approaches available for ethical co-authorship practices, especially within academic and institutional systems. Ethical, emergent, and political action is needed on this front to create a safe, empowering means of including and amplifying marginalized voices within the frame of community-engaged, intercultural research.

The increased need for co-authorship models notwithstanding, the principles of responsive, negotiated, and collaborative research and engagement approaches are both

complementary to and exemplary of intercultural and improvisatory practice. They can serve as guiding models and methodologies through which ethical and creative engagement might be explored within underserved and aggrieved communities.

Identity, storytelling, & the performing arts

The previous two sections discussed what I consider to be indispensable ethical and practical principles upon which to begin work in diverse cultural and sensitive interpersonal spaces. In this section, I will elaborate upon how storytelling and the performing arts are powerful vehicles through which individuals, particularly disempowered individuals, might explore and assert their own identity. Scholarship on personal identity and identity formation ranges from fields as interrelated and diverse as sociology, psychology, feminist studies, literary studies, and the performing arts. This section reviews the broad notion of socially constructed identity. Much can be learned from physiological/biological and spiritual understandings of the nature of personal identity. However, my focus in this work centers upon conceptions of socially constructed identity and complementary discussions of phenomenological embodiment, as they offer framing through which the instigation of intra- and interpersonal change can be explored.[5]

In *Culture and Identity* (Hall and du Gay, 1996), Stuart Hall argues that "because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practice" (p. 4). This discursive relationship is reflected in psychologist Albert Bandura's writing

[5] Social identity and identity construction are taken up by community arts scholars as well, such as Kuppers (2006) and Badham (2013). This research engages in complementary discussions and draws inspiration from community arts writing, but a comprehensive review of community arts theory and practice is beyond the scope of this thesis.

on social learning theory. He asserts that “psychological functioning is best understood in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between behaviour and its controlling conditions” (1971, p. 2). Both Hall and Bandura highlight “historical and institutional sites” and “controlling conditions” as social structures that significantly define and influence conceptions of personal identity. As agents within these discursive frameworks and through reciprocal interaction, notions of identity have been argued to be performed and negotiated. In her writing on socially constructed gender, Judith Butler argues that gender identity is brought into realization only through a performance of socially understood gender characteristics (1988). In her complementary writing on the theory of identity negotiation, Ting-Toomey asserts that “The core dynamics of people's group membership identities (e.g., cultural and ethnic memberships) and personal identities (e.g., unique attributes) are formed via symbolic communication with others” (2015, p. 419). These four distinct, but interrelated theoretical frames characterize personal identity as an enacted and reciprocal dynamic that is conceived through fluid relationships among social interactions and structures.

The use of story to disseminate biographical and fictional identities is taken up across multiple forms of creative expression and scholarly practice. If we are to take Thomas King at his word, “The truth about stories is that’s all we are” (2003). I suggest that a key to understanding King’s quote is to note the plurality of the word ‘stories.’ Our sense of self is not one story, but a series of stories that we continuously write about ourselves or have others write about us. This notion of complex, sometimes contradictory stories is articulated to great effect in Adichie’s *The Danger of a Single Story*. She reflects on the stories that were written for her and about her identity as a Nigerian, as an African woman, and how those stories belittled

and misrepresented her own lived experiences. She also reflects on the stories she carried about herself and others, as she concludes that “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete” (Adichie, 2009, 12:45). The power of story has resonance not only with our own perspectives, but with how we are represented and perceived, which is consequential to the ongoing narratives that emerge from our lived experiences. King reflects on this power when he asserts “That a story told one way could cure, that the same story told another way could injure” (2003, Lecture 4). As she explores the role of arts-based research as social justice activism, Karen Keifer-Boyd highlights how autoethnographic approaches are used as a means “to explain self to others, or to explain how one is ‘othered’” (2011, p. 9). She further highlights the personal and political nature of how “histories of systemic socio-institutional practice” (2011, p.9) reflect the personal and interpersonal experiences of colonial, hegemonic, and oppressive structures through the structure of story.

Stories, however, need not be bound within the framework of the written or oral expression of one’s experience and sense of self. Though self-expression may be explored through a range of creative practices, this research engages primarily with performing arts programming as the vehicle through which identities are explored. Building from the philosophies of his Brazilian contemporary Paulo Freire, drama theorist and political activist Augusto Boal asserts that “Art is the search for truths by means of our sensory equipment . . . These internalized oppressions have their origin in, and retain an intimate relation with, our social life” (2006, p. 5). For Boal, engagement in a creative process “allows the subject to exercise themselves in activities which are usually denied them, thus expanding their expressive

and perceptive possibilities" (2006, p. 18). This perceptual exercising of the self through expressive practice expands beyond the interpretive, curated narratives that might typically be explored in a written or oral storytelling practice.

In musicology and ethnomusicology, cultural expression and cultural identity through music have been widely studied. In his 1996 article 'Music and Identity,' Simon Frith argues that "the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them" (1996, p. 9). Frith's assertion is another example of iterative and reciprocal practices, in this case characterizing how musical performance serves as a means of expressing one's identity and as a means of forming it. He does not limit this experience to the individual. He highlights the communal nature of this performative identity exploration, asserting that "it creates and constructs an experience . . . that we can only make sense of by taking on both a subjective and collective identity" (1996, p. 109). This fluidity between personal and collective identity is most succinctly argued by Frith when he states that "Self-identity is cultural identity" (1996, p. 125).

Many scholars have explored music as a nexus through which cultural identity is formed and negotiated. In his writing on music and identity politics, Ian Biddle reflects on the power of music and musical culture to the collective resistance of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community to the police raids of the Stonewall Inn in 1969. Biddle argues that amid the community standing up to the homophobic and transphobic violence being perpetuated by the police, "music, both as a sounding material, and as a kind of cultural force is intensely apparent . . . music had marked one of the few places in the world where they could meet to talk, dance and sing in relative safety" (Biddle. 2016, p. xii). The cultural force that brought this oppressed community

together, Biddle suggests, also served as a galvanizing force that emboldened one of the most influential moments in the history of the gay rights movement. In her work exploring dialogue and meaning within the improvisatory performance of jazz, Ingrid Monson has argued for a deeper understanding of how "music as a sonic phenomenon and human agency participates in the construction of social and cultural meaning" (1996, p. 209). Digging deeper into the Black roots of Western improvised music, George Lewis explores the paradoxical nature inherent in the assertions of essentialist notions of identity (i.e., that individuals labelled with a particular gender, racial, or ethnic identity will inherently share a set of characteristics with others in their identified group). Lewis highlights that while Black improvisatory musicians might have fundamentally disagreed with many of the problematic implications of essentialism, a movement of "strategically essentialist" Black nationalism had asserted itself in the 1970s. This strategic effort is described by Lewis as a unifying practice amongst Black artists to protect the cultural and historical roots of the music born from their lived experiences from being absorbed and consumed by dominant commercial and cultural forces outside their control (Lewis, 2015, p. 311). Lewis' writing exemplifies how contested identities and contextual negotiation occurs among and between individuals, communities, and the controlling conditions that surround them.

As highlighted in the discussion on decolonized and anti-oppressive practice, a community-engaged researcher or facilitator must engage in self-reflective practice with respect to one's own identity and positionality. Through the practice and study of social circus, the experience and expression of identity are not limited to participants engaged in learning and sharing through circus workshops. In their text, *Social Circus – A Guide to Good Practice*,

Hyttinen et al. have highlighted the reflexive nature of implementing socially-supportive principles through performance-based practice. As facilitators, Hyttinen et al. counsel that "In the course of work, the identity of instructor/teacher is consolidated, and the circus instructor will discover his or her own approach to the instruction" (2011, p. 68).

Intercultural dialogue & space

At the time of writing this review (with little to suggest that this will change soon), notions such as identity politics, appropriation, systemic racism, and privilege have become lightning rods for contentious dialogue. In this section, I explore how diversity, in dialogue and in space, may be conceived and experienced across cultural and social identities. This section explores conceptions of diverse interpersonal space and practice as a means to engage with the collision of difference. What happens and how can we engage within this difference, while remaining conscious of power imbalances, systematic privilege, and personal/community trauma?

I will mainly use the term intercultural to describe dialogue and interaction between people with diverse cultural backgrounds. It is distinguishable but intersects with discussions on cross-culturalism and multiculturalism. Where cross-culturalism tends to describe a sharing of cultural experiences and traditions from one group to another and multiculturalism tends to be applied to broader discussions of national identity, intercultural dialogue is used most often to describe the social and cultural interplay within more localized and interpersonal contexts (Kastoryano, 2018).

Any discussion of intercultural spaces is well served by an interrogation of what we understand to be a community of people or how we might discuss the idea of being in a

community. In their book, *Community of Rights - Rights of Community*, Daniel Fischlin and Martha Nandorfy characterize community "as a complex allegory for the relational identities in their human, environmental, historical, and contextual fullness that arise as embodied, material presences in the here and now" (2011, p. 7). Fischlin and Nandorfy's inclusion of allegory (story) and relational identities in this definition are particularly resonant with explorations of identity in my research. Jens Zickgraf's definition of community (described through his work exploring the identities of the Badagas communities in South India) resonates with the complexity evoked by Fischlin and Nandorfy when he asserts that community consists of a "competition and tensions among kinship groups, settlements and territories" (Zickgraf, 2017, p. 84). For Zickgraf, these tensions emerge from and give life to shared identities and to the notions "communal activity" and "solidarity" (Zickgraf, 2017, p. 84). In both definitions of community, inherent differences and liminal states of being are fundamental concepts for an inquiry inclusive of community or communal identity.

Liminal states within an intercultural space have been widely characterized as existing through experiences of hybridity. Homi Bhabha asserts that a sense of hybridity manifests as an expression of "partial culture" through which "visions of community" are constructed (1996, p. 58). The construction of 'visions of community' aligns with complex and narrative constructions of identity, further blurring any clear distinction between the perceptions of personal identities and community/cultural identities. Bhabha has been widely recognized for his definition of this liminal, 'partial' space as a third space, the "contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures" (1996, p. 54). Bhabha's use of the term 'contaminated' is interesting as it distinguishes a lack of homogeneity within and across cultures. Many postcolonial writers have built upon

Bhabha's conceptions of third space in their exploration of cultural identity. The blurred lines between community and cultural identities are discussed by Ien Ang who asserts that, through an examination of hybrid identities of the Asian diaspora, "we no longer have the secure capacity to draw the line between us and them, the different and the same, here and there" (2003, p, 141). In his exploration of third space and cultural identity in Africa, Kalua argues that the idea of liminality is useful as a means to reject any notions of "a pure African identity" (2009, p. 26). He argues that the concept of a unified, consistent African identity, such as those perpetuated in the dangerous single stories discussed by Adichie (2009), exists largely as "a function of colonialism" (Kalua, 2009, p. 26). Kohfeldt applies third space theory to the experiences of children and youth within the context of yPAR, asserting that the third space "acts as a mediating setting between and within the school and community. Infused with elements of the school culture, the community culture, and children's culture, students may come to experience this space as one that is both within and outside of each" (2014, p. 35).

It is noteworthy that postcolonial thinking on hybridity and third space has also been broadly questioned in scholarly circles. In his book *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization*, Amar Acheraïou notes, among other critiques, that "postcolonial approaches to hybridity and the third space are usually insufficiently contextualized, if not completely decontextualized" (Acheraïou, 2011, p. 106). Further, scholars express concern for inattentiveness to power and oppression within models where the relationship between lived experience and cultural identity is dissolved within an ephemeral and liminal context. Uma Narayan, in her examination of emotional considerations for working in difference, highlights the potential of harm when power and oppression are not meaningfully considered in

intercultural spaces. In these settings, Narayan cautions that "the sense of self, of the members of the oppressed group are unintentionally violated by non-members of the oppressed group who participate in the dialogue" (1988, p. 31). As discussed earlier, intent, well-meaning or otherwise, does not necessarily offer protection to oppressed community members if it is not guided by wisdom and reflexive practice. Dylan Robinson, in the exploration of decolonizing practice, further asks us to consider the extent to which intercultural dialogue can impose burdens on Indigenous people, resulting in strains not experienced by non-Indigenous people in the same space. Robinson questions, "how such collaboration and conversation between various settler, diasporic, immigrant or 'arrivant' subjects might proceed without (or with reduced) demand on Indigenous people to expend the considerable emotional, intellectual, and physical labor required through leading such processes" (2020, p. 253). In a community-based engagement space, Philips et al. (2014) describe how notions of hybridized, third space identity in practical implementation become somewhat inert. They question the extent to which we might "expect groups from diverse backgrounds, with differing . . . needs, and varying commitments to the neighbourhood, to agree and collaborate fully on local issues" (Phillips et al., 2014, p. 57). While post-colonial scholars may not intend their writing to be applied to localized social change initiatives, the insights offered in post-colonial critiques serve as notice to ensure that community-engaged scholars and practitioners are attentive to the localized, contextual, and interpersonal realities in which they work. It is important to be conscious of how notions of hybridity might obscure a recognition of the lived experience of aggrieved community members whose identities are framed by the oppressive environments in which they live.

Previously in this chapter, I discussed conceptions of creative practice as a mode through which identities are conceived and enacted. It is interesting also to reframe the focus of intercultural exploration from individuals to artistic outputs. Scholars have examined music not only as an art form through which intercultural identities are examined, but as a performing art that as an object of study might be conceived of interculturally. In their 2019 study, Mehr et al. found that there are fundamental elements in song and musical composition that can be found in musical cultures around the world. Their findings concluded that while musical diversity is widespread, it "varies more within than between societies" (2019, p. 15). Mehr et al. argue that in a broad sense song form and musical structure might be characterized as a universal phenomenon. In a digitally connected world, the globalized pervasiveness of popular music has contributed to highly recognizable and common characteristics in youth-focused music across the globe. The African and African American roots of much of this music have been widely acknowledged ranging from the ubiquity of hip hop in almost every country in the world to the digital dance beats included in electronic dance music (Katz, 2017; Marsh & Petty, 2013; Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Thinking interculturally, we might conceive of musical engagement as a vehicle through which interpersonal commonality and difference might be effectively navigated within and across communities. In their research on service learning among non-Indigenous post-secondary students and Indigenous communities in Australia, Bartleet et al. (2016) enacted music as an intercultural structure. They found that "music making . . . can provide a culturally sensitive and enabling process for embedding Indigenous content and a way for students and community members to 'face' one another, build mutual appreciation, and engage in relationship building and intercultural reconciliation" (2016, p.

187). In the next section, I will elaborate more on how arts-based mechanisms serve as a basis for social change emerging from the intercultural spaces where agency and identity are enacted.

Improvisatory, arts-based social change

How do arts-based and improvisational practices effect the personal and interpersonal perspectives of youth in intercultural spaces? Improvisation, while perhaps considered new and emergent as a subject of academic study, has a long and diverse history in the performing arts. Creative performing arts disciplines (such as theatre, music, dance, and circus arts), while they often function independently, are frequently brought to work in concert with one another. They are explored in professional and virtuosic contexts, as well as amateur, play-based settings. Improvisatory concepts, like concepts related to identity and intercultural space, are rarely siloed and often enact and embrace interdisciplinarity both intentionally and as a by-product of their practice. In this section, I focus on the conceptualization of improvisation and arts-based community development as models for social justice and resistance.

In their book, *The Fierce Urgency of Now*, Fischlin, Heble and Lipsitz present the responsive nature of improvised music as a model for just social engagement. They assert that "improvised musickings that reflect on and enact the formation of alternative communities have a great deal to tell us about how successful, meaningful encounters not predicated on violence, oppression, or inequity can be achieved" (2003, p. 31). For Augusto Boal, the theatre-based play that he conceived through *Theatre of Oppressed* serves as an agentic model through which people realize and conceptualize citizenship and liberty. He asserts that through improvisatory play participants are enacting "metaphors for social life" (2006, p. 37). Boal's

later work extends beyond the realm of theatre to include broader creative and aesthetic processes which, he asserts, serve as deeper vehicles for change than the creative products they may produce. These processes, Boal argues, “develop the perceptions” (2006, p. 18) of creative participants, presenting opportunities to challenge and shift oppressive personal and community narratives. Incorporating a wider arts-based community development perspective, Alan Kay found that participants in arts-based initiatives expressed a number of positive outcomes that could be characterized as social protective factors, such as “self-expression, communication, feeling good, working hard, pride in the making, having fun, and feeling part of a team” (2000, p. 416).

To realize their power for social change, improvisatory models must be clearly situated within the political and cultural context within which they are mobilized. As Kay (2000) suggests, “the arts cannot operate independently in the regeneration of a declining area" (p. 422). Keifer-Boyd elaborates this point arguing that in an arts-based inquiry “a reconstitution of self in the act of learning about lives” requires that “the personal is understood and contextualized as political” (2011, p. 10). Taken together, these works suggest that a consciously political and contextually integrated approach to improvisation is at the foundation of an intentional effort toward social change. A political, intentional model through which improvisatory social change might be mobilized is a social justice art approach. As characterized by Kohfeldt in her study of children as activist artists, she defines social justice art as “aligned with an empowerment, social agenda specifically through . . . creating opportunities for constructing alternative narratives . . . space claiming, and . . . building relational power that enhances social and cultural capital” (2014, p. 44). Within an intercultural or cross-cultural

space, we might consider Tuhiwai Smith's musing that "The strategies that work for one community may work well for another. The gains made in one context may well be applied usefully in another" (1999, p. 105).

The experiences and lessons that emerge from within and across similarly oppressed communities might develop new communities of solidarity through which emergent learning and empowerment are mutually beneficial and spontaneously generated within creative spaces. To determine how community-engaged creative and research practice support learning and empowerment in underserved and aggrieved communities, we might look to Tomlinson and Lipsitz's writing on accompaniment as an improvisatory practice. Through accompaniment, Tomlinson and Lipsitz assert that "individuals from different backgrounds with different experiences, perspectives, and interests recognize and reinforce each other's work and worth by joining together. Accompaniment recognizes the inescapably and quintessentially social nature of living in the world" (2019, p. 24). Their description of accompaniment incorporates both the contextualized and political nature of community-engaged practice while recognizing the improvisatory nature of lived engagement. They further elaborate on creative and improvisatory models as liminal, "middle run" interventions not entirely out of sync with notions of hybrid, intercultural third space. Reflecting on Immanual Wallerstein's concept of "middle run" temporality, Tomlinson and Lipsitz suggest that interpreting creative, improvisatory practice as an enaction of the middle run "allows us to reach ourselves and others to exploit fissures and fractures available to us" (2019, p. 39). They further elaborate on how these interventions fill an important space within movements toward social justice. In the middle run, intermediary interventions are focused neither on short-term, tangible outcomes,

nor larger policy and systemic issues, but upon the sustained, medium-term personal and social transformation through which aggrieved individuals and communities can resist oppressive forces (Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2019).

Arts-based and improvisatory practices have been mobilized as a means of supporting resilience and as a vehicle through which mental health and trauma may be explored. In their book, *Playing for Keeps: Improvisation in the Aftermath*, Daniel Fischlin and Eric Porter argue that "in the aftermath of chaos and trauma, improvisatory modes of being provide generative alternatives based on risk taking and nonconformity rooted in cocreative connections" (2020, p. 2). Artistic expression as a protective factor for vulnerable youth was exemplified by civil rights activist Jerome Smith, who suffered beating and imprisonment in his youth. Smith asserts (in an interviewed cited in a 2016 book review by Orissa Arend) that the artists he engaged with in his youth had "invented something that prevented us from committing suicide" (qtd in Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2019, p. 19). In their research on resilience and the mental health benefits of youth engagement in social circus practices, Fournier et al. found that "Interventions incorporating art forms such as theatre, dance, and drama have been shown to be effective in youth dealing with psychiatric illness or neurodevelopmental problems. These interventions can improve participants' socialization, social skills, self-esteem, self-expression, and self-confidence" (2004, p. e552).

Engaging in improvisatory accompaniment through dialogue and interpersonal relationship can be a powerful complement to performing arts practice as a means of incorporating lived experience and expert knowledge within a community intervention. John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach explore the use of music and metaphor in the process of

peacebuilding in post-conflict environments in their book *When Blood and Bones Cry*. One of their most inspiring stories, however, does not focus upon music, but upon risk, trust, and dialogue. They recount the tale of Haja, a lone female faith leader engaged in peace negotiations with the predominantly youth-filled ranks of the rebel forces in the Sierra Leone civil war between 1991 and 2002. At great risk to herself, Haja "never stopped building the trust and confidence of the children she met in the bush. Eventually, the rebels agreed to join the peace talks and the long process towards a formal peace accord began" (Lederach & Lederach 153).

In *Playing for Keeps*, Fischlin and Porter present an interview with the cofounders of Al-Mada Association for Arts-based Community Development. Al-Mada uses improvisation in their music therapy practices with Palestinians facing violence and oppression in the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through their efforts "bridging difference, fostering mutual respect, and healing" (Fischlin & Porter, 2020, p. 201), the co-founders emphasize that they "work in therapy with people who are not musicians" (p. 226). They further highlight the importance of having trained therapists available to support the complex needs of vulnerable community members in these spaces (p. 226). The Sierra Leonean and Palestinian cases offer guidance for how wise and experienced accompaniment plays a foundational role in building informed, trusting relationships that support aggrieved persons on a healing journey.

The journey toward personal healing and resilience is further supported by the extent to which arts-based improvisatory practice can empower oppressed communities through a reclamation of agency and dignity. Echoing Boal's assertion that improvisatory play serves as a metaphor for social life (2006), Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz state that "One of the functions that

improvisation fulfills for members of aggrieved groups is to provide training for life, to cultivate new kinds of consciousness . . . by activating embodied public performances of one's own agency in relation to others" (2013, p. 238). Lisa Hirmer and Elizabeth Jackson observed agentic relationships emerging from the stories shared by temporarily/newly urban Ontario youth in an improvisatory intervention; "a pattern emerged where in most cases the thing that led to the way out of whatever predicament was either approaching a stranger or a stranger noticing something was wrong and stepping in to help" (2016, p. 173). These reciprocal, spontaneous relationships allowed youth to reframe their context and empowered them to overcome obstacles. The power of the relationships formed through arts-based practices was further elaborated by Caines, Seibel, and Kenny in their work exploring place through community-based art practice. Through an intergenerational collaboration amongst youth and Elders in the Keewaytinook Okimakanak region of Northern Ontario, Caines, Seibel, and Kenny (2014) found that "Powerful connections occurred when young people asked the Elders about drums, and other sounds that have not been heard in the community for over sixty years" (p. 18). These relationships allowed youth to engage with elders and to be active participants in the reclamation of cultural and sonic experiences that had had been taken from them by the ever-present colonial epistemicide which their community is still resisting.

The chapter authors in *Playing for Keeps* (Fischlin & Porter, 2020) offer a series of stories of reclamation and assertion of cultural identity in a diversity of international contexts. In response to theft and vandalism of his creative space, South African saxophonist, composer, and improviser Zim Ngqawana used an improvisatory performance with and within his damaged space to revitalize and reform his relationship with the space (p. 35). Tanya Tagaq's

contemporary use of katajjaq (Inuit throat singing) allowed her to reassert and reframe her own Inuit identity, building upon, but entirely reimaging, this creative practice (p. 95). Moshe Morad described the significance and resistance inherent in the prominence of vocalized, improvised curls in modern Israeli popular music within a broader influence of uncurled styles of Western music (p. 256). In the context of the commercialization of Hawaiian slack key guitar in the continental United States, Kevin Fellezs describes the role of improvisation in the reclamation of the indigeneity of slack key guitar practice and singing in local languages through the strained relationship between traditional and popular performances (p. 295). In all cases, performers have reclaimed and re-affirm their cultural identities in the face of conflict and oppression that would have seen their agency and their culture stripped from them. They asserted their lived and cultural realities through performance to resist the forces that would perpetuate their marginalization.

Chapter 3: Institutional-Community Relationships

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Feeling the dissonance between institutions and community

The principles and skills that I trust most, and for which I have the deepest passion, are those I have learned and absorbed through engaged, improvisatory relationships in and with communities. This inclination finds itself more at home in the language reflected in Indigenous (OFIFC, 2012) and Afrocentric (Asante, 1983) worldviews than in Eurocentric, positivist thought (Comte, 1880). Co-creative and community-engaged practice is imbued with a nuance that I have perpetually struggled to describe in literal terms. My engagement in community has juggled emotions, intuition, care, analysis, and strategy. I've never been sure when one ball will drop or when another will be tossed into the clamor. In academic spaces, I have found most peer-reviewed writing (including my own limited publication history) to be obscure representations of the deep learning and experiences I have had living and working in community and speaking directly with community members. I have read and listened to a wealth of scholarship within the academy extoling the successes of co-creative and community-engaged practices. These literal characterizations have always felt dissonant with my experiences outside the academy. Throughout my professional and academic career, I have encountered an abundance of authoritative structures that limit the realization of community-

engaged principles and co-creative practice. On the other hand, structures that facilitate community-centered, emergent, and reciprocal practices are far more difficult to identify and access. The theoretical principles written in scholarly publications have felt discouragingly impractical and incomplete when compared with lived engagement in community. Throughout this chapter, I explore intercultural engagements as they appear through the relationships and structures that exist within and between institutional and community-based spaces. I interrogate how we can and do use improvisatory approaches to navigate the tensions, opportunities, and contradictions encountered within and between these spaces.

As a researcher in a range of institutionalized settings, I have privately and publicly questioned if it is appropriate (or possible) to describe any of the work I've observed or implemented as exemplary of truly community-engaged work. It's been a constant personal reflection while engaging with collaborators throughout the *Improvising in-between* project. In most cases, those involved in community-engaged research are cognizant and honest about the tensions and limitations within their own work, but frank reflection on the flawed, mundane realities is often veiled (if at all present) in the articles and reports that emerge from practice. I'll admit to a considerable amount of distress navigating contradictions that are complex at the best of times, but at their worst can feel deceptive and hypocritical. When I returned to the academy, I had not intended to delve deeply into the troubling relationship between post-secondary institutions and underserved, aggrieved communities. In all honesty, I am not particularly inspired to explore this fraught space. An unignorable feeling of agitation and preoccupation has made a deep exploration of these issues an essential part of moving forward

with my exploration of improvisatory strategies that build on a foundation of co-creative, action-oriented, and community-engaged principles.

The uncompromising nature of institutional processes and priorities imposes significant obstacles to the realization of ethical, decolonizing university-community collaboration. As discussed in Chapter 2, conceptions of community consist of relational identities among people and environment which are filled with kinship, competition, tensions, and solidarity (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2011; Zickgraf, 2017). While 'community' has a useful and frustratingly flexible interpretation, in the context of this chapter, I discuss 'community' most often as it relates to aggrieved and underserved people with and about whom scholarly researchers and institutional actors may engage and write. Here is where there is a cognitive dissonance that might feel particularly salient to social science or arts-based scholars with a community-based or social justice orientation. The recognition of these contradictions is not a dismissal of the deep learning and social change that has manifested from the anti-oppressive, decolonizing, critical scholarship generated in academic institutions. Rather, it is an important and honest reckoning with the reality that values widely espoused within and by academy are very often systematically prevented from being actualized. It is important for us to consistently and openly acknowledge that our principles and the nature of our work are compromised and transformed by the academic structures that govern them. Structural barriers to community-engaged practice are not unique to post-secondary institutions and can be influenced, imposed upon, and regulated by factors external to the academy. This does not, in my estimation, absolve the academy from openly acknowledging and addressing how these structures impede the ability of academic researchers to practice what they preach. As Ajay Heble argues, "In the face of elite

control over the way in which knowledge is produced in our society" there remains a persistent demand for "the encouragement of active participation where citizens can represent their own perspectives and create alternatives to unjust social and institutional structures" (2017, p.5).

Throughout this chapter, I discuss these tensions, these contradictions, and how many academic policies and procedures are broadly and inappropriately applied across disciplines. As such, I assert that they compromise efforts toward ethical engagement with aggrieved and underserved communities. I explore the dearth of post-secondary/academic structures that facilitate the realization of emergent, decolonizing, and empowering practice. Through the lens of *Improvising in-between*, I discuss a range of issues where the academy promotes practices that contradict community-engaged, anti-oppressive principles. Community-engaged practice from within the academy can be an ethical minefield which calls into question whether post-secondary institutions are structures through which it is possible for sustainable, creative, and vitalizing scholarship to flourish in partnership with aggrieved and underserved communities. Ultimately, I hope to provoke questions and consider pathways for community-engaged, improvisatory scholars as we navigate and challenge existing structures. I conclude with a hopeful eye toward supporting healthy, ethical, and generative university-community relationships. I present this chapter in four distinct, but interrelated, sections: Navigating research ethics and regulatory landscapes; Authorship, authority, and publication; Funding, sustainable resources, and results-based accountability; and Gaps perpetuated by exclusivity and differing priorities.

Navigating research ethics and regulatory landscapes

Institutionalized research ethics frameworks are paradoxical.[6] While these structures are built from a rights-based foundation designed to empower and protect, in practice they can have the effect of facilitating and entrenching structures that would limit or impede ethical, community-engaged practice. I've had the perpetual misfortune of having to develop, review, and apply ethics and privacy protocols in a range of settings. If there is one thing that remains consistent in these settings it is that they have been inconsistent and contradictory. As this section makes evident, there is an important distinction between "research ethics protocols" and "ethical research practice." While the first of these conceptions is meant to contribute to the realisation of the second, in practice this is often not what we observe and experience in our research relationships. In this section, I interrogate a series of legislative and regulatory frameworks to which institutional researchers are held. Throughout, I will compare these "standards" and "requirements" with the decolonizing ethics being advocated for by Indigenous communities and scholars from the Global South (Afolabi, 2018; Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019).

The paradoxes of institutional ethics frameworks

A foundation of contemporary discussions of informed consent in academic and institutional spaces is that participation in research must be voluntary. Ironically, in Canadian academic contexts community collaborators, partners, community-engaged scholars, and research participants are not given the option to voluntarily comply with the Tri-Council Policy

[6] Note: this section deals largely within the Canadian context administered under the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other Canadian regulatory and legislative structures. While these issues are likely resonant in many international contexts, the discussion here is grounded mostly within the Canadian system.

Statement (TCPS). The application of the TCPS is not a good faith practice carried out by post-secondary and health institutions and their collaborators. It is a requirement for institutional funding (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 3). As such, TCPS requirements become a hurdle that researchers must clear before pursuing their research. For many researchers, they may find themselves searching for how to tell ethics committees what they want to hear, waiting for permission to engage in their work. Scholars will aim to use regulated approaches and language to receive approval. As Schrag (2011) highlights, however, in the worst of cases, "Overregulation can also endanger research participants. It can provoke researchers to lie to their ethics committees, perhaps discrediting the very idea of research ethics" (p. 127). While overt deception with an intent to harm is certainly rare, in my own career I have witnessed the immense gap between the elaborately written and conceived language of consent and privacy/data security procedures and their implementation. Institutionally approved language and protocols become largely forgotten and/or loosely applied when confronted with the realities of the environments in which research takes place.

When I speak with colleagues about communicating with an institutional research ethics board (REB), I encourage them to know what an REB would expect under ideal circumstances. For me, this means more though than telling them what they want to hear. I strongly advocate for being honest and telling them what they need to hear. Throughout *Improvising in-between,* I have tried to communicate who I am and what I am trying to learn. This does not only apply to my research collaborators, but also to ethics authorities. I have created formal, written information sheets, consent forms, and media release forms which all align to the expectations of my local REB. In my approved REB application, however, I honestly say, "it may be

inappropriate to ask participants to sign written documents, such as when they lack the literacy and language skills to understand what they are signing, or when levels of distrust related to signing documents can lead to research participants being excluded from research and programs that might otherwise be of interest or value to them. Where written consent is not an appropriate model, consent material will be read aloud (and translated, as needed) to all research participants and/or parents/guardians." To be frank, this was my bureaucratic way of saying that formalized consent procedures as expected by the REB are ill-suited for engagement with diverse, aggrieved, and underserved research collaborators.

In community-engaged and arts-based scholarship, formalized relationships can be troubling to the point of stifling or excluding participants from meaningful research. The structures upon which the TCPS is built align most readily with a positivist, "scientific, biomedical model of objective, experimental inquiry that construes research as an unchanging sequential process that can be set in stone in advance of the research" (Halse & Honey, 2007, p. 343). It affirms paternal, colonial relationships of the expert researcher(s) gathering and interpreting research findings from the research participants as "defenseless research 'subjects' in need of protection" (Halse & Honey, 2007, p. 347). It is worth noting that the updated Tri-Council Policy Statement incorporates guidance for researchers in the context of Indigenous research in Canada (Chapter 9) and qualitative research (Chapter 10). They acknowledge the nuances of applying these methodologies in social environments (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 107-142). However, this guidance does not resolve the contradictory relationship between institutional ethics structures and "the pragmatic 'realities' of qualitative research, as is evident in fields such as social anthropology and life history research, with

qualitative methods such as ethnography and participatory action research" (Halse & Honey, 2007, p. 343).

The authoritative application of institutional ethics structures (with seemingly benevolent but paternalistic intent) to collaborative and creative research initiatives restricts and undermines any engagement that might seek to challenge the power dynamics across community-university relationships. It makes notions of relational, community-informed, and community-led practices far more difficult to realize as the REB process imposes itself upon institutionally based scholars before meaningful, relational research practice can begin. As further problematized by Schrag (2011), deeply committed, community-engaged researchers may find that the ethics approval process "imposes burdens on university-based researchers" which may cause them to "abandon promising projects, get less work done, make do with lower response rates, or leave ethics-committee meetings in tears" (pp. 126-127).

Struggling to align our practice with the protocols

Improvisation, action research, and practice-based research all are problematized by the existing frameworks, such that intriguing and provocative initiatives are abandoned or fundamentally transformed by the REB process. The foundational TCPS requirement that "Researchers shall provide to prospective participants, or authorized third parties, full disclosure of all information necessary for making an informed decision to participate in a research project" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 30) calls into question the possibility for academic researchers to engage in emergent, reflexive research praxis with community. This is particularly true of improvisatory practice, where a "full disclosure of all information" is not only impracticable, but inherently counter to the desire to engage with the

unexpected. Gelling and Munn-Giddings (2011) highlight the challenges of realizing the benefits of an action research (AR) approach through the institutional research approval process. They argue that "AR can play an important role in the development of services and the provision of care in many settings" (p. 106). They express concern that academic ethical review processes "make this methodological approach unpopular with researchers because of the perceived problems encountered when seeking ethical approval" (Gelling & Munn-Giddings, 2011, p. 106).

Throughout the collaborations in *Improvising in-between*, I have drawn inspiration from the deeply relational and trust-filled work of my community collaborators (ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ). Yet, in practice I have found the imposition of formalized REB procedures to have enforced a distance in the relationship between myself (as the researcher) and the "participants" in my research (whom I prefer to consider collaborators). Although the TCPS reaffirms the troubled "researcher" and "participant" relationships, it does acknowledge the inappropriate contractual nature of written consent procedures in certain cultural contexts: "In some types of research, and for some groups or individuals, written signed consent may be perceived as an attempt to legalize or formalize the consent process and therefore may be interpreted by the participant as a lack of trust on the part of the researcher" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 47).

During my first interviews with representatives of BWTM, as I diligently applied formalized consent protocols, I experienced firsthand how these protocols can provoke distance between researchers and interviewees. When I verbally presented informed consent information to BWTM music teacher Paul Pambe, he expressed confusion and hesitance before

the discussion had even begun. He had been invited by trusted colleagues to engage in a research discussion about his experiences with the program. The specificity, nuance, and purpose of the REB imposed protocols were unfamiliar to him. Despite efforts to simplify and clarify this formality, and though the initial confusion was largely assuaged through the unplanned Kiswahili translation and explanation of a trusted fellow interviewee, the goodwill and trust that had been established suddenly felt fragile. Opportunities for a deeper, relational discussion had been compromised.

As a conflicted banner-carrier for the University (a responsibility imposed by the REB),[7] I have struggled to feel fully at home with my institution and in my relationship with my collaborators. The regulated adherence to my institution acted as an intervenor that troubled my community-engaged ethics in both spaces. I'm far from alone, however, in reflecting these experiences. In her educational research work with Inuit youth in the Nunavik region (where the CIRQINIQ program operates) Tatiana Garakani had similar, even more distinctly resistant, experiences:

> We introduced the [consent] forms after an initial ice-breaker activity. The students had just relaxed and were starting to engage. Yet we felt obliged to interrupt the organic process and introduce the consent forms. This meant shifting back from an informal to a "school-like/homework" setting. The power of talk shifted from them to us, and from issues they were interested in to abstract concepts that seemed irrelevant to them ("voluntary research," "benefits," "risks," and "confidentiality"). It was a matter of

[7] Inclusion of the University of Guelph logo is required on approved research consent forms and information letters: https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/support-document/do-i-need-include-university-guelph-logo-or-my-departmental-or-college-letterhead

> minutes before the students started rolling their eyes. Some left the room; others felt overburdened by having to read the long form; some were suspicious and reluctant to initial the forms; some just threw the forms into the trash. The process used up most of the time allotted to us. It forced us to cut short our planned activity and ultimately rush the students through it. By the end, we had spent more time talking and explaining than listening to students." (Garakani, 2014, p. 242)

Indigenous scholars Kathy Absolon and Susan Dion (2017) encountered similar struggles as they sought to engage in culturally appropriate forms of consent. As their large Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project progressed, they describe "tensions related to letters of consent. We proposed that the communities use their language and words for their consent forms (if they were going to use them) and debated with team members about this issue" (p. 91).

Negotiating the irony of complex, involuntarily imposed ethics and consent protocols is a difficult reconciliation for research founded upon participatory principles. Even through the decades old lens of Sherry Arnstein's 'ladder of citizen participation' (1969), the TCPS model would hardly make it past the "informing" rung of the ladder: notably, the third lowest of Arnstein's eight rung model. The authoritative role of the TCPS, and by extension institutional REB frameworks, undermine efforts to realize empowering, community-engaged research, as the REB authority over institutional research is immutable. This is not to say that negotiation cannot occur with REBs, but ultimately, in the negotiation, the authority remains unchanged.

Legislated and regulatory frameworks as a risk to aggrieved communities

Canadian research ethics frameworks that impose themselves on community-affirming, co-creative initiatives are fundamentally structured to align with parallel individualistic, legislative frameworks, such as those regulating privacy, freedom of information, human rights, child protection, and education (Access to Information, 1985; Child, Youth and Family Services, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017; PIPEDA, 2000). To explore how we navigate these authoritative frameworks, I highlight the complex considerations related to engaging with LGBTQ2SIA+ youth in research spaces. This discussion is grounded in my own experience, hearing members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community emotionally express the risks that are provoked for them by regulated research. Similar issues will resonate across other equity seeking communities. I focus here on LGBTQ2SIA+ youth as an example where the risks and stakes are both clear and salient at the time of writing (Hunter, 2023; Jo Hsu, 2022). Through my experience working as an education researcher in Southern Ontario, I've seen how the complex demands of rights-based regulations (such as the Ontario Human Rights Code and Ontario's Anti-Racism Act) permit and encourage research with and for equity serving communities. As we consider the importance of engaging with and advocating for LGBTQ2SIA+ youth in regulated research spaces, we must also be aware that consent frameworks and access to information regulations may empower parents and legal guardians to consent to their child's participation and/or be entitled to access any information gathered from or about their child.[8] What we inevitably must then address is the fact that engaging LGBTQ2SIA+ children and youth

[8] The TCPS does not prescribe specific age restrictions. It applies a "decision making capacity" approach to assent and consent with children and youth. It defers to existing regulations on related issues (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al. 2018, p. 33)

in our research initiatives, by virtue of these regulations, may expose them to risks of exclusion or being harmfully outed against their will and safety. During *Improvising in-between*, I had to carefully consider and negotiate safety related to LGBTQ2SIA+ persons due to the very differing scope of risks within the political and cultural environments in which my collaborating partners engaged. The nuances of these discussions are further elaborated upon in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

For all intents and purposes, strict adherence to formalized, informed consent processes put LGBTQ2SIA+ youth who are not ready or do not feel safe to come out to their parents/guardians in the position where they must juggle a series of unfortunate risk scenarios. These scenarios could include denying their identity and lying to researchers; opting out of research intended to support them; or participating and hoping that their parent will not request access to their personal information. While there are legal protective measures that can be enacted when a child is at risk (Child, Youth and Family Services, 2017), the unavoidable fact is that the regulatory protocols have the potential to provoke risk and harm rather than protect against them.

Improvising a response to institutional regulation

Within these spaces, what is the ethical researcher to do? How can you follow the law, respect the rights of parents/legal guardians, engage in a fully informed consent process, and create a space in which all LGBTQ2SIA+ students feel safe and encouraged to participate? To be honest, a practice that resolves all these issues is not available to us. I will argue that new means of engagement are necessary to actualize an ethical practice which challenges the normative authority of legislation. What we encounter is a need to introduce a dialogical framework that navigates these structures and seeks to amplify strategies that assert the will

and agency of the children and youth, while respecting and negotiating some of the legal authority granted to parents/guardians. We need to invite youth to comment about their own interests and their own privacy. In my consultation work in the education sector, LGBTQ2SIA+ community members expressed the need to create accessible opportunities before, during, and after research to safely and meaningfully empower young people to assert their interests and leverage all legal means available to ensure their ability to control if and how their gender identity, and their sexual and romantic orientations, are communicated. As we've discussed, these fears are echoed in Indigenous and racialized communities (Robinson, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Hall & Tandon, 2017) and are relevant to our engagement across underserved and aggrieved communities. Assumptions and challenges related to trauma and anxiety in creative research initiatives are discussed in Chapter 4, in the section titled "Trauma-informed Practice and the Conceptual Framework" (p. 152).

Regulations force us to listen, create and improvise new, nuanced, reflexive mechanisms which institutional authorities do not provide. As ethical researchers we have a responsibility to identify and facilitate trusted and trustworthy relationships with children/youth and families that can ensure that care still has a central place in our engaged research practice. In these spaces, the very human intervention of the researcher must not only understand but navigate the regulatory and legislative structures which simultaneously affirm and undermine the identity and agency of research participants. In her work on improvisatory practices within the justice system, Sara Ramshaw (2013) has argued that within unique, situated scenarios, it becomes the duty of the judge to "make new law" (p. 94). As creative, community-engaged scholars, we may not have the authority make laws. We can and should, however, be attuned

to our power to control and practice our engagement as situated between communities and larger authorities. We must create new ways to engage with the law. The essential practices of relationship building and care need to be centered on and actioned within these highly regulated but precarious spaces. Our concerted efforts to humanize our scholarship may serve to counteract the Kafkaesque nature of our regulatory frameworks and help realize the type of agency and ethical relationships to which the regulations purport to aspire. Though it can be a disheartening and frustrating process, navigating these spaces is often well-served by first filtering our work through the authoritative frameworks that govern it. It's important that the impact of these legislative mechanisms on our work is acknowledged and (when necessary and appropriate) mitigated. Risk mitigation through legislation is one thing, but in practice we often find ourselves negotiating how we mitigate the risks provoked by legislation.

Listening to wisdom from Indigenous communities

As we navigate risks and contradictions in search of opportunities, we can look to the guidance of Indigenous research and data governance principles to inform how we question and respond to the colonial structures that undermine their realization. I'll discuss here how Indigenous ways of knowing and being demonstrate how relational engagement is incongruous with notions of researcher impartiality and how a relational, community-oriented ethic can serve as a means to resist legalistic/individualistic concepts in communities that remain perpetually aggrieved by colonial governance structures.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres USAI Research Framework (2012), includes "inter-relationality" as one of its principles. The emphasis on relationship as central to Indigenous research praxis is clearly advocated

through USAI. The definition of "inter-relationality" asserts that "All knowledge and all practice are situated within all relations; there is no objective knowledge or neutral praxis" (OFIFC, 2012, p. 10). One can see this as a direct challenge to the institutional research bodies that still hold tightly to the model of the objective researcher. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) also challenge the authoritative image of the expert researcher in their document *Negotiating Research Relationships with Inuit Communities: A Guide for Researchers* (2007). ITK and NRI advocate for researchers to bring a learning spirit to their work with community. They advise that, "This will help you hear, and perhaps include, community concerns or interests within your research project. It is also very much appreciated by community members and will likely ensure smoother research progress and a more reciprocal relationship" (ITK & NRI, 2006, p. 7). In the Nunavik region, where the CIRQINIQ program operates, a research organization called Atanniuvik was in development at the time of this research. In Atanniuvik's integrated plan, the ethical necessity of trusted, relational engagement is asserted. They identify being "Fair and trustworthy" and "Grounded in and building good relationships" among their principles (Atanniuvik, 2022, p. 15).

Building the case for the necessity of relational practice in our community-engaged research practice, Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti (2019) make a clear distinction between individualistic, results-oriented "brick sensibilities" and inter-woven and relational "thread sensibilities" (pp. 13-15). In *Toward Braiding*, Jimmy and Andreotti offer "thread sensibilities . . . oriented towards relationality" (2019, p. 15) as a framework for responding to the challenges associated with hierarchical, siloed, legalistic frameworks. They position genuine relationships as a prerequisite to our efforts to navigate imposed colonial structures, noting

that “thread sensibilities . . . require that we sense entanglement in order to weave genuine relationships, which will in turn command responsibility for collective wellbeing as a grounding force for adequate (new) political and institutional systems” (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019, p. 15).

Relational ethics reflected internationally

USAI, ITK, Atanniuvik, and *Toward Braiding* all emerged from Canadian Indigenous communities. The importance of relational, contextual engagement, however, is deeply integrated in culturally diverse performing arts practice in a range of international contexts. Writing on his performing arts practice with internally displaced persons in Nigeria, Taiwo Afolabi reflects on the importance of relational interaction as the foundation of ethical practice. For Afolabi, “ethical consciousness demands ethical actions based on accountability and responsibility to self and others” (2018, p. 7). Similarly, reflecting upon her experiences seeking ethics approval for her theatre workshops in war torn regions of Sri Lanka, Jenny Hughes argues that “We need to work towards a reflexive ethics for applied theatre research and support the development of a critical subjectivity in researchers and practitioners to equip them to respond to ethical issues in practical contexts” (Hughes, 2005, p. 232). You’ll note that there is a deep commitment to accountability and responsibility in both institutional and community-engaged spaces. What is distinctly different is that community-engaged, creative practitioners discuss accountability in terms that put their collaborators at the heart of their ethical practice, as opposed to the impersonal standards and protocols of institutional accountability. It is in enacting reflexive relationships that we can improvise a response to the restrictive and authoritative frameworks of our institutions.

Conceiving consent in and with community

For community-engaged, creative scholars who seek to apply relational, trust-infused consent protocols, oral consent procedures serve as a middle ground compromise which can alleviate some issues when administered carefully. In presenting consent material orally, however, we must still think carefully about how the information is presented. Oral consent processes are necessarily dialogical in nature and are most often applied when language or literacy prohibits the use of language, as prescribed institutionally, due to challenges with comprehension. In these moments, our reflexive, relational instincts are essential. We need to recognize the tone of the setting, the nature of our relationship with others in the space, and the extent to which we need to rely upon other trusted individuals to support the facilitation of the consent process (as was the case during the group discussion with my Tanzanian collaborators). In these times, the consent script becomes a general guide. What becomes more important is how we communicate with participants and collaborators. This is essential for facilitating a meaningful consent process with communities. Despite this reality, there is an absence of a clear acknowledgement, let alone guidance for, these situations in TCPS and REB guidance. What might this more relational conception of consent look like in practice?

In our efforts to create space where co-creative, expressive relationships and learning can occur and as we adhere to our regulated institutional responsibilities, we may find ourselves mired in contradiction. Let's consider the improvisational cliché, "yes, and . . ." In the context of informed consent, this improvisatory ethic is troubled by the essential need for the ongoing and uncompromised invitation to say 'no.' Not only must we consider that an individual can refuse to participate in any aspect of a research initiative, but we must also

consider how collaborators will decide if research (in any form) should indeed be conducted in the first place. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) assert "Refusal challenges the individualizing discourse of IRB[9] consent and 'good science' by highlighting the problems of collective harm, of representational harm, and of knowledge colonization" (p.242).

Through the *Improvising in-between* collaboration, I've learned from the work Art Not Shame (ANS) has undertaken to reflect on consent through their engagement with Montreal-based facilitator Nadia Chaney. The relational consent facilitated through ANS's work differs fundamentally from the legalistic model enforced through the TCPS. Consentful engagement is a model for how a more wholistic conceptualization of consent might look in a co-creative space. Chaney's approach to consent directly responds to some of the challenges presented by the institutionalized practices as she advocates for a deeper, relational form of consent. Chaney describes "consentfulness" as "a tool for perceiving fluctuating dynamics of care within a group and situation, towards a consentful group field, rather than a (binary, brittle) moment of consent. It is a term to describe the mood, tone and possibilities of a group where 'no' can flourish" (Chaney, n.d., para. 1).

An exploration of "consentful" practice helps to challenge and overcome the momentary, documented consent processes that are enforced by institutional research ethics authorities. Notions of consentful and relational engagement are widely discussed in social, cultural, and creative fields (Badham, 2013; Caines et al., 2014). These foundational ethical practices were evident in the USAI principles and reinforced by theatre practitioners like Afolabi

[9] IRB (institutional review board) is the parallel structure used by research institutions in the United States of America to the research ethics board (REB) used in research institutions in Canada.

(2018) and Hughes (2005). They are further reflected through the work of community-engaged social organizations like Planned Parenthood and Allied Media Projects (Lee & Tolliver, 2017; Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Relational and consentful practices have been conceived within intimate interpersonal spaces and more broadly in the ubiquitous online spaces in which we've increasingly found ourselves working since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In their article "Rethinking Ethics Review as Institutional Discourse," Halse and Honey (2007) offer a perspective reminiscent of Chaney's consentfulness and the USAI principle of inter-relationality. They highlight "that creating ethical relations involves repersonalizing the moral by putting relational ethics and 'respect for persons' at the center of the moral decision making of research ethics and research practice" (p. 349). Through her engagement in applied theatre in war torn Rwanda and Sri Lanka, Hughes (2005) describes ethical practice as "an ongoing interaction of values in shifting contexts and relationships, rather than something delivered by a signed consent form or adherence to a static set of principles. We have to make an attempt to assess risk as part of this ongoing negotiation" (Hughes, 2005, p. 231). For Afolabi, "Artistic practices deemed ethically successful should be conceptualized through an informed lens that is socio-culturally answerable, accountable and *response-able* to self and community through the dialogic process of communication and collaboration" (Afolabi, 2018, p. 14).

Planned Parenthood promotes understanding of consent in the context of intimacy and sex using the 'FRIES' acronym (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Through FRIES, Planned Parenthood defines consent as 'freely given,' 'reversible,' 'informed,' 'enthusiastic,' and 'specific'. The deeply personal and vulnerable nature of Planned Parenthood's conception of consent has been adopted in other social justice-oriented spaces. In the context of the COVID-19 global

pandemic (2020-2023), it is interesting to consider how it has been applied not only to intimate, in-person relationships, but also to its adoption for use in justice-seeking digital spaces. Applied Media Projects has developed the Consentful Tech Project from Planned Parenthood's FRIES framework. The Consentful Tech Project, like Chaney, are critical of point in time, binary consent. In considering that our selves in digital space are becoming more deeply integrated with our physical selves, they argue, "As our physical bodies become increasingly interlinked with our digital bodies . . . harm can't be justified because someone checked a box that said 'I agree to these terms and conditions'" (Lee & Tolliver, 2017, p.6).

None of the literal language used in community-engaged, relational notions of consentfulness is contradictory to institutional ethics frameworks. They fundamentally differ, however, in that there is a prioritization of relationality and personal agency over expert authority in terms of how they are realized in practice. One is grounded in documented, authoritative accountability and the other is grounded in interpersonal and community-facing responsibility. Though notions of consentfulness in literal terms are in no way prohibited or discouraged in an institutional space, the protocols that govern consent within institutionalized frameworks operationalize "ethical" engagement in a fashion that restricts the realization of collaborative, relational partnerships. As Afolabi (2019) asks, how might we "navigate a community where seeking consent . . . is earned rather than given?" (p. 59). While there is much to learn from the language and conceptualization of consentfulness, institutionalized practice is even better served by learning how community-facing organizations enact relational consentfulness. How can we recognize the experiential authority of our community-engaged

collaborators to guide our ethical practice, rather than defaulting to the regulated, authoritative guidance of our institutions?

Hearing "no" in our ethical engagement

This recognition can start by listening carefully when a collaborator says "no." As researchers, we can make the decision to cease our active and voracious collection of "data." For Tuck and Yang (2014), "This refusal might take the form of: turning off the tape recorder; not disclosing what was on the tape even if it was recorded; hearing a story and choosing to listen and learn from it rather than report it; resisting the draw to traffic theories that cast communities as in need of salvation" (p. 245). Sometimes, we also need to attune ourselves to what "no" sounds like. During my field visit with the CIRQINIQ program in Montreal, I had the pleasure of attending a creative, cultural workshop led by members of Montreal-based Inuit circus troupe Tupiq A.C.T. As we waited to be let into the Cirque hors Piste[10] training facility on a rainy evening in Montreal, I asked the Tupiq A.C.T. members about their workshop plans. They described a series of engaging cultural activities related to storytelling, family background, and katajjaq (Inuit throat singing). Excited by their plans, I asked one of the facilitators how she felt about me taking some photographs and notes during the session. I was proud of (but admittedly a bit disappointed by) her response. She clearly communicated that while she felt it would be fine for me to document some of the session, she knows that some Inuit (especially some elders) are not comfortable with the documentation of their cultural expression and stories. She encouraged me to ask all the participants before and during the session how they felt. I participated in the session. It was a fun and moving workshop, but I won't be sharing it

[10] Cirque hors Piste is a Montreal-based social circus organisation: https://cirquehorspiste.com/en/

with anyone. Honouring the facilitator's open and honest cultural wisdom, I decided it was best for youth to be free from my insatiably curious researcher's gaze. I decided not to formally document anything in that space and strongly believe the participants were freer and safer as a result.

Improvising consent

Later that same week, as the CIRQINIQ youth participated in the national social circus gathering Cirkaskina, I remained careful not to impose my research agenda upon their co-creative, socially safe spaces. Sporadically, I asked to take photos and videos, I journaled, and I engaged actively (but informally) with participants and facilitators. As the workshops were nearing conclusion, I approached a member of Tupiq A.C.T. to see if she'd be willing to participate in an interview. She enthusiastically agreed, indicating that she wanted my time with them to be a worthwhile contribution to my research. These interactions were in stark contrast to the experience expressed by another researcher attending the gathering. In my journal notes from the event, I noted her frustration with the ambitious quota and the methodology she was responsible for implementing. She and prospective participants struggled with consent protocols that necessitated that young people read (or be read) several pages worth of material as well as provide contact details for the purposes of follow up interviews and a participant honourarium of $75. She expressed longing for the level of engagement and learning that I expressed to her. I ultimately conducted a podcast style interview with two members of Tupiq A.C.T.[11] While I did review the formal informed consent material and received a "yes" from each of them, their joyful laughter at the beginning of the interview was a

[11] Excerpts from this interview can be seen in the link in Appendix E - Arctic Voices in Social Circus

much deeper expression of consent than what could be achieved strictly through an institutionalized consent process. Building relationships freely and spontaneously and improvising our engagement was a foundational component of building a consentful collaboration.

Repersonalizing our ethical engagements

My criticisms of institutional ethics frameworks are not targeted at those dedicated to supporting and navigating the research ethics structures governed by institutional authorities. I have no doubt that many research ethicists and authorities will take issue with some of my characterizations in this chapter. I expect, too, that many of these issues will ring as frustratingly true for many research ethicists as they do for community-engaged, arts-based scholars. In response to the frustration, I suggest that we can commit to enacting principles of collaborative and engaged practice throughout all our research relationships. We can work to personalize our relationships within the institutional structures in which we find ourselves. We can model community-engaged, collaborative principles within the very frameworks that frustrate them. We can work to understand with whom we are engaging institutionally and recognize the people behind the protocols. For those of us invested in this work, perhaps we can take up what might be considered an invitation within the TCPS. While the regulatory structures may feel glacial and unyielding, perhaps we ought to take "the Agencies" (an unfortunately villainous sounding moniker) at their word when they say, "The Agencies recognize that considerations around the ethical conduct of research involving humans are complex and continually evolving. We welcome comments and discussion and commit to the continued evolution of this document" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p.

4). As scholars continue to pursue engaged research, improvisatory, reflexive, creative practices offer us opportunities to strengthen our ethical and consentful practice in ways that both challenge and build upon institutional foundations.

I call back now to Tomlinson and Lipsitz's reflection on middle run interventions (2019, p. 39) and how an emphasis on bettering our practice and our relations can plant seeds for change. By committing to honest and persistent actions in our immediate practices, we can lay the groundwork for the longer-term efforts of scholars, communities, advocates, and institutions. As we inhabit a relational middle between our institutions and our community collaborators, we listen and respond to the spaces we share in necessarily emergent and improvisatory ways. These may take the form of recognizing disciplinary differences in ethical practices. A medical model, an arts-based, or a development model will be enacted under fundamentally different conditions and should be treated as such. Ethical, co-creative scholars have their work cut out for them as we must work and advocate for alternative ethics review models that meaningfully and contextually commit to challenging systems that perpetuate rather than alleviate inimical research relationships. As Schrag (2011) suggests, empowering non-academic collaborators through community-based reviews, accessible mechanisms for grievances, and post-research ethical reflections offer viable alternatives. While Hughes (2005) argues in favour of more informal reflexive practices that rely on the relational, iterative (dare I say improvisatory) nature of ethical practice to thrive.

Authorship, authority, and publication

In the conception of *Improvising in-between*, I aspired to cowrite, emergently and creatively with my collaborators, especially youth and community-based facilitators. As I discuss

in later chapters I struggled to realize this hope. In this section I will explore some of the systemic mechanisms that contribute to this challenge from within the academy.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, bemoans post-colonial rhetoric of the academy "as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, 14). As Tuhiwai Smith elaborates "there are powerful groups of researchers who resent indigenous people asking questions about their research and whose research paradigms constantly permit them to exploit indigenous peoples and their knowledges" (1999, p. 14). There remains a persistent effort from Indigenous scholars to challenge colonial, institutional authoritative knowledge claims. In their "cautionary tale" of navigating a SSHRC partnership with their non-Indigenous colleagues, Absolon and Dion (2017) cite the work of Van Katwyk and Case in the vision for their own "re-search" efforts. Van Katwyk and Case (2016) argue that "Most fundamentally, community-engaged scholarship is proposed as a means of democratizing research and scholarship by breaking through the university's monopoly claim on knowledge and truth" (p. 28). As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, we see here an example of the alignment between community-engaged, collaborative principles (that I've argued are enacted through improvisatory, relational approaches) and the decolonizing principles that emerge from Indigenous scholars. Despite decades of research and writing on colonialism, oppression, and collaborative research methodologies the journey toward legitimizing Indigenous and community-voiced authority within the academy is steep and obstacle-filled.

Whose knowledge? Who is the expert?

Building on his critique of ethics review protocols, Schrag (2011) notes how the barriers to community-based authorship begin to emerge early in the research design and planning process. Schrag asserts that in participatory research and action research contexts, "People who participate in research have interests too . . . When ethics committees insist on anonymity for such participants, they may be stripping co-authors of the credit that is due to them" (Schrag, 2011, p. 127). Determining whose stories are being told and who is recognized as an "author" requires a depth of practical and ethical judgement. As Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) describes in her writing on Indigenous storywork,

> There are many complex issues concerning appropriation of First Nations stories, culturally appropriate times to tell particular stories, and who has authority to tell stories. The solutions to the issues are diverse and reflect the diverse nature of Aboriginal Nations in Canada . . . Asking or getting permission to tell a story, and stating the name and nation of the person from whom the story is acquired, are examples. (p. 383)

Validation of knowledge and knowledge holders is foundational to the recognition of authorship. Dominant research paradigms in post-secondary institutions are designed to position the institutionally affiliated scholar as an expert or an authority in their "field" (Biddle, 2012; Hall & Tandon, 2017; Heble, 2017). As a scholar in cultural and artistic disciplines, I just don't believe this is an honest or accurate reflection of how cultural and creative knowledge is held. It is incongruous with the advocative, engaged, and co-learning principles to which I aspire. Though community-engaged, creative scholars may have nuanced understandings of

and relationships with their own work and their own "expertise," the institutional structures in which they work are still built to affirm the authority of the academy as the arbiters of knowledge.

Exclusive authorship standards

As discussed in Chapter 2, academic authorship standards, such as those developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, n.d.), severely restrict opportunities for community-based collaborators from being labelled as authors, largely reserving that title for institutionally affiliated scholars. While academic authorship standards are not ubiquitous, similar language can be found across a range of academic publishers, notably the many major publishing members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (ucpress, n.d.; Taylor & Francis, n.d.; COPE, n.d.a; COPE, n.d.b).

The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work;
2. AND Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
3. AND Final approval of the version to be published;
4. AND Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

(ICJME, n.d.)

In and of themselves, the guidelines do not prohibit community-based contributors from being recognized as authors in academic journals. The expectations and the protocols

required of authors, however, are beyond the capacities of most community collaborators for a variety of practical, linguistic, and cultural reasons. The first consideration for a community-engaged researcher, especially one engaged in cultural and creative practice, is how these criteria impact the relationships with diverse collaborators. The first criterion is immediately a challenge for advocates of community self-voicing. In most cases, definitions of "design," "analysis," and "intellectual content" can be conceived in ways to affirm the contributions of community-based collaborators as meaningful authorship. However, expectations related to accountability for "all aspects of the work" can put impracticable expectations on non-scholarly collaborators that can quickly restrict their eligibility as an author in peer reviewed publications. Scholarly works are often grounded in the experience, knowledge, creative expression of collaborators, yet the title of "author" is granted authoritatively to the collector and conveyor of the deeply lived consciousness of others.

For many community-based organizations, program administrators and facilitators must focus their limited time, energy, and resources on keeping programming going and keeping the lights on. Where time for organizational learning is available, they are often forced to prioritize cost-effective strategies for deepening understanding about how and why they do what they do. It is a significant ask for community collaborators to commit themselves to extensive scholarly publications which do not further their own goals, especially when peer reviewed materials are likely to be inaccessible to and inconsequential for those with whom they work. These learning priorities contrast with the demand for scholars to produce peer reviewed, systemically validated publications. As highlighted by Jeanes, Loacker and Sliwac, "Academics

are expected to focus on the production of publication outputs that 'count' within a research measurement regime" (2019, p. 1541).

Publication pressures minimize the capacity of community-focused scholars to engage in deep, relational, practice-based work, as they are pressed to produce quantifiable research outputs as measures of success and merit. Jeanes, Loacker, and Sliwac (2019) elaborate how the pressures to meet publication expectations "can have detrimental effects on academics, manifested in feelings of insecurity and other negative thoughts . . . This can lead to an individual's inability to secure academic employment, to remain employable or to gain promotion" (p. 1541). This couldn't be further from the relational, participatory, and consentful praxis promoted in co-creative and community-engaged spaces. At the same time the academy lacks performance expectations for research praxis that enacts these qualities.

Accessible language in scholarly writing

A particular tension point for many academics is the nature and complexity of language used in academic writing. As there are those who would defend the high rhetoric of the specialist writing found in many academic publications, there are many who question both the ethics and efficacy of it. It can be argued that deeply specialized knowledge and language are needed within disciplines that are far removed from everyday practice. Notably, Judith Butler argued in a 1999 *New York Times* article "The contemporary tradition of critical theory in the academy . . . has shown how language plays an important role in shaping and altering our common or 'natural' understanding of social and political realities" (Butler, 1999, para. 5). While Butler and others can prepare well reasoned arguments, this type of language becomes more difficult to defend in community-engaged or social justice-oriented scholarship. The use

of inaccessible language in these contexts might be considered impractical at best and exploitative/exclusionary in its worst forms.

Systems show their priorities by where they lend their energies and their resources. Though plain language and community-facing research is not prohibited, the systemic mechanisms that encourage or facilitate these types of accessible scholarly outputs are not normalized. Whereas the structures for facilitating peer reviewed publication and discipline-focused conferences and lectures amongst experts, peers, and their aspiring students are abundant. The colonial, Eurocentric grip on knowledge production is consistently affirmed through the types of knowledge products that are celebrated. In their research on working class academics, Waterfield et al. assert, "the cultural capital valued within academia cannot be reduced to class tastes and preferences, as it is just as bound up with a culture of whiteness that is privileged within academia" (2019. p. 371). As community-engaged scholars, for practical and ethical reasons, we necessarily need to be attentive to the language that we use, both when we engage with community and when we communicate about how we've engaged. Reflecting on their own struggles with empowered "research" terminology, Absolon and Dion counsel scholars to "Talk about language, terminology, and wording. Have conversations that deconstruct language and meaning behind the use of jargon and alienating terms" (2017, p. 95).

Throughout *Improvising in-between*, language was in a constant state of changing, reframing, and translating based on the circumstances and audiences. As discussed more fully in Chapters 4 and 5, the common language of my research has been English. The majority of my collaborators, however, were most comfortable speaking languages other than English, most

notably Inuktituk, Kiswahili, and French, not to mention the numerous local languages and dialects spoken by Inuit and Tanzanians. When engaging interculturally, we instinctively change our tone and choice of words. When possible, we do our best to express ourselves in languages that are not our own. This codeswitching (Myers-Scotton, 1993) is familiar to many who find themselves working in intercultural spaces between non-academic communities and the academy. When writing, we wonder what is lost in translation? It is not that translation and codeswitching themselves are the problem, it is that what is understood and experienced one way in a moment can become expressed very differently by the prescriptive expectations and standards imposed by the academy. The strategies we employ through gesture, rewording, and shifts in inflection are sometimes as improvisatory and creative as any purposeful artistic endeavour. As Myers-Scotton (1993) characterizes, codeswitching can be considered "a type of skilled performance with communicative intent" (p. 2). Again, another question of translation, how do we translate these momentary performances into scholarly writing? In the context of our scholarly writing, we must navigate these communicative relationships throughout our writing and knowledge mobilization efforts. It calls us to consistently attune our communication to the dramatically different languages we encounter.

Vehicles for self-voicing

As we engage in creative and emergent practice with community, we must ask ourselves, is peer reviewed, academic writing an appropriate vehicle for community-based voices? This question has been tackled through previous academic research conducted about the CIRQINIQ program. Interestingly, the authors highlight that "One of the most pronounced limitations of this article is that the voices of Inuit youth are largely absent" (Schwan &

Lightman, 2015, p. 16). Crucially too, they express the difficult challenge of engaging with underserved and aggrieved communities as a practitioner or researcher who is not a member of that community. I sympathize deeply with Schwan and appreciate her candor when she declares, “because I am not an indigenous or Inuit person, I have struggled tremendously to avoid appropriating the voice of others or displacing their own experiences . . . Embracing the imperfection . . . we intentionally present this research as work in progress” (Schwan & Lightman, 2015, p. 16). While Schwan and Lightman do not resolve this challenge, they do advocate that “Further collaborative research with Inuit youth is critical to assessing the relevance and validity of the approach and arguments made in this article” (Schwan & Lightman, 2015, p. 16). The resonance of this call-to-action rings harmoniously with the conception and the goals of *Improvising in-between*. Despite the deep desire and commitment expressed by Schwan and Lightman, their work shows that the realization of deep collaboration with Inuit youth remains elusive, something echoed in the work of Garakani (2014) discussed above.

The collaborations throughout this doctoral research have been an affirmation of my previous experiences outside the academy. My ability to hear, validate, and make space for aggrieved and underserved community members felt stronger as a non-academic collaborator than they have within the pressures and expectations of the academy. As we personally navigate our conflicted identities as scholars, who feel restrained and conflicted by our institutional responsibilities, it behooves us to consider that “innovations happen when constraints arise; finding new spaces and sites for innovation also enables accountability of

research findings to academic and non-academic partners and stakeholders as well" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 21).

It can be amazing what arises from our innovative responses to constraints. I recall one afternoon, as a pre-academic, ambitious (some would say naïve) teacher with the ᑲᑎᕕᖅ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᓕᕆᓂᖅ - Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (the Nunavik School Board), I found myself substituting for an ill colleague in a middle school English classroom, full of first language Inuktituk speaking students. Our school (like many in the region) had a chronic teacher shortage. Between unfilled positions and the dearth of substitute teachers, students were unsure from day to day if they would have a teacher at the front of their classroom. This made students frustrated and angry.

Sensing student frustration that day, I thought, let's try a creative, co-writing exercise. I asked the class to share (and write on the chalk board) how they were feeling in school. I wish I could remember exactly how they expressed themselves, but the words "ignored" and "forgotten" still ring in my mind. I tell this story not just to reflect on the improvisatory, pedagogical tactic, but because of the unexpected results. Each student agreed to write down the words of their fellow students. Though a small class, each student now had on their desk an honest and powerful expression of their collectively frustrated feelings. Had this improvisatory intervention ended there, it would have been a deep co-learning moment, but then the school principal came to check on us. What happened next filled me with anxiety, pride, and excitement. As I spoke with the principal, something was quietly brewing behind me. One student had gathered each student's paper and on his own initiative handed the pages to the principal. I never took the opportunity to reflect with the students or principal about that moment, but admittedly, my first reaction was "Oh shit, what have we done?" In the years

since, I've often found myself asking, "How can we recreate more of these moments?" It's difficult to say if and how that moment rippled throughout the lives of others. For me, the pride I felt in those students in that moment inspires me to this day. We did that together and none of us knew what was going to transpire. Not only did they inspire me to be more like them, but they taught me that there are ways and means to create space where youth are empowered to make their voices heard and we need to jump at every opportunity to make that happen.

It's clear that through relational and improvisatory engagement, collaborators can be empowered to assert their voices, but the question remains. Are there avenues for us within the academy to disentangle ourselves from the structures that perpetually undervalue and discount community voice in favour of distant, regulated, peer-reviewed works? Perhaps it is a key role of the community-engaged scholar to be persistent in our insistence that community practice (in all its contradictory, political, flawed glory) is in fact a better representation of community-engaged scholarship than much of the peer-reviewed works that are systemically privileged by the academy. If you'll indulge me a brief personal interlude, I'd much rather be writing with and for my research collaborators than for the academy. When I have the pleasure of stepping out from the formal dissertation and supporting collaborators with emergent, co-learning (e.g., promotional materials, curriculum development, impact assessment, program planning, and workshop delivery), I find myself fulfilled and far closer to my ethical and creative ideals. But here we are over one hundred pages into a document that most of my collaborators will likely never read. Not because I won't share it, but because it is not designed for them. Sadly, academic expectations seldom align with community needs or interest, but more on that later.

Relationship and rhetoric in community-engaged, improvisatory scholarly writing

As creative, community-engaged scholars, how might we position ourselves and our scholarly writing in relation with our community collaborators? It has become a persistent preoccupation of mine to be accountable and responsible to my community collaborators. I continually reflect on important questions about whose stories and whose knowledges are shared, when they are shared, and by whom. These are questions I have previously discussed and will continue to explore in future chapters. The following discussion has emerged from my own fear of traveling well paved roads that lead to high rhetoric at a great distance from our community-based collaborators. As an aspirational, engaged scholar, I find myself perpetually uncomfortable with the highly specialized language of the academy and a persistent feeling that it will feel foreign and largely incomprehensible within the aggrieved and underserved communities in which I've worked. As a means to interrogate this discomfort, I have developed my own conceptualizing of our relationships as scholars with our community-based collaborators and with the content of our scholarly research outputs. I reflect on these relationships and outputs by considering notions of hyperbole in our writing and of our proximity to the source of our learning and knowledge. While it may be somewhat facile, I've found this reflection to be helpful as I consider my relationships with my collaborators, with literature, and with the knowledge products being generated from my doctoral collaborations.

My interrogation of hyperbole in particular is grounded in my careful reflection on how we elevate our scholarly rhetoric with the intent of having it stand out among our academic peers in a competitive environment. Broadly speaking, hyperbole here is framed negatively. If, however, the audience for hyperbolic rhetoric is equipped to recognize the scale and purpose

of the exaggeration, then as a rhetorical device, hyperbole isn't inherently problematic. As Henkemans and Snoeck note, "Although exaggerating involves saying something which is strictly speaking not true, or not warranted, this fact in itself does not make the use of hyperbole fallacious" (2013, p. 7). However, hyperbole in a scholarly context may be shrouded in disciplinary, academic jargon that obscures hyperbole and presents it as deep or elaborated thought, lending it a questionable authority. Hyperbole can become a problem when (intentionally or not) it results in the manipulation or deception of those who read it or hear it.

In creative writing and creative expression (such as poetry, advocacy, drama) hyperbole is a powerful and engaging tool. It can evoke reflection and expansion in ways that literal writing can not. For years, critical and creative scholars have explored this through the practice of performative writing arguing, it "expands the notion of what constitutes disciplinary knowledge" (Pelias, 2005, p. 417) and "dramatizes the limits of language . . . in an open endless field of representation" (Pollock, 1998, p. 83). However, in the context of community-engaged practice, we must be conscious of the fact that we are working to amplify and reflect the experiences and feelings of those with whom we work. We become accountable not only to those to, for, and with whom we are writing, but especially those about whom we are writing. Carolyn Miller (1979) argues that "to engage in any communication, is to participate in a community; to write well is to understand the conditions of one's own participation - the concepts, values, traditions, and style which permit identification with that community" (p. 617). Our careful choice and use of language in community-engaged and collaborative spaces requires a deep awareness of community. As Della Pollock asserts of performative writing, "its meanings are contextual. It takes meaning from the context-map in which it is located" (1998,

p. 79). Our use of language models our relationship with our collaborators and the communities we encounter.

We need to be open and careful with our hyperbolic language, as "hyperbole is a form of indirect language use, which means that the arguer cannot be held committed to the literal speech act. This may . . . make it difficult in some cases to establish to what exactly the arguer can be held committed" (Henkemans & Snoeck, 2013, p. 7). Henkemans & Snoeck further elaborate that "the use of hyperbole can in some cases be problematic because of its vagueness, which can lead to committing fallacies such as misusing unclearness, or immunizing one's arguments against criticism" (2013, p. 8). Indeed, exaggerated writing may indeed "be used to emphasize the information that contributes most to achieving the arguer's aims in the stage concerned" (Henkemans & Snoeck, 2013, p. 8). But what might we consider as we approach rhetorical lines that if crossed lead into the realms of deception and manipulation?

In Figure 2, I map how a relational model of hyperbole to proximity might look. I don't suggest in this model an ideal ratio of hyperbole to proximity. I offer to community-engaged, co-creative scholars a schema for considering how their scholarship and/or creative written expression might be understood through these two domains. The capacity of an audience to understand the extent and intent of hyperbolic writing will vary. This model suggests that higher levels of hyperbole at greater distances from source material will increase the likelihood that one's writing may trend toward obscurity and misinterpretation. Figure 2 broadly presents hyperbole and proximity in extremes (i.e., high/low, close/far). These concepts do not exist in a binary but are presented as such in an effort to allow us to consider the broader impact that these domains might have on the nature of our analysis and our writing.

Figure 2

Proximity to community and the implications of hyperbole

	Low hyperbole	**High hyperbole**
Close to the Source	- Likely not wide reaching. - Close representation of experiences, feelings, events to which people relate. - Underrepresented in publication and decision-making discussions. - More mundane and local.	- Framed to engage or impress a focused audience. - Skews experiences to support local/individual interests. - Attention grabbing but may lack a wide reach. - May be performative and/or manipulative.
Far from the Source	- Wider reach. - Tries to reflect experiences, feelings, events to which people relate. - May lack some validity and reliability related to the source. - May be technical and somewhat inaccessible.	- Framed to engage or impress a wide audience. - Skews experiences to garner support from broader sources. - May be associated with a high profile and more influence. - May be performative and/or exploitative.

As a multidisciplinary, improvisatory scholar, I find myself gravitating toward 'high' hyperbole that stays close to the source. This allows me to feel relational and connected through proximity, but it also permits me with a freedom to express creatively through transparent hyperbole. On the other hand, as a deeply committed community-engaged scholar, I am careful with hyperbole and conscious of the extent to which any exaggeration or high rhetoric might contribute to a distancing from my collaborators or toward misinterpretation by prospective readers. Applying this framework to the structure of this dissertation, I've found that my writing gradually navigates from the high hyperbole that is far from the source (as seen

in the conceptualization and literature phases) toward writing and expression that are far closer to my collaborators. The research outputs shared in later chapters navigate between the high hyperbole of creative exploration and the lower hyperbole of transparent context setting.

As explored in Chapter 5, several reflective narratives actively discuss the day-to-day, the incidental, the mundane. These honest, largely quotidian moments are defining characteristics of our genuine experiences in community-engaged work. They impact us on a daily basis, but rarely find their way into our writing and reflections. I suggest that they are remarkable because they remain mostly unremarked. They do not meet the high rhetoric sought by so many scholars and yet they impact our work in so many ways. In the following sections on 'Funding, sustainable resources, and results-based accountability' and 'Gaps perpetuated by exclusivity and differing priorities,' I further explore some of these mundane, day-to-day, non-academic realities.

Funding, sustainable resources, and results-based accountability

Given the broad range of challenges and concerns characterized in this chapter, it raises the question, why pursue creative, engaged research through an institution that is ill-suited to facilitate it? The simple reality is there is an inordinate amount of talent, funds, and resources available within institutional research bodies that remain largely inaccessible to community actors. On the flip side, community-based learning and creative social practice continue to inspire and impress despite (or maybe because of?) their often minimal resources and insecure financial circumstances. Community-engaged, creative researchers must negotiate these realities. When working as an evaluation consultant supporting mostly non-profit programs, I remember the honest reflection from an administrator supporting an initiative that engaged

with underserved, in-risk youth. He reflected that to meet some of the "best-practice" evaluation standards expected for their work, it would cost them nearly half their budget. This off-handed comment might have been funny if it wasn't true. I've never forgotten it. While the realm of program evaluation/evidence-based practice may be somewhat distinctive in the general Venn diagram of research, knowledge mobilization, and learning, these same demands are increasingly impressing themselves upon scholarly researchers. As Jeanes, Loacker, and Śliwac (2019) assert, "Even collaborations with emphasis on relationships and scholarly interests were often subsumed by, or only feasible because of, their output-generating potential" (p. 1549).

Controlling the flow of funds

The institutional control over research funds means that institutionally affiliated scholars and program administrators operate within organizations with budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Significant portions of these funds are used to study or evaluate publicly and privately funded programs and social services through what I unaffectionately refer to as the "accountability industry" (Canada Council, 2022; IDRC, 2023; Gauthier et al., 2022). The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, from whom I was fortunate to receive funding for this research, regularly transfers over $500 million annually in "Funding social sciences and humanities research and training" (SSHRC, 2021, February 25). In fiscal year 2021, the University of Guelph (through which this research was administered) reported nearly $183 million in received research revenue (University of Guelph, n.d.).

Financial resources for conducting research about aggrieved communities are widely available, while opportunities to work with aggrieved community members in a manner that

troubles colonial structures and empowers community remain largely peripheral to the academy. This reality was experienced acutely by First Nations scholars Kathy Absolon and Susan Dion in their efforts to apply a community-based and Indigenous research lens to a large SSHRC partnership grant. They were frustrated with how the "Demands from the university and partner institutions surfaced and pressures for more efficient decision-making, budget reductions and a dismissal of epistemological differences of progress over process led to compromising the commitment to Indigenous principles" (Absolon & Dion, 2017, p. 84).

Appropriately valuing our community collaborators

Institutional ethical guidance importantly, if myopically, highlights how power imbalances and coercive incentives can compromise the free and informed consent of underserved and aggrieved participants (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, pp. 28-29). In practice, however, this can contribute to reinforcing the very power relationships and exploitation they are designed to avert. By cautioning researchers about incentives, they normalize the practice of institutional researchers asking participants and collaborators to offer their time, experience, and knowledge voluntarily. There is a growing recognition that this is at minimum a burden and at worst deeply harmful to expect diverse, aggrieved populations to voluntarily share their experiences and knowledge as part of social justice efforts in academia and workplaces (Miller-Cole, 2020; Western University, n.d.; Carrion, 2021).

Indigenous organizations and scholars have long expressed these same concerns and principles. In their guide for researchers working in Inuit communities, ITK and NRI very explicitly and clearly advocate for researchers to "Hire/purchase locally – Support the local economy wherever possible" (2006, p. 8). Kathy Absolon and Susan Dion also highlighted the

importance of being cognizant of the availability and distribution of financial resources in their efforts to indigenize research as they advocate for researchers to "Ask about writing, decision-making practices and access to funds" (2017, p. 95).

The TCPS does not encourage or discourage incentives or compensation for research participants. It characterizes funds and resources in terms of incentives, noting, "Where incentives are offered to participants, they should not be so large or attractive as to encourage reckless disregard of risks" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 29). This language again affirms the binary "researcher" and "participant" relationship that is troubled in collaborative and co-creative research spaces. By focusing on incentives from researchers to participants, the TCPS ignores the important discussion about how funds and resources can be made available to research collaborators and their role in defining how research funds should be used (inclusive of compensation and incentives for research participants). As community-engaged scholars, we must carefully consider resource allocation as part of our engagement. As Mandakini Pant (2013) argues, a key role we can play as collaborators with and accomplices of our partners is to demonstrate leadership by "(a) amplifying the collective voice of their community, in particular, marginalized members, to gain access to and control over resources, justice and social services; and (b) engaging in negotiation to change the power relations" (p. 46). Without our dynamic, creative responses to these structures, they will do as they are designed to do and promote predictable, risk-averse practices and spaces that produce controlled, commodified outcomes.

It's worth reflecting for a moment, in the context of how the arts-based, improvisatory engagement contributes to intercultural learning, why I place such emphasis upon these

arguably non-artistic, non-improvisatory structures. First, reflexive, improvisatory engagement with these structures is a reality for many community-based and arts-based initiatives which can flourish and have flourished despite these structures. Second, I've come to learn that if during an engagement with community I haven't had to reflect on the mundane financial and administrative details surrounding an initiative, it almost certainly means that that responsibility has fallen to someone else. I've seen and experienced these realities over and over again as I've worked with community-based programs in the arts, sport, health, and education, and they've been reaffirmed throughout my engagement with ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. Understanding these realities and relationships is crucial to the creation of a co-learning arts-based, improvisatory, intercultural environment.

Challenging a distinction between 'outcome' and 'process'

In the planning phases of *Improvising in-between*, I sought funds that would see collaborators directly funded for their contribution to the design of the research. I had prepared a process-focused research proposal and found myself both disappointed and intrigued by the response I received from the selection committee of the 'equity, diversity, and inclusion' research grant. They indicated, "the selection committee felt that although the idea was strong, the application lacked clarity in terms of timelines, products and deliverables." This response from the funder suggests that they expect that the significant time and effort of collaborators to define 'timelines, products, and deliverables' ought to have been conducted free of charge or that their engagement ought to have remained superficial. Granted, the fund may not have been designed to support collaborative project design initiatives, but there is a certain irony in an equity, diversity, and inclusion fund that is designed in a fashion that mirrors the very

structures it ought to be troubling. The nature of this results-based funding strategy narrows our focus to "products" and "deliverables" at the expense of changing "how we work." Our emergent and dynamic processes become secondary to the communication of results or affirming our hypotheses. Once again, Absolon and Dion (2017) give wise counsel in decolonizing and indigenizing research:

> In terms of re-searching and affirming Indigenous values and priorities related to process and protocols, don't let the funding grant deadlines generate pressure to default to the PIs [principal Investigators]. If a project team wants to do a CBR [community-based research] methodology, it is crucial that all partners invest in the time to discuss and understand what it is they are seeking to accomplish (Absolon & Dion, 2017, p. 95).

In improvisatory and emergent spaces, we dedicate ourselves to the way we engage. Spontaneity, surprise, and reflexiveness is at the heart of understanding how we work. In his follow up work to *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal, in *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, discusses important distinctions between the roles and functions of 'Aesthetic Process' and 'Artistic Product.' For Boal (2006), "the most important thing is the Aesthetic Process which develops the perceptions of the person who practises it, though it may be very desirable that it culminates in an Artistic Product . . . for its amplificatory social power" (p. 18). When engaging in creative practice with aggrieved and underserved communities, improvisatory, creative practice offers strategies and principles for empowerment and agency that outcome and accountability focused initiatives do not. For Boal (2006), "The Aesthetic Process allows the

subjects to exercise themselves in activities which are usually denied them, thus expanding their expressive and perceptive possibilities." (p. 18).

A focus on process is not an invitation to skirt accountability or responsibility for how we use resources or for the outcomes of our work. An important reflection from the community-engaged perspective, however, might be to ask to whom do we hold ourselves accountable? As discussed in his work with internally displaced persons in Nigeria, Afolabi argues that for a relational, creative scholar the development of an "ethical consciousness demands ethical actions based on accountability and responsibility to self and others" (Afolabi, 2018, p. 7). Echoing relational accountability as a creative process, artist-researcher Marnie Bardham asserts that "as an artist working 'with' and 'in' communities . . . the principle of reciprocity and the responsibility of authenticity is paramount" (2013, p. 94).

Collaborative and creative work takes time and resources

Another aggravation provoked by the efficiency fixation of outcome driven funding is the inconvenient reality that engaged, arts-based initiatives (done with deep commitment and intent) can be resource intensive. In their work looking at arts-inquiry in educational program evaluation Searle and Shulha (2016) acknowledge that "All responsive, collaborative, and participatory forms of evaluation require an investment of time. Initially, AI [arts-informed inquiry] may elongate the time required for evaluators and participants to ensure that reliable forms of data are collected" (p. 52). Searle and Shulha (2016) argue that arts-inquiry can be "a spark that can capture the imagination of program planners, developers, participants, and audiences" (p. 53) but note that this is contingent upon an evaluator's willingness to "proceed slowly" (2016, p. 52), an ethic that is troubled within and beyond the academy where

authoritatively defined funding cycles and outcome measures control the flow of resources and management of time (Hall et al., 2013; Malenfant et al., 2019).

Community-based, non-profit, and public programs engaged with creative, developmental, and justice-oriented objectives are increasingly subject to performance-based funding (Badham, 2013; Hall et al. 2013; Malenfant et al., 2019). These outcome-focused structures directly impact programs and organizations and "the ways that work is organized and valued" (Malenfant et al., 2019, p. 41). Our attentiveness to these structures and demands are crucial as community-engaged scholars as we can never assume that our engagement with collaborators can operate meaningfully in isolation from them.

Mobilizing funds and resources to community

Funds for collaborative research design are not widely or easily available. Larger, institutional partnership grants (such as the University of Guelph's Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership[12] and the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation[13]) allow for some relational, co-management of funds. In these instances, research funders place a significant amount of trust in institutional researchers to manage large budgets. The "accountability industry" on the other hand places extensive expectations upon communities to prove themselves, with far fewer resources and offering far less meaningful empowerment to control and drive the research agenda. Where collaborative initiatives exist, they are often between similarly empowered groups. Where power discrepancies exist the authority over funds nearly always rests with the empowered partner, such as a principal

[12] Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership website: https://conservation-reconciliation.ca/
[13] International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation: https://improvisationinstitute.ca/

investigator or the program officer from a large organization (Absolon & Dion, 2017: Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005; Malenfant et al., 2019).

The SSHRC doctoral grant received to support this research was not designed to support community-engaged research. No matter my commitment to explore emergent improvisatory practices, I could not break free from the financial and resource constraints related to implementing collaborative research. I sought to subvert the individualistic nature of my grant (to the extent possible) by putting financial and material resources very much on the table as an important and necessary part of my partnership discussions. This resulted in me contributing minimally to costs related to technology, transportation, and meals for participants and collaborators, but most significantly the grant allowed me some freedom to contribute my time to my collaborators' priorities even for activities that were not specifically aligned with my proposed research objectives (although one could argue that emergent, collaborative engagement is at the very heart of this work). The modest contributions of resources and time afforded by my SSHRC grant hardly change the overarching power of our funding situations, nor do they significantly alleviate long term funding pressures for my collaborators. Just as we bring relationship and deep listening to our creative practice, we can't simply close our reciprocal and "response-able" (Afolabi, 2018) spirit to our funding challenges. We must take the tools and the resources that we have been granted as institutionally empowered individuals and creatively apply them. Like all our provocations, we must continue to be attuned to the moments where opportunities present themselves. We need to be ready to respond in ways that will not just create moments for our collaborators to be empowered to express themselves creatively, but also to be empowered to continue to do so.

A deeper reflection on arts-based evaluation and program reporting, and the vulnerable competition that is community-arts programming are included in the Chapter 5 narrative "Community Impact Speaks for Itself; Institutions Need to Listen" (p. 230).[14]

Gaps perpetuated by exclusivity and differing priorities

To this point I've largely highlighted ways in which institutional (largely colonial) and market-based structures impede and undermine the practice of fully realized community-engaged, creative research practices. I also must acknowledge that community-based principles (while useful guides) often lack the depth and diversity to reflect what community-engaged practice actually looks like. In simplest terms, community-engaged work can be a complex, contradictory, negotiated mess. It can be and most often will be filled with flawed decisions, competing interests and outcomes that rarely demonstrate what we "expect." It can often have as much or more in common with our surprising, even chaotic, improvisatory creative interactions, than the idealized models of community-engaged practice to which we aspire. With academic funding so often tied to traditional research outcomes (i.e., publication) and project funding frequently tied to efficiency-focused, results-based management accountability frameworks, there is relatively little room for emergent, community voices to lead practice. Authoritative structures have very often dictated research and project output priorities before community voices have been engaged. In this section, I discuss how the messy, emergent realities of our co-creative, community-engaged practices encounter a number of exclusive

[14] A series of practices and resources related to arts-based evaluation strategies are included in Appendix F - Arts-based/Creative Evaluation Resources List.

siloes and competing priorities that contribute to gaps between community-based and scholarly spaces.

Recognizing and affirming the realities of our collaborators

Even when determined intent and creative resource mobilization are in place, scholars (like me) can fall into the trap of being overly ambitious and optimistic in terms of our expectations and our hopes for community work. The extent to which community-members (and those that work with them) have the time, interest, and capacity to engage with a researcher will vary dramatically and what occurs in the real world rarely matches the lofty rhetoric of our writing. Throughout *Improvising in-between* there was a significant amount of goodwill and interest from my collaborators toward the vision and aspirations of this research. From the beginning, my research approach and objectives were interesting and even exciting for my prospective collaborators. But they were not a priority for them. Especially in the context of the 2020-2022 COVID-19 pandemic, partners needed to focus on programming, funding, staffing, and an overwhelming amount of "pivoting." These ubiquitous experiences of the day-to-day, despite their significant impact on our practice and opportunity, rarely make their way into scholarly writing where grand conclusions and highly selective (hyperbolic?) examples extoling our theories dominate the text. These tendencies in our scholarly writing are encouraged and rewarded by academic and economic priorities, but often misrepresent the complex and widely differentiated experiences of community-based actors. What is there in the nature of the academy that makes frank and humble writing unusual?

I find myself a beneficiary of the academic structures that reward scholarly writing, even as I harbour an ebb and flow of resentment toward them. My uneasiness becomes amplified in

the context of rhetoric that might be perceived as self-congratulatory with respect to academic scholarship on and institutional rhetoric about social justice. Within the academy, we'll find that our purported social values are out of sync with the reality of the structures and practices that bind us. While we benefit from access to brilliant and supportive colleagues in the academy, underlying systems and cultural frameworks persist in keeping community-engaged, creative scholars at a distance from the aggrieved communities with whom they seek to collaborate.

Resisting the corporatization of the academy

The commodification of academic research is another mechanism through which the gaps in interests and priorities between aggrieved, underserved communities and the academy are maintained. Accelerating this distancing is the extent to which commercial and economic interests increasingly drive the research agenda. In a 2022 opinion piece in the *Calgary Herald*, Dr. Marc Spooner opines, "Under the guise of performance-based funding models . . . universities are quietly being repurposed as entrepreneurial training centres devoted to corporate research by funding models that sharply skew the definition of 'performance' to mean labour-market, industry, and economic outcomes" (Spooner, 2022, para. 5). The community-engaged practices and collaborative principles so lauded in institutional rhetoric are undermined consistently by the quiet (though not hidden) priorities of market-based organizational structures, which are fundamentally at odds with the interests and welfare of aggrieved and underserved communities. Spooner further asserts, "critical and creative habits of mind, . . . collaborative, communication and civic engagement skills . . . are being pushed aside as universities are directed and financially rewarded to focus on 'Graduate employment earnings,' . . . and 'Research funding from industry sources'" (Spooner, 2022, para. 5). What

Spooner effectively describes here is a systemic disenfranchisement of social justice-seeking, co-creative, and improvisatory practices.

While prescriptive institutional structures can drive community organizations away from market-driven funding opportunities, the same organizations are also entrapped by them out of need. Malenfant et al. (2019) found through in their interviews with staff of Toronto- and Montreal-based social innovation networks that "participants regularly described avoiding a reliance on government funding in order to maintain autonomy for activism, advocacy, and political potential" (p. 44). They further describe one of their collaborators as feeling insecure and constrained "playing a funding game where you're not entirely sure of all the rules, trying to cast and frame programs in ways that fit the requirements for a given grant or subsidy" (Malenfant et al., 2019, p. 47). These descriptions present narratives of community actors either not wanting to engage with systemic structures and/or accommodating to their unyielding demands due to the power and resources they hold.

Hearing and learning from community

On several occasions, I've had the opportunity to hear from public and not-for-profit organizations that have broadly dismissed working with academic researchers as they see little alignment or benefit to the relationship. As the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami "Guide for Researchers" asserts, "Community members are not necessarily impressed by university credentials or large grant affiliations. Make a genuine effort to be taught by local people" (ITK & NRI, 2006, p.7). The increased demands put upon prospective research partners, alongside the format and priorities in scholarly research outputs, will very often align poorly with the interests and needs of the organizations and/or the communities with which scholars may be interested to engage.

At the heart of this consideration is the understanding of needs and benefits. The ethical question remains: who benefits most from our collaborations, our partnerships, and our engagements?

Within community-university relationships there are many guiding documents and principles one might turn to, including those that have been previously referenced (Afolabi, 2018; Hall et al., 2013; Hughes, 2005; ITK & NRI, 2006; Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021; USAI, 2012). Despite this guidance and examples of community-university partnerships that are "responding by continuing to work towards social change, exploring creative ways of working together . . . and developing intentional processes to demonstrate their value and impact in universities, communities and society" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 89), many gaps and barriers stubbornly persist.

As noted, there are small fissures in the language and values espoused by institutional actors. These can be found in the form of diversity, equity, inclusion initiatives, emergent research ethics guidance (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018), or in Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (GAC, 2017). But even when there may be alignment on principles and values, a lack of attentiveness to localized needs and realities contributes to the ongoing disconnect between institutional actors and the communities with which they are engaged. As Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's guidance for researchers counsels, "Keep in mind that community members may have more pressing daily matters to attend to than research priorities and timelines" (ITK & NRI, 2006, p.7). Examples of institutionally driven initiatives crumbling due to their failure to understand and respect community are widespread. The cautionary tales of mosquito nets as a malaria intervention being used as fishing nets to meet

local hunger needs (Short et al., 2018) or the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into the academy without meaningfully understanding and empowering Indigenous worldviews (Morgan, 2003; Robinson, 2019) are examples of the ironic ignorance of institutional knowledge brokers. I had the difficult privilege to learn this lesson personally in 2011, during my participatory master's research on community-based responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis with a small Canadian-based NGO in rural Uganda.

The following narrative discusses individuals struggling in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Northern Uganda. Individuals' circumstances are not described in detail, but for any readers who may find the topic distressing, please be sure to take care of your own needs before, during, and after reading. Our field team (two Ugandan staff members and me) arrived in a village to meet a prospective new partner and to deliver donated bicycles in support of their community-based healthcare efforts, a common strategy in community-based development in Uganda (Ardizzi et al., 2020). After presenting them with new bicycles, we gathered under a tree for a discussion with community members. We briefly presented the goals and objectives of our organization, then I heard a simple and blunt statement that I'll never forget. I must paraphrase, as the message was translated to me through one of my fellow field team members. In the simplest terms, I was told, "You need to provide us with ARVs."

We were not ignorant of the need for anti-retroviral medication (ARVs), and we weren't positioned to be a reliable source of this life saving medication. I was patently naïve, however, not to have understood how the offer of a few bicycles was deeply out of touch with what they hoped a Canadian NGO might offer them. Despite our best intentions, grounded in our commitment to community-based collaboration, our offering was built on a fundamental

ignorance of the expectations and lived experiences of our collaborators. We did not know and had not heard from our collaborators, ahead of our engagement. I've never had the opportunity to follow up with the residents of that village, but I have tried in the years since to listen more carefully and be prepared to respond to my collaborators in all my social and creative engagements.

As we continue to consider how our scholarship and social practices align (or misalign) with community needs and interests, we might also open our eyes to the opportunities in our practice where collaborative engagements between cultures, while imperfect and contradictory, can be generative. In Schwan and Lightman's work on the CIRQINIQ program with Inuit youth in the Nunavik region, there are important lessons learned and shared about the colonial power structures and how these intersect with the facilitation and administration of the program. Schwan and Lightman go so far as to characterize some of the perceived "challenges" of the program such as attrition, tardiness, and a lack of commitment "as a sign of cultural survival rather than a risk to cultural survival" (Schwan & Lightman, 2015, p. 27). While their writing provokes an interesting reflection and I'm inclined to agree with many of these points in principle, one might question if/how it supports and/or challenges the youth and the facilitators of the CIRQINIQ program in practice. What is conspicuously absent from Schwan and Lightman's work is a discussion about what it means to "actively attempt to participate in decolonization with participants" (Schwan & Lightman, 2015, p. 27). Might this look like Inuit youth leading and engaging actively in sharing and supporting social engagement about their communities to their fellow Inuit and to wider non-Inuit audiences? If so then, perhaps we

might listen to the youths themselves and discuss the examples where this has emerged from the program.

Inuit voices are more directly cited in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, but what is also fascinating is that in the years following Schwan and Lightman's work an independent Inuit circus troupe called Tupiq A.C.T.[15] emerged out of the CIRQINIQ program (with ongoing support from and collaboration with professional circus artists from Southern Canada). This young group of artists is carving a new place for themselves and their own cultural expression. While there can never be a free pass to ignore persistent challenges related to colonial, Western ideologies, the CIRQINIQ program was the vehicle that helped carry them on their journey. You can find some of Tupiq A.C.T.'s work online through Vimeo[16], YouTube[17], and Facebook[18]. They have had their work on display at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa and have been featured in articles by Radio Canada[19] and Nunatsiaq News.[20] While Tupiq A.C.T. will undoubtedly encounter ongoing challenges on their artistic journey, in March 2023, I was informed that Tupiq A.C.T. received a $50,000 grant in support of their creative practice.

Though the accomplishments of these Inuit youth do not dismiss or dispel any of the foundational questions raised by Schwan and Lightman they do put them to work in the world. These Inuit youth have seized opportunities, joy, and pride in a manner that might be seen as a navigation of or resistance to existing colonial tensions, without simply falling prey to them. The

[15] Tupiq A.C.T. website: https://tupiqact.com/
[16] Tupiq A.C.T. on Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/user114805680
[17] Tupiq A.C.T. on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClNh6ET_0Dg5L6pyyd4lukA
[18] Tupiq A.C.T. on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TupiqACT/videos/?ref=page_internal
[19] Tupiq A.C.T. on Radio-Canada: https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1811395/cirque-inuit-tupiq-act-montreal-completement-arts-theatre-nunavik
[20] Tupiq A.C.T. in Nunatsiaq News: https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/young-nunavik-artists-blend-art-history-at-new-exhibit/

question remains: was the founding of Tupiq A.C.T. realised despite or because of the Eurocentric, Southern Canadian structures and art forms that still have a significant influence on how the CIRQINIQ program operates? Could the answer actually be more complex than that? Perhaps these young people were able to thrive despite AND because of the structures and practices upon which CIRQINIQ is built.

While the problems of colonial, government structures and Western art traditions in Inuit communities are being and should be questioned, and while Schwan and Lightman's academic reflection on colonialism may be well conceived, the more pressing and actionable questions relate to how we can improve our understanding of existing and active relationships and initiatives. The alternative is to exclusively challenge and problematize them and while there are times when this is warranted, I wonder who learns and benefits from these reflections and this knowledge. Having had the opportunity to see first-hand how Inuit youth felt seen and affirmed through the CIRQINQ program as they progress to a point where they can express their own agency and lead their own arts practice, it is not as easy to prioritize these broader conceptual issues at the expense of these localized, personal, and interpersonal moments. How then can we as community-engaged, creative researchers attune our own practice not to just identify or disengage from the colonial structures but invest ourselves in navigating them in meaningful relationship with community? As we will explore more fully in coming chapters, our creative, relational, and improvisatory interventions help us to navigate and negotiate these tensions as, like Tupiq A.C.T., we put them to work in the world.

Recognizing when and how to engage

My first direct engagement with research collaborators at Art Not Shame (ANS) was not through arts-based practice or engaged dialogue with aggrieved, underserved community members. I had heard their current needs and interests were not to bring in another body into their already deeply committed and purposeful arts practice. They were back in the chase, looking for funds. They were preparing a holiday fundraising campaign called Reimagining Possibility, through which participants, staff, and collaborative supporters would publicly share their experiences and reflections on their relationship with ANS.

As we built our relationship, they saw that my assistance through that campaign was something of value. As I met with staff, we discussed what they wanted to say and learn through the campaign, and I supported them to develop their interview questions. They conducted and released the short interviews publicly via Instagram. While my formal engagement was minimal, the output was simultaneously as informative as any formalized interview I might have conducted. All while still serving ANS's ongoing interests and needs. I subsequently downloaded the videos and edited/created short thematic videos centered upon the 4 elements of ANS's "deep purpose" ('systemic justice,' 'artful expression,' 'connection in community,' and 'feel into wellbeing'). I then shared them with ANS staff.[21] The videos themselves helped me to gain a stronger understanding of not just how the organization expresses their deep purpose, but what those deep purposes look like when given life and

[21] These videos (both in their original and edited forms) can be seen in Appendix D - Art Not Shame - Reimagining Possibility Campaign

context through the experiences and reflections of ANS collaborators. Key learnings and quotes from these interviews are shared in Chapters 4 and 5.

While this early engagement with ANS may not reflect the deeper relational and creative engagement discussed in later chapters, it exemplified how we can engage with partners without imposing and controlling our outcome driven agendas. The irony here is that by decentering my own research priorities, my keen interest in how ANS fosters co-creative, relational, and justice-focused work came to the fore. Without directly asking about relational or justice seeking practices the narratives emerged organically through a commitment to working ethically, listening, and establishing a reciprocal relationship with my collaborators. This engagement demonstrated how improvisatory, reciprocal relationship and learning can produce deep and revealing research learning.

Relational and creative practices as improvisatory ways forward

Through the relationships and examples discussed in this chapter, we can see the need to listen, negotiate, accommodate, and respond: to improvise. As community members, accomplices, and advocates, we may need to be honest with ourselves and others, that we are creatively navigating a system and performing as academics. As one working class academic puts it, "You put on your academic costume and you go out and you perform 'professor'" (Waterfield et al., 2019, p. 380). However, we must be careful about our performance, that it does not obscure our intentions, but affirms honestly that our work is being molded creatively to navigate an unyielding system. We have lessons to learn from the anticolonial practices shared by Indigenous and racialized scholars. As Asante (1983) says of Afrocentric scholars, "they look to create rather than to join with the oppressor" (p. 14). Our work "demands a

wholistic philosophy" as we resist "rhetorical discourse" that is "polluted, distorted and dismembered by the onslaught of European images and symbols" (Asante, 1983, p. 6). As scholars we need not only to recognize that the "distance between the communities and ourselves" is "both material and ideological" (Absolon & Dion, 2017, p. 89) but also to determine how we will navigate and negotiate these differences. It is within this contested space where we enact creative and improvisatory practices to amplify "our familiarity, awareness, and understanding of intercultural communication by incorporating other forms of knowledge into our methodological repertoire" (Schreiber, 2000, p. 665).

As a community-engaged, creative researcher, I ethically, logically, practically, feel that our first commitment must be the wellbeing and interests of the communities with which we work. I argue that it's this commitment that gives the socially engaged rhetoric of critical studies in improvisation its life. This simple priority raises many nuanced questions about the interests, the wellbeing, and the communities to which I am referring, and I find that these become clearer through our engagement with and empowerment of the specific communities with which we co-create. The closer we are to those communities, the more honest, impactful, and empowering our work can be. My pervasive frustration in the academy is the extent to which institutions make doing deeply community-engaged work so much more difficult by establishing and reinforcing distance between researchers and communities. The academy continues to espouse the virtues of community-engagement as they perpetuate and fortify structures that stifle its realization. Throughout *Improvising in-between*, I have looked for meaningful and actionable approaches through which community partners can both direct and benefit from a community-university collaboration. It is a challenge that I remain committed to

tackling, but one with which I continue to struggle. I see determination, care, and possibilities in the creative and practical wisdom of my community collaborators as they continue to improvise their own way through the structures that trouble them. I continue to hope that their experiences, their knowledge, and their voices will be embraced and eventually empowered by the academy.

Chapter 4 - Revisiting the Story of Change: Interrogating the Conceptual Framework

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The Conceptual Framework Revisited

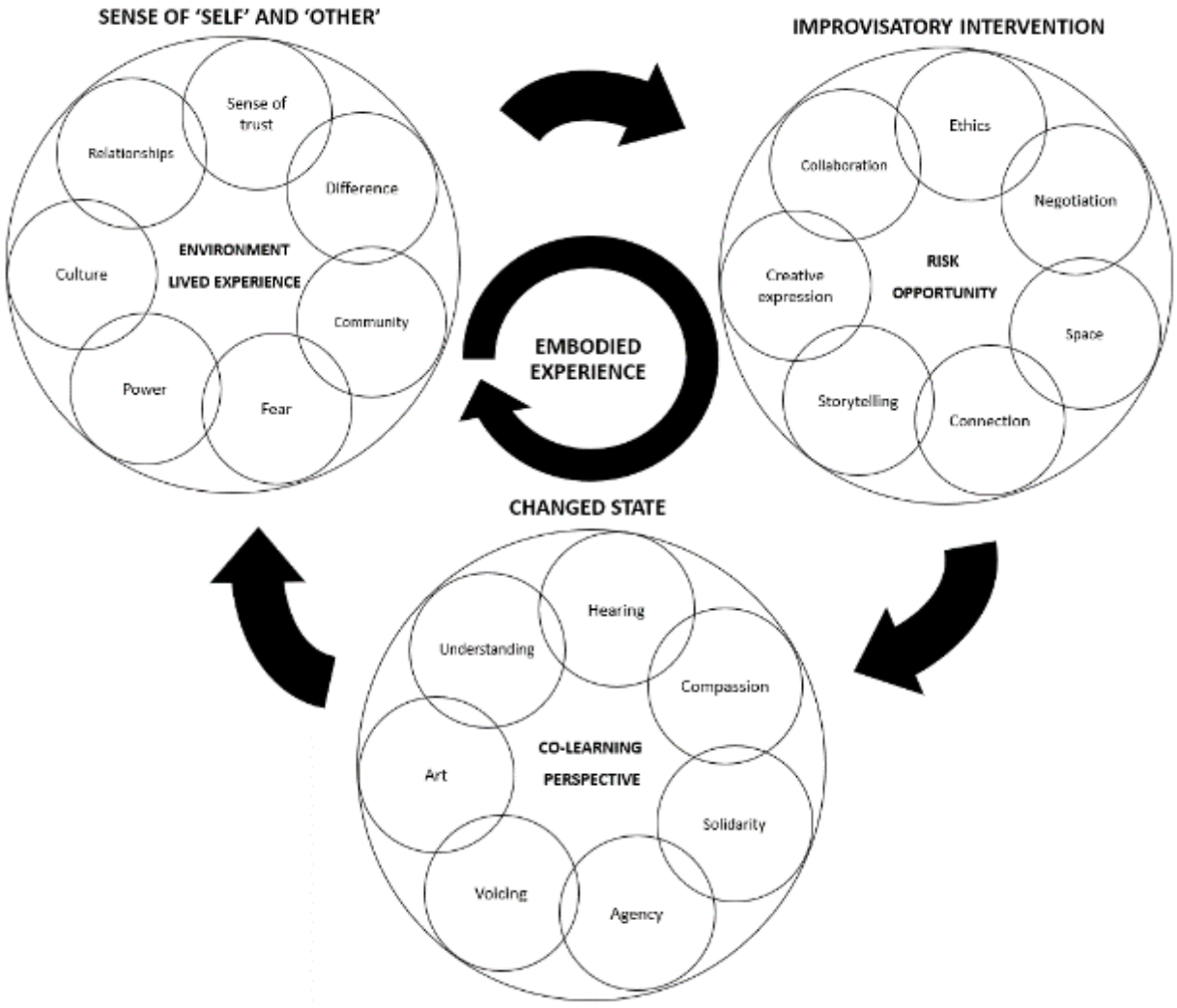
In this chapter, I revisit the conceptual framework that I developed during the inception phase of *Improvising in-between.* This conceived research story served both to frame and to communicate my ethical and conceptual approach to creative, improvisatory, intercultural engagement. This chapter interrogates the framework by asking how it stands when real relationships and actualized practices are filtered through it? What's missing? What is redundant? Ultimately, what was or can be learned by framing intercultural and improvisatory engagement in this way? On a small scale, the framework was reflective of improvisatory performance and relational engagement that characterized some of the momentary creative engagements realized throughout *Improvising in-between*. On a larger scale it supported my explorations of the prolonged collaborative initiatives with individuals and groups who walked with me through this work.

I begin my review of the framework by elaborating on the centered notion of embodiment, before reflecting on two key concepts that are not explicitly captured in the

framework: time and trauma. Each of the three main phases of the framework's cycle are then placed beside and interwoven with moments and learnings from my collaborative and creative engagement with partners. I conclude by interrogating if and how conceptual framing is meaningful and useful within these complex spaces that abound with risk and opportunity.

Figure 3:

The Conceptual Framework Revisited



Embodied Experience

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research considers that within intercultural, creative spaces collaborators will come with a range of bodies and experiences. Before we actively reflect on the conscious sense of self and the stories written by our conceived selves, I ground my thinking in the consideration that "the body remembers" (Babette, 2000; Moreno, 1946). Bridging disciplines like phenomenology and psychology, the concept of embodied experience and memory is grounded in the relationships that our bodies and minds, as individuals in communities, have formed with the worlds around us (Babette, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The conceptual framing of *Improvising in-between* is centered by the recognition that each collaborator's "sum total of experience, and therefore all memory, begins with sensory input" (Babette, 2000, p. 38). As we consider the embodied person, we make ourselves conscious of how each body consciously and unconsciously encounters their environment. As MacArthur Fellow and Grammy award-winning composer and pianist Vijay Iyer asserts, the "process of embodied action situates the perceiver within the environment; so the perceiver must interact with her embodied self as well" (Iyer, 2004, p. 165). In her work exploring improvisation in a jazz context Ingrid Monson describes how our creative interactions are more than intellectual, but deeply social and embodied. She argues:

> The relationships between interactive performance and intermusical associations are not merely 'in the head' but also in the heart and the body. They are part of the process

by which communities grow out of the social activities and emotions of real people" (Monson, 1996, p. 180).

I can't express or share another's embodied experience. It is with caution that I will seek to discuss changed states later in this chapter knowing that each collaborator's embodied experience will be different. To misrepresent or speak for my diverse participants aligns me more closely to the types of systemic epistemicide and the consumptive, epistemic violence critiqued and highlighted by the likes of Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon (2017), and Dylan Robinson (2020). Through this chapter, I will reflect on my embodied experience and my sense of self while seeking to do justice to the trust, relationships, and experiences of those with whom I've had the privilege and genuine joy to engage. These relationships exist within a concerted awareness that ethical, intercultural work takes time. If we wish to consider how improvisatory engagements impact our intercultural encounters, we can begin by reflecting on Iyer's assertation that "Temporality must ground our conception of physically embodied cognition" (Iyer, 2004, p. 160).

This research collaboration has been years in the making. Not only did I begin to explore relationships and potential partnerships over a two-year period, the connections and relationships that grounded how I and my partners came together have a history that traces at least as far back as my years as an educator in Canada's far North (about 15 years before the time of writing). I am conscious too of the fact that the identity, skills, and values that I bring as a musician with an unyielding compulsion to engage across culture and explore social justice took root long before I was consciously aware of it.

By acknowledging that my embodied self brings decades of my life into these spaces, my research seeks to honour, without presuming to fully understand or tell, the embodied selves of my collaborators. To frame a discussion of embodied experiences, I begin with the forethought that "A fundamental consequence of physical embodiment and environmental situatedness is the fact that *things take time*" (Iyer, 2004, p. 160). To situate our embodied self in the improvised relationships, spaces, and creative practices of *Improvising in-between*, I present a chronology of what occurred in the time and spaces through which our bodies navigated.

Things Take Time

Building a relational, community-engaged partnership necessitated a prolonged planning and relationship building phase. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that I needed to be attentive to the pressures and restrictions that made active engagement difficult. Patient and open communication can prolong the time needed for relational engagement. Throughout *Improvising in*-between, I remained committed to determining how I could work reciprocally and supportively with my research collaborators. The needs of ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ and my relationships with them differed. As such, so did considerations for how I could meaningfully mobilize my time, skill, and resources. This meant that, due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic, I had to slow down and respect the time and space that my collaborators needed to navigate new ways of working.

The pandemic restrictions limited early engagement to web-based calls and some semi-formal interviews. In our first meetings, my partners and I discussed their needs and how they work. I shared my own interests and perspectives, most notably a desire to work collaboratively and to find mutual interests and complementary co-learning opportunities. From a program

perspective, partners often highlighted the pressures and vulnerabilities of funding and the human resource shortages and instabilities, as they continued to work to engage with and support the diverse needs of their program participants. Building trust and relationship through email and web-based calls comes with a literal and figurative distance. As pandemic restrictions eased, I jumped at opportunities to meet in person and felt a notable shift in the trust and depth of relationship.

One of the simple ethical commitments I reiterated and worked diligently to uphold was never to impose personal or institutional research priorities and pressures upon research partners. This is not to say that I would not welcome the mutually beneficial sharing of the time, resources, and opportunities that partners were willing to contribute, but I carefully considered how externally imposed demands and interests might come at the expense of partner's principles, programming, and resources. Putting this principle in practice while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic meant that patience and forthright communication became indispensable. Unscheduling and allowing opportunities to evolve takes time, and when the world nearly comes to a grinding halt, research planning and visioning become a fool's errand. Working with my partners, exploring their practices, and interrogating my own could not be forced into a work schedule. It took a global health emergency to truly force me to slow down and fully recognize that pushing ahead with my research interests would have been selfish and inappropriate. Perhaps that's how it always should have been.

In this context, what did my engagement look like? How did my emergent, improvisatory ethic allow me to maintain and build relationships, not only in spite of but because of this massive circuit breaker in the development phases? As Garakani found in her

engagement in education research with Inuit in the Nunavik Region, "building relationships requires time and a continuous presence, which is virtually impossible for academic researchers who must balance teaching obligations in the South and research in the North during the school year" (Garakani, 2014, p. 243). If indeed, this balance is virtually impossible, it behooves us to consider how we can transparently and ethically navigate the imbalance.

Retrospectively, regular engagement, infused with patience and respect for a collaborator's availability and competing demands, became not just the most appropriate but, I might argue, the only ethical way to navigate these research relationships. Recognizing need, listening to partners, and being responsive when opportunities presented themselves result in an irregular ebb and flow. How did this manifest? It ends up looking like a web of contacts, initiatives, discussions, and overlapping relationships that could never have been planned for. As Hazel Smith and Roger Dean argue of practice-focused and collaborative work, "the process-driven approach obviously lends itself to emergence . . . a plan is always open to transformation as long as it is regarded flexibly" (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 23). In Figures 6 and 7, I offer a chronology of how my emergent, improvisatory engagement strategy manifested over nearly 4 years.

My cyclical and iterative approach to research manifested as a sustained and flexible engagement with research collaborators that persisted in the face of a frustrating and frightening period of uncertainty. The initiation phase (between 2019 and 2020) accelerated surprisingly quickly. While I placed little urgency on mobilizing research engagement and field work, partners quickly showed a willingness and desire to engage with a collaborative, creative, research practice, including field work in the regions around Lake Victoria in Tanzania with

BWTM and in the Northern Village of Kuujjuaq with CIRQINIQ. Initial partner conversations with local school board, neighbourhood group, and City of Guelph representatives were positive. Stakeholders with these groups all expressed a desire to explore and support (in various capacities) improvised art and intercultural voicing initiatives with local youth. In the early days of the research, I persistently pursued strategies and opportunities to ensure my research collaborators would benefit from our relationship. I had little in terms of resources (beyond my own time, knowledge, and skill) to contribute but I was preparing to take on costly field research with all the resources I had at my disposal. Because of my past relationships with the Canada Africa Partnership Network (the umbrella charity that supports BWTM) and the Kativik Regional Government (the administrators of the CIRQINIQ program), tentative field visits to Tanzania and Nunavik were already being planned for the spring and summer of 2020.

Then it happened. The global pandemic that nearly ended and entirely changed the nature of my collaborative work with partners. I rather unaffectionately describe this phase as a disruption. Now with a bit of maturity and wisdom we can recognize how we can learn through what for so many was a frightening and difficult time. As Arundhati Roy suggests, “pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew” (2020, para. 48). My plans to fly to East Africa in the spring of 2020 were cancelled following the declaration of a state of emergency in Canada. Naively believing that the pandemic would dissipate in a matter of weeks, I held out hope that my travel to Nunavik to engage with the CIRQINIQ program in the summer would come to fruition. These plans were officially dashed by June. With few other engagement avenues available, I continued to engage remotely throughout 2020 with BWTM

Founder and Director, Christie Ulicny as we explored options and possibilities for sharing and developing music curriculum resources for their programming.

Despite some fruitful discussions with Guelph-based organizations, I chose to suspend efforts to engage in local schools. School boards in Ontario largely suspended all external research initiatives in schools throughout the first year of the pandemic. I had found myself, at this phase of my research, in a somewhat contradictory position. I had not (yet) received any research funding and the positive progress I had made had been deeply disrupted, but a foundation of positive relationships had been laid.

It is in this phase that I struggled to communicate how a collaboration might meaningfully move forward in the absence of financial resources. I was conscious of "the problems posed by the prevailing short-term, project-based approach to socially engaged arts" (Belfiore, 2022, p. 63) as I strived to support "fluid structures and naturally evolving collaborative activities" (Belfiore, 2022, p. 63). To add to the struggle, the financial bumps along the road kept on coming. Although I was afforded generous time and letters of support from both academic and community collaborators, the aforementioned institutional Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion grant was unsuccessful. A failed Ontario Graduate Scholarship application would soon follow. In this interstitial phase, however, a small community-engaged scholarship grant from the University of Guelph's Community-Engaged Scholarship Institute allowed me to offer small compensation to partner organizations for their time and contribution to the design and relationship building phase of the research. These funds instigated the opportunity to compensate Guelph-based ANS and initiate our potential collaboration. The news of my successful SSHRC Doctoral Scholarship in April of 2021 marked a

key turning point for this research collaboration. With $35,000 per year for three academic years, I now had the coveted resources that would facilitate contributive relationships and allow for engagement that would rely far less on the scarce resources of my community-based collaborators. This new infusion of resources helped to re-invigorate discussions with ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ, and to explore new opportunities.

In the fall of 2021, I had collaborated with a Guelph-based NGO (the Guelph Tool Library) to collect donated digital cameras in support of a photo storytelling initiative during a CIRQINIQ training that was scheduled for November 2021.

Figure 4

CIRQINIQ – Guelph Tool Library Camera Collection Drive.

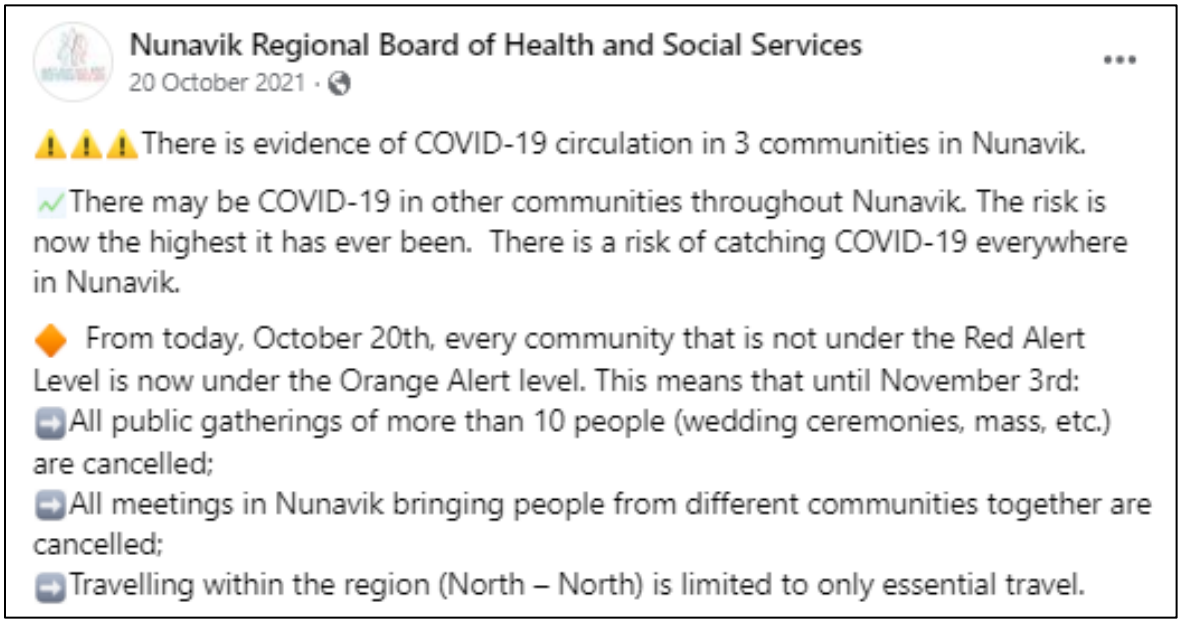
Note. Facebook advertisement for the camera drive. Source:

https://www.facebook.com/guelphtoollibrary/videos/1054666718625923

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, was not yet finished disrupting our collaborative efforts. Due to an outbreak in the Nunavik region, the CIRQINIQ training and all travel in the region were cancelled (see Figure 5). The cancellation was truly discouraging. I had received a much-appreciated bursary from the University of Guelph College of Arts Graduate Travel, Research, and Creation Fund for a cancelled journey and for airline tickets that could not be reimbursed (only transferred into credits for a future flight). To rub salt in the wound, due to costs related to the future changes in my flight itinerary, the bursary ultimately covered less than half of the change fees that I ultimately needed to pay.

Figure 5

Nunavik Region COVID-19 Red Alert Restrictions



Note. Description of COVID restrictions in the Nunavik Region in October 2021. Source: https://www.facebook.com/NunavikHealthBoard/posts/pfbid02WEAxUPoDxWB7rScrGV5QTishKHdeHosRNzMNgtk6A3prdjEzpgrytwoDMWbEcYsal

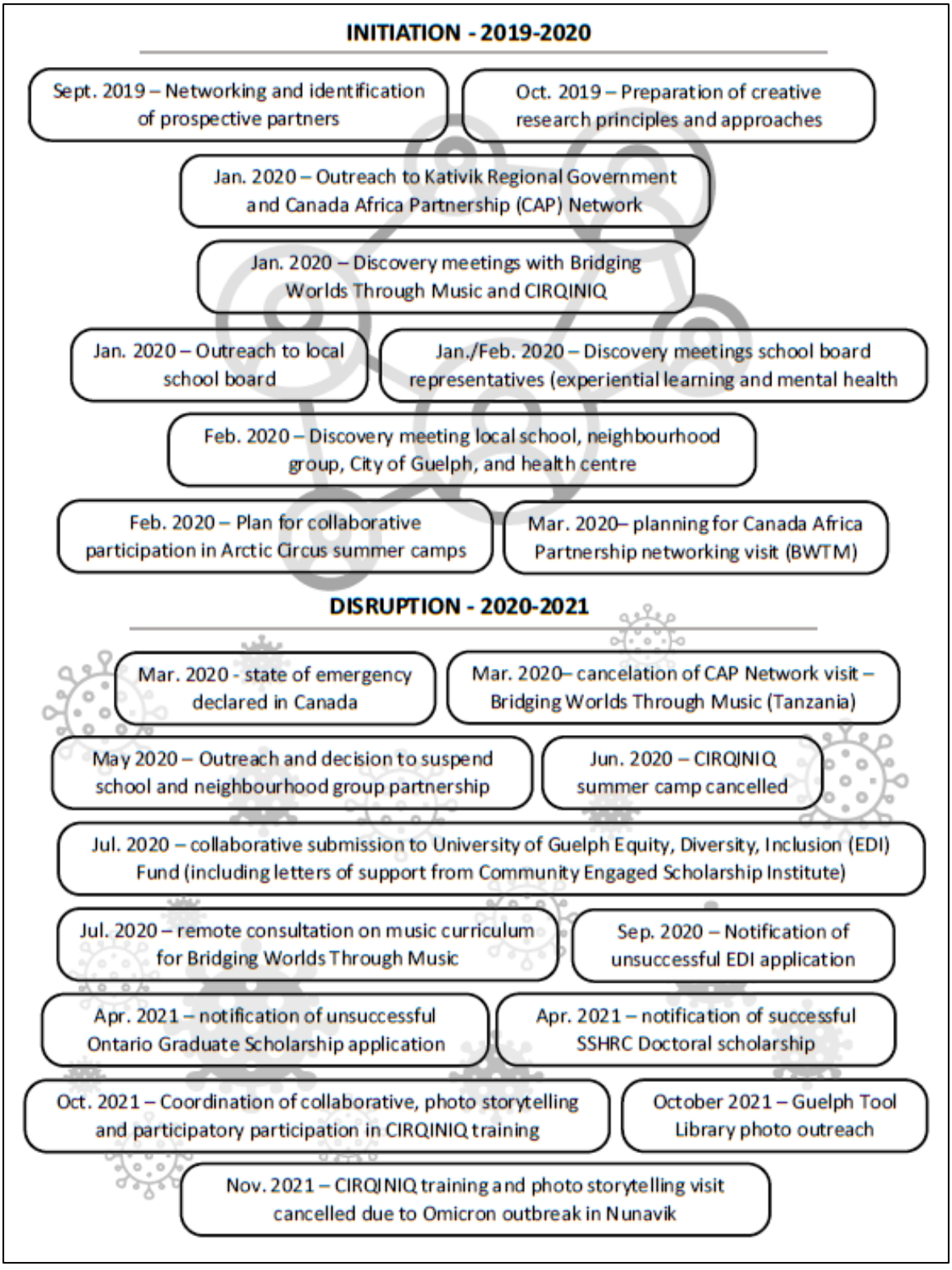
I recall these mundane, seemingly uncreative experiences to emphasize that this can be the reality of community-engaged work. Disruptive, financial, practical, and unpredictable factors significantly impact the realization of relationship building and collaborative research practice. These disruptions can stall and even transform our relationships. As seen, the pandemic made the initial local partnership work largely untenable, and while the work with Tanzanian and Nunavik-based partners sustained, they were forcibly made distant and uncertain. The entire initiative had become vulnerable and might well never have been sustained were it not for some dynamic, trust-filled dialogue, and the injection of the SSHRC funding.

While I was wringing my hands with impatience and frustration at the hurdles and limitations, my collaborators found ways to continue their work. BWTM bought hundreds of face masks for school children so they could safely attend school and continue their music programming; Art Not Shame (ANS) engaged in several online workshops, culminating in the Art in Hard Times Mural Project (a collaborative, digital mural project with 65 diverse artists); CIRQINIQ mobilized safely in communities as soon as travel and gathering became a safe option, while the former CIRQINIQ youth of Tupiq A.C.T. collaborated with the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services to create a COVID-19 awareness video.[22] Despite my eagerness, the appropriate and ethical choice was to wait and listen. It was not yet my time to actively engage, share, and co-learn. It was only through taking the time to re-evaluate and re-connect, that the right time and opportunities would present themselves.

[22] Tupiq A.C.T. COVID-19 awareness video: https://www.facebook.com/NunavikHealthBoard/videos/1099088474229170/

Figure 6

An Improvised Timeline - Initiation and Disruption



In March of 2021, I hosted a Zoom meeting of coordinating representatives from each collaborating organization. Following weeks of email and web-based engagement, I had the pleasure of hosting an exciting meeting of minds between Art Not Shame Founder and Executive Director, Michelle Peek, Bridging Worlds Through Music Founder and Director, Christie Ulicny, and CIRQINIQ Program Coordinators and Training Facilitators, Rebecca Leonard and Véronique Provencher. This encounter would be a one-time occasion, but it laid the groundwork for identifying the needs and interests of the partners and was a fascinating opportunity to see how these passionate and dedicated arts professionals could share and learn from one another. They expressed a desire to learn and share on a range of topics such as ideologies of social justice and unique approaches for the inclusion of community members (such as elders) from outside the program. They discussed their shared belief in art as a means for social change. What was apparent in the discussion, however, were the very different contextual circumstances in which they work. The difference in cultural, logistical, and financial realities between the Arctic, Tanzania, and Southern Ontario were stark (e.g., travel costs, languages, access to resources).

Sadly, some of my initial, ambitious cross-partner collaborative ideas were ultimately shelved in favour of looking more closely at the type of research and co-learning that could be explored within each organization's programming. Future partner collaboration remains an exciting prospect, but the complex demands facing each organization as they navigated their emergence from the pandemic meant that the ethical and practical approach was to re-affirm and support existing initiatives rather than introducing elaborate new ones.

Outreach throughout 2021 took a variety of forms. I met ANS staff in person, during a socially distanced backyard meeting, in an effort to get to know them and explore possibilities. I subsequently engaged with ANS as they prepared to conduct online interviews with staff and previous collaborators as part of a reflection and story gathering for their Reimagining Possibility fundraising campaign (as discussed in Chapter 3). I managed to mobilize an online group discussion through my partnership with BWTM. Through this outreach, we worked together to navigate the limitations of online engagement in Tanzania through a group Zoom interview with Christie Ulicny, BWTM Project Manager Samuel Limbe and Rich Hill English Medium Nursery School music teacher, Paul Pambe. The remote journey continued as CIRQINIQ facilitators introduced me to the world of "circademics." This is a group of dedicated scholars looking at circus arts as a creative and social phenomenon. Through the CIRQINIQ network I was introduced to Dr. Louis Patrick Leroux of Concordia University, with whom I had the pleasure of discussing my research and delving more deeply into the international scope of social circus practice.

One of the many emergent and unplanned outcomes of *Improvising in-between* was unintentionally provoked by the University of Guelph's research ethics board process. As I mobilized my Nunavik partnership, I sought to confirm whether the Nunavik Region had established an independent research ethics review. Consequently, I reached out to the emerging Nunavik Regional Research Authority[23] (NRRA). They were in the process of developing a research review process. Based on my experience having lived and worked in Nunavik and my current role as a doctoral researcher, I was asked to participate in a

[23] NRRA press release: https://www.krg.ca/en-CA/current-news/1041

confidential review of their 'Integrated Plan for Research Management in Nunavik' entitled 'Retaking the Lead.' Though this engagement lasted only a few weeks, it was a valuable and important co-learning opportunity which strengthened my awareness of the emergent landscape with respect to culturally responsive and relevant research initiatives in the Inuit Nunangat (lands, waters, and ices of the Inuit in Canada). The NRRA eventually reformed as Atanniuvik and formally released their research plan in the spring of 2023. Following the release, I had the pleasure of following up with the lead consultant on the plan, Kaitlin Breton-Honeyman. I learned about the progress and complexities of initiating the new plan. Many years of development lie ahead in this work, which would be an interesting topic for a community-engaged doctoral dissertation on its own terms.

In early 2022, the severity of the pandemic waned. With a finalized and approved research ethics protocol and a SSHRC doctoral grant in hand, I could now focus on opening up the scale and scope of engagement with my research partners. I could begin to engage and create more in line with how I envisioned my collaboration from the initiation phase. With newfound knowledge, strengthened goodwill, trust with partners, and an ongoing awareness of how the pandemic effected the lives of collaborators and participants, a new and exciting phase of this research collaboration could take off.

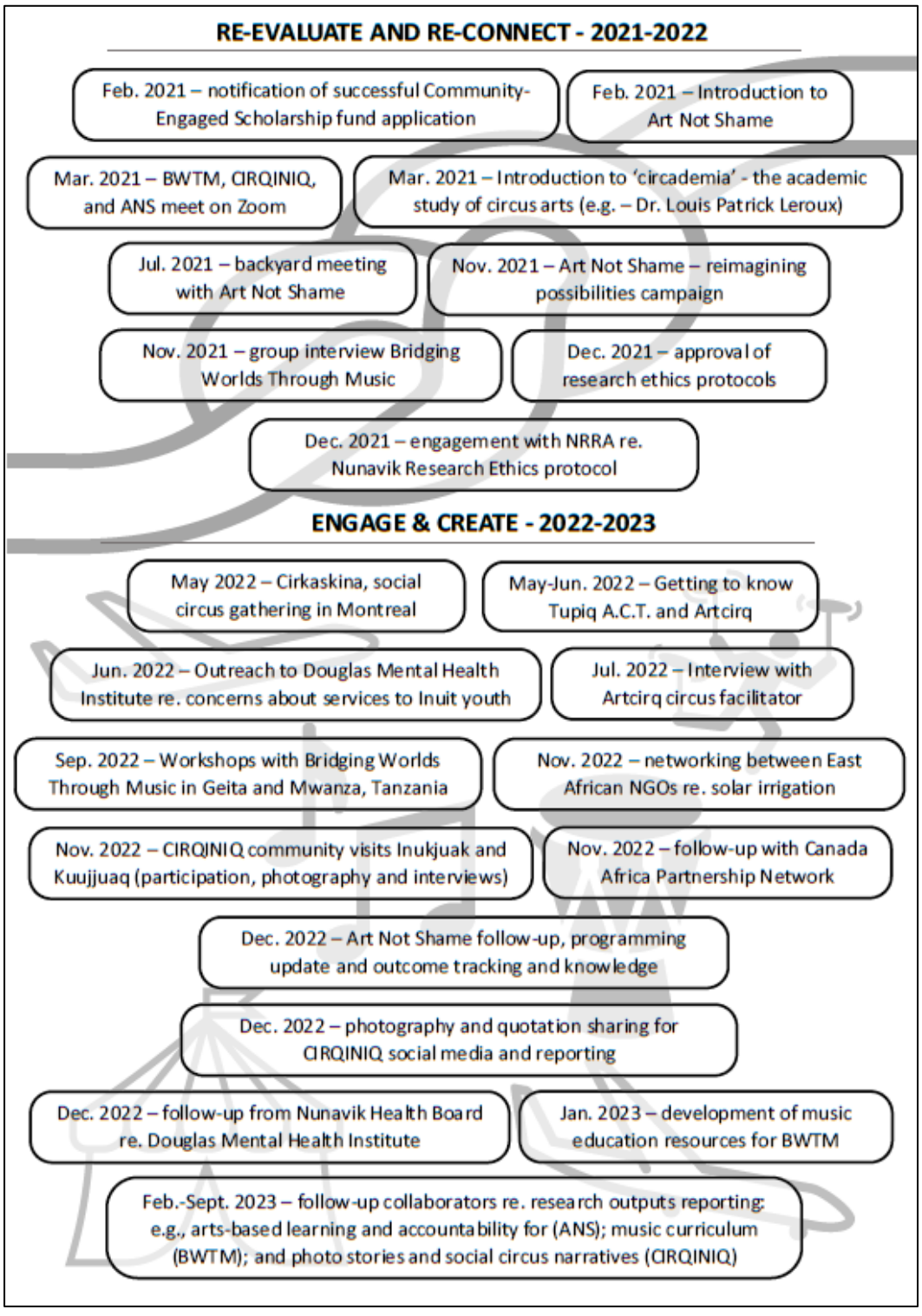
I will discuss the creative expression and co-learning that emerged from the 'engage and create' phase of *Improvising in-between* more fully later in this chapter. I also elaborate upon them further in Chapters 5 and 6. You will find other knowledge outputs from the co-creative engagement with collaborators in the appendices. I return now to the engagement timeline to discuss an opportunity which materialized through an invitation I received to join the Arctic

contingent of a national social circus gathering in May of 2022. The relationship building that took place in Montreal opened doors to wider engagement and outreach, such as with other Inuit social circus initiatives, including Artcirq and Tupiq A.C.T., the Douglas Mental Health University Institute (Douglas), and Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS). Follow-up with Douglas and NRBHSS was a result of learning about a lack of culturally appropriate mental health services provided to Inuit who have been referred to the Institute for mental health treatment.

In September 2022, my long-awaited travel to work with Bridging Worlds Through Music's programming in Tanzania was finally realized. In three weeks of engagement with coordinators, teachers, and students, I shared space with over 200 children and youth, leading and supporting music workshops and exploring future program activities. Like my time with CIRQINIQ, my collaboration with BWTM also took me down unanticipated roads, such as discussions with their Tanzanian partner organization the Anza Kwa Imani (AKI) Foundation. Among other charitable activities, AKI runs an orphanage on farmland outside the City of Mwanza. When AKI's founder expressed a desire for solar irrigation for the purposes of establishing sustainable food production, I reached out to a board member of Rainmaker Enterprise Inc, a contact of mine through my past engagement with the Canada Africa Partnership Network (which also includes AKI and BWTM). Rainmaker has supported sustainable solar irrigation initiatives in South Sudan and happily shared their expertise with AKI.

Figure 7

An Improvised Timeline: Re-evaluate and Re-connect then Engage and Create



Time and patience continued to be foundational to my collaborative engagement. In November of 2022, in collaboration with CIRQINIQ, I was finally able to travel to Nunavik (the villages of Inukjuak and Kuujjuaq). The funding awarded by the Travel, Research, and Creation Fund could finally be put to use. Much to my surprise, the Guelph Tool Library, which had collected cameras prior to my cancelled Nunavik trip nearly 12 months earlier, had held the cameras for me. This visit not only allowed me to act as a participant researcher in CIRQINIQ's ongoing Nunavik-based community work but enabled me to connect with a representative of the Nunavik Health Board regarding my concerns about Inuit services at the Douglas Institute in Montreal. I learned later that the issue was raised at a health board meeting thanks to a friend, who happened to be among the board of directors (it really is all about relationships). Time will tell where these excursive engagements will go, but the moral imperative to hear these unsolicited concerns and to leverage my position to facilitate connection and movement is an example of what it means to me to be an ethical and improvisatory scholar.

As I got to know ANS, we began to discuss how we could collaboratively re-think their assessment and communication of the program's impact. It was through these discussions that we began to identify where my skills might further contribute to ANS's work. We considered how arts-based outcome measurement might be more reflective of ANS's organizational process and that these outcomes might be communicated without the need to collect new data. ANS already had what they needed to meaningfully reflect learning through the rich data and stories gathered through existing multimedia, artistic, and administrative documentation. This ongoing engagement represents a navigation of market and accountability-centric structures that can feel antithetical to arts-based, community-engaged praxis. This learning

reflection, while more of a focus in my discussions with ANS, is a reality that emerged frequently in discussions with CIRQINIQ and BWTM representatives as well.

Building from the needs and interests elaborated by collaborators became an important part of the final 'engage and create' phase of the research. Following my field visits to Geita and Mwanza, I drafted and shared context-based curriculum with lesson planning guidance for the BWTM team. These learning resources were an emergent documentation of and elaboration upon the improvisatory approach to workshop delivery in Tanzania. These music lesson plans and guides, along with other learning outputs from the collaborative engagements with BWTM can be found in Chapter 5 and Appendices A, B, and C.

Sharing the actualized timeline of collaborative engagement provides important context for a deeper dive into the components of the conceptual framework. It afforded me an opportunity to reflect on the iterative, emergent nature of collaborative partnership work. I will elaborate more fully on the creative engagement and expression of youth participants and collaborators through partner programs in the sections below on 'Sense of Self and Other,' 'Improvisatory Intervention,' and 'Changed State.'

This temporal reflection also revealed that the conceived ideas and enacted practices were scalable. For example, the implementation phases of *Improvising in-between* (represented in Figures 6 and 7) resemble the temporal stages of an improvisatory musical interaction characterized by Roger Mills in his book *Tele-Improvisation: Intercultural Interaction in the Online*. Mills found that improvised musical collaborations frequently followed six temporal phases: Initiation, Development, Progression, Recapitulation, Conclusion, and Deconstruction (Mills, 2019, p. 109). This temporal similarity is informative in the sense that the creative,

shorter temporal relationships observed between improvisatory artists seem to be reflective of the broad temporal relationships realized through *Improvising in-between*. These similarities are aligned in Table 2.

As partner representatives and I progressed through the "getting to know you" (Lewis, 2015) notion of 'initiation,' we transitioned into the 'development' phase. Our collaborative 'development' phase manifested in *Improvising in-between* as a sharing of ideas and negotiating plans which were then confronted in my work by a massive (unanticipated) disruption. Through this disruption, a new 'progression' was necessary, and manifested through re-evaluation and re-connection. This re-connection required 'recapitulation' and in this a sort of reformation of existing communication and understanding. A 'conclusion' in the context of the *Improvising in-between* research timeline broadly looks like an agreement to move forward to engage and create together. The ongoing collaborative relationship is a continuous 'deconstruction' of our propositions, our learnings, and our understandings. This effectively reflects the unsettled and unfinished nature of a relational, community-engaged ethic.

Table 2

Temporal Phases and an Improvised Timeline

Mills' Six Temporal Phases	**An Improvised Timeline**
Initiation	Initiation
Development	Initiation and Disruption
Progression	Disruption and Re-Evaluate/Re-Connect
Recapitulation	Re-Evaluate/Re-Connect
Conclusion	Engage/Create
Deconstruction	Engage/Create

While much work and preparation went into building, conceiving, and planning how *Improvising in-between* would be realized, much of what actually occurred has diverged from those idealized designs. It is my belief that a fulsome and honest reflection on how dynamic the circumstances really were is important. It is something that is often missing from scholarly writing. It is widely known that community-engaged work is complex and hardly ever goes to plan. It's important that we are transparent about this in our writing. A reflection on what actually occurred allows us to have a more fulsome discussion about what we mean and what we hope to say about our work.

Trauma-informed Practice and the Conceptual Framework

Engaging with aggrieved and underserved communities, and with programs whose participants often experience trauma and mental health challenges, necessitates a reflection on trauma-informed practice. When we enter spaces with an awareness that "the body remembers," we know that for many, their embodied experience holds trauma and post-traumatic anxieties (Babette, 2000). From its inception, this research was necessarily conceived of with an awareness of safety and power. However, it was following a reflection on my work by Dr. Leila Qashu during a research roundtable session that I was inspired to look at my work explicitly through existing trauma-informed frameworks. Much to my relief, I found that my conceptual framework (my research story) was infused with the principles and practices that mirrored those found in a variety of trauma-informed frameworks. For example, the 6 principles of a trauma-informed approach (Figure 8) as communicated by the United States' Centre for Disease Control (CDC) align with the many aspects of the conceptual framework that informed the ethical, theoretical, and practical framing of this research.

Figure 8

6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma-Informed Approach (CDC, 2022)

SAMHSA's trauma-informed principles and the elements of my conceptual framework differ in terms of structure and definition, but broadly speaking there was an alignment between how I've conceived of processes and relationships in *Improvising in-between* and trauma-informed principles they describe (see Table 3). While I did not intentionally ground this research in an existing framework, it was clear in the conception of this work that a grounding in trauma-informed awareness and action was necessary. I will assert here that whether these are based on standardized or professionalized understandings of trauma, or a compassionate and purposeful approach based on lived experience, we must deeply consider the effects of trauma before engaging in creative and improvisatory initiatives with aggrieved and underserved communities.

What is a trauma-informed approach?

Put simply, "Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma into all aspects of service delivery" (CEWH, 2017, p. 1). The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health's trauma-informed principles echo those of SAMHSA, with some supplementary principles oriented around "Trauma Awareness" and

"Strengths Based and Skill Building." These additions affirm and advocate for the informed engagement of program designers and facilitators.

Table 3

SAMHSA principles and Improvising in-between's conceptual framework

Trauma-informed principles	The Conceptual Framework
1. Safety	- Sense of trust (Sense of Self and Other) - Ethics (Improvisatory Intervention) - Space (Improvisatory Intervention) - Compassion (Changed State) - Hearing (Changed State) - Understanding (Changed State)
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency	- Sense of trust (Sense of Self and Other) - Ethics (Improvisatory Intervention) - Connection (Improvisatory Intervention) - Storytelling (Improvisatory Intervention) - Negotiation (Improvisatory Intervention)
3. Peer Support	- Relationships (Sense of Self and Other) - Community (Sense of Self and Other) - Hearing (Changed State) - Compassion (Changed State) - Understanding (Changed State) - Solidarity (Changed State)
4. Collaboration and Mutuality	- Collaboration (Improvisatory Intervention) - Negotiation (Improvisatory Intervention) - Relationships (Sense of Self and Other)
5. Empowerment Voice and Choice	- Voicing (Changed State) - Agency (Changed State) - Art (Changed State) - Creative expression (Improvisatory Intervention)
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	- Difference (Sense of Self and Other) - Fear (Sense of Self and Other) - Power (Sense of Self and Other) - Culture (Sense of Self and Other) - Community (Sense of Self and Other)

In the context of community-engaged work, we are wise to carefully reflect on how we think about the term “service.” Hierarchical or authoritative notions of service can contribute to the perpetuation of paternalistic, colonial relationships with our collaborators. I suggest that in a community-engaged context, we might reframe the notion of “service” with those of relationship, care, and collaboration.

Although I’m conscious of not presenting collaborating communities and participants as a monolith, it is important to acknowledge that the collaborators with *Improvising in-between* have experienced and expressed a range of traumas and anxieties. It is wise and inclusive to expect that traumas and anxieties may be found within any group of creative participants, but the collaborating communities engaged in *Improvising in-between* are particularly susceptible to conditions where experiences such as hunger, interpersonal violence, mental health challenges, family loss, poverty, neglect, and discrimination are prevalent (ANS, 2021; NRBHSS, 2017; Obasi et al., 2022). Each of these can contribute to a diversity of complex traumas, anxieties, and other socio-emotional challenges.

Ultimately, a trauma-informed approach (or a complementary commitment to diligent and ethically informed care) will contribute to a personalized realisation of healing and resilience (SAHMSA, 2014) and will support the creation of spaces where collaborators can engage, express, and learn (Brunzell et al., 2016). If we conceive of improvisatory spaces as opportunities for a full and affirming expression of self and an opportunity to see this in others, then we must consider trauma-informed practices to be crucial building blocks for fully relational, creative engagement. In environments that are susceptible to trauma, we can realistically aspire to enable experience through which individuals are empowered “to make

sense of their lives and to create meaningful and consistent relationships in their families and communities" (SAHMSA, 2014, p. 5). Exploring the efficacy of trauma-informed practices in learning environments, Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters found that through the application of trauma-informed principles, "teachers reflected and actioned classroom interventions to promote an increase in student regulatory abilities and an increase in their own abilities to manage classroom behaviours" (Brunzell et al., 2016, p. 234).

Trauma-informed improvisation

Furthering their reflection on a trauma-informed teaching and learning, Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters describe four recurring themes that might be intriguing, if not familiar, to improvising artists: "rhythm, self-regulation, mindfulness, and de-escalation" (Brunzell et al., 2016, p. 226). Some insightful similarities surface again if we consider these themes alongside Mills' phases of improvisatory musical interactions: Initiation, Development, Progression, Recapitulation, Conclusion, and Deconstruction (2019, p. 109).

As the conceptual framework could be integrated with and filtered through SAHMSA's principles for trauma-informed practice, we might also consider how themes emerging from trauma-informed teaching and learning might be reflective of the emergent, temporal phases of an improvisatory performance. We may find our 'rhythm' as we initiate and develop improvisatory interaction. As we develop and progress, we will engage in some 'self-regulation,' bringing us to a 'mindfulness' that will allow us to recapitulate with our collaborators. Finally, we conclude and deconstruct our interactions through a 'de-escalation.'

While we can see how trauma-informed practice and improvisatory collaborations may be complementary, it is essential that we recognize that improvisatory practice is not inherently

trauma-informed. We have a responsibility to bring an awareness of trauma-informed practice into our improvisatory spaces. With care and an ethical foundation, improvisatory engagement can create spaces where individuals' traumatic histories are understood and, implicitly or explicitly, built into the creative and collaborative interactions. An ignorance toward personal traumas and triggers within an improvisatory space can result in provoking participant traumas, or contributing to an exclusionary space that is likely very familiar to members of aggrieved and underserved communities.

Research in the fields of music therapy and improvisation studies often reflects on the effectiveness of improvisatory practices as a means to navigate trauma and confront a variety of personal anxieties (Dhillon, 2018; Ladano, 2016). A lesser discussed reality is how these improvisatory and performative spaces can be difficult and even harmful for some participants. Roger Mills (2019) found, in his case study analysis of improvising musicians within online spaces, that negative feelings and anxiety may increase "when musical interaction is not in line with their expectations" (p. 34).

My own experiences of performance anxiety and self-criticism, in addition to the defensive retreat and provoked panic that I've observed in others, suggest to me that more careful attention is needed in spaces where complex trauma, anxiety, and depression are present. A recollection by a youth participant of the Geita music workshops described the lasting effect of the anxiety provoked in a previous music workshop that lacked a trauma-informed sensibility. He recalled, "I performed . . . quite well on the first day of training, but on the second day, the instructor handed me a song to play along with the drums, and I was unable to play the rolling . . . I was removed from the session and another student was chosen

since the teacher was so upset. I recall shutting myself in the room after leaving and crying. Although I succeeded admirably in my first lesson, I questioned what was wrong. After crying for a while, I decided to return to class. Nobody noticed that I was in tears. This is the story I will never forget." Although the young man had shown resilience, the lack of support shown to him has left him with a difficult memory that he has carried with him into new creative learning spaces.

In another provocative moment, during one social circus session in Montreal, I observed a youth as he ventured high up a ladder, fully harnessed, ready to be filmed swinging down on a large trapeze. Though he had mustered the courage to stand high on the platform, he was too fearful to follow through and swing on the trapeze. After descending, the youth removed himself (often tearfully) from the rest of the day's activities. Crucially in this case, social supports were in place to help him, but those emotions (whether brought up to the platform with him or subsequently provoked by the physical and social fears of that moment) cannot be taken lightly. Without appropriate trauma-informed care, these moments can facilitate exclusion and reclusive responses that directly contradict both the objectives and the promises described by proponents of improvisatory arts practice.

Through observation and listening, I sympathized with the feelings of those who retreated from and panicked in moments and spaces where they were asked to perform in front of others. As a performer who has tried (with varying degrees of success) to manage my own performance anxiety, I have found myself retreating from improvisatory opportunities due to the self-judgement and anxiety that they provoke. I think carefully about when and how I will engage in improvisatory environments. As I prepared this chapter, I recalled my personal

reflections from September 2019, when I first began my doctoral studies in critical studies in improvisation. I noted “my self-judgement about my weaknesses as a performer (my frustration with not performing/improvising at a level that I feel happy with) as a key point of anxiety and frustration” (David Lane Commonplace Book – personal notes from 2019-2021). As I processed my own feelings of having participated in improvisatory activities, I reflected, “Though I’ve had moments where I’ve allowed that release, they are often accompanied (during and following) by an extreme dose of anxiety and self-doubt. At worst, they can be followed by depressive feelings that I have been managing since I was a child” (David Lane Commonplace Book – personal notes from 2019-2021). This awareness drives me to be conscious of the expectations and relationships in places when I seek to create improvisatory opportunities for others. Many of us can picture young people hiding their faces or staring at the floor as the prospect of performing presents itself. For every waving “pick me” hand, there will be those doing their damnedest to remain unseen.

Figure 9

Youth leaders from the CIRQINIQ program engaged in a circle discussion, Inukjuak 2022

Note. Own photo

When we think about raising up voices, we must be careful that we don't simply amplify the voices of those who are thriving in the creative and playful spaces in which we work. As argued by Mimi Orner in her writing on feminisms and critical pedagogies, "There are times when it is not safe for students to speak: when one student's socially constructed body language threatens another; when the teacher is not perceived as an ally" (Orner, 1992, p. 81). We must be conscious of the fact that for some, these experiences and spaces are difficult. We need to be attentive to those who are struggling and to the conditions that contribute to their struggle. Despite many empowering personal experiences with music and improvisation, I often count myself among these strugglers.

While not as widely discussed as the socioemotional benefits of play and performance, there is research that highlights the importance of the effect that a fear of embarrassment has on experiences of public performance. Van Boven, Lowenstein, and Dunning (2005) caution that "underestimating fear of embarrassment is a major cause of biased and erroneous social judgment" (p. 140). They found that participants' perceptions about their emotions when considering a hypothetical opportunity to perform publicly were largely positive. However, when participants faced the imminent decision to perform, the prospective benefits were overtaken by the more immediate negative emotions related to the perceived stakes of public embarrassment. Within spaces where trauma, trust, and emotional fragility may be compromised, focused efforts to understand and accommodate anxieties and fears ought never to be overlooked. Though performance and improvisatory creativity may well be a powerful vehicle through which trauma and mental health challenges might be explored, we must not take for granted that our approach (no matter what we believe about it) will inherently feel

safe. I can personally attest that I have left performative, improvisatory environments emotionally exhausted, needing to address my anxious feelings hours or even days later. As Van Boven et al. (2005) have argued, we underestimate the emotional impact of performative spaces to the detriment of our stated goals (be they inclusiveness, joy, empowerment or otherwise). A truly trauma-informed approach will be consciously aware that the social dynamics of a creative and improvisatory space may be emotionally and psychologically unsafe for some. A truly healing and empowering space will not only acknowledge this, but proactively build spaces where these provoking experiences are understood and mitigated against.

There is an awareness among youth arts participants and arts facilitators of the relationship between creative engagement and psychosocial wellbeing. As one music student from the BWTM workshops asserted during a follow up interview in Mwanza, “If music and psychology combine, patients will receive the most excellent care possible because music promotes relaxation and improves mental health.” In several conversations with ANS founder and executive director Michelle Peek, we’ve mused about how making space and creating experiences that establish relational trust is fundamental to the way we have engaged through difference and in vulnerability. In her 2021 interview for their “Reimaging Possibilities” matching campaign, Peek elaborates: “Relationship is sort of at the center and heart of everything we do . . . And so, if we’re bringing that kind of care and attention and lens in terms of relationship to all of what we do, I feel like that it just necessarily permeates through all of our work . . . If our relationships aren’t well, then we’re not well.” This relational approach is fundamental to how we can be trauma-informed within a creative, intercultural space. In their wise and insightful booklet, *Beyond Braiding*, Jimmy and Andreotti (2020) assert that

“Indigenous communities will value more your capacity to relate even if you don’t understand the context, than what you think you know about their cultural reality, aspirations, struggle or trauma” (p. 97). This insight further affirms how our ethical and trauma-informed approaches need to be grounded in relational praxis.

I have received only cursory formal training in trauma-informed awareness and engagement. I have, however, had the (sometimes difficult) privilege of working in communities and spaces with people who have lived with complex histories of socio-emotional trauma. As I conceived my doctoral research, it was evident that any interaction or dialogue with research collaborators had to hold people’s safety as a priority. *Improvising in-between* did not explicitly seek, nor document, participant’s or collaborator’s trauma stories. They emerged, nonetheless. One of the most personal, sensitive, ethically complex aspects of this research has been sitting with and encountering others in their traumas. My research design and ethical protocols do not ask or encourage participants to explore or share their anxieties and traumas. However, in spaces where people are encouraged to bring their whole selves, where you actively seek to see them and support them as they are, they will share their stories. I can’t share these stories in full. In Chapter 5, I anonymously and narratively reflect on them in the section entitled ‘Stories I Can’t Tell’ (p. 281).

Through both remote and in-person engagement, the cultivation of trust and care with collaborators and participants resulted in a safety where people could share and discuss their personal traumas with others. There was no specific identity associated with those who revealed their trauma and anxieties. Age, ethnicity, gender, privilege, and education were not limiting factors to the sharing of trauma stories. Throughout various phases of this research,

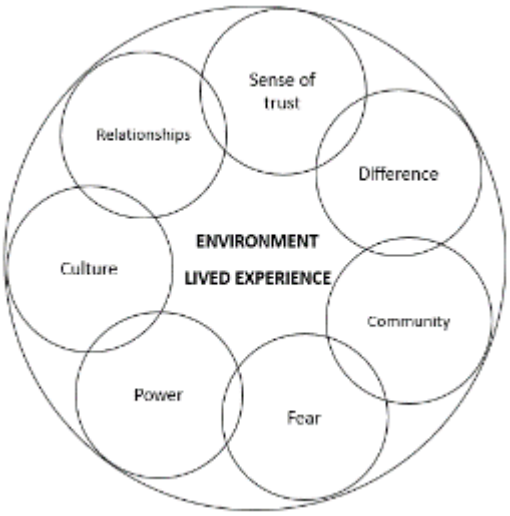
collaborators and participants across all partner organizations and roles shared with me their personal experiences, including loss of family members; psychological abuse; sexual assault; mental health struggles (including eating disorders, anxiety/depression, substance abuse); loneliness; fear; family trauma; dismissal and disempowerment; loss of opportunity; financial distress; and severe poverty.

A trauma-informed approach to improvisation recognizes that an improvisatory approach that is not fully prepared to encounter a range of traumas within aggrieved and underserved communities can be problematic and may well be harmful. If "improvisation can serve a therapeutic role . . . in the treatment of trauma" (Dhillon, 2018, p. 8) and "free improvisation practice is a viable solution to helping young musicians with various anxieties" (Ladano, 2016, p. 57), we should expect it to do so only in an environment which affirms and understands that traumas and anxieties will be experienced and provoked within improvisatory spaces. Spaces where traumas and anxieties surface are not inherently bad. They can, however, be dangerous, and those that are actively creating and facilitating these spaces are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate care and support is in place.

In the absence of this care and responsibility we are left with two potential decisions. First, avoid engaging with communities and in spaces where complex traumas are likely to be prevalent. That is, avoid any conceivable risk of harm. Second, risk provoking and/or isolating those individuals struggling with trauma and anxieties. That is, risk causing harm without fully understanding or mitigating it. From an ethical perspective, I argue that both options are untenable. We know we cannot be risk free, but wise, careful engagement in intercultural spaces will help us to find the kind of balance described in Ting-Toomey's writing on identity

negotiation: “too much emotional security will lead to tight ethnocentrism, and, on the converse side, too much emotional insecurity (or vulnerability) will lead to fear of outgroups or strangers” (2015, p. 419). In her elaboration on risk within service-learning initiatives, Kari Grain asserts, “learning from our mistakes in the enactment of critical hope is as vital as learning from our successes, and such a task requires vulnerability and risk-taking” (2016, p. 55). So, if we hope to realize the intercultural, empowering, and inclusive promises of community-engaged, improvisatory practice in aggrieved and underserved communities, a trauma-informed approach is a crucial starting point. This foundation sees and respects the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of collaborators (thus mitigating harm) and contributes to the environments where the promises of improvisatory practice will manifest.

Sense of Self and Other: Environment and Lived Experience



In this section, I reflect on the each of the elements of sense of “self and other” described in my conceptual framework. I emphasize elements of the framework in *italics* as they appear throughout the rest of the chapter. Many articles written by academics from southern Canada (that is, those not living in Canada’s far North) rightfully and carefully reflect upon their own positionality relative to Arctic communities. Echoing some of my own reflections in Chapter 1, Kaitlin Jessica Schwan notes: “Writing as a White woman of Irish-German descent, I want to begin this article with an acknowledgment of the privilege and

benefit my race and occupation of indigenous lands has afforded me" (Schwan & Lightman, 2017, p. 16)

As I promote relational engagement in community-engaged collaborations, I am conscious of the valid, as well as limiting, concerns expressed around the nature of research *relationships*. As Garakani asserts through her educational research with Inuit youth in Nunavik, "Engaging in 'friendship' with young research participants is an important ethical consideration. Researchers must clearly describe their roles and capacities to participants in order to ensure that the latter have appropriate expectations" (Garakani, 2014, p. 243). Additional ethical considerations force us to consider the balance between a positivist, "unbiased" approach, and more personal and allied research *relationships*. Interestingly, Spiegel and Parent (2017) suggest caution in the application of scientific, positivist approaches in their social circus research, but seem to conclude that doing so with awareness and reflexivity is still appropriate and useful.

I, like Schwan, identify as white. As Garakani notes, I must strike a careful balance of being a 'friend' to research participants and, like Spiegel and Parent, I must be cautious (to the point of actively) resisting the pull of any positivist leanings in my work that are, or might reasonably be considered, harmful. My privilege affords me access to knowledge and resources that may be useful to community partners and participants as they navigate colonial structures. There remains a risk in this navigation. Because of my own colonial training, I am susceptible to unconsciously and ignorantly affirming the very colonial concepts and values that I seek to resist.

In Geita and Mwanza, I mostly fulfilled the role of a music teacher. I certainly did not look or sound like the teachers most students have had in past, but they clearly saw me as their teacher as several young adult participants in follow-up interviews identified me as “mwalimu Dave” (or “teacher Dave” in Kiswahili). In my engagement with CIRQINIQ, I could traverse both insider and outsider roles. I was simultaneously a co-participant and a researcher. I was an English-speaking, white man with some (albeit quite limited) knowledge of Inuktitut. I previously lived and worked for several years in the Nunavik region and developed strong connections with communities and community members throughout the region. During *Improvising in-between*, I took on the role of a caring adult when appropriate, to the point of being told that I had taken on a ‘big brother’ role for several CIRQINIQ participants. In some ways through my engagement with ANS, my local Guelph-based partner, I was most consciously aware of my identity as a white, male researcher and the impact it might have within their creative spaces. To date, I have largely engaged with their programming at a distance, rather than directly engage in spaces where BIPOC and LGBTQ2SIA+ have a need to feel safe and freely express themselves, fully and authentically. In my work with ANS, I remained a collaborative advisor and supporter, engaging at an administrative rather than a program level. Delays due to the pandemic also minimized opportunities for my direct engagement with ANS programming.

It’s not always clear what personal connections other academics may have had or have developed with their research collaborators and participants. I can, however, reflect openly and honestly on my own. All of my research partnerships were brought into being through an extension of my personal, professional, and scholarly networks. While many of these network

contacts would not initially have been grounded in friendship, I have come to think of many of my key collaborators as friends. I can't conceive of working differently within these spaces. One can't freely explore play, creativity, and self-expression in an unfriendly environment.

The scope of environments and lived experiences among collaborators and participants engaged through *Improvising In-between* is infinitely complex. It was necessary for me, as a community-engaged scholar, to maintain attentiveness and sensitivity within these diverse spaces. Contexts ranged from Inuit in Montreal meeting and collaborating with circus-engaged youth from across Canada, to diverse artists with ANS discovering how to engage online, to Tanzanian children receiving music lessons from a white, English-speaking Canadian, to name just a few. Past and present experiences are brought into spaces where they both consciously and unconsciously inform how we understand ourselves and the others that we encounter. I present as a graduate-level educated, English speaking, cisgendered, heterosexual, white male who carries all of these perceived, embodied, and lived experiences and characteristics into these spaces. I change these spaces with this identity and will, in many cases, change the experiences and perceptions others have of themselves by my very presence.

In Table 4, I present a simple demographic profile of the project participants and collaborators. While, pigeonholing such a diverse scope of humans into narrowly prescribed categories is something of a disservice to the complex identities of each collaborator I had the privilege to engage with, this social identity profile provides a useful (if reductive) context to this research story. Note that this collaborator profile focuses on participants who actively engaged in partner programming and with whom I shared a virtual or physical space and engaged with in an intentional way. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the nature of this

emergent research resulted in several other tangential and orbital engagements which are elaborated upon in other sections and chapters.

Table 4

Collaborator profile

Affiliated partner	Count[24]	Role	Age category	Home community	Gender identity[25]	First language
Bridging Worlds Through Music	Approx. 80	School students	Aged 7-12	Geita	Female	Swahili and many local languages (e.g., Bantu languages)
Bridging Worlds Through Music	Approx. 80	School students	Aged 7-12	Geita	Male	Swahili and many local languages (e.g., Bantu languages)
Bridging Worlds Through Music	13	Youth/adult workshop participant	Aged 16-30	Geita and surrounding villages	Male	Swahili and many local languages (e.g., Bantu languages)
Bridging Worlds Through Music	8	Youth/adult workshop participant	Aged 16-30	Mwanza & surrounding villages	Male	Swahili and many local languages (e.g., Bantu languages)

[24] For participant groups with a high number of participants, counts are estimates. The figures represent conservative estimates, but do not provide exact figures as programming and participation rates would vary from day-to-day.

[25] The gender identity of some participants may be different that the identities that were communicated and expressed within the program spaces. As discussed previously and in later chapters, there are a number of reasons for how and why participants may choose to express their gender identities, including personal safety.

Affiliated partner	Count	Role	Age category	Home community	Gender identity	First language
Bridging Worlds Through Music	5	Program coordinators and teachers	30+	Bukoba, Geita, Mwanza, Ontario	3 males 2 female	Swahili, local languages (e.g., Bantu languages), and English
CIRQINIQ	2	Trainer and coordinator	30+	Southern Quebec	Female	French
CIRQINIQ	2	Trainer and coordinator	25+	Ontario and British Columbia	Female	English
CIRQINIQ	3	Workshop facilitators and trainers	20-30	Montreal (via Nunavik)	Female	Inuktitut and English
CIRQINIQ	7	Workshop participants	15-25	Nunavik	4 female 2 male 1 non-binary	Inuktitut and English
CIRQINIQ	4	Workshop participants	15-25	Igloolik, Nunavut	3 female 1 male	Inuktitut
CIRQINIQ	4	Youth participants and mentors	15-30	Inukjuak	3 female 1 male	Inuktitut and English
CIRQINIQ	Approx. 20	Gym class participants	12-18	Inukjuak	Male	Inuktitut
CIRQINIQ	Approx. 20	Gym class participants	12-18	Inukjuak	Female	Inuktitut
CIRQINIQ	Approx. 20	Community workshop participants	12-18	Inukjuak	15 female 5 male	Inuktitut
Art Not Shame	4	Staff	20+	Ontario	Female	English

In total, I shared space with over 200 collaborators and participants, in both physical and virtual spaces. The scope of identities and lived experiences from across these spaces is impossible to honour fully. My collaborative, creative engagement with program and community members included dozens of one-on-one interactions, both formal and informal, within spaces and programs predominantly coordinated by research partners. As seen in Table 4, none of the collaborators or participants shared my identity as a white male (let alone an English speaking, cisgendered, heterosexual, white male). When I enter these spaces as a privileged minority, collaborators and participants will have consciously and unconsciously considered and confronted their own 'sense of self' and 'other' in relation to me. This realization is an essential consideration for how we engage in spaces.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I reflected on how we might conceive of *community*. Complexity and liminality are important concepts to consider in our understanding of communities. In this section I seek to describe the various notions of *community* that have been experienced and/or imposed upon participants and collaborators of *Improvising in-between*. I will begin by reflecting on what might be considered a "home community." I come from rural Nova Scotia. CIRQINIQ participants include Inuit youth from the 14 Northern Villages of Nunavik, while Tupiq A.C.T. members include Montreal-based Inuit who trace their heritage to Nunavik. Instructors and coordinators with the CIRQINIQ program most often hailed from southern Canada with roots predominantly in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. BWTM collaborators and students come from the regions around Lake Victoria in Western Tanzania. Though some were raised in and lived in Mwanza, a bustling city of more than a million people, other participants grew up in small rural villages (such as those around the town of Geita). Within these Tanzanian regions

we find a variety of ethnic groups, such as the five major groups identified by Mwanza city council: Sukuma, Zinza, Wakerewe, Kurya, Haya and Jita (Mwanza City Council, 2017). ANS's *community* might broadly be conceived as the City of Guelph, in Southwest, Ontario. However, their reporting highlights how notions of *community* become far more complex and diverse when we peel back that outer layer. The online summary of their Art in Hard Times project highlights their goal to "amplify the voices of Guelphites who identify as Black, LGBTQ2I+, Indigenous, People of Colour, newcomers, street-engaged, living with developmental exceptionalities, or struggling with mental health and addictions" (ANS, 2020, para. 7). This highlights just some of the communities we find within the larger *community* of Guelph. Each partner organization has facilitated a found *community*. I discuss this establishment of a found *community* more in the subsection below titled 'Improvisatory relationship building'.

While not synonymous, *community* and *culture* are intimately intertwined. It is no easier to create a boundary around "*culture*" than around "*community*." Art is often considered an expression of *culture*. Within CIRQINIQ spaces, we can see the overt and obvious integration of artistic cultural elements. The CIRQINIQ program uses forms of circus arts (e.g., clowning, aerials, and acrobatics) in their community performances, infusing them with various Inuit cultural traditions (e.g., including katajjaq, Inuit legends, and Inuit games). Circus arts bring with them a historical *culture*. In the context of CIRQINIQ, the influence of the Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil can be seen and felt. Within CIRQINIQ's engagement in Inuit communities, the continued presence of centuries of Inuit fishing and hunting traditions remains a persistent influence on Inuit cultural expression through social circus.

My work with BWTM brought my experience as a Western trained musician in contact with the largely Christian devotional musicianship tradition that is widespread throughout the country. I am not shy to admit that in Geita, several young men were better performers than me. The music *culture* I grew up in taught me in depth how/why music works. These young men learned aurally, through repetition and replication. In addition to our different embodied identities, we came into musical spaces from very different musical cultures.

The way we perceive ourselves and the ways others perceive us change the space and the interactions that can and will occur there. In its various forms, these interpersonal changes are affected by *power*. *Power* is ever present in relational spaces. I grew up in a middle to low-income family and attended a rural, but good quality, Canadian school. This educational privilege, combined with my white, Canadian, male identity has afforded me status and opportunities that are rare and *power* filled. Many of my collaborators did not share this access to status, resources, and authority. Even the access to services and institutions that many southern Canadians would take for granted (e.g., well-resourced schools and health centres) are largely inaccessible to most of the Inuit and Tanzanian collaborators with whom I engaged. They often become reliant on institutional actors, not-for-profit organizations, government programs, or church initiatives for access to these basic human rights. This *power* dynamic is where *Improvising in-between* sits. BWTM is partnered with the Tanzanian, church-affiliated AKI Foundation. Both BWTM and AKI are regulated by Canadian and Tanzanian not-for-profit legislation and rely on the financial contribution of donors and institutional funders. CIRQINIQ operates within the complex relationship between their administrative body, the Kativik Regional Government, and their main funder, the Makivik Corporation (an Inuit owned and

operated private corporation). The regional government and Makivik Corporation were established, and are governed by, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, a land claim agreement with the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada (Canada, 2016). ANS, as a Canadian charitable organization, like BWTM, is regulated by charity law. Much like the work of BWTM, it relies greatly on donations and grants. ANS sponsors have included institutional funding through (to name just a few) the Canadian Mental Health Association, Guelph Community Health Centre, Regional Tourism Organization 4, the Canadian Red Cross, the United Way, and the Ontario Arts Council (ANS, 2021, p. 16).

I, too, live in and am beholden to the bureaucratized, colonial, and market-driven structures of the academy, and the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. My identity is informed by them as an empowered, but regulated, academic. There is always a bigger fish. In recognizing and naming these *power* structures, however, we can seek to navigate them through improvisatory strategies at various levels, from the institutional to the interpersonal. Considering how my position and knowledge might offset some of these *power* structures remains a continuous moral and practical challenge as a community-engaged scholar. Ultimately, how can we aspire to create empowering and collaborative spaces while navigating institutional and interpersonal relationships infused with *power*?

Trust can never be bestowed. It is earned. While there may be ways that it can be established in relatively short order, it remains something that must be built and sustained over time. The *sense of trust* that exists among the collaborators of *Improvising in-between* relied heavily upon recognizing and honouring the existing, trusted relationships that each organization has built and earned over years of engagement.

In a 2021 Zoom interview I conducted with BWTM project manager Samuel Limbe and Founder/Director Christie Ulicny, they discussed the importance of getting to know each other and learning about one another's families. Christie recalls getting to know the community and participants in Geita, saying "I've learned more about being more warm and welcoming, and discussing life. Say, 'how is your family? How are you? What have you been up to' instead of 'ok, meeting started.'" This captures an important aspect of how we engage and build trust. When "researching," I spent hours sitting beside youth participants and going for dinner, walks, and coffee with collaborators just talking and getting to know them and letting them get to know me. Through 'Stories I Can't Tell' in Chapter 5, I reflect on how powerful these relational acts can be, but also on the fact that one reason I can't share these stories is that I was trusted with them. Part of that trust means keeping them in confidence.

Earlier in this chapter I described various contributors to trauma and anxiety, which in many cases will both provoke and/or be provoked by *fear*. The elements of *fear* are individual and will not be experienced in the same way by collaborators within a shared space. In my travels to Africa over the years, just the unfamiliar sight of a white man was enough to provoke curiosity, joyful excitement, and outright *fear* in different children.

While there are innumerable fears that consciously and unconsciously impact participants' sense of self, I would like to reflect on a viscerally chilling and angering encounter that occurred during the Montreal-based social circus training attended by Inuit youth from CIRQINIQ, Artcirq, and Tupiq A.C.T. Following a joyful, creative workshop in a downtown park in Montreal, filled with acrobatics, juggling, katajjaq (throat singing), and goose calling, the youth were verbally attacked by a local man who had been sitting on a bench across the park.

"Freaks." "Monsters." "You don't belong here." "They are terrifying," he shouted. As the workshop had just come to an end, I confronted the man, giving the youth the time and space to leave the park. I was joined by some of the older, more experienced Inuit youth leaders, who confronted his racial assertions. The layers of *fear*, those claimed by the attacker; those provoked in the moment, and future moments, by the young Inuit who will question their safety in public spaces in Montreal; and even my own fears confronting this man, viscerally place our sense of self at the forefront of these intercultural encounters. A fuller account of this encounter, including the heartening and powerful *solidarity* it provoked, is shared in the Chapter 5 narrative 'The Man in the Park'.

The strength of the *relationships* among the circus participants - the range of friends, mentors, and allies on that day in the park in Montreal - helped weather that triggering assault. Not all our *relationships* will be positive and reinforcing. Our perception and experience of how we relate to others also contribute to the sense we have of ourselves and others. We have *relationships* that might be considered our lived *relationships*, like our family, teachers, and neighbours. We then have (like our found community) our chosen *relationships*, such as our friends and creative collaborators. Some of our connections with others sit somewhere in between our lived and chosen *relationships,* such as service providers or community/church leaders.

As young musicians in Tanzania communicated during their interviews, *relationships* impact how we understand ourselves and our experiences. When asked why they enjoy music or to reflect on fond memories of music making, the young musicians often shared stories of their experiences through the lens of their *relationships*. For example, one young man who

attended music workshops in Geita highlighted, “I enjoy music. I was raised in a singing family. I'm sure that I inherited it from them.” While another young man in Mwanza recounted, “my college roommate used to play guitar and other instruments for paying clients in order to make money. He continued to make money from music while in college . . . That greatly inspired me.” Their musical and creative journeys are communicated through and informed by the *relationships* that have existed alongside and as part of their artistic experiences.

We often understand our own identities through the lens of our *relationships*. At the time of this writing, my ties to the CIRQINIQ program date back more than 10 years, to my years as a teacher in the Nunavik Region. I first met Tupiq A.C.T. founding member Minnie Ningiuruvik in 2006. I was fledgling 24-year-old teacher in the Northern Village of Kangirsuk. She was a joyfully mischievous fourth grader. She has become a creative leader through her involvement with the CIRQINIQ program. While I previously knew Minnie as my student, I now have the pleasure of being a friend and collaborator as she leads workshops and performances, playfully and creatively weaving Inuit cultural narratives though the circus arts. I have skills and knowledge that I can still share with Minnie, but I now have the pleasure of learning from her well-earned creative and cultural knowledge.

ANS grounds their practice in understanding *relationships* and how they engage within space and with others. As ANS Executive Director Michelle Peek stresses, “We come to *relationships* with care, thinking about the dynamics that inform them . . . Thinking about who the individuals are that make up that relationship, thinking about honouring people that make up that dynamic.” It is clear that the *relationships* within all partner spaces are central to

understanding and conceiving of the selves that we find within our environments and our lived experiences.

The identification and sense of *differences* are complex. As a collaborator, I experienced a range of *differences* with my collaborators and, as discussed, I exist in these spaces as a privileged minority. Among Inuit youth in the CIRQINIQ program, experiences with "qallunaat" (the Inuktitut term for a white person) are relatively frequent. There are many English and French speaking 'Southerners' living and working in their communities. Many youths would see qallunaat teachers every day in their community schools. Through CIRQINIQ, many Inuit youth will have engaged with qallunaat circus professionals for many years. By contrast, most students and youth in Geita and Mwanza will have had minimal engagement with mzungu (the Bantu term for a white person used widely in East Africa). Those involved with BWTM and the Africa Inland Church of Tanzania (with whom BWTM is affiliated) will have had some interaction with European and North American missionaries and development workers but, unlike Inuit youth, will very seldom live in community with them or learn to converse with them in a common language.

The scope of *differences,* great and small, among collaborators in *Improvising in-between* is boundless and dynamic. They are as intriguing as they can be troubling. To narrow our focus on difference slightly, I'll look at two of the most prevalent and notable *differences* we experienced through our collaboration: language and gender.

Figure 10

Rich Hill English Medium Nursery and Primary School Bus, Geita, Tanzania

Note. Own photo

As a workshop instructor and facilitator in Tanzania, I believe it is fair to assume that less than half of the words I spoke in English were understood. Rich Hill English Medium Nursery School offers English language instruction to pre-primary (nursery) and primary aged students. I worked with students in forms 3, 5, and 6 (approximately ages 8 to 12). Though English was not entirely unfamiliar to them, no students sought to have a conversation with the strange, Canadian-accented mzungu that animatedly yammered to them from the front of their classroom.

The language gap was a consistent marker of difference throughout my collaboration with BWTM. I relied upon English speaking Tanzanians and/or a variety of other (non-verbal) communication strategies to facilitate workshops and carry out simple day-to-day tasks (such as commuting and ordering food). Navigating these differences relies on a range of relational considerations including power, trust, and relationships. I'm grateful to the many Kiswahili

speakers who supported this work including Pendo Limbe, Samuel Limbe, Paul Pembe, Paul Malifa, and Asmaha Heddi. I elaborate more upon how improvisatory and creative communication became a crucial part of navigating these differences in the section entitled ‘Improvisatory Intervention’ (p. 186) and in the Chapter 5 narrative ‘A Reflection on Language’ (p. 218).

In Figure 11, you can see linguistic differences on full display in the promotional poster for the community performance presented at the end of the CIRQINIQ’s community visit to Inukjuak in October 2022. Communication in English and Inuktitut is commonplace throughout Nunavik. Also, while there is no French on the poster, the Nunavik region is situated within the Province of Quebec, which means that the French language is also prevalent in Nunavik communities.

Figure 11

CIRQINIQ promotional poster created by Mina Maina Tukai

Note. Own photo.

When engaging across cultures, one of the most palpable markers of difference is language. Exploring and making space for local languages while avoiding the easy habit of defaulting to English is an essential consideration in intercultural spaces. Language explorations can be creative, playful, and generative opportunities. During a Zoom interview with Artcirq circus instructor Maya Cook, we discussed her experiences learning Inuktitut as an English-speaking woman from British Columbia. She recalled that while people were hesitant to give her formal lessons, "I realised that everyone was teaching me in their own way. Everyone was doing that in the way that feels good for them . . . Kids are so helpful. They are so good to learn a language with . . . they are very easy to mess up in front of." We recollected the joy young people express seeing and hearing qallunaat speaking Inuktitut. I experienced similar reactions of joy when I used my extremely limited bank of Kiswahili phrases with my Tanzanian collaborators. BWTM project coordinator Pendo Limbe was encouraging and supportive, creating a short phrasebook for my day-to-day interactions. I must sheepishly confess that I did not use it to its full potential. But then I'm reminded, things take time.

ANS communicates publicly in English and operates mainly within the predominantly English-speaking city of Guelph, Ontario. English is the majority language in the city. But within these spaces, the use of English is coded. There is a fluency with equity-seeking language used by ANS staff and through its public communication that might not be familiar in other cultural spaces. Concepts like "equity-seeking and community-building multidisciplinary art-based engagement" (ANS, 2023b) and "ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, transphobia" (ANS, 2023b), while undoubtedly experienced throughout Nunavik, Geita, and Mwanza, would rarely be communicated using similar terms or with fundamentally shared understandings.

Within ANS spaces, priority is given among other equity seeking communities to creating LGBTQ2SIA+ friendly spaces. The open dialogue and safe spaces for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming persons in the ANS community include the use of language and concepts related to gender identity. Even for individuals with English as a first language, these can lead to differences of understanding akin to speaking a foreign language. Equity-seeking language can require the same level of relational trust and non-verbal communication that is needed to negotiate an entirely different language.

Throughout workshops in Inukjuak and in Tanzania, while gender identity was not openly discussed, I observed the prevalence of binary understandings and enactments of gender. Within these spaces, it takes wisdom and sensitivity to recognize how these binaries are understood and how they impact the space in distinct ways. Creative engagement is sometimes needed to navigate these spaces, recognizing that perceptions around gender roles can create an exclusivity that can be difficult to overcome.

Within Rich Hill classrooms, boys and girls almost always grouped themselves by gender. Activities naturally emerged where boys excitedly gravitated towards playing djembe drums, while girls sang more confidently. Gender became a means to quickly organize students for activities, such as engaging in call and response games, with the girls opposite the boys. My engagement with young adult music learners in both Geita and Mwanza was notable for its lack of female participants. The distinct absence of young women in these adult classes is not coincidental or by chance. These learning spaces, the learning of instruments, and roles leading choirs were described to me to be largely reserved for men. Women sang in church choirs that were often led by men and accompanied instrumentally by men. Traditional gender roles play

an important role in Tanzanian society. Discussions around LGBTQ2SIA+ identities are largely absent. I had only two informal discussions with collaborators on these topics, broached by adults outside of the regular workshop activities.

In Inukjuak, CIRQINIQ spaces were open to all genders. In spite of the openness, there was significantly more engagement from female-identifying Inuit youth. In community workshops, only two male-identifying youth attended with consistency, compared to over a dozen female identifying participants. By contrast, during workshops coordinated during the school day in gym classes, male-identifying students would often take the lead and/or dominate activities, leaving female-identifying students on the sidelines. Interestingly, some boys who seemed to enjoy the activities during gym class arrived at the community-based workshops, only to quickly decide to leave the space upon observing the overwhelmingly female attendance. The only way to encourage them to stay was to allow them to explore their own interests apart from the organized activities which included mostly girls. I had several conversations with CIRQINIQ coordinators and facilitators in which they asserted that gender-inclusive practices are strongly impacted by diverse gender representation among the facilitators and trainers who are engaged in creative workshops spaces.

During my interview with Maya Cook of Artcirq, she reflected on the important role gender plays in making people feel comfortable in space. She noted that, “I am the only one who regularly teaches at [our program] who is a woman . . . having people see what you are going through, helping them through difficult things. That’s something that I find really meaningful in my work is just being there and seeing how much more comfortable the young women are coming into the space because I’m there.”

ANS programming also generates creative spaces where female-identifying collaborators play significant roles, both as leaders and as participants. As the lead artist for the Art in Hard Times mural project, Melanie Schambach, reflected: “it has been very special to co-create within a lot of feminine energy . . . I feel that you know, feminine energy tends to have like really in-depth listening, very caring, very supportive and nurturing space . . . I feel like there’s this very strong feminine energy that has held a lot of the spaces that we create together that has been really interesting and different to me.” Melanie’s reflection celebrates feminine strength, as she affirms the importance of what are often identified stereotypically as feminine characteristics, such as ‘caring’ and ‘nurturing.’

Cirkaskina in Montreal was a space where gender diversity is understood and supported in a similar fashion to ANS workshops. It is prevalent and unapologetically celebrated. Gender identity and sexual orientation permeate relationships within these spaces in both empowering and vulnerable ways. LGBTQ2SIA+ representation is emerging in Inuit communities; CIRQINIQ participants both quietly and loudly expressed their identities. In the Nunavik region, discussion and acceptance around diverse gender and sexuality is changing. I have observed that former students of mine from Nunavik, who previously identified as cis-gendered and/or straight, are openly expressing LGBTQ2SIA+ identities as adults. In Tanzania, however, these issues remain not just contentious, but dangerous for young Tanzanians. Diverse gender identity is not recognized in law and same-sex relations are criminalized, with sentences as severe as life in prison. These identities and expressions of sexuality are restrictively and prescriptively described as prohibited acts “against the order of nature” (US State Department, 2020, p. 45).

An interrogation of how *differences* are held and conceived across identities in culturally diverse spaces forces us to reflect on how we might engage creatively in these spaces. *Improvising in-between* used an emergent project design and engagement approach to explore these realms of identity and difference. The following section on 'Improvisatory Intervention' begins to unpack what this navigation looked like.

Improvisatory Intervention: Risk and Opportunity

As discussed, underserved and aggrieved communities are risk-filled places, made more exposed by the continued prevalence of trauma-provoking and anxiety-inducing conditions. The risk to participants is an ever-present reality when new social and creative opportunities present themselves to collaborators. As opportunities exist within risky spaces, we must aim to create opportunities where a trauma-informed ethic allows for new experiences and relationships to happen.

Providing opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable is where ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ have thrived. This is an important aspect of where and when improvisational, intercultural spaces can exist. Engaged with underserved communities, each organization has generated opportunities that have excited youth participants and allowed them to explore themselves and their interests. Participants across all partner programs have expressed how important it has been for them to be able to learn and be creative.

In Geita, a young adult participant in the music workshops recalled his experience of being discouraged from pursuing his musical interest. He shared, “One thing I can recall from my journey to study music is the discouragement I experienced from some of the teachers I encountered. I used to tell them that I wanted to be a musician, but some of them continued telling me that music was too difficult for me.” Through his determination, however, he expressed how he persisted and pursued is musical interests, “My expertise is in playing drum and piano . . . I can compose a song . . . I have the ability to sing both solo and in a choir.”

In Inukjuak, during interviews with two young adults, they both reflected on why they joined circus activities in the first place. Neither participant was actively seeking the circus arts. They were simply looking for something to do. Where opportunities were scarce, they found social circus because it was made available to them. One Inukjuak youth leader said, “Being in the North . . . especially growing up, there wasn’t a lot of things to do, so whenever an after-school program started at the school, like it was always a fun opportunity to do something with your friends and kinda have something afterschool to destress.” Another young adult said more succinctly, “It wasn’t so much of an interest at first. It was mainly because I was bored.”

One ANS participant described a chance to re-find an interest, one that seemingly had started to slip away. The participant recalled the opportunity the Fuck Perfect program offered her, “Like, before I went into Art Not Shame, I wasn’t going to pursue music anymore, but I actually was you know open to a whole realm of possibilities. And then I got back out there with music, which is really awesome.”

As we have seen throughout this entire improvised journey, there are many pathways to finding opportunities. These youth expressed their experiences of finding opportunity in several

different ways: through a pursuit of passion, through a desire for something new, and in the form of an affirmation of past experiences. It is in the making of space and opportunity where improvisatory and creative engagements can happen.

As we consider how we conceive of improvisation, it is important to remind ourselves that it is an extraordinarily broad and malleable concept. When describing improvisation, it is necessary for us to define the spaces, practices, and domains through which we improvise. We otherwise risk evoking a vagueness that becomes infinitely untethered. While this flexibility might be intriguing and to some extent freeing, it can become unlimiting to the point of being imponderable. With that in mind, here I reflect on the improvisatory practices of *Improvising in-between* through three grounded modes of improvisatory engagement: improvisatory project design, improvisatory relationship building, and improvisatory artistic creation. It is useful here to reflect on systems thinking, as discussed in Chapter 1. Within our capacity to do so, it is valuable to consider how the environments and lived experiences within improvisatory engagements integrate and affect one another in unpredictable ways (Gallopin, 2003). The three modes discussed in this section, while not mutually exclusive, each come with their own foundation of existing relationships, knowledges, practices, assumptions, and limitations. This section reflects on how elements of the conceptual framework manifested (or didn't manifest) in each of the project design, relationship building, and artistic creation phases.

Improvisatory Project Design

We often think of project design as a front-loaded practice. Even collaborative project design is most often considered a process that occurs before implementation. For *Improvising in-between*, this might have seemed to be true as well. Research questions, methodologies,

ethical principles, conceptual frameworks, and proposed research outputs were all discussed, conceived, prepared, and shared before any "research" was conducted. However, as project designers and researchers, we can learn from performers. Take for example, the advice recounted by Irish comedian Tommy Tiernan during a 2022 podcast interview with Marc Maron: "Prepare meticulously, but once you step on stage, abandon all preparation" (Tiernan, 2022, 45:55). The extent to which my meticulous project designs were used as conceived is negligible. Interview guides were loosely referenced; workshop designs were largely set aside in favour of daily plans; photo storytelling plans were transformed; administrative and programming advice emerged as key points of interest.

My ethical engagement was elaborately planned (through my institutional *ethics* review approval) and situationally negotiated. I communicated my research interests and participant rights through a variety of means, such as written consent information and verbal agreements, with an ongoing commitment to communicating how and when information might be used. Perhaps the most important component of this ethical engagement was the revisiting and re-affirmation of our ethical agreements. As I prepared research writing, generated stories, shared multimedia materials, and planned to move forward with knowledge sharing, I would continuously reconnect and ask permission from key collaborators to continue along the path that was only made possible by their engagement and consent.

One of the important processes that became an essential part of the project design was the *negotiation* of how and when to engage. As elaborated through the improvised timeline, this work necessitates the enactment of patience, listening, and flexibility. These enactments are foundational to negotiating and improvising with our collaborators. Over time, I negotiated

how I would collaborate with ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ in terms of when it would be beneficial to engage and what my engagement would look like. The programs had unique needs, and my presence filled a different role based on how my skills and assets contributed to their mission and priorities. Being a multimodal collaborator sometimes means abandoning ideas (such as canceling field visits or choosing not to actively document research creation to avoid imposing upon existing creative practices) and taking on new ones (such as looking at program plans and funding alternatives or reaching out to peripheral organizations when opportunities present themselves). Engaged researchers must ask if, when, and how to engage at every phase of the work and recognizing that consent extends to agreements and plans with your community collaborators, whether they are organizational founders or children. *Negotiation* should be on the table at all times, as it represents an opportunity to actualize relational, consentful research within the practices and spaces we experience.

But what does an intercultural, ethical, improvisatory *space* actually look like? When we reflect on embodied practice, we need to consider the physical spaces in which we find our bodies. I've had the great privilege of visiting and collaborating in the environments where ANS, BWTM and CIRQINIQ deliver their programs. Figure 12 shows the building where I worked with teacher Paul Malifa in a repurposed classroom, in a church compound in the outer neighbourhoods of the City of Mwanza. With approximately ten acoustic guitars, intermittent electricity, and several broken electric keyboards, Paul and I offered daily lessons for eight young men who were in the early stages of their musical journeys. At the time of writing, this new initiative, the Mwanza School of Music, was continuing to evolve under Paul's tutelage.

Figure 12

Mwanza School of Music

Note. Own photo.

At Rich Hill English Medium and Nursery School (Rich Hill) I co-taught daily with teacher Paul Pambe in a classroom with concrete walls (similar to those in Mwanza) and a well-used blackboard. Rich Hill had nine functioning keyboards, two guitars, and over 50 small percussion instruments. While the Rich Hill classroom *space* offers many exciting possibilities, all these instruments and this spacious room became quite restricted when filled with 40 to 90 students at a time.

Figure 13

Rich Hill School Music Classroom

Note. Own photo.

In Geita, our adult workshops took place at the Africa Inland Church of Tanzania's Kalangalala Pastorate. While working in lovely and secure gated grounds, we packed upwards of ten participants at a time into a small room. Paul Pambe and I facilitated, offering rotating opportunities for participants to play one of two keyboards, an electric drum pad, an electric guitar, an acoustic guitar, and a bass guitar.

Figure 14

Africa Inland Church of Tanzania's Kalangalala Pastorate Church, Geita

Note. Own photo.

Not all spaces are made equal. Upon arrival in Montreal in May 2022, I was struck by the circus training facility managed in a repurposed church building by the host organization Cirque hors Piste. The aerial hoop, overlooked by a stained-glass window (Figure 15), is a small portion of what the *space* had to offer. Among other things, this *space* included professional circus training equipment, a large open *space* (where pews would have been), and a vast collection of costumes and artwork from past circus events. I spent one week with the Inuit youth in this *space*, and we benefitted greatly from the professional quality trainers and equipment therein.

Figure 15

Cirque hors Piste, social circus training facility, Montreal, QC

Note. Own photo.

While lacking the professional equipment and the unorthodox architectural aesthetic, Nunavik CIRQINIQ participants have access to community centres and school gymnasiums where CIRQINIQ workshops are run (Figure 16). Unlike the Cirque hors Piste *space*, these spaces are not dedicated to the circus arts. CIRQINIQ instructors must transform these community facilities into circus spaces upon each visit and return them to their multipurpose state upon departure.

Figure 16

Pinnguavik Recreation Centre, Inukjuak, QC

Note. Own photo.

For ANS, the importance of providing a *space* for art and social change has become a focal point of their work. At the time of writing (November 2023), they are in the process of establishing a new arts hub in the downtown of the City of Guelph. ANS state that "this accessible, beautiful, welcoming arts space will allow us to expand our programming AND offer space to other organizations and arts practitioners that are so vital to our community" (ANS, 2023a). When I spoke with ANS Executive Director, Michelle Peek, about the importance of *space*, she reflected, "Making a space beautiful with art communicates a lot. We tried to set the atmosphere as beautifully and artfully as we could . . . Which is why we are so excited about our [new] space."

I've provided minimal description of some of the physical spaces used by my collaborators. I invite you to look at Figures 12 through 18 and consider how they might inform creative interactions. You will read, see, and hear from these spaces in Chapters 5 and 6, and in the appendices.

Figure 17

Art Not Shame Artist Hub Entrance

Note. Source: ANS Instagram account (https://www.instagram.com/reel/CpyKxrIsjtY/?hl=en)

Figure 18

Architect drawing of the ANS Community Arts Hub

Note. Source: https://artnotshame.org/new-space

As I consider these spaces and our relationships with them, I'm reminded how my collaborators and I were consistently confronted by the reality that our control over these physical spaces varied. With this in mind, I turn my attention now to a creative, improvisatory ethic, and I question, "How do we make *space*?" When I asked Artcirq trainer Maya Cook about what an ideal *space* would look like, she started by acknowledging, "Having a physical space is

important, where you have equipment." She went on explain how an ideal creative *space* was more than that, and it would include "a small group of people that you can feel really close to, who are your community and your family who you can also explore creatively with, who have different skillsets." A CIRQINIQ participant in Inukjuak echoed these relational notions of a creative *space* as she described a supportive, creative environment. She shared, "I think a lot of the time, we tend to go to these things with our friends . . . but then when you are actually at the place it's such a great group setting. You just kinda like get to know everyone and it kind of feels like a safe space cuz you're all learning the same kinds of things. You are all trying new stuff. It doesn't matter if you screw up, you just support each other."

In Tanzania, when BWTM project manager Samuel Limbe joined a drumming workshop for the first time, he too described his experience of a *space* in which it was safe to learn. He recalled, "I was making mistakes every single time, and I felt sorry to myself, I was angry with myself, but the trainer, he was very accommodative. I mean I feel like I want to apologize . . . and he is like 'No! you are amazing, you're getting it' . . . it's so encouraging." ANS also describe spaces where learning and mistakes are normalized. Through their Fuck Perfect programming, ANS provides *space* to "look at all the tricky ways perfectionism shows up in our lives, society and culture, and take inspired and creative risks together through artmaking, discussion, and self-reflection" (Fuck Perfect, 2021, para. 1). For each program, close relationships where mistakes are not just tolerated but honoured, are enacted in their creative spaces. These are the models for improvisatory acts and ethics. As Ellen Waterman asserts in her reflection on free improvisatory music, "The possibility of failure is always imminent, because the process demands such a high degree of self-exposure. Improvisation is most satisfying when the

conditions of trust exist that allow participants to risk everything in the moment of performance" (Waterman, 2015, p. 59). As we consider how to design intercultural, co-creative spaces, no matter the physical environment or the tools, ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ have all offered, in their own ways, a model grounded in shame-free, safe, exploratory spaces.

All collaborative initiatives will involve bringing co-creators to the table in the design of the project. The *collaboration* of *Improvising in-between* retains an inherently improvisatory nature through the fact that the collaborative project design approach manifested as it emerged throughout the project. That is, the project design was meaningfully impacted by the ongoing interactions among collaborators. Contributions to the project design began in the initiation phase of the research, including the active communication with and contributions from partner representatives toward the (eventually) successful applications for funding. Funding permitted me to be collaborative in a contributive way and not in a way that was extractive of partner time and resources. I was able to share resources (such as iPads and cameras) and facilitate my own travel (as well as contributing to the travel needs of others) through the funds I received, due in large part to my affiliation with community partners.

My *collaboration* with creative research partners manifested as emergent opportunities and explorations. The contribution of cameras for photography work with CIRQINIQ emerged from a *collaboration* with the Guelph Tool Library. In Tanzania, meticulous plans were almost entirely abandoned[26] in favour of creating and developing context-informed, lesson plans and learning guides, based on the expressed and demonstrated needs and interests of workshop participants. The contributions of BTWM students were foundational to each day's lessons. This

[26] Samples of the initial workshop plans designed for work with BWTM can be seen in Appendix G.

continuous *collaboration* resulted in the development of the lesson plans and guides shared in Appendix A and Appendix B. Emergent *collaboration* also resulted in many discussions between me and partners about how I could leverage my time and knowledge base for them as they navigate institutional funding and reporting demands.

To remain consistently responsive and iterative, collaborative project design relies on an improvisatory ethic that is realized through a creative response. Our improvisatory ethic may appear in the way we accommodate and respond to our physical environments. It will appear in the way we create *space*. We will continue to improvise through the emergent practice that is generated by listening and co-creating with our collaborators. Catalysts for a collaborative response may be global in scope, like a pandemic that effectively re-arranges the way the world can safely interact, or they might be as personal as one young person who carries a challenge with them into a creative space that day. A truly improvisatory and community-engaged approach must be ready to respond to both.

Improvisatory Relationship Building

As my collaborators and I transitioned from conceptual project design phase into an active engagement and research phase, it was necessary to ensure that our ethical commitments were meaningfully enacted in our praxis. As discussed in Chapter 3, relational, emergent, and continuous approaches present scholars with opportunities through which ethical, consentful, improvisatory research may be realized. In practice, this means repeatedly ensuring that participants know when you are documenting and that they are not simply informed of their right not to participate but that they are encouraged to engage in ways that are best suited to them. This includes observing when people appear uncomfortable and

checking in before, during, and after program activities. This often means you will abandon a formalized research activity, in favour of a conversation, a joyful (undocumented) activity or, sometimes crucially, just some unscheduled free time.

I reflect now on the conversation I had with the frustrated researcher I met during the Cirkaskina national social circus gathering north of Montreal in May of 2022. Armed with resources and research protocols, she expressed her struggle to meet quotas and to get deep engagement from the youth participants. I, on the other hand, having effectively deformalized all my engagement during my time at the Cirkaskina gathering, was overwhelmed by the level of engagement and co-learning that I was experiencing. Relational ethics involves being fully human within the environments we share. It does involve informed consent, but this looks less like an institutional consent form and more like telling and showing people who you are, then honestly and openly negotiating with them about when and how you will document your co-learning.

In Tanzania, I remember the almost manic scenes through which my *connection* with my musical collaborators was built. Improvisatory relationship building often looked like leading workshops which frequently and repeatedly asked participants to bring themselves and their interests into the space. The first workshop sessions with each group (from the eight-year-olds at Rich Hill to the twenty-somethings in Kalangalala and Mwanza) included chaotic scenes of unplanned music interaction. I recall Paul Pambe (in Geita) expressing some distress about how disorganized and arguably musically unpleasant these first sessions were. For me it was a powerful way for us to get to know each other. I learned more in that chaos about how we could move forward together than I might have learned through a rigorous lesson plan, a focus

group discussion, or a series of interviews and planning meetings. I was able to build on what they knew and find language and symbols upon which we could grow our understanding together. Especially in the absence of a shared first language, determining our shared musical language through playful, experimental musical interactions was not just a transgressive co-learning approach, but an effective one. While the musically skilled choir directors and church musicians demonstrated a strong capacity for music improvisation, they astutely expressed (and would eventually demonstrate) their desire and need to build their formal understanding of music theory and notation. This was not necessarily where I expected to go (I initially expected to lean into improvised collaboration and song writing), but it was a pivot I was willing and able to make. In a somewhat bittersweet fashion, our sessions in Geita concluded just as a spark of excitement had been ignited by the exploration of some musical foundations of the African American jazz tradition.

In all this work, a binding agent for the sense of community among the collaborators engaged through *Improvising in-between* was the creative relationships they form through the programming offered by ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. This includes their opportunities to participate in arts-based programming, but just as substantially, their relational connection with others. As Tupiq A.C.T. member Minnie Ningiuruvik expressed in an interview during the Cirkaskina social circus gathering in Montreal, “We are an open family. We always say that circus is a family.” Negotiating and establishing a found community or ‘family’ was a consequence of these programs that sought to generate and affirm creative relationships. Circus participants have frequently and proudly adopted an ‘outsider’ identity, yet they have found a home in their ‘circus family.’ In their study of social circus in Quebec, Spiegel and

Parent (2018) heard from one participant, “Most people who come here are rejects, either at school, or somewhere in their family. There is an aspect of reject somewhere, but circus aims to change this” (p. 608).

The examples of partner programming I discuss in this research demonstrate how relationships and shared experiences are foundational to the establishment of a sense of community. For the young adults in the BWTM workshops, among the most prevalent of convening communities was their church. Though they expressed and demonstrated varying levels of experience with music, they often shared common encounters of hearing and singing music through their church. During their interviews, the young men in Mwanza and Geita recalled a variety of relationships and communities through which they came to realize their creative practices and interests. Few described experiences with formalized music education. They frequently attributed their musical learning to family members, friends, or church choirs. Each were dynamic examples of improvised, co-learning communities.

For ANS, relationship building and establishing a found community is an active practice. As ANS Executive Director Michelle Peek describes in her Reimagining Possibility interview, “I remember the conversations we were having . . . around really trying to push the envelope in terms of individual wellbeing, and say like ‘no, there’s a collective component to care.’ That’s why we run groups.” Like a circus family, like a church choir, ANS programming establishes a found community through relationships of care.

As a collaborative researcher, I also needed to find myself and be found within these improvised relationships. I allowed relationships to emerge in and through the programming,

but also, perhaps especially, outside of it. These relationships consistently remind me to engage as my full self within these shared, co-creative spaces.

Improvisatory Artistic Creation

Through the narrative reflections and research outputs in Chapters 5 and 6 and the appendices, I share what improvisatory creation can look like. They can be as poignant and beautiful as they are chaotic and silly. Some of the poignant outcomes aren't those that would be explicitly thought of as art but might be considered something more easily recognized as social. In many cases, these emerged on the sidelines of the creative spaces, outside the realm of programming and research. They took the form of sharing about family, culture, and life, precisely because in the spaces where these conversations happened, relationships were not only safe but valued. The narratives and creative outputs shared in Chapter 5 and in the appendices aim to reflect the voices and experiences of my creative collaborators through their words and works, while also capturing the power of what they've shared and taught me outside the research container. In this section, I will share some of the ways in which my collaborators demonstrated and described their co-creations.

The *storytelling* that has and will continue to emerge from *Improvising in-between* ranges from reflecting on very personal experiences to broader public-facing art and performances. In Inukjuak, the CIRQINIQ youth collaborated to put on a show that captured an original tale of an Inuk caribou hunter. This type of Inuit *storytelling* through circus arts has been a hallmark of performances shared by the CIRQINIQ program for many years. This practice has been taken to another level by the Inuit circus troupe Tupiq A.C.T. When describing their creative *storytelling* of Inuit legends, Tupiq A.C.T. member Mina Maina Tukai highlighted, "We

integrate it into circus and we just like, we love to share the richness of our culture, like the sea creatures, the shapeshifters."

Through follow up interviews in Geita and Mwanza, workshop participants shared personal stories of their musical journeys. While some recounted their successes in overcoming hurdles, others recalled their appreciation for the mentors and teachers they encountered along the way. Their stories were simultaneously inspiring and disheartening, as these young musicians describe the challenges they faced as they persevered in their desire to access music opportunities and musical training.

Engaging with youth across cultures sometimes results in the generation of new perspectives on creative practice. During the social circus trainings with Inuit youth in Montreal, CIRQINIQ senior trainers, Véronique Provencher and Rebecca Leonard, reviewed the formal definition of social circus. Through this exercise I asked if the Inuit workshop participants could share any words in Inuktitut that would capture what social circus means to them. We then created collaboratively, not necessarily to make new art, but in an exploration of new ideas and meaning. Figure 19 shows the heartwarming feedback in the youths' own handwriting.

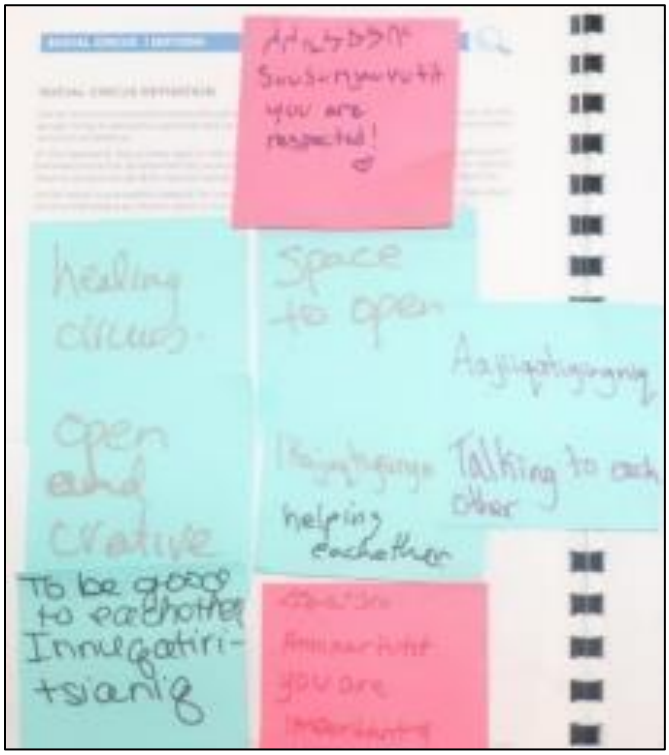
To these Inuit youth, a social circus space meant:[27]

- ᓭᓱᓚᕆᐅᕙᑎᑦ - Suusurijauvutit - "You are respected"
- ᐃᓐᓄᖅᑎᑦᓯᐊᓂᖅ - Innuqatiritsianiq – "To be good to each other"
- ᐊᓐᓂᓇᖅᑐᐃᑦ - Anninartutit – "You are important"
- ᐊᔾᖅᑎᑭᖏᖅ - Ajiiqatigiingniq – "Talking to other"

[27] These definitions along with the Inuit youth contributions to the Cirkaskina mural, discussed later in this chapter and in Chapters 5 and 6 served to provide the themes for the "CIRQINIQ photo story" shared in Appendix E.

Figure 19

CIRQINIQ youth redefine "social circus"



Note. Own photo.

When the same youths were asked to describe how they see the 'collaboration between social and circus' their responses represented a range of social, emotional, and practical topics, including 'listening,' 'emotional support,' 'balance (circus tech and community),' 'problem solving,' 'communication,' and 'steps to learning a skill.' We find, again, these youth placing a strong emphasis on the relational nature of collaborative creative practice. Later in the discussions, one participant (with no prompting from me) reflected on 'expression and creativity,' and highlighted the role of 'improv' in their practice. The youth, through their own

reflections, bridge the those deep relational components of listening and communication with improvisatory acts.

For ANS, the restraints of the COVID-19 pandemic were an opportunity to challenge and find new ways of *creative expression* that might otherwise never have been explored. Art in Hard Times lead artist Melanie Schambach reflected that when faced with restrictions, their response was not to retreat or bemoan their inability to practice their known methods. She excitedly recalled, “We were just going into creativity mode . . . like what is possible in the virtual space?”

As I described previously, when standing in front of up to 90 students at a time at Rich Hill school, I sought to engage with them knowing that they did not understand (or hardly understood) the words I was speaking. My *creative expression* took on some rather improvisatory characteristics. Movement, tone, call and response, repetition, and affirmation were just some of the key communication tools I applied. My pedagogy became its own performance. I needed to do what I could to find ways to keep these young students engaged in this unorthodox learning experience. I had instinctively enacted what Henry Giroux asserts to be a central tenet of critical pedagogy, that it “be infused with the possibility of using interpretation as a mode of intervention, as a potentially energizing practice that gets students to both think and act differently” (2011, p. 14). The performative nature of teaching and learning was succinctly echoed in the social circus spaces by a CIRQINIQ youth leader who asserted, “Sometimes you also need to be entertaining to be able to teach because if the lesson is really boring people won’t be really interested. So, you gotta know how to entertain them

and make it fun for them to learn." What this emerging Inuk leader didn't quite express was how necessary this form of entertainment was as a means of communication.

In our musical workshops with BWTM, we worked to fill our toolbox, then play with our tools. For one workshop participant, the connection between learning about music notation through playing an instrument was an unexpected surprise. He mused, "I had no idea you could study music while playing a musical instrument. I was excited. The sounds are the same when the teacher teaches us to play musical instruments." We learned about rhythmic and melodic notation together. We listened and creatively improvised ways to experience how these musical concepts sound and feel through their instruments, their voices, and their bodies.

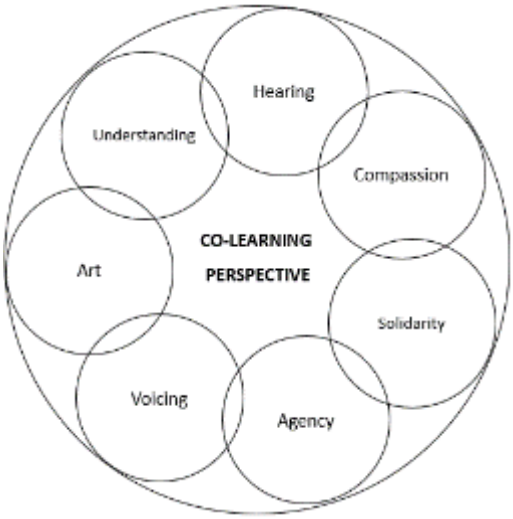
Figure 20

BWTM Workshop flip charts, Kalangalala, Geita

Note. The middle sheet includes an original melody by workshop participants. Own photo.

In practice, I worked to decenter the instruction so that we could collectively discover. This models what David Scott Ross argues about improvisation-based pedagogies: “The teacher, whose direction helps shape student interest and input to explore general goals, is no longer the gatekeeper to knowledge but guide and collaborator. In this way, all involved are co-creators in the improvisation” (Ross, 2012, p. 55). Through the BWTM workshops we took opportunities to explore new musical concepts in novel ways, creating rhythmic activities and new melodies. We were not professional performers or composers. We were creative learners.

Changed State: Co-Learning and Perspective



When we speak of changed states, I’m an advocate for humility and honesty. Change both takes time and is affected by time. When we think about change, we may first ask, has anything changed? By virtue of any intervention occurring, we know that change occurred. When looking honestly at change states, I try to identify if and how participants expressed changes that they feel have occurred through their creative and relational engagements with partner programming. In this section, I share some of their own words as they express their experiences of learning and their perspective shifts. Chapters 5 and 6 include more focused and narrative reflections on how some of these changes manifested.

Throughout *Improvising in-between*, participants and collaborators described how expression through *art* has affected them. As ANS collaborator Brendan Johnson, executive director of the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, expressed, “*art* is such an essential

thing, process, gift . . . it's essential to our souls and it always has been, and it's the way we're going to learn from each other, the way we're going to share, the way we're going to celebrate or the way we're going to heal." For one youth leader in Inukjuak, it was important to have the opportunity to perform, to express their *art,* and to show their growth at the end of the CIRQINIQ workshops; "I think it is nice that we engage the whole community. And kind of show them what we've been working on, what we've learned. So, I really like that aspect too. Even though it can be really nerve-wracking. It's really fun for sure." Her description expresses how her experience with performance gave her a sense of pride, while allowing her to build emotional strength.

During the social circus workshops in Montreal, Inuit youth also reflected upon what 'expression and creativity' meant to them. The dynamics of what *art* (i.e., creative expression) is and can be, was conceived of in such a multifaceted way by these youth. Their ideas included 'being active,' 'being vulnerable without guilt or shame,' 'confidence of speaking,' 'emotions are inspiration,' 'encouragement,' 'freedom,' 'having materials,' 'improvisation,' 'learning music theory,' 'outreach,' 'outspoken,' 'openness,' 'physical teaching,' 'process,' 'research,' and 'safe space.' Nearly all these reflections frame expression and creativity as active and alive, and not a static or unchanging product.

As a collaborator and interloper in these spaces, I've tried to strengthen my *hearing*. I use *hearing* rather than listening as we are all guilty sometimes of listening without *hearing*. I've tried to step back when needed, I've tried to hear what participants and collaborators have been saying (or not saying). This sometimes involved *hearing* what silence means. My concept of *hearing* is evocative of the "deep listening" concepts and practices discussed by Pauline

Oliveros. She asserts, “All cultures develop through ways of listening . . . Deep listening represents a heightened state of awareness and connects to all that is there . . . Deep Listening is active. What is heard is changed by listening and changes the listener” (Oliveros, 2002, p. 27). I can hear that I have affected, and am affected, by these spaces. This sometimes means that I must make space for others and get out of the way in case my embodied presence adversely imposes itself. It may mean that I need to hear better, to better learn how my impact on the space is a healthy and generative one.

Change spaces are infused with reciprocal and affective relationships. For ANS Art in Hard Times facilitator, Melanie Schambach, there was *compassion* in how she engaged with her collaborators. In her Reimagining Possibility interview, she reflects, “The relationships I have built, they are relationships that have been … where I can get really connect [*sic*] intimately with other people and that has been a lifeline in my mental health through our social isolation. So, I care for them very deeply.”

The youth in collaborating programs also described how they develop *understanding* of themselves and others through their creative encounters. One ANS Fuck Perfect participant described how he felt validated and connected as he shared his music interests during one of the workshops. He recalled, “The first song that Michelle put on was one that I suggested . . . everyone stopped and said ‘woah what is song this is really cool?’ and then I was like okay I’m around cool people.” The participant expressed a real sense of relief and belonging. Youth in the CIRQINIQ program also expressed how they have come to understand themselves and others through their engagement in co-creative spaces. In Inukjuak, one Inuk CIRQINIQ youth leader offered this advice to those interested in taking up social circus; “Just make some

memories with a group of people that you would like to learn with or make some new friends with it. I find that the more you practice with other people the more you understand that doing this with other people is treasured." Through this advice, this young man not only reflects on a sense of friendship, but the how important these connections have been for him.

The creative relationships described by participants in partner programs express a spirit of *solidarity* among participants. For me this was powerfully displayed among Inuit youth and non-Inuit instructors and coordinators following the racist encounter in the park in Montreal that I mentioned earlier (p. 174). The Inuit youth in particular came together and supported each other in the face of an attack on their identity and culture, which is elaborated more fully in the Chapter 5 narrative "The Man in the Park" (p. 276). This relational strength is described by Brendan Johnson during his Reimagining Possibility interview; "Just nothing happens without relationships. Literally, no work sustains, no work is ultimately powerful without relationships."

One BWTM workshop participant felt that the art itself, the music, is a vehicle for bringing people in; "Music is good for everyone, not just musicians. Anyone who understands the basics of music, such as someone who can play a musical instrument, can benefit from music." BWTM project manager Samuel Limbe further asserts that the music programming opportunities create the kind of environments where *solidarity* and support will emerge. He feels that these initiatives "have been a kind of a platform for life changing, for connecting people, and for encouragement."

Establishing encouraging spaces generates environments where opportunities for *voicing* can empower. I remember feeling a sense of respect and appreciation for the Tupiq A.C.T. workshop facilitator who kindly and assertively voiced the sensitivity around

documenting Inuit cultural expression and traditions. As described in Chapter 3 (p. 91), because of her voice, I did not document the workshop she led. In social circus spaces, participants are encouraged to express themselves. Not all youth will enter creative spaces with the confidence to assert themselves. For some they may begin to feel increased confidence but what we find in co-creative spaces is the power and opportunity to express it. Artcirq facilitator Maya Cook reflected on her conversations with one Artcirq participant at the Cirkaskina national gathering. She recalled observing that the participant was expressing herself more confidently but was more encouraged when the participant expressed for herself "how much more confident she felt." Maya reflected that to have the participant notice and express her own increased confidence "felt really meaningful."

The two *voicing* examples above reflect how young Inuit women have expressed their values and their own sense of self in creative spaces. In Tanzania, workshop participants described how they've shared their voice through singing. One participant in Geita recalled his experience as a young singer performing publicly for the first time. He recounted, "I was singing that day, and at one point I couldn't perform because I was losing my voice. Although I had sympathy from others, I never gave up. I prayed to God for the courage to go on. People began to understand what I was doing as a result of my continued efforts, and they began to appreciate and support my efforts." For this young singer, the opportunity to express himself through song was a vehicle through which he had become heard and affirmed. As I co-led workshops with students at the Mwanza School of Music, we collaboratively learned the Leonard Cohen song "Hallelujah." We explored the song musically together and the participants did their best with the English lyrics, but they showed hesitancy and a tense focus. Then with all

their experience singing in church choirs, something happened when the young men started singing the lyric "hallelujah." They immediately expressed a freedom, a boldness, a sense of release. This freedom allowed them to harmonize without restriction or instruction as an expression of relief from the uncertainty of the unfamiliar English lyrics. These free moments evoke what Clare Grant discovered in her years as an improvisor: "The paradox at the heart of all improvisation . . . is that the greatest of freedoms as a performer is created in the most highly structured of situations" (Grant, 2015, p. 353). The smiles and joy unleashed in these moments were as infectious as they were memorable.[28]

It's not just participants and learners who've found their voice in these creative spaces; professional artists are finding new ways to immerse and express their art through community-engaged initiatives. As Melanie Schambach marveled in her Reimagining Possibility interview, "I've seen all these facilitators that have had arts practices in their lives, but maybe they're just getting to know how to bring their art into community service and it's just been wonderful to just witness and be part of that evolution, you know."

Personal and collective *agency* presents itself along many pathways and manifests in many ways, including *voicing*, *solidarity*, and *art*. In some cases, just the opportunity to see what is possible creates a new pathway. As one youth leader in Inukjuak recalled, "Circus is just fun and you're like, 'wow!' People are really skilled, and this could be me in the future. So, I think that's like a big motivation." Translating these possibilities into a reality allows people to gain a new sense of confidence and willingness to engage. As one former Fuck Perfect

[28] Samples from these workshops can be seen in Appendix C in the YouTube video entitled "Mwanza School of Music."

participant recalled, “When I performed at the end of the second . . . program, that was something I’d never done before, and I was so incredibly anxious to do it. But then I did it, and everyone seemed to really enjoy it, and it really gave a lot of confidence and belief in the fact that maybe I can actually do this.”

As we gain newfound confidence and build relationships, we begin to see how a creative, relational space free of shame and judgement reforms our sense of self and community. As ANS artist collaborator Kavya Yoganathan explained during her Reimagining Possibility interview, “Every interaction that I have with people in these various programs allows me to be, just become, a better human being, become a better member of community.” Kavya, who leads digital storytelling projects with youth in the Guelph-Wellington region of Southern Ontario,[29] reflects here how these co-creative engagements affected her relationship with those around her and her sense of self in those spaces. These personal and relational changes were also expressed by collaborators in Tanzania. I bring you back now to the story shared earlier in this Chapter (p. 195) by BWTM project manager, Samuel Limbe, about learning the drums for the first time through BWTM workshops. He concluded that story by saying, “I still remember that day and it changed my life, not only my life, but it changed almost everybody’s way of doing things.”

There is no question that creative and improvisatory interventions contribute to a changed state. The nature of that change relies heavily on the strength of the relationships, the scope of the opportunities, and the ethical and conceptual foundations of the spaces in which these creative encounters occur.

[29] Leaders of Today by Kavya Yoganathan: https://www.arts.on.ca/education/projects/2020/leaders-of-today

Conceptual Framing – What's Been Learned?

From a narrative and process-oriented perspective, the conceptual framework supported planning, while offering a filter through which to ideate and disseminate the creative research reflections. In its original form, the framework is scalable and multi-practical. It framed conceptual and interpersonal relationships on a broad range of topics allowing it to be malleable enough to reflect the practical and theoretical elements of *Improvising in-between*. The sheer scope of ideas considered therein, however, were neither tightly specific nor comprehensive. In many ways, the strength of the framework's flexibility and broad applicability is also its weakness. Much like conceptions of improvisation, it is almost infinitely macro and micro in scope and consequently required a significant amount of context and practice for its reflective value to be realized.

As collaborative engagements emerged, I rarely looked to the conceptual framework to explicitly inform my relational practice as it was happening. Through conceptual framing, however, I was able to structure my thinking as I established and later revisited the breadth and scale of the emerging research. Reflectively, given that I conceived it, it's natural that it faithfully captured how I understood and engaged in creative intercultural engagement throughout *Improvising in-between*. It may feel difficult and limiting to build a conceptual framework, as it can feel like it either continues to impose itself on your work or it may become clear that it's been poorly conceived and of questionable utility. Conceptual thinking that is cyclical and emergent is less susceptible to these limitations. Encountering new tensions and/or connections that were not anticipated does not undermine the original story but strengthens and expands it.

I was encouraged that the conceptual framework broadly aligned with guidance for trauma-informed practice. The framework did not, however, offer a clear acknowledgement of the need for deep and careful attention to how creative spaces and creative experiences both impact and are impacted by the complex socio-emotional realities of engaging with diverse and especially aggrieved collaborators. Upon reflection, I feel that a more informed and explicit incorporation of trauma-informed principles would have strengthened the framework, particularly if I hope for the framework to reflect a research story that will narrate empowered and inclusive change.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, and as I will illustrate through the final two chapters, relationality has been central to the learning and practices that have emerged from *Improvising in-between*. In hindsight, a more explicit inclusion of relationships and relational engagement would have strengthened the conceptual framing. While implicit in many elements of the framework (e.g., connection, collaboration, community, relationships, solidarity, hearing, compassion), if I were to reframe the framework, I'd emphasize more pointedly the interconnection between relationships and embodied experiences that exist in intercultural, community-engaged, improvisatory spaces.

As a scalable and cyclical conception, the framework does not clearly speak to the importance of time in how relationships are built and sustained. Creative intercultural spaces require a careful attention to time. We may think of time as linear, cyclical, or undulating. No matter how we conceive of it, it is necessary to consider that relationships, creation, collaboration, and ethical practices take time, and that time is understood and prioritized differently across cultural spaces. If we seek to stay true to decolonizing and dignity-affirming

relationships and principles, we need to push back against the timely notions, strict efficiencies, and deadlines imposed by colonial authorities.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I will explore how the role of improvisation within creative practice and social justice-oriented programming can be argued to be a key contributor to changed states. In these chapters, creative and narrative reflections from the *Improvising in-between* collaborations are presented. I highlight examples of the types of intercultural exchange introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, such as how circus arts and Inuit traditions have become the foundation of the creative works of CIRQINIQ and Tupiq A.C.T., or how BWTM participants actively expressed a desire to engage musically with the local music traditions and with improvisatory and Western musical traditions.

The conceptual framework for *Improvising in-between* is not particularly novel, nor does it preclude that improvisatory engagement will inherently contribute to empowering intercultural learning or social change. The contingencies therein, however, do give improvisatory creators and community-engaged practitioners a wide range of concepts and relationships that they might wish to consider in the design of, implementation of, and reflection on intercultural creative initiatives.

Chapter 5 – Narratives and Reflections from In-Between

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Throughout Chapter 5, I share what I've called "Narratives and Reflections from in-between." Through the narratives in this chapter I expand on ideas, moments, and emergent learnings that have been provoked and become particularly salient throughout Improvising in-between*. The learnings have emerged from my efforts to bring co-learning, creative, improvisatory scholarship, and practice into my engagement and relationships with my research collaborators, Art Not Shame, Bridging Worlds Through Music, and CIRQINIQ. I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Christie Ulicny and Michelle Peek for their active contribution to some of these stories and reflections, as well as all the collaborators with* Improvising in-between *without whom none of these learnings could be shared.*

A Reflection on Language

As I reflect on the importance and complexity of language in the diverse community spaces encountered through this project, I am humbled by the skill and generosity of my collaborators for their willingness to support me and fellow program participants throughout *Improvising in-between*. Program managers, instructors, facilitators, participating youth, and

community members all stepped into various roles as we translated our way through our engagements. This reflection is dedicated to them.

In the first sentence of this dissertation I wrote, “A simple conversation was not going to be an option.” That was as true for me as a consultant working with schools in Benin as it has been throughout my time engaging with diverse collaborators in Ontario, Nunavik, and Tanzania. In simple terms, the collaborators in this project engaged predominantly in three spoken languages: English, Swahili, and Inuktitut. Highlighting just these three verbal languages, however, ignores the prevalence of the French language (Québécois) influence within the circus community in Canada, the many local dialects in the Mwanza and Geita regions of Tanzania, the range of Inuktitut dialects spoken throughout the Inuit Nunangat (the lands, waters, and ices of the Inuit), and the multilingual collaborators who engage with ANS’s programming.

As I met and worked with more and more people, the ideas of language, and the means of language and communication permeated the work. I speak passable, conversational French. I’ve learned some very basic vocabulary and phrases in Inuktitut. Despite my desire and the openness of my collaborators, I felt badly to have internalized very little Kiswahili through my engagements with BWTM. My two Kiswahili phrase and vocabulary lists (my own and the one developed for me by BWTM program manager Pendo Limbe) saw embarrassingly little use. I’m hopeful that this will be part of a challenge on future journeys. No matter these differences in spoken language (not to mention their written counterparts), we still communicated, interacted, and learned.

Looking beyond the spoken word, we begin to see an almost undefinable range of other languages at play. How did we find common languages within these creative and collaborative

spaces? What role did a collaborative and creative spirit play in influencing the languages that we used? In exploring these questions, I'll discuss language from three distinct perspectives: verbal/written languages, cultural/social languages, and non-verbal/expressive languages.

Spoken and written languages

The multilingual environments within which programs operate significantly impact how we engage. We constantly felt these impacts through the collaborations and relationships enacted during *Improvising in-between*. At times, we spoke and engaged using very simple words and phrases. Frequently, the multilingual collaborators within the co-learning spaces played a crucial role in creating and navigating interactions where common language fluency was absent. My own experiences speaking broken, but conversational French, remind me of the exhaustion and the cognitive gymnastics that multilingual work requires and contribute to my own admiration for the efforts everyone made to share and learn together. Sometimes, even as English speakers, we must translate the English vocabulary that we use, depending on our context. One of the intriguing linguistic quirks I continually had to remember was that the colonial English learned in Tanzania came predominantly from the British. Throughout our music lessons, for example, I repeatedly had to translate the rhythm durations in my head from the American/Canadian terms of a whole note, half note, quarter note, and eighth note to the British semibreve, minim, crotchet, and quaver. Being reminded that a 64^{th} note in North American musical settings is called a hemidemisemiquaver in British musical parlance does, however, bring an amused smile to my face.

At Rich Hill English Middle and Nursery School (Rich Hill), music teacher Paul Pambe alternated his lessons between English and Kiswahili. The teaching staff at Rich Hill are trained

teachers who all spoke English as an additional language, but as I sat with them for tea in the staff office, they spoke most often with one another in Kiswahili (or one of the shared local languages). The students study in English, but they seldom expressed themselves with me in English. The older youth often politely say “good morning” and “thank you.” They would often confirm when they understood things by answering “yes” in response to my questions. Among our few English interactions, the “good morning” routine was admittedly quite charming.

“Good morning!” I say.

“Good morning, sir!” they reply in unison.

“How are you today?” I ask.

“We are fine and how are you?” they reply.

“I am fine, thank you for asking!” I reply before transitioning into our lessons.

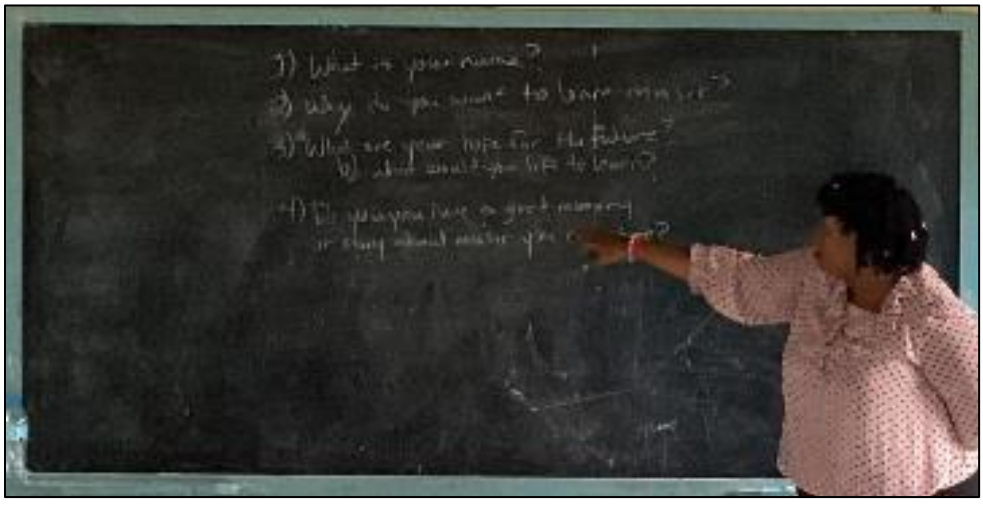
Paul Pambe served as my key translator with both the school children and during the adult music workshops coordinated in the evenings in Geita. I had to trust in his translations. Paul did not translate word-for-word, meaning that I could never be fully sure how the learning was being shared and received. From a “research” perspective where accuracy and consistency is idealised, we must acknowledge that in cultural, multilingual spaces this may not be possible (particularly where resources for and access to highly trained translators are not available).

In both Mwanza and Geita, BWTM Program Director, Pendo Limbe, and BWTM Project Manager, Samuel Limbe, led interviews in Kiswahili with the young men who attended the workshops. One participant in the workshops in Geita (out of 21 interviewees) decided to complete his interview in English, but for most of the students, it was many weeks later before I would learn what they’d shared.

Through contacts at the University of Guelph, I had the fortune of finding and engaging with US-based, Tanzanian linguist, Asmaha Heddi. Heddi translated and provided English interview transcripts for each of the 20 Kiswahili speaking participants who completed post-workshop interviews in Geita and Mwanza. Her translations allowed me to finally hear and understand the thoughts and stories shared by the young musicians. Relying on trusted collaborators is a necessary element of translating and communicating through differences. Throughout *Improvising in-between*, I had to be consistent, transparent, and diligent with the people, the tools, and the time available. As I continued to communicate remotely with the music teachers in Geita and Mwanza, WhatsApp and Google translate were surprisingly effective at facilitating ongoing sharing and discussions about BWTM music programming. No matter the differences and the filters, we creatively find ways to collaborate and communicate.

Figure 21

Interview questions on the blackboard at the Mwanza School of Music



Note. Pendo Limbe reviews interview questions in English before conducting interviews in Kiswahili with the students. Own photo.

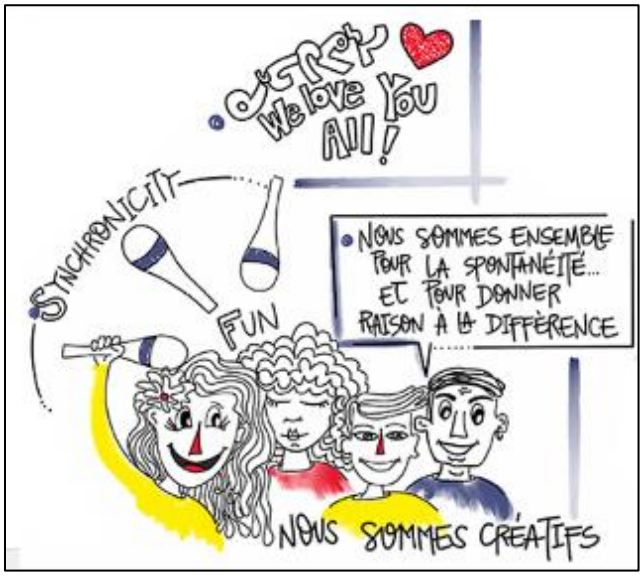
During the creation of their circus demonstration at Cirkaskina, the Inuit youth from Nunavut (of the Artcirq program) and the Inuit youth from Nunavik (of the CIRQINIQ program) realized that each region had a traditional song entitled, "Qulluppa, Qulluppa."[30] However, they quickly learned that each region's song consisted of a different melody and different lyrics. This discovery led to the youths from each region to engage in a playful singing competition. They concluded their musical collaboration by singing a song that they all knew, and that was sung in both regions. The youth included this playful musical competition into their showcase performance at the Cirkaskina national social circus gathering in May of 2022 (while juggling at the same time, of course).

As part of the Cirkaskina national social circus gathering in May of 2022, the organizers from Cirque hors Piste mobilized the co-development of a mural that would serve as a social circus manifesto (developed and designed by Mina Maina Tukai of Tupiq A.C.T. and visual artist Alina Gutierrez Mejia of Visual Versa). The mural consisted of messages and ideas in French, English, and Inuktitut (though not the only languages present at the gathering, they were the most prevalent languages among participants). Figure 22 shows the middle portion of the mural including ideas and values in each of the three languages. For English readers, "synchronicity" and "fun" were included in this portion, whereas in French we see "Nous sommes ensemble pour la spontanéité . . . et pour donner raison à la différence" and "Nous sommes créatifs" ("We are together for spontaneity . . . and to affirm differences" and "We are creative").

[30] The Nunavik version of "Qulluppa, qulluppa" served as the backing track for the Wapikoni Mobile produced short film Tupiq A.C.T. du Nord, available online at: https://vimeo.com/378154762. The music on the short film is credited to Maina Nastapoka of Inukjuak.

Figure 22

Segment of the Cirkaskina Social Circus Mural



Note. Mural created by Mina Maina Tukai and Alina Gutierrez Mejia. Source: https://cirquehorspiste.com/fr/cirkaskina/le-mouvement/

As the Inuit youth attending the gathering considered how to contribute to the manifesto, I suggested they contribute something in Inuktitut. Following some deliberation, youth from both Nunavut (of Artcirq) and Nunavik (of CIRQINIQ) agreed to add ᓇᖏᒋᕐᕕᓴᐅᓪ to the mural. The youth further decided to spell the phrase using a Nunavut dialect, which is subtly different from the same phrase in Nunavik dialects. Spelled using the Latin alphabet, it would be spelled 'Nagligivassi,' and as shown in the top center of Figure 22, it translates to "We love you all!" Unlike most of the mural, which was mostly illustrated by Maina Mina and Alina, this short message in English and Inuktituk was sketched by me. It was finalized in marker by two Inuit youths, one from Nunavik and one from Nunavut.

In intercultural, creative spaces, we are persistently looking for ways through our linguistic differences. Just as tools to facilitate digital translation aided the ongoing communication with my Tanzanian collaborators, so too was I able to find tools to support communication in Inuktitut. The Inuktitut keyboard for Nunavik was developed and made available through ᑲᑎᕕᓴᓂᕆᓂᖅ - Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (the Nunavik School Board) and has allowed me to include syllabic spellings in Inuktitut in selected parts of this dissertation.

Discussions among the Inuit youth often flow freely between English and Inuktitut. The Nunavut youth would speak to one another often in their dialect and the Nunavik youth in theirs. When they spoke to one another across regions, they would often speak in English as this was sometimes easier than speaking to one another due to their regional differences. For me, I am aware that my inflections and pronunciation change when I speak with Inuit youth. I'm not always conscious of doing it, but frequently fall back onto familiar terms and phrases that I learned from my years working in Nunavik. To a lesser degree, I know too that my inflections and vocabulary choices differed as I worked with collaborators in Tanzania. This forces me to consider, how even within one language, I make very different choices, both consciously and unconsciously, about the words that I use.

Cultural/social language

Verbal languages represent the most evident conception of language that we encounter. Throughout our time together, my collaborators and I navigated our various capacities in English, Inuktituk, Kiswahili, and French as best we could. Though ANS programming is delivered predominantly in English, with English-speaking participants, there are important and powerful discussions about language being undertaken by staff and

collaborators at ANS. They make use of language in ways that align with their commitment to social justice and wellbeing. Their website offers a range of terms and phrases meant to communicate how their practice is informed by their beliefs and values. On the "What we believe" page of ANS's website they describe their ambition to promote "community-making through the arts," establish a "sense of belonging," and to "unlearn," "challenge systemic sources of shame," and "transform systemic justice." ANS seeks to "create safe(r) and more accessible, equitable spaces" and establish "brave space," by working against "ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, transphobia" through a commitment to "anti-oppression" (ANS, 2023b). This language will be familiar to many who work in environments committed to advocacy and solidarity with aggrieved and underserved communities. Some of the language used by ANS aligns with the language found in institutional spaces working on diversity, equity, and inclusion (University of Toronto, 2023; University of Michigan, 2023; SSHRC-CRSH, 2023).

On the surface, the language used on the BWTM website seems to resonate strongly with many of the values and concepts expressed by ANS. BWTM speaks of "inclusion" and their goal to "empower communities and build local capacity" and work toward "community development through music" (BWTM, n.d., Homepage). They are "human-focused" and seek "gender parity" and aim to provide "opportunities for all people regardless of gender, income, religious affiliation" (BWTM, n.d., Homepage).

Under the surface, however, some key differences can be unearthed. References to systemic challenges, oppression, and overt references to forms of discrimination expressed by ANS are absent from BWTM's vision, mission, and values. BWTM uses terms and concepts that that align with language found in international development practice such as the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.) or Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (GAC, 2017). BWMT also makes explicit reference to religious affiliation, which is absent from ANS's 'What we believe' page. While BWTM as a project is not religiously affiliated in a formal way, its partner organization in Tanzania, the Anza Kwa Imani Foundation is affiliated with the Africa Inland Church in Tanzania. In case there is any doubt about the foundation's beliefs and values, "anza kwa imani" translates to "start with faith" in Kiswahili. It is accounting for these contexts where we begin to see how social and cultural conditions effect the language we use. As ANS actively discusses homophobia and transphobia, BWTM seeks gender parity as an objective. As discussed in Chapter 4, for a number of faith-based and cultural reasons, gender parity in the Tanzanian context is focused explicitly on heteronormative, gender binaries. Their efforts around gender are focused on providing both female and male children and young adults equal opportunities (largely based on the acknowledgement of a need to empower women and girls). At this time, BWTM programs do not use or actively consider diverse gender identities or sexual orientations. In their context these conversations come with much higher risks than they do in the Canadian context. As such, our choices of language and the expression of the beliefs and values they represent must reflect that.

I discussed the accessibility of language and code switching in Chapter 3. It's worth remembering the differences in language use in academic and non-academic spaces. It's likewise necessary to be conscious of these differences within and across programming in diverse cultural spaces. 'Colonialism,' 'racism,' and 'gender' will hold very different meanings and will be accompanied by very different experiences in Guelph, in Nunavik, and in Mwanza.

Within intercultural spaces we need to attune our awareness not just to the concepts and topics of importance to our collaborators, but to how the language affiliated with them is used and understood. While we all have our limits and will inevitably make missteps, our ability to recognize that the way we communicate and the words we choose carry meaning in the bodies and minds of our collaborators is an essential component of intercultural work. These meanings are often different, broader, and/or more specific than any literal definition we might find in an article, a dictionary, or a textbook. Through our emergent and improvised communication, we worked creatively and collaboratively to find the words (no matter the language). But what about when words are not enough? What other languages do we practice?

Non-verbal language

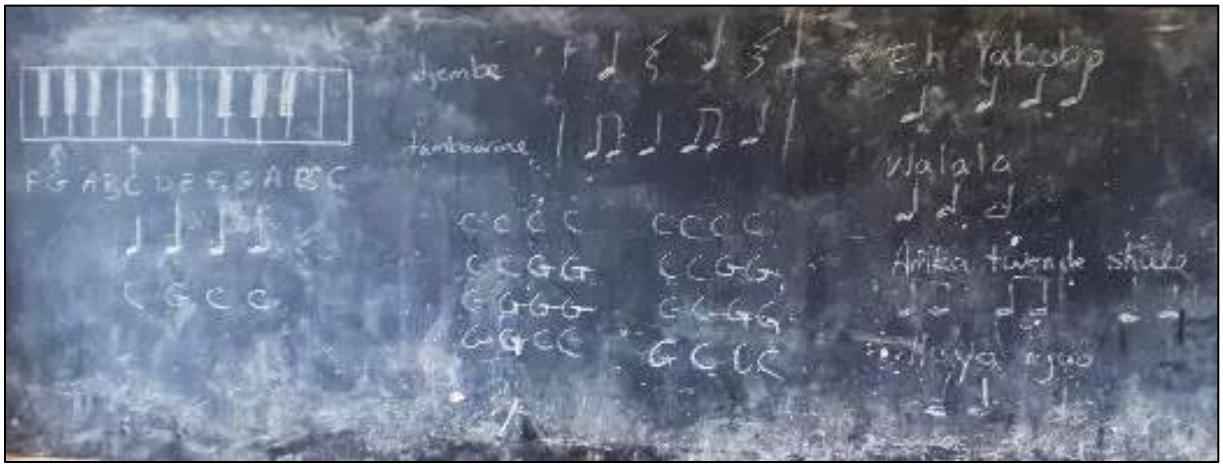
Creative, community-engaged scholars viscerally experience how communication consistently goes far beyond verbal language within artistic, intercultural spaces. In her writing on improvisatory methodologies, interdisciplinary artist and scholar Rebecca Caines asserts, "It is clear that improvisatory methodologies cross back and forth between linguistic and non-linguistic forms" (Caines, 2021, p. 335). Our use of diverse languages and communication strategies is further accelerated when the ability to communicate verbally is limited. At Rich Hill School in Geita, Paul Pambe and I made extensive use of the blackboard. In Figure 23, you will see a sample of several symbolic languages used to express music and concepts. In the photo you can see the graphic and symbolic ways we represented the musical elements of our simple arrangement of the nursery rhyme "Eh Yakobo." This song is a Kiswahili rendition of the popular European nursery rhyme "Frère Jacques" in French (or "Brother John" in English). On the

blackboard the various symbols, images, lyrics, and instrument names help to show the instrumentation, notation, and rhythm we used to play and sing along with the song.

To teach these symbolic languages, a range of embodied practices must take place. Singing is supported by posture, breathing, and pitch matching (an element of musical ear training). These are all demonstrated and practiced through movement, vocal production, and sensory integration. Rhythmic accompaniment requires a feel and attentiveness to a beat that is an invisible (and often silent) sense aligned to an intangible tempo. The work of internalizing a beat is often fostered collectively through any number of mirrored or reactive exaggerated movements. These movements provide an externalized symbol (or language) to an otherwise ambiguous feeling.

Figure 23

Arrangement of "Eh Yakobo" at Rich Hill English Middle and Nursery School



Note. Own photo

Then, there are the fine movements and techniques related to instrumentation. At Rich Hill these were expressed by illustrating the instrument on the blackboard and emulating the playing of the instrument with exaggerated movements in the air to encourage mirroring and embodiment in the students (this is reminiscent of the integral role of conductors and band leaders present at all levels of musical performance). Modeling musical concepts through movements encourages the hearing and feeling of musical motion, including small finer movements that align our bodies with the structure and function of musical elements and instruments. We can't take for granted that our hands will have the coordination or the strength to pluck a string, accurately strike a drum, or play piano keys. For example, it may not seem self evident when introducing children to the piano that many young children struggle to isolate and use their ring finger. If we hope they'll learn skills that will free them to be creatively expressive, we need to begin by reading their body language. How is their body responding and what is it telling us? As we demonstrate, describe, and illustrate lessons, we mustn't only communicate techniques, but also a sense of safety and freedom for people to learn how to connect with and coordinate their own body without fear of being judged or dismissed. This softer, encouraging language may include touch, patience, and sometimes a physical demonstration that you are sheltering or buffering them from the judgement of others.

It bears noting that all that I've just described was happening through a multimodal approach to teaching and learning a nursery rhyme. The number of communicative and linguistic concepts at play in just this simple tune, demonstrates the broad scope of diverse languages at play within a creative space.

Embodiment, physical expression, and storytelling are also at the core of circus practice. Clowning, acrobatics, aerials, and juggling are circus practices that become integrated with coordination, strength, flexibility, and expressiveness. Mobilizing exercises that build bodily awareness and confidence is fundamental to social circus practice (Hyttinen et al., 2011). CIRQINIQ workshops were no exception. An activity often used as an introductory or warm up exercise by CIRQINIQ asks participants to introduce themselves with their name accompanied by a movement or gesture. This popular ice breaker/team building activity can be found in a range of youth facilitation toolkits (Buesgen, 2018; Guide, Inc., 2023; Swartz & Nyman, 2010). Prompts for the movements can vary but may be related to expressing their interests or sense of self, how they may be feeling that day, or simply an expression of joy or humour. There are almost limitless iterations of the activity, but a popular version involves the group copying the gestures of each of participant in turn around the circle. While the objective here is often to help participants to meet one another and to get participants' minds and bodies prepared for upcoming activities, I'd like to reflect somewhat on what the gestures themselves may communicate.

During CIRQINIQ workshops, youth and facilitators all presented a range of movements to introduce themselves. I can recall star jumps, spins, poses, acrobatic flares, and goofy/clumsy acts, alongside those who stepped forward with heads held down, bodies curled, expressions of fatigue, and unenthusiastic or quick movements expressing that they are nervous or not comfortable. My own contribution? I decided to curl up like a rock, attempting to express both a reserved, but steady, solid feeling. We might try to explore the sophistication and the effectiveness of such an activity, but what interests me more in the context of this narrative is

the recognition that these gestures and the body language are telling us something, even if it's not obvious or even fully intentional on the part of the participant. Careful observation and care in these moments can tell us things that might never have been expressed verbally. As much as they tell something about the participants' interests or sense of self, they strongly tell us how someone feels and the nature of how they want to or feel able to engage. Anxieties, relationships, experience, physical aptitudes, moods, and interests can all be expressed through these improvised movements. They say as much or more through their gesture as they ever will with their words. We are often told to listen to our own bodies, but in co-creative spaces we also need to hear what the bodies of others are telling us.

What has stood out to me through *Improvising in-between* is the extent to which translating and communicating through difference becomes a process of finding commonalities from which we can build. It's not a matter of seeking sameness, but a concerted effort to not allow a pernicious sense of otherness to corrupt our engagements. Being separated by language (verbal, non-verbal, cultural, or otherwise) can be profoundly distancing. A creative, trust-filled, improvisatory ethic can provide the foundation for subverting conditions that might contribute to othering and isolation. It gets to our deeper humanity and offers us opportunities where we might have feared they weren't available.

Community Impact Speaks for Itself; Institutions Need to Listen

Earlier in this dissertation, I challenged what I characterized as the "accountability industry." In academia, the public sector, and the non-profit sectors, the relentless commodification and reductive quantification of outcomes and impacts is ubiquitous. In this narrative, with contributions and insights from ANS founder and executive director, Michelle

Peek, I discuss how ANS demonstrates that there are meaningful and impactful alternatives. I begin by looking at some examples of how ANS has publicly communicated their outcomes and impact.

"This is a story of love grown from grief." These words are the opening lyrics to the self-produced song by ANS staff, "Love and Art."[31] They speak to the ethic that grounds their work through an expression of both experience and passion. The lyric references the lived grief that inspired the founding of ANS[32] while serving as an artistic expression of how ANS embodies and engages in programming. Figure 24 is a screenshot from the video for "Love and Art" captured immediately after ANS staff have sung the lyric, "We think of you." Who can fully say what is in the minds of these singers as they smile and laugh while singing these words? We see joy on their faces, and we see how ANS staff work together.

Figure 24

Love and Art by Art Not Shame

Note. Source: https://vimeo.com/763458964 [1:37]

[31] "Love and Art" by Art Not Shame: https://vimeo.com/763458964

[32] As described on the "Who We Are" of the ANS website, "Art Not Shame originated from a single-story of sibling suicide loss, when at the age of 15, Co-Founder and Executive Director Michelle Peek lost her brother James to suicide, initiating profound questions about what it means to belong, and what we need to be well."

In another expression of their work, on page 2 of the ANS 2020-2021 Annual Report, we see it communicated that “The majority of participants (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops allowed them to express their feelings through art” (ANS, 2021, p. 7). The report also shares a quote from a Fuck Perfect participant; "Being a part of a community that allowed, accepted, and encouraged me to be vulnerable and open and authentically me (something I struggle DEEPLY with) was so overwhelmingly meaningful that I found myself in tears” (ANS, 2021, p. 8). On their website ANS also shares a reflection from their innovative artist witness initiative. As artist witness Aubrey Szabo reflected, “hurt, mistakes, frustrations, sadness . . . all these things can be difficult to deal with . . . Through a community of brave and honest people, we allow ourselves to affect and be affected by the growth and change of others” (Szabo, 2022, para. 7).

Figure 25

Bucket drummers expressing themselves.

Note. Source: https://artnotshame.org/our-impacts-outcomes

In one more representation of program outcomes, Figure 25 shows five bucket drummers participating in ANS programming. Even in this moment, there is a range of feelings and thoughts being expressed, one with a calm content smile, three drummers laughing (as one covers their mouth), and one with a somewhat serious looking smirk. But what story might each of them tell? I think we can all sense them to some extent and yet we can't really be sure about how they each feel.

Each example of knowledge, learning, and reflection gives us a different sense and a different insight. Yet, one of them holds a higher place of validation within the institutionalized funding community, which consistently privileges "facts and figures" as an expression of outcomes. Despite it being arguably the weakest expression of ANS's work, the percentage of agreement as reported from the survey, is the metric that will be expected and validated by many donors. Organizations, like scholars, are trapped in this superficial cycle of competitive grant and report writing. It is the natural outflow of a system with "an often undue focus paid to 'deliverables'—a framework drawn from the discourse of neoliberal economics that presently permeates public academic funding in Canada" (Chapman, & Sawchuk, 2012, p. 6). From the academy to the development sector, we see in Global Affairs Canada's guidance the declaration that both quantitative and qualitative results are necessary. Yet when providing examples of qualitative outcome indicators, they provide unambiguously quantitative metrics: "#/total of local independent journalists (f/m) who plan to continue cross-border investigations beyond the life of the project" and "%/total individuals (f/m) who felt that they were completely or mostly able to participate in democratic management bodies" (GAC, 2023, Box

41). In the non-profit arts sector, the Canada Council for the Arts offers a "Diversity Evaluation Tool" which uses the percentage of "representation of designated communities" (Canada Council, n.d., p. 1) as an evaluation metric. Even these institutional actors that might seemingly embrace and advocate for qualitative and creative expression reduce outcome and impact down to reductive facts and figures.

Artists and practitioners know, however, that there are no multiple-choice questions that can communicate the wave of goose bumps over our skin, or the tingly feeling in our cheeks when an uncontrolled smile takes over our face. We don't all have the vocabulary to express our sense of fulfillment and connection through an interview or even in our own storytelling. As Michelle expressed to me as she tried to describe ANS's approach, "it's really hard to communicate those intangible pieces but they are all very intentional decisions . . . Honestly, I think all we do is create space in a very intentional way, we hold space in a very intentional way and sometimes I feel like it's the easiest thing to describe and the most impossible thing to describe." We focus so heavily on how effective a program has been, that there seems to be little care or interest in how affective it was. Aggrieved and underserved people feel it when a program meets their needs, but it is rare for their feeling to be affectively captured and understood through project reporting and program evaluations.

Why do we struggle so much to allow programming to speak for itself? Why do we box ourselves in by manufacturing dehumanizing mechanisms to "prove" that our programs are "worth" the money that has been spent on them? How do you convince someone that while having fun for a few hours might be a momentary reprieve for a dozen people, for one of those people that joy and those connections were a lifeline? Positive interactions and experiences can

take years to bear fruit. How could you possibly expect a post-program survey to tell you that a creative interaction that occurred when you were a young person is something you have drawn upon for solace and inspiration as an adult? Think back. How many of us can recall drawing, dancing, singing, or role playing as a pivotal reflection point for our sense of selves? What about that time when we were terrified to do something and someone patiently saw us, heard us, and found a way to bring us in? Could we possibly have articulated the impact of those moments shortly after they occurred? Why would we expect that of the participants in arts-based programming? We intuitively know the quantitative and standardized reporting methods are reductive and limiting. So, why do they persist? I contend that it's a consequence of our misguided idolatry of "accountability" and a perpetuated myth of the expertise of empowered and "educated" authorities. This problem is perpetuated in a variety of ways: through a misalignment of evaluation and reporting strategies with program models, through the imposition of ill-suited criteria and expectations by funding authorities, and by the inappropriate assignment of authority to agencies without the knowledge or skills to deeply understand the programs they are responsible for overseeing.

As Marnie Badham (2019) asserts, "The arts sector generally agrees that evaluation is an important part of any publicly funded project; however, very few resources of time and money are dedicated to such assessment" (p. 209). Those in the arts sector do not oppose learning and accountability. The issue becomes more a question of resources and processes. In project-based and grant oriented funding worlds, accountability at its foundation means you've used the money the way you said you would and that the program achieved what you said it would achieve. In this cycle, programs and projects align their proposals to meet the priorities of

funders, then do a creative dance to manipulate their program spaces and the communication of their practice to fit the preconceived design for which they received their funds. In my years as a planning and evaluation consultant, I was constantly faced with the reality that managers and coordinators of a funded project were more interested in meeting their funding requirements and ideally securing future funding, than they were with genuinely communicating the realities of their program and seeking to learn and strengthen their work. Ironically, these misguided "accountability" efforts have forced organizations to spend their sparse resources on generating and communicating metrics at the expense of opportunities for authentic learning and strengthening programming. For Michelle, through ANS, she finds that "it gets really hard to talk about art . . . people live an artistic process, when they are playing and experimenting." For ANS, transforming their work into outcomes requires a level of translation that is not readily met by institutionalized evaluation and reporting expectations. When she describes their work, Michelle highlights that, "We don't offer product or like follow the rules of professional art it, we exist in this weird limbo space that people don't understand."

Elaborately conceived and communicated program designs are not in and of themselves the basis for good programming. Just as well written and structurally coherent program reports do not mean programs have been "successful." In Chapter 3, I asked "to whom do we hold ourselves accountable?" For community-engaged practitioners, the moral and logical answer to this question is the community and/or program participants. However, the dearth of time, resources, and community-based authority results in the high frequency of irresponsible "occasions when evaluation is undertaken and data is collected, but the results are not

analyzed, fed back to collaborators, publically disseminated, or applied in future planning" (Badham, 2019, p. 209). An honest and practical reckoning, however, forces us to admit that within the structures that bind us, it is institutionalized authorities (with their funds and resources) that dictate to whom we are ultimately held accountable. While accountability to community and to institutional authorities need not be inherently mutually exclusive, when engaged with aggrieved and underserved communities, it is the institution that is inordinately empowered to enforce accountability.

So, what is an arts organization to do? As Badham (2019) asserts, "there is no 'one size fits all' evaluation toolkit. Due to the culturally complex natures of communities and the elements of emergence and indeterminacy in socially engaged arts, the effectiveness of external evaluators is therefore limited" (p. 216). There is no shortage of tools and guiding resources for organizations to support arts-based research and evaluation approaches. These include strategies for building arts-based approaches into program design and using an arts-based strategy for program creation and reflection (see Appendix F for a range of open-source resources). However, there is less acknowledgement of the sheer amount of high quality "evidence," that remains mostly unrecognized in a formalized way, that speaks so deeply and meaningfully to what co-creative and arts-based work really does. To exemplify how arts-based outcomes and impacts are communicated in practice, I will reflect on experiences shared with me by Michelle Peek and my own observations from ANS's culminating event of their Art in a Just Recovery mural project (a follow up project to the aforementioned Art in Hard Times project).

In her reflections on ANS's Fuck Perfect program, Michelle places an unapologetic emphasis on their process. She mused, "Each of the exercises are designed with sort of a destination . . . you've done it enough to kind of know that it leads in that direction, but the path is always different, and it doesn't necessarily get there . . . You could take that same exercise and probably talk about something else." Practice-based work, while it may feel like a tired cliché, really is about the journey not the destination. This is especially true of creative, improvisatory work, where undesign makes the destination unknowable.

These spaces are emergent and intentionally uncertain. When describing their opening circle activity for their Fuck Perfect programming, Michelle highlighted their "regular practice of saying our needs out loud." This is a practice she learned from her engagement with artist facilitator Nadia Chaney. Michelle asserts that "welcoming people in is one of the most important things, [including] your history, your mood." Emphasizing the complexity of making spaces inclusive and accessible, she ponders how they would respond to the diverse expression of need "if we had some policy about how we open circle." She questions how a fixed approach would manage if one participant expressed that "loud voices are triggering for me" while another identifies as "hard of hearing." Michelle emphasizes the importance of setting up space "making it accessible . . . not just accessible in terms of physical accessibility [but also] centering the participants' voices, like kind of getting out of the way, so that the community that's developed can just do its thing." By breaking down the facilitator hierarchy through their relational circle practice, Michelle concludes that "as a community now, we have to sort it out."

Flattening the hierarchy in a space applies not just to how participants relate and engage, but fundamentally to how lessons are learned and how change happens. Michelle

asserts that "if you go in thinking you know the answers, or you're going to fix someone, or save someone, or give them advice . . . that's where we get into really, really problematic power dynamics, patterns." This ethic is reflective of Michelle's training with the Center for Courage and Renewal (Courage & Renewal).[33] In reflecting on how ANS conducts its programming, Michelle affirms that "it is essential in our work to believe that the participants have what they need, or they have their own answers. So, if you're creating a space for that wisdom to come through, or that creativity to come through, like that's the ultimate goal."

In practice, Michelle continues, this means that at ANS they "have to really cascade risk and the instruction, so that . . . there is that learning moment, but you also can't predict it. So, you just have to let it be what it is." Michelle expresses that for ANS staff and participants, these moments and these learnings don't "always have to be positive . . . and then you're like what is that?" In these moments Michelle reflects more on the facilitation approaches she's learned from Courage & Renewal as they "embody an invitational ethic so that . . . people can sense that difference and feel like they can come into it, or not, and nothing's riding on that. It's for them, it's not for me." Part of that invitation includes the ANS practice of starting sessions by eating together. As Michelle describes it, "That's also where the magic happens in the casual conversations. You learn a lot about people too and also there you get to tune the workshops and your approach." And as if the promise and relevance of a relational approach manifested as Michelle and I chatted and sipped our coffees she remarks, "I'm only realizing it as I'm saying it . . . but you're listening always." Michelle reveals here how important those unplanned, personal moments are in informing how we engage and how we work. This culminates for

[33] Center for Courage and Renewal: https://couragerenewal.org/

Michelle through a practice where “everyone has an inner teacher, and we need community to hold us . . . doing your work alone but together.” Within this community, she describes an ethic where participants can feel that “It’s not for the end survey. It’s for them.” This allows them to engage in “creative risk taking as you build trust with the group.”

Given the emergent and multifaceted nature of ANS’s arts-based work, how then can they be positioned to communicate their outcomes and impacts? My response to this lies in the inspiration for this narrative. In June of 2023, I had the pleasure to attend the mural unveiling and culminating event for ANS’s Art in a Just Recovery project. At this event, ANS demonstrated, shared, and generated a multitude of individual and collective narratives, art works, perspectives, and experiences. I summarize here how ANS enacted and communicated the outcomes and impact at this event.

At each table, friends, family, and strangers all sat. There were prompts and materials at the tables for writing and drawing that could be used for individual expression or as discussion starters, and yes, there was also an invitation to complete a survey. There was a large canvas along one side of the room for all ages to contribute their art, ideas, and sentiments. A short documentary video was shared that had captured the process and experiences of the workshops, while staff and volunteers were on hand to photograph and film the goings on at the unveiling event. Local musicians also performed, providing light entertainment, while food and drink was available.

All of this was happening in a mostly informal fashion around what one might describe as the formal proceedings, which included a panel discussion from Art in a Just Recovery participants, who shared their own experiences as well as their creative choices and artistic

contributions to the mural. Prior to the unveiling, attendees could view each individual participant's creation, which were displayed at the back of the space, many of which included a brief narrative or description by the artist. As I sat at my table, listening and doodling, I met two very animated workshop participants who spoke proudly of their own creations. Finally, the anticipated moment had arrived, and the mural was officially unveiled.[34]

I spoke with Michelle briefly that evening, wanting to say hello and to congratulate her. I remember the emotion she expressed and the humble (almost embarrassed) pride she felt at having founded an organization through which such a communal and generative space could be realized. When I sat with her in a coffee shop, several months later, I asked for Michelle's reflections on the event. She expressed how ANS engages and activates agency as individuals are brought into community. She expressed how through the unveiling participants could see their "stories honoured in their own individual way then also seeing it in the collective on the mural." She captured her feelings on this event when she expressed, "I think that was so effective at communicating impact because it created the space and culture that we do in our programs, and it's really hard to communicate those intangible pieces . . . Honestly, I think all we do is create space in a very intentional way, we hold space in a very intentional way."

The Art in a Just Recovery event shows how process and creative accountability can be and are meaningfully powerful ways of communicating impact. I asked Michelle if any of the grant project officers were in attendance that evening, and she confirmed that they were not able to attend. ANS will still need to complete their many project reports, adhering to the

[34] Images from mural unveiling have been shared on the ANS website at https://artnotshame.org/art-in-a-just-recovery

aforementioned, inauthentic, and donor driven expectations. They remain accountable to the structures that reaffirm the authority of the funder's interests, which will stand as a superficial expression of the experiences and the practices that ANS embodies.

What this demonstrates is not that community-engaged arts organizations lack the capacity to communicate the impact of their work, but that institutional actors and funders lack the mechanisms to appropriately understand and validate these practices. These funders and donors continue to demand that cash-strapped arts and community-based programs use their own scarce resources to translate their practices into commodified, reductive reports. In so doing, they diminish the quality of learning and understanding, ironically defeating the espoused purposes of promoting and communicating the effectiveness or efficiency of programs.

Figure 26

Art in a Just Recovery mural.

Note. A collaborative mural coordinated and assembled by social artist, Melanie Schambach, Source: https://artnotshame.org/art-in-a-just-recovery

Through this narrative I wish to reconsider what it means to be accountable and communicate impact. I put this out as a call for community-engaged scholars and those with access to and authority over arts-based funding to push institutions to take accountability for doing their own work to understand the strengths and the expertise of the community and arts-based practitioners. A persistent and concerted effort is needed to push back at the constant barrage of requirements to apply costly, inefficient, misaligned accountability methods as the controlling mechanism for funding and technocratic authority. This is not about shirking accountability, it is about admitting that the accountability structures in place are ill-suited to community-engaged, arts-based programming.

Perhaps its time to stop presuming that arts-based organizations need more evaluation and accountability capacity. Maybe its time to affirm that arts-organizations have a lot more to teach institutions and funding agencies than current structures have been willing or able to recognize. Throughout *Improvising in-between*, I've seen high quality arts-based learning and assessment happening consistently and applied in ways that align with the community's needs, in their cultural context. What I haven't seen is an institution or funding structure that has shown a nuanced or intimate capacity to truly understand how that is being achieved by community-facing arts organizations. For many organizations and programs, they may not need more "evaluation capacity," but they certainly need more advocacy toward and from institutional spaces that will allow the expertise and knowledge of the community and community-engaged organizations to be recognized and affirmed.

Improvising a Lesson and a Curriculum

There is a video on YouTube (with over 11 million views at the time of this writing) of the virtuosic singer and vocal educator, Bobby McFerrin, improvising on a pentatonic scale with an entire audience during a panel discussion at the World Science Festival.[35] It's a fascinating and inspiring demonstration, as McFerrin prompts the audience, which had apparently no training or preparation, to sing an improvised melody in unison. I've shared the video many times with my musician and music educator friends. The video implies that we are all inherently musical and that certain musical concepts (such as the pentatonic scale) are intuitively and instinctually understood. For many years, I had pictured modelling this lesson with emerging music learners. During music lessons with students at Rich Hill English Medium and Primary School, I finally tried it, and it failed. I felt a bit foolish when it dawned on me, I am not Bobby McFerrin, and the classroom of Tanzanian children that I had the privilege to instruct was not the same as an auditorium replete with keen vocalists and musicians excited to attend a panel headlined by McFerrin's brilliance. Context matters.

At Rich Hill School, having a white, English-speaking teacher hopping up and down in front of them singing and modeling a pentatonic melody, while possibly amusing, was also probably confusing. Now to say "it failed" is only to say that the students at Rich Hill did not playfully and innately know how to match my pitch and predict the pitches as McFerrin's video had promised. In that sense, it was unsuccessful. In another sense, it was pedagogically and interrelationally successful. But how could a poorly conceived and poorly implemented lesson be reconceived as a success? Sometimes it means letting go of expectations and shaking off

[35] Bobby McFerrin Demonstrates the Power of the Pentatonic Scale: https://youtu.be/ne6tB2KiZuk

disappointment to realize what was truly happening in the moment (not doubling down on what you had hoped or planned for). Through an improvisatory and co-learning lens, we might recognize a golden opportunity to listen to and engage with the learners. There was a lot of learning happening in those cacophonous interactions, as long as I remained open and receptive to it.

It was always my intention to be flexible and responsive to the learning environment in which I found myself. In many ways, I found my own beliefs about co-creation and music as a social and developmental practice very much echoed in the conception of Bridging Worlds Through Music and through its founder Christie Ulicny. Our belief in the power of collaborative and creative play was a feature of some of our early exploratory conversations.

At the heart of this narrative is the ongoing balance and contrast that has been set up between rote learning (i.e., teacher/expert led repetition) and student centered, experiential/creative learning (i.e., differentiated, contextualized, emergent). On the one hand it's easy for me to say that I favour the latter of these two broad learning categories, but in reality, as was demonstrated during my time with BWTM, I've come to see them very much as operating in a mutually reinforcing, iterative relationship.

My early engagement with the students and workshop participants consisted of improvising together. In my first day in the concrete walled classroom of the Mwanza School of Music, we jammed freely in the key of Eb for nearly 30 minutes. I joined their musical exploration as their makeshift drummer on a partially broken keyboard, carefully listening and observing how they play and learn. At Rich Hill, in a similarly concrete walled music room, we started with call and response activities, and moving our bodies in time. I modelled the

expression of pitch through embodied techniques like vocal glissando (sliding from one pitch to another) as a means to manipulate and match pitches. The room began to fill with high, uncontrolled energy. The liberated joy expressed by some students seemed overwhelming to others. Finally, I met the young men of Africa Inland Church of Tanzania's worship team at their church in the Kalangalala neighbourhood of Geita. These young men were already talented and inquisitive musicians. We jammed and improvised in several keys adding and adjusting guitar, piano, bass, and drum parts to create new feels. We thrived and stumbled as we went.

Following the first day with the young men in Kalangalala, I received a clear message. My focus and intent to continue to improvise together and work toward songwriting or original music was diverted by a direct request from the students for lessons on Western music notation and theory. This was a turning point in the co-learning relationship that defined the rest of our time together.

The initial co-creative engagements resulted in spaces and interactions where I could see, hear, and feel the skills and the knowledge that the young musicians brought to the table. It also allowed me to learn how Paul Malifa, in Mwanza and Paul Pambe, in Geita taught their students. Both men could play circles around me on guitar and had strong musical ears that allowed them to improvise freely within traditional, popular, and worship music spaces. The asset that I recognized I could bring to the learning environments included both dynamic and structured approaches to music pedagogy. I could share how formalized music learning can inform creative learning and how creative freedom can inform formalized music learning. This is how we came to improvise a music curriculum together. The subsequent days involved a daily reflection with the teachers, based on the previous days learning on how to construct a

framework for learning new music concepts and then playing with some freedom within that framework.

The plans and lessons that I conceived and developed prior to these first improvisational musical meetings, did serve as a useful reference for me.[36] Although I shared them with local instructors for their feedback prior to my arrival, they were built in isolation from the learners. In practice, these plans would never have worked given the timing, experience, context, languages, and expectations of a real-world setting. Getting to know the learners and allowing them to see what I could share with them meant we now had a basis upon which to learn together each day.

Rich Hill English Medium and Nursery School

At Rich Hill, we spent two days playing and re-imagining their relationship with rhythm and pitch. Having recognized that they were previously introduced to terms for rhythmic durations and solfège, we explored ways to bring those concepts to life. Many of the techniques I applied were grounded in the Kodály method (Dobszay, 1972), inspired by the work of Hungarian composer and music educator Zoltán Kodály. His music education philosophy was grounded in the belief that "Music is learned first through immersion" (KMI, n.d., para. 6) then that music literacy can be explored by using a variety of strategies such as melodic and rhythmic syllables, and hand signs (KMI, n.d.; Dobszay, 1972). The lessons in Rich Hill evolved by building off students' known skills and capacities, playfully finding ways for them to take control of how lessons rolled out, while infusing them with my own learned music

[36] A draft version of these largely abandoned workshop plans that I shared with BWTM can be seen in Appendix G - Emergent and Collaborative Research Documentation (Samples)

pedagogy strategies. We moved our bodies to feel tempos and embody pitches. Using increasingly complex musical elements, we co-created and played simple rhythmic patterns and melodies familiarizing ourselves with how rhythm symbols and solfège syllables translate into sounds and feelings. Students took turns conducting their classmates who formed a giant percussion section, using their voices to create percussive sounds. We gradually integrated these playful activities into co-learning two nursery rhymes as a class (including arrangements with percussion and piano accompaniment and singing as a round).

The song sheet shown in Figure 27 is a culmination of many elements of our lessons as we integrated them into our learning. “Moja, mbili, tatu” is a Kiswahili children’s counting song that I found via a web search from my hotel room at the Lenny Hotel in Geita. This was yet another example of the emergent lesson plan. The song is a playful conversation about proudly catching a big fish, only for the fisherman to have to throw it back after being bitten by the fish (the translation was provided to me by Rich Hill teacher Paul Pambe). Our playful and responsive lessons built on foundations already established and ensuring that some bits of joy and fun were integrated. We built a curriculum together. As co-teachers, Paul and I met each day before and after class to discuss new ideas for the next day. Although our final day of workshop did not incorporate intentionally improvised music, the ongoing dynamic and creative engagement we fostered with the students never waned. We adjusted and animated on our final day on a foundation of hearing, seeing, and responding to students’ musical engagement just as we did in our first days together.

Figure 27

"Moja, mbili, tatu" with rhythm and solfège

Note. Own photo.

Remember the reflection on the intuitiveness of the pentatonic scale that McFerrin made look so simple? Well, when we sang a familiar nursery rhyme ("Eh Yakobo" – a Kiswahili version of "Frère Jacques"), building on rhythm, then solfège, then lyrics, some of the musical intuitiveness and familiarity I had been pre-emptively looking for suddenly started to emerge. Technically the melody of the song breaks from the pentatonic scale (with the introduction of 'fa' the fourth pitch of the full seven note major scale), but the musical elements are still quite basic. As the students became comfortable with the simple melody, I began to notice something happening with how the students sang the concluding pitches. For the closing lyric "Haya njoo" ("come on" in English) I had simplified and taught it to them using only "do" and

"sol" (the first and fifth pitch of the major scale). To my surprise, the melody had been unconsciously adapted by the students in the class, who had started to sing the relatively simple "do, sol, do" pattern, as the slightly more advanced "re, sol, do." It may have been a small change, an intuitive, unconscious change, but it was musically more interesting. I wrestled with the idea of trying to "correct" their adaptation, only to decide against it. Why would I discourage musicality that improved on what they had been taught? With more time, I may have taken a moment to highlight the difference between the two melodies. But in the end, accidental or unintentional as it may have been, this improvement represented a special form of creative discovery. It was a heartening sign that the intent behind my practice-based and collaborative approach was bearing fruit.

Africa Inland Church in Tanzania in Kalangalala, Geita

On day one in Kalangalala, we quickly recognized our familiarity with the common music building block that is the IV-V-I chord progression. Inquisitively, I encouraged the students to play this progression in different feels, keys, and meters. Within this foundational musical frame, the young men were very strong musicians, displaying rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic flexibility, improvising confidently and expressively (especially on the piano). But quickly, though their music was beautiful, I started to identify opportunities for supplementing their musical toolkit. They were unfamiliar with feels in different musical meters, would often use automated features on electric keyboards to change different keys, and had less freedom of expressions outside of the chords and chord patterns that deviated from the IV-V-I progression.

Like Rich Hill, we co-developed our lessons. We built from where the participants were musically. They already had a foundational understanding of major triads and scales. They had a strong sense of rhythm and pitch and was it ever a pleasure to hear them sing. Given their existing foundation and how it relates to the IV-V-I progression, I considered if the "circle of 5ths" might be a foundational framework these young men could use. Equipped with this well-known harmonic teaching tool, I framed musically engaged lessons through which we explored key signatures, scales, chords construction, harmonic progressions, and chord-scale relationships.

At the same time as building these more advanced ideas, I recognized that their previously limited opportunities to learn concepts like rhythmic and melodic notation offered us plenty of space in which to explore and play similar games and strategies that I used at Rich Hill, though at a much faster and more elaborated pace. An especially playful practice is the co-creation and performing of rhythmic patterns using a combination of rhythmic notation and rhythm syllables. When harmonic and melodic ideas started to become heavy, the integration of fun, collaborative, and embodied rhythm exercises was a welcome reprieve from the brain work of harmonic and melodic structures.

After applying new knowledge of rhythm, melody, and harmonies to musical improvisations and to the creation of short musical compositions, we turned our attention to reading music notation. Co-teacher Paul Pambe had a book of simplified hymns with which some of the participants were already familiar. Paul and I selected a hymn called "Sioshwi Dhambi Zangu," a Kiswahili translation of the hymn "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" composed by Robert Lowry in 1876. The musical elements of the song had complemented our lessons.

Aligning this familiar hymn to musical notation allowed them to connect their already impressive musicianship to a new set of tools and musical concepts upon which they could continue to build. As a co-learner, I was hearing and learning the song for the first time, but conversely relied on my familiarity with musical form and notation as opposed to my familiarity with the hymn itself. Singing with these young men as they accurately and passionately sang the song as written, including accompanying piano and guitar, and the written harmony was hair raising.[37]

Figure 28

Arrangement of "Sioshwi Dhambi Zangu," Kalangalala, Geita

Note. Own photo.

[37] A link to a video of their performance can be found in Appendix C – Adult Music Workshops - Geita 2022.

Figure 29

Learning the blues scale in Kalangalala, Geita

Note. Participants in Kalangala practicing a blues scale on an electric piano. Own photo

On our final day of lessons, as we extended our work with musical forms and chord types, I demonstrated the 12-bar blues. In a bittersweet realization, the young men became quickly excited by this new musical vocabulary. After an emergent and responsive week of improvising, composing, harmonizing, and learning a new language, we had arrived at the realization that we had so much more to learn and share. The young musicians from the Africa Inland Church in Tanzania in Kalangalala, Geita concluded their workshops, gathered around the keyboard joyfully practicing the blues scale.

Mwanza School of Music

Workshops at the Mwanza School of Music, with co-teacher Paul Mailfa, followed a similar trajectory in the beginning few days as the workshops in Kalangalala. Things took on a different character due in large part to the fact that the students in Mwanza were less experienced than those in Kalangalala and teacher Paul Malifa had a number of existing

teaching approaches that were weaved into the emerging lessons. The young men in Mwanza, like those in Kalangalala expressed their interests, including a desire to understand music concepts and practices such as accidentals and conducting (which we incorporated into our workshops). One particularly memorable session involved us cycling through that old favourite, the IV-V-I chord progression, as we iteratively rewrote the accompanying percussion rhythms by changing the newly learned rhythmic notation patterns written on the blackboard. The dynamic exploration of rhythm by some as other learners practiced their chords on piano and keyboard, made our learning practice space into a live musical experiment in which people could practice a variety of skills, all while adding to their musical toolkit.

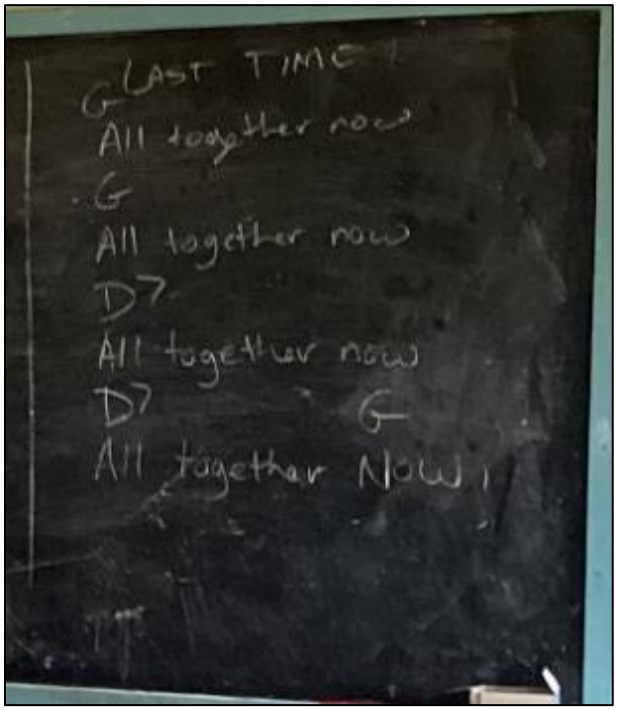
The workshops in Mwanza changed dramatically from those in Kalangalala when after a couple of days of workshops, teacher Paul Malifa requested that I bring English songs into the class as a basis for lessons. We were now weaving and integrating our melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic learning into our efforts to learn Leonard Cohen's "Hallellujah" (which I had recently heard sung by a local vocalist in Mwanza) and The Beatles "All Together Now" (which thematically and musically seemed to align with our classroom environment). Suddenly, not only were we learning new musical styles and integrating them with the concepts we had been developing, but these young men were also trying to understand and pronounce English lyrics with which they had no familiarity.

It soon became apparent that familiarity and confidence facilitated expressive freedom within our musical interactions. Whereas we know that tension can spark innovation and learning, the learners in Mwanza showed a marked sense of relief and openness each time we reached the rather simple choruses of these songs. As previously described in Chapter 4, the

palpable joy and freedom of expression could be felt as they belted “Hallelujah” and “All Together Now.” While they still focused and trained to learn more difficult musical skills and concepts, the vocal tone, spontaneous harmonies, and the wide-open mouths and thrown back heads expressed a deep musicality that seemed to be aching to get out. I sat back joyfully as Paul Malifa led his students as they played chords and rhythms along with the new songs they had learned.[38]

Figure 30

“All Together Now” – The Beatles at the Mwanza School of Music



Note. Lyrics and chords for The Beatles song “All Together Now” written on a blackboard at the Mwanza School of Music. Own photo.

[38] A link to a recording of some of these moments can be found in Appendix C - Mwanza School of Music.

I sang and played with them, and watched these young men engage passionately in lessons that in many ways were designed by them and for them. What felt particularly important about this co-learning approach was how it seemed to contrast with their previous music learning experiences. My exploration of intercultural engagement through practice became deeply realized by my desire to actively share and learn with my collaborators. For a variety of reasons, participants in both Kalangalala and Mwanza expressed feelings of having been discouraged in their past experiences trying to learn music. I recall now the participant in Kalangalala who recounted, “I was removed from the session and another student was chosen since the teacher was so upset. I recall shutting myself in the room after leaving and crying.” In Mwanza, a workshop participant also recalled being dissuaded from pursuing his music interests. He shared that, “Some people told me to do something different, but I refused. Many people tried to discourage me, but I convinced myself that I could accomplish it despite my lack of experience. Therefore, I decided to learn music to inspire others and my community to think anything is achievable with hard effort and dedication.”

Another participant in Kalangalala boldly and proudly expressed his determination and persistence in the face of the discouragement he encountered. He said of his past experiences with music teachers, “I used to tell them that I wanted to be a musician, but some of them continued telling me that music was too difficult for me. They claimed that I was too old to study and that I couldn't do it since I already had too many responsibilities . . . I can now sing well and teach people. People appreciate what I do . . . I give God praise for that.” The opportunity to support the perseverance of these young men and to do so in a manner where

they are not just allowed but enthusiastically encouraged to pursue their passion is a humbling privilege.

In Rich Hill, we may not have fully unlocked the improvisatory freedom evoked by Bobby McFerrin, but by bringing a creative spirit into our lessons, we planted seeds from which expressive ideas could grow. In Kalangalala, our lessons went full circle, we began improvising together, building our common musical language collectively, only to arrive at a new excitement for improvising. With the new ideas and tools we had discovered together, a spark of excitement for blues and jazz infused improvisation was ignited. In Mwanza, they found freedom in the familiar and boldly expressed joy through being encouraged to express.

Our time together resulted in two lesson plan toolkits (Appendices A and B). These tools (in the spirit of how they were made) remain emergent. Ongoing work to translate, contextualize, supplement, and support the application of these resources remains. As long as the need and the desire is there, improvising our music learning together will hopefully sustain our relationships.

A space for outsiders

I begin this reflection by expressing my gratitude to the members of CIRQINIQ, Tupiq A.C.T., and Artcirq for their insights and contributions. I hope they remain strong in their chosen families.

Following my visit to the Northern Village of Inukjuak to participate in a community visit with the CIRQINIQ program, I shared my key take away with the CIRQINIQ coordinators as a contribution to their program reporting. I noted, “I’ve observed how social circus intentionally provides alternative and welcoming physical and creative opportunities for youth who may not

have found other spaces (at school or in the community) where they can learn and express themselves." In this reflective narrative, I will elaborate upon how Inuit youth who've engaged in social circus have found their community in creative environments filled with trust and care.

Many long-time participants in social circus programming express pride in their identities as outsiders. As I described in the "A Reflection on Language" (p. 218), during the national social circus gathering, Cirkaskina, visual artists Alina Gutierrez Mejia (of Visual Versa) and Maina Mina Tukai (of T.U.P.I.Q. Act), worked collaboratively with social circus participants to create a graphic social circus manifesto. The entire mural (which was co-created using traditional paper and marker, then digitally recreated) is available on the website of Montreal-based social circus organization Cirque hors Piste.[39] It is another strong representation of arts-based knowledge mobilization, like those discussed above in the narrative, "Community Impact Speaks for Itself; Institutions Need to Listen" (p. 234).

On the mural, many of the participants expressed ideas and contributed language that evoke an outsider identity. Some examples included, "Our weirdness doesn't need a filter," "We are misfits with cool tricks!" and "The family we choose, we are differently the same." When describing social circus spaces on the mural, participants contributed the phrases "safe space" and "a space to where we can fly and be free." These descriptions align with the foundational ethics communicated by social circus practitioners. As Karine Lavoie, director of Cirque hors Piste, highlighted, "We use circus as a tool to create a relationship with them and to give them a safe space where they can be themselves." (Bernstien, 2020, para. 6).

[39] Cirque hors Piste – social circus mural: https://cirquehorspiste.com/fr/cirkaskina/le-mouvement/

How do these improvisatory social circus spaces make space for those who seek it? As expressed through interviews and shared reflections participants in Arctic social circus programs have described the social circus community as a family.[40] As CIRQINIQ participant, Noriko Tooktoo from Umiujaq put it, "Circus is so much fun, making a lot of friends, meeting new people. People have a good vibe. Circus is like family to me."

During their joint interview Tupiq A.C.T. members Minnie Ningiurunik and Mina Maina Tukai shared with me how they've struggled with shyness and anxiety. They've both credited their engagement with social circus for helping them to overcome and navigate these challenges. When thinking about some of the most important changes they've experienced through social circus Minnie admitted, "I'm really, really shy . . . My mind shuts down for like opening up to like new people . . . So, I'm trying to overcome that . . . and it's getting there, it's getting there." In a similar reflection, Mina Maina reflected, "I used to be really anxious and shy, but I've learned to approach conflicts in a calmer manner. I still have like trouble with it, but I'm better now." In both these reflections, Minnie and Mina Maina describe struggling to engage in social spaces, but have both thrived, in their own ways, to become young leaders among their Inuit peers.

For some Inuit, they are not quite so direct about how they perceive themselves or how they self identify. As I interviewed a young adult circus participant in Inukjuak, I asked him, "What do you think would be your best skill as a teacher. What do you think you'd be good at?"

"Probably nothing," he replied.

[40] These reflections by collaborators inspired the title card "It's Like a Family" in the video shared in Appendix E – Arctic Voices in Social Circus.

At first blush, it's easy to reflect on the young man's lack of confidence. But as we continued to discuss further, it became apparent that he had some thoughtful insights on his own experiences and what he could share with his fellow participants. When I asked him to share advice for those who might want to give circus a try, he asserted, "It's not easy I know. I've tried. Trust me. I went through it all. Take your time. Don't get frustrated. Just try to enjoy yourself in learning something new." It's in this reflection where we begin to see how and why an ethic of encouragement that emanates through social circus practices has become a space for outsiders.

Artcirq teacher and facilitator Maya Cook referenced perseverance as an important component of supporting young people through their difficulties. For Maya, as a leader, it's been important for her to be able share challenges and model skills as a means to engage and to reach the Inuit youth with whom she's worked. She asserts, "I can always tell people how hard it was for me to learn, and they can also see the level that I'm at now. I find sharing that with people very helpful when they are having a difficult time."

This supportive ethic was not only identified as something that is enacted by experienced leaders. It was something that appeared through the collective ways that participants engaged with one another. This was shown through the youth response to the man in the park as described earlier (p. 174) and was echoed in a memory shared by one of the youth leaders in Inukjuak. She recounted, "My friend . . . she was really being down on herself . . . everyone came together, and we were all just like, they sat around and being really encouraging. So, I think it was really like a heartfelt moment where everyone just came together, and we all supported her . . . She like really gained a lot of confidence with it. So, I

think those are like my favourite memories, just like everyone supporting each other." This memory gives a strong example of how the inclusive ethic that is described by the broader social circus community is enacted within the creative spaces. We see here how this experience not only allowed the supported participant to build confidence, but we also hear how the supporters come away feeling fulfilled. These are the stories we hear time and again from social circus spaces. A very similar reflection was shared by Siasi Audlaluk, a CIRQINIQ participant from Ivujivik. She reflected, "When I started circus at a young age . . . trying out new skills and improving and gaining confidence, it made me feel safe because nobody was judging you or trying to put you down, or competitiveness. There is always support and encouragement, believing in each other. That's the safe space."

I've described how social circus participants have self-identified as outsiders and expressed the struggles that they've brought with them into creative spaces. I've shared how the social circus community has committedly affirmed and supported people's identities and differences. But what might we say about the creative spaces themselves that contribute to the development of environments where outsiders are welcomed and affirmed? In Chapter 4, I highlighted how youths came to circus out of boredom or lack of opportunities in their home communities (p. 185). In her interview at the Cirkaskina gathering, Minnie Ningiuruvik put a more optimistic spin on this yearning, when she noted, "We are of course open for new experiences. We love new experiences. We crave them." Throughout their interview, both Minnie and Mina Maina touched on the myriad of creative practices that they've explored through their social circus engagement. To name just some, they mentioned costuming, face painting, aerials (e.g., silks, trapeze), hand to hand acrobatics, juggling, pyramids, and parkour.

As the Cirkaskina mural suggests, these misfits love their "cool tricks." For the young Inuk leader in Inukjuak, he strongly identified with clowning and expressed the pride he experienced for still being recognized for the clowning performance he gave years ago. Siasi, from Ivujivik, also highlighted how clowning allowed her to find herself as a performer. She reflected, "Clowning was my favorite too, it brought comedy to the community. I never thought I would act funny, but with circus I was a performer."

These spaces are therefore multidisciplinary with a wide range of physical and artistic modes of expression. We can also describe them as co-learning environments. Said another young leader in Inukjuak, "Sometimes people don't have anyone in their circle that wants to come. So, I would say . . . it's easy to make connections because you are all doing the same thing you are all teaching each other, all learning together." The co-learning was not only described as among peers, but across generations, as Noriko from Umiujaq expressed, "I want to make little kids laugh and surprise them . . . I was so little, and I saw my biological mom doing circus. I will never forget it. My eyes sparkled with circus."

At the end of the community visit in the Northern Village of Inukjuak, with the guidance and support of senior instructors Véronique Provencher and Mina Maina Tukai, the youth co-devised their community performance, featuring juggling, acrobatics, parkour, and aerial performances around an original tale about Inuit caribou hunting. The roles, opportunities, and modes of expression that are realized through the circus arts were on full display, including the curation of a soundtrack by participants that helps to evoke the stories they are telling. Through the performance the youth not only expressed their newfound skills and creative ideas, but

there are many examples of the supportive ethic on display as youth encourage and assist one another.[41]

The diversity of opportunity and inclusion within these social circus spaces has offered Inuit youth who've struggled to find their community and to express themselves an opportunity to feel included and to thrive. This is not to say that the circus family will be the right fit for everyone. Collaborators will make mistakes and a certain amount of risk taking and negotiation is necessary. I recall discussing inclusivity with the CIRQINIQ coordinators and they've often emphasized how important it is that inclusive practices must begin with safety as a foundation. We are wise to recall our trauma-informed reflections as our base upon which we can explore and negotiate. What the relational and creative dynamics in social circus spaces do show us, however, is that they are a generative place for outsiders who might have struggled to find a supportive community. The invitation to explore, to create, and to be seen, without being judged is the exact example of a social justice oriented, improvisatory engagement that this research sought to explore. It reinforces international research on social circus work which has asserted, "Social circus shows great promise not only for promoting healthy individuals but also for promoting health equity and the social change needed to sustain it" (Spiegel et al., 2015, p. 72). The sheer scope of choice and opportunity, combined with an inclusive, trauma-informed ethic I feel truly characterizes how and why social circus has earned the reputation of being an empowering space for a family of outsiders.

[41] A link to an edited video of this performance can be seen in Appendix E - CIRQINIQ Community Performance.

Western music in East Africa

My desire to explore inclusive and culturally appropriate creative collaboration preoccupied many of my thoughts during my time with BWTM in Tanzania. I recall one day, music teacher Paul Malifa and I sat in the back of a bajaji (a Tanzanian autorickshaw) on our way back from the BWTM workshops with the Mwanza School of Music. "Do you have songs you can bring to the class to teach the students?" Paul asked me. I sheepishly admitted that I didn't know any songs in Kiswahili, but that if he could share some with me, I'd be happy to co-learn the songs with him and the students. I was trained to teach in Western[42] music practices and have little more than a superficial awareness of East African music styles and cultures (and as established in earlier chapters, my efforts to learn Kiswahili can charitably be described as fledgling). In the early phases of my own preparation to work with Tanzanian musicians and music students, I read about and listened for examples of Tanzanian traditional music. I distinctly remember sitting down at a piano trying to answer the nagging question in my mind, "Why do those choir harmonies sound so good?" What I discovered, was not that there was some mysterious harmonic structure at play that I was unfamiliar with, but that the style and timbre inflected by the singers created a powerful resonance that no advance harmonic structure on its own can recreate. On the one hand I was relieved that the musical structure on the surface was one that I was familiar with. On the other hand, I was entering the space as someone with minimal capacity to provide much value to the hair-raising talent of local choirs and singers. There is nothing quite as humbling as coming into a space as a learner. I wanted to

[42] In this text, "Western" refers largely to the traditions and practices that have been developed, controlled and/or co-opted by white, European authorities. This term may draw some deserved criticisms, but I will not be taking them up in this text. I will use this term due to its widespread use and relatively well understood meaning.

learn and honour their musical traditions as much as I was hopeful that my own musical training would be of some value to them.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I reflected that in early consultations I negotiated with partners to determine if and how we might work together. During the early engagement with BWTM, we spent a lot of time discussing how we might support the music instructors in Tanzania with teaching resources. My inclination was to find and purchase music education materials in Kiswahili and/or identify sheet music or lesson plans (for various musical levels) that was grounded in Tanzanian culture and traditions. Not only did this prove challenging, but in my ignorance, I didn't fully stop to consider that this might not be the type of programming the team in Tanzania wanted. Program coordinators and teachers continuously re-affirmed their desire for formalized, Western music knowledge. After informing Paul of my lack of experience with local, culturally relevant songs, he informed me that the students would like to learn English songs.

BWTM Founder and Director, Christie Ulicny, recognizes the delicate balance of engaging as a white identifying Canadian in East Africa. She graciously has contributed to this narrative through back-and-forth email correspondence. She began by highlighting the "complexity of the unspoken power dynamics inherent in being a westerner teaching/learning in East Africa."

As a doctoral researcher in critical studies in improvisation, I found myself constantly seeking ways to apply socially engaged, spontaneous, non-idiomatic music collaborations. I aimed to enact those ideas and practices I've experienced and have read about that seek to intentionally challenge colonial structures, authoritative learning environments, and celebrate

the differences brought by each musical collaborator. Yet, throughout my engagement with BWTM, I continued to hear that this was not what my students and the local teachers were seeking. Following the workshops in Geita, one participant expressed, “I didn't have a qualified teacher instruct me on the things I was doing. In general, I mimicked and copied other individuals and learned music. I didn't have a teacher, mentor, or guardian to teach me the basics and explain things.” Later in Mwanza, at the Mwanza School of Music, another participant asserted that, “When I'm allowed to, I want to be able to sing songs that are composed by professionals that are found in books. One must undergo training in order to be able to sing these songs.” In my desire to break free from the trappings of Western music and formal music structures, I had failed to acknowledge their value and utility to those who had previously had little access to them.

As the director of a small, international charity, Christie expressed a deep awareness of the challenges related to resource access and allocation, “the tension of resources is ever present.” In Chapter 4, I shared some of the modest material and spatial resources available in the learning spaces in Geita and Mwanza (pp. 189-191). The funds available to cover the costs of instruments, technology, and staff are scarce. The physical infrastructure and access to formal music education resources (i.e., storage/rehearsal spaces, mobile/internet access, teaching guides, music books) are similarly difficult to access in many rural and peri-urban areas, such as those in and around Mwanza and Geita. While these challenges are evident, Christie wonders, “Are we undervaluing the assets that exist in the communities?” She wonders if perhaps these ever-present resource constraints, from a program planning perspective, can sometimes distract us from the deep reflection that is needed on the tensions between

"providing culturally sensitive teaching [and] the community desire to learn Western theory and English songs."

Working with the young adults and teachers in both Geita and Mwanza, their ability and willingness to explore, improvise, and sing was never in short supply. Their curiousity for music up until that point had been fulfilled by their relationships in their family, in their communities, in their churches, and with their friends. Perhaps understandably, they were not looking to me for culturally informed, play-based, co-creative, and socially engaged music learning opportunities. They already had that. I found myself with a deep sense of discomfort with the use of Western practice. This discomfort, ironically, has emerged in large part due to my intensive immersion and adoption of Western academic critical thought.

I have found that while it can feel knotty at times, we can approach these seeming contradictions with a combination of wisdom and relationship. It remains important to challenge and question the often deeply internalized notions of the authority and superiority of Western music theory and pedagogy. Naturally, those educated in methods originating from Eurocentric, predominantly white systems (like me) will have internalized a range of pedagogical and artistic practices that they believe to be powerful and effective. It's important for us to further recognize, as Molefi Kete Asante has asserted, this internalization is not exclusive to white identifying people. Through his scholarship on Afrocentrism, Asante argues that "Many nonwhites, educated in white studies, assumed their own inferiority and accepted the superiority of white culture as promulgated by white studies. The communication between such a person and a white person is superficial and often meaningless" (Asante, 1983, p. 12). Christie's experience working with BWTM has led her to reflect upon how power, access to

resources, and internalized narratives of superiority and inferiority exist as conscious and unconscious contradictions for our collaborators. She scrutinizes how “Those threads of tension are forces that shape the engagement and lead to censorship on the side of participants.” She notes how participants will consider difficult questions related to how they interact with their Western interlocutors. Such as, “How can we be pleasing and make sure this resource isn't taken away?” For our collaborators, the stakes can feel high and as Christie describes, “a delicate dance ensues.”

As empowered educators, guests, and collaborators, our attunement to our selves and our collaborators becomes crucial. For Christie, it’s important that we are aware and that we interrogate “The notion that we have superior education/skills, and the valuation placed on that versus the value of community learning/sharing (i.e., songs passed down orally) that exist in community.” If we are faced with collaborators who assert their agency in a way that appears to affirm the superiority and authority of Western practices and ideologies, how do we respond? It makes me wonder if colonialism has been so successful that it has been turned around on itself? Though the British have not occupied Tanzania as a colony since the East African country gained independence in 1961, the authority and influence of colonial repression persisted (Cheeseman et al., 2021; Lupeja & Komba, 2021; Thiong’o, 2018). These colonial relationships are complicated. Efforts to decolonize learning spaces are troubled if they intentionally or unintentionally replicate existing power relationships. Within intercultural spaces, our relationships can be further problematized by differences in cultural understanding or resistance to contemporary Western scholarly and institutional priorities and beliefs. Some of these have gained prominence in the West in decades since colonial occupation (such as

those related to children, Indigenous people, gender, and sexuality), and may find themselves in conflict with existing cultural and political realities in modern Tanzania.

As my days working with the students at Rich Hill English Middle and Nursery School were quickly coming to an end, plans for a culminating performance to demonstrate our learning started to take root. Suddenly, the playful, exploratory dynamic of the early lessons was replaced by a more serious focus on "getting it right" and "showing how their music skills had improved." The performance on the last day of lessons at Rich Hill School felt distinctly less joyful than the play and the chaos that preceded it. The environment had changed, the freedom to experiment, explore, and make mistakes, was replaced by an effort to perform "correctly." You can observe the differences is students' demeanor for yourself in BWTM's YouTube video entitled Rich Hill Music Classes BWTM 2022 linked in Appendix C. I continue to question the role of formalized, performance in these spaces. Admittedly, in our 10 days of working together there was a noticeable change in the fundamental musical skills students were able to demonstrate. Students' ability to keep time, sing on pitch, accompany a song on the piano and percussion along with their singing classmates all showed "improvement." But to what end?

When Christie reflected on the need to produce results, she considered how the power dynamics inform how our Tanzanian collaborators are concerned with maintaining relationships and access to opportunities through connections with wealthy Western collaborators. Christie recognized that "The hope to make sure needs and interests are being supported (impact) on the side of the educator lies in balance with the desire to maintain access and opportunity on the side of the student." As Christie asserts, the desire to demonstrate a positive outcome (such

as through a musical performance) is tied to the effort to show prospective donors and supporters that the program is effective. BWTM exists within these dynamics and Christie confesses her own challenges and uncertainties when navigating them. She reflects that as she seeks to create space for collaborators to feel free to express their needs and interests, "This kind of context plays heavy into the results I find. I haven't figured out how to create more freedom in this."

This brings me to the question of what might be considered a "Western" approach to music and music learning in the context of my Tanzanian experiences and collaborators. On the one hand, my more modern Western philosophies related to play-based learning and decolonization feel simultaneously at home in and foreign to the music learning spaces in which I found myself in Geita and Mwanza. And perhaps that's the very thing, they are both and neither at the same time. I'm both inspired by and skeptical of the findings by Mehr et al. (2019) that assert that song and compositional form "varies more within than between societies" (p. 15). Through our workshops, certain aspects of song form, rhythm, and harmony feel deeply resonant within and across the cultural landscape. And yet, just as the resonance of the African choral singing or the embodied relationships with traditional drumming and dance affect me deeply, I see and feel distinctions in our cultural relationships with music.

In our time together, we rarely engaged directly or deeply with local Tanzanian musical traditions. The influence of these traditions, however, was ever-present in our learning spaces, as exemplified by the vocal performances of workshop participants, in the references by teachers and workshops participants to Tanzanian drum traditions (such as when a workshop

participant in Geita recalled his experience with soukous style drumming), or in the way the students at Rich Hill evoke culturally embodied dance movements.

I drew on my own experience as the iterations of workshop lessons emerged. Each day I tried to find immediate, accessible inspiration when making choices about songs and activities. Having engaged in some musical, improvised play, I tried to build on what I had learned from my collaborators, what I was being told, as well as what I could access in terms of musical source material. We worked on songs with Kiswahili lyrics, but each drew melodies from European and North American nursery rhymes and hymns. When selecting English-language popular music for the workshops in Mwanza, the first song that came to mind was Leonard Cohen's "Hallejujah." The inspiration for this was not just that I like the song and that I could share with them a songwriter from my home country, but that I had heard it performed admirably by a talented Tanzanian band at the Cask Bar and Grill in Mwanza several days before. When I chose "All Together Now" by The Beatles, I searched carefully for a song that was aligned with the language and musical capabilities of the participants. I looked for chords, rhythmic concepts, and lyrics that I thought would be accessible and joyful for the participants. I'll be honest, the kitschy complementariness of the song's title with the intercultural aspirations of BWTM and *Improvising in-between* was probably the real chef's kiss in terms of selecting it.

In their post-workshop interviews, participants in Geita and Mwanza expressed interest in and appreciation for the learning and for the opportunity to learn Western musical ideas. I have to accept the possibility that their responses were motivated, as Christie suggested, by the desire to maintain access to future opportunities and resources. I can't and don't discount that

possibility, but my feeling is that what that they shared was genuine. One of the experienced musicians in Geita expressed, “I want to start by expressing my gratitude . . . There are lots of things I now know. [David] showed us how to play and read music notation, among other things. Before, I knew nothing about music notation.”

I call back now to the young man from Mwanza that I cited in Chapter 4 (p. 205), who expressed surprise at how we explored music notation and structure at the same time as playing and experimenting together with musical instruments. This embodied and practice-focused approach to learning is where a clear identification of Western practice gets fuzzy. The pedagogical approaches I use are largely grounded in the music education principles that I learned in my Western education, inspired by the works of Carl Orff (Thresher, 1964), Zoltán Kodály (Dobszay, 1972) and my own training in undergraduate jazz studies at St. Francis Xavier University. This contrasts with a misguided Western, “rational” approach that sees music theory, history, and structure taught and learned in isolation from musical performance. These practices still see widespread use in music curricula in grade schools and post-secondary music studies around the world (Doğantan-Dack, 2022).

Interrogating if Western music practices are appropriate or culturally relevant in each context is wise and important. Drawing a clear line around which practices can be understood to be Western, however, may be a fool’s errand. The obscured, blurry lines around and between cultural practices may appear in many forms, such as the prevalence of Afrobeats in modern popular music in Tanzania and the widespread prevalence of these rhythms and dance feels in Western popular music (Reuster-Jahn, 2014; Krings & Simmert, 2020). As the workshops in Geita and Mwanza concluded, participants expressed their desire to explore these blurred

musical landscapes. Said one of the more experienced musicians in Geita, “I want to learn how to play scales flawlessly and without anyone seeing that I'm still learning. I'd like to learn how to effortlessly play minor and its timing in any song. I also want to learn how to play jazz and blues music. This type of music has a lot of intricate methods to play it, therefore I wish to learn it.” This aspiration was echoed by another participant in Geita, who determinedly expressed his desire to bring new knowledge in musical styles and structures and combine them with Tanzanian traditional music to create something new and special. The longing and limitation stressed by another participant, however, lamented that “There are no experts in the area who can teach us on how to play this kind of music.” As we consider these intercultural opportunities, we might consider how East African knowledges and traditions can be centered. As Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (2018) argues, a renewed effort to advocate for and support engagement with “oral literature could suggest new structures and techniques and could foster attitudes of mind characterized by the willingness to experiment with new forms” (p. 107).

The passions and hopes expressed by the participants in BWTM programming are bittersweet. Their eagerness and optimism are contagious. Their musical expressions of joy in musical spaces at times allow us to forget the power, resource, colonial, and cultural challenges that confront us. As I’ve reflected on the real and arguable distinctions between our musical cultures, I’m now left to consider how to honestly reckon with the power and privilege of our colonial history without dismissing the beauty and value of some Western music practices. It is with care and wisdom that we need to be cautious not to re-affirm a narrative of superiority about Western music practice. If we enact this care and wisdom alongside our collaborative,

creative efforts we may just realize the environments of intercultural sharing, learning, translating, and creating to which we aspire.

The Man in the Park

Between myself and one Inuk youth, we found common ground in our anger. Another, who largely had avoided me and seemed to have little interest in speaking with me or getting to know me, came up to me to give me a hug. I'd just met them two days before. These were profoundly intimate moments between a white man and Inuit youths given our relative unfamiliarity. Less than an hour earlier, we were together in a park, enjoying ourselves, but following the inciting incident, we had become raw and emotional.

It was a beautiful spring day. Inuit youth from Nunavut and Nunavik explored circus skills such as hand-to-hand acrobatics and juggling, while integrating these practices with Inuit storytelling, Inuktitut songs, Inuit games, and goose calling. They collaboratively built a performance that they would share with youth from across Canada at a national social circus gathering a few days later. One young participant from Nunavut trusted me to learn a skill that would see me safely lift her to stand on my shoulders. Called "two-man high" in circus terminology (as I have come to learn) this was the first time I'd attempted this skill, and the youth was showing me a surprising amount of trust. With this new skill acquired, I subsequently became the base for my aforementioned anger companion from Nunavik as we lifted them, and they walked across the shoulders of their fellow Inuit participants. They were enacting the role of an Inuit hunter within story the group was creating. The day was filled with joy and exploration.

Innocently unaware that it was prohibited, some youth had picked a small bunch of flowers from the park's garden. They bundled them with notes of well wishes to be brought to a fellow participant who was being observed at the local hospital. The youth troublingly had passed out during earlier workshops, likely due to dehydration and fatigue. Thankfully they rejoined the workshops the following day. This is the context in which a racist assault on these youths occurred. As the session in the park was ending, a middle-aged man seated on one of the park benches began to yell at the youth; "Freaks!" "Monsters!" "You don't belong here!"

I immediately walked over to the man. I was extremely angry but tried to remain calm. "Sir, don't talk to them like that." Most of the youths gathered their things and started to make their way out of the park. A few shouted in response to the man.

The man went on to tell me, "They are terrifying." A label which is belied by his willingness to stay in the park and maliciously shout at them.

"Why are you angry?" I asked. He criticized the youths' behaviour, reiterating that he believed them to be freaks and who did not belong there. Each time he called toward the youth, I would insist that he direct his comments toward me and not them.

"They have been talking to me indirectly. Now I am talking to them directly," he claimed.

"These are youths being creative and supporting each other," I asserted.

The man showed little interest in or resonance with this line of dialogue. He was distressed that they had occupied the park and was convinced that they did not belong in that space. He insisted that their actions and behaviours were disturbing and abhorrent. I described

his attitude as racist and harmful to these young people. To which he retorted, “No, you are racist.”

The man in the park went on to accuse us of being from Toronto and attempted to assume and assert our motivations. “You know this is weird. You are only here because you are being paid.” In turn, I began to speak with him in French, assuring him that neither I nor the youth were from Toronto, and that I was not being paid to be there. He searched for another prejudicial narrative, presuming I was part of a local church group with which he seemed to have been familiar. Swing and a miss. I informed him that I was not. He had an image about what he was seeing and experiencing and was trying to name it and frame it with his preconceived notions. He never seemed to ask or reflect on whether or not his perspectives or his actions were harmful or indeed even based on the reality of the circumstances.

His grievances with the youth came in a variety of forms: they were loud; they engaged in unorthodox creative behaviour (combining circus arts and Inuit traditions); they took over the space; and they took flowers from the garden. I granted him that the youth should not have taken flowers from the garden, but while I assured him this was an innocent mistake, his vilification of the Inuit youth had already hardened.

A few youths hurled retorts and insults at the man from a distance (though not aggressively or loudly). One of the young Inuk leaders came and spoke to the man directly, while another recorded the exchange on her phone. The young Inuk woman explained to the man that he was on traditional Mohawk territory, while wearing a t-shirt that said, “respect Inuit culture.” I was simultaneously proud of, inspired by, and protective of these youth as they stood their ground and asserted their own voice and agency.

In Chapter 2, of this dissertation, I cited Thomas King who highlighted the dangerous, but at times humourous nature of racism (King, 2003, Lecture 2). That day, the man's behaviour was worthy of mockery and under the right conditions was perhaps laughable, but in the moment, I was seething with anger, and consumed by what I felt was a responsibility to support and defend these Inuit youth from what was unambiguously discriminatory persecution. Once the majority of the dozen or so youth had cleared the park, we all left the man in the park, thankfully never to see him again.

Rather than having these youth walk away with unexamined raw, anxious, frightened, and angry feelings, one of the lead coordinators of the CIRQINIQ program, Rebecca Leonard, called the youth back together (far away from the man in the park's gaze) and convened a circle discussion. This proved to be a wise and powerful decision. The youth were given space to decompress and an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Lest we ever forget that cultural groups are not a monolith, the range of experiences and interpretations from the youth put that on full display.

Said one of the older youth participants, "I re-interpret it as a compliment. We are unique."

For one young Inuk, her Christian upbringing came to the forefront. She asserted that it's best that we "don't respond with anger, but with love." I'll admit, I was struggling to contain my own anger at the situation. I wasn't alone, my angry friend initially expressed their frustration and anger by attempting to walk away from the circle discussion. We spoke to one another, on the side (not with the entire circle) and shared our feelings of anger and frustration. Having someone with whom we could express our shared anger was helpful and

affirming. The youth stayed in the circle and was embraced and welcomed, no matter their feelings. One Inuk youth shared her personal experience of racial tension based on her relationship with her white, Francophone boyfriend. She had the experience of feeling that she and her partner have been judged and criticized because he is not Inuk.

One youth in particular surprised me with the way he responded to the man in the park. "I just ignore these things," he said. Though he had seemed sad and reserved throughout the workshops, he seemed to bring a distant calm into the circle. He stepped up and encouraged a group hug. He then led a simple, but playful, hand exercise which connected us with our bodies and with the bodies of everyone in the circle. After this group activity he came to me directly and hugged me. I have tried to figure out what prompted this hug and how it differed so starkly from the more distant and sad way he'd carried himself in the days previous. It showed me that while we are all empowered and disempowered in different ways and spaces, when opportunities present themselves, we find our moments. For this previously downhearted and distant youth, he found his time to be a leader and to bring those around him together.

Later that evening, as I sat in my hotel room. I was still holding anger about the man in the park. I was also sad and questioned how I might have responded differently. Could I, should I have tried to challenge the man in a manner that would make him question himself the next time he considers openly and aggressively attacking vulnerable youth in a public space? Should I have tried harder to "educate" him? In the end, I just tried to buy time and buffer the youth from him. "Talk to me, not them . . ." I pondered, was this a man who needed help? Does that matter when he's attacking others? I've not come to an answer to these questions.

If we are looking for ways in which a relational, co-creative, trauma-informed approach empowers and protects young people from stressors and societal oppression, this encounter encapsulated that. They built solidarity and care through their co-creative practice. They came from different communities, brought their own personal challenges, and talents. They used the trust, the skills, the knowledge, and the values they had developed through their engagement with social circus and as Inuit youth to respond admirably to a truly disturbing encounter. I can't speak fully to what the youth carried with them out of this experience, but I can tell you that for hours after the incident my anger toward the man still seethed. At the same time, like the flowers that the youth picked for their friend in the hospital, my pride in and hope for these youths had bloomed.

The next morning, I thought of a way to symbolically put an end to this story. Prior to arriving for the morning's workshops, I returned to the park. I sat on the same bench from which the man hurled his insults. I was reclaiming it for myself, but in my own way, I considered this to be a private (if only symbolic) reclamation of the space for the youth as well.

Stories I Can't Tell

When we've built trust and relationship, people will share and engage with us in ways that require both care and discretion. We learn things that people will rarely, if ever, share "on the record." Sometimes this is not because they are trying to hide it, but because what they have to say and what is important to them is not what we've decided to ask them about. If we are truly collaborative, reciprocal, and emergent in our practice, we will accept and take on new challenges and initiatives, even if they are seemingly "not part of the plan." If we are truly open and listening, then we recognize that these moments are more than just interesting tangential

side stories, they are often absolutely at the core of our work, precisely because they have emerged from the lived realities of those with whom we are working.

In Chapter 3, I argued that truly ethical engagement is grounded in trust-filled and consentful relationships. Deep learning and empowering relationships take root in spaces where someone feels they can count on you, and they can trust you. It is essential that we never break that trust, but how then do we find ways to share the depth and power of this relational work within institutions that are not designed to embrace the flawed, emotional, inconsistent realities of our human interactions?

In May 2022, I was invited to attend a national gathering of social circus initiatives coordinated by Cirkaskina (the national component of Cirque hors Piste).[43] The week-long event consisted of three days of training and workshops with Inuit and Arctic-based participants in Montreal, followed by the three-day national gathering based at a youth camp north of the city. Prior to the gathering, I had received research ethics approval from the University of Guelph. I was equipped with a DSLR camera and a folder full of information sheets and consent forms. I introduced myself and was subsequently introduced by others as a researcher. The roles I embodied, however, very quickly made that label and identity something that I and those around me dismissed and thought little about as the week progressed. I became a learner, a participant, a chaperone, a chauffeur, a trusted ear, contributor, and an advocate. I simultaneously drew from and obscured research practices including ethnography, participatory-action research, participant observation, practice-based research, and research creation. What does all that mean in terms of my identity as a researcher? I'll leave it to others

[43] Cirkaskina through Cirque hors Piste: https://cirquehorspiste.com/fr/cirkaskina/le-mouvement/

to ponder that question, with the simple recognition that a researcher to one is not the same as a researcher to another.

I don't regret for one moment prioritizing co-learning and relationship building ahead of academic outputs. Having engaged in many formalized research and evaluation projects, I can confidently say by resisting the pressure to follow the output obsessed objectives of the academy, I was able collaborate and learn far more. Does it complicate the writing of a dissertation? Sure. But what good is a dissertation that is riddled with inauthentic, manufactured moments?

By not being as strictly concerned about generating outputs for my dissertation, I created opportunities and space for my collaborators to open up to me, ask me for help, share experiences, and tell truths that would have never happened or might have been taboo in a formalized research environment. But . . . I can't share those stories with you. Like the time I asked . . . or when the youth said . . . or when we had to respond to the emergency that happened when . . . or when I was shown . . . or when I told the youth . . . or the many times I was asked for help . . . or the stories shared by one youth that inspired me to . . . I can't tell you any of that. How can my writing begin to reflect on the importance of ethical, improvisatory, community-engaged practice if the depths of what I've learned and done can't be shared within the framework of the institution? When we formalize, codify, and objectify our research practice, our work becomes less and less a reflection of our world, and more and more a mythos around a world that most of us don't actually experience and perhaps even struggle to recognize.

If you've ever managed a not-for-profit or an externally funded project, perhaps this fictionalized narrative will resonate with you.

The funding application wasn't successful. There is a grant outstanding and a deadline coming (oh, and the report for the last fiscal year is due!). The board just lost two experienced board members and recently brought on a new administrator. There has been some confusion over the organization's signing authority, so the distribution of funds and the financial reporting are behind. Might these struggles get them in hot water with charitable/non-profit regulators? Even as things eventually settle, the programming had to be cancelled or postponed until after the financial uncertainties were resolved. A staff member needed to move on from the project due to burnout. They took a public sector opportunity that comes with secure pay and benefits. The staff member's new job is less of a passion project, but they are less fearful about missing house payments or about being unable to provide their children with the time and opportunities which will allow them to thrive. For those still with the program, the deadline is still creeping up, but the kids are sick. Staff needs time and support to manage their personal lives and family relationships (this stress is completely unrelated to the program yet its effects on the program are palpable to everyone involved). The participants in their program bring with them a range of complex traumas and personal histories and see staff and volunteers as safe confidants. Staff feel honoured to be the much-needed support person for someone who is struggling. At the same time, they are absorbing this trauma, feeling waves of hopelessness as they consider the depth and breadth of the challenges that are faced by the people they've come to care for. Passionate staff and volunteers will use the remaining threads of their time

and energy to advocate for the importance of their work, and to challenge structures that perpetually minimize or dismiss their value.

Many arts-based programs can relate to the stressful reality that their organization and their programming is on unstable financial footing. Arts coordinators and administrators are sometimes artists, volunteers, parents, or dare we just say, human. These initiatives run on the backs of passionate, moderately (or poorly) compensated staff and volunteers who are stretched beyond their limits, determinedly fighting to keep their programs alive (Belfiore, 2022). The scenarios described above were not about any specific program or any particular individuals, but all the circumstances included therein occurred in some form as I engaged with collaborators throughout *Improvising in-between*. Key coordinators and facilitators were determined, dedicated, tired, and overwhelmed. These programs balance heavily, but delicately, on the shoulders of key individuals. People, who in addition to their skills, experience, and resilience, have limits. They function in a system that lacks the structures and supports that would permit them to fully attend to their own wellbeing, while maintaining the high standards to which they hold themselves. As they manage their own lives, they use the under-supported mechanism of the arts to reach, engage with, and empower those who truly need it.

This is the broad context through which countless personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional narratives emerge. I did not plan to pursue, find, discuss, collect, or share any of these moments. *Please note, some of these incidents and stories (though not discussed in detail) are distressing in nature. Be sure to take care of your emotional needs before, during, and after you read this section.* Many of these untold stories are reflective of trauma or loss. It's

not that they represent all the unplanned and impactful stories we encounter, but they do represent those that are expressed through vulnerability and that we must hold with the greatest care and confidence. Each of the encounters and experiences listed below occurred within, along, and beside *Improvising in-between*.

Such as those who experienced loss like . . .

- [Redacted] who lost her mother
- [Redacted] who lost his son
- [Redacted] who died, leaving behind a young family
- [Redacted] who engaged in cultural storytelling and advocacy despite growing up separated from her culture
- [Redacted] who lost her mother as a child, and now manages an eating disorder, anxiety, and depression

. . . or those who needed to manage their individual health and wellbeing like . . .

- [Redacted], [Redacted], and [Redacted] who all needed to visit the hospital resulting in several after hours hospital runs throughout the workshops
- [Redacted] who asked me for help after soiling himself and wanted it kept secret
- [Redacted] who asked me to help create space so he could come out as gay to his peers

. . . or those overwhelmed by emotional and difficult family and personal relationships like . . .

- [Redacted] who was a young mother who was apart from her baby from the first time
- [Redacted] who found out she was pregnant during the workshops

- [Redacted] who is a mother of three who expressed her struggles as a woman facing cultural barriers and turning to substance abuse as a coping mechanism
- [Redacted] who brought me to meet orphaned infants and toddlers that were in his care and in need of a home
- [Redacted], [Redacted], and [Redacted] sharing their emotional struggles with their current romantic partners

. . . or those managing poverty and trauma like . . .

- [Redacted] who wrote me a personal note asking for help because he could not afford to continue his schooling
- [Redacted] and [Redacted] now living on the streets of Montreal who I saw from the window of a taxi years after having taught them as children
- [Redacted] who shared details with me about being raped and not knowing where to turn and being fearful of the next steps
- [Redacted] who shared her distressing experiences in a mental health institution

. . . or those navigating and questioning the systems and structures designed to support aggrieved people like . . .

- [Redacted] working at a mental health institution who wanted change, but lacked the tools, to [Redacted] who never responded to my requests for details related to the need for services for Inuit youth, to [Redacted] who brought my concerns to a regional board with the hope of strengthening services
- [Redacted] who recounted the story of a wealthy philanthropist visiting development programs, flying on a private plane

- [Redacted] who provided guidance for environmentally sustainable agriculture
- [Redacted] running a big, new arts program to [Redacted] and [Redacted] working in the same communities who are all unaware of each other's work
- [Redacted], [Redacted], and [Redacted] who discussed their observations of and experiences with white supremacy in programs and research being implemented in Canada's far North
- [Redacted] who acknowledged that despite years of consultation and collaboration, community-led research is many years from becoming a reality

I find myself questioning if it is possible to effectively write about community-engaged practice. I believe ethical and high-quality community-engaged work relies upon a foundation of trust and openness. Part of that trust is built on collaborators' belief that you will be discrete with the information you've shared with them. We can't share these stories . . . they are not ours. We can't share these stories . . . academic protocols prevent it. We can't share these stories . . . because they would never have been shared with us if we did not hold them in confidence and if we had not earned the trust of those who shared them with us. You can't know the details of these incidences, where they've come from or who was involved. I can tell you that they are every bit as important and impactful as any other concept, practice, or experience I've discussed in this dissertation (perhaps in some cases more so). What I can do is hope that I honour their stories by bringing the care and wisdom they've instilled in me into the spaces in which I will continue to engage.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion: Reflecting and Sustaining

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The Research Questions

In the first chapter of this dissertation I asked, "How do improvisatory arts-based practices facilitate a generative dialogue of understanding among unfamiliar co-creators?" To respond to this overarching research question, it's useful to begin with a simpler question, "*Do* improvisatory arts-based practices facilitate generative dialogue of understanding among unfamiliar co-creators?" To this question, I can confidently respond "yes." The creative sharing and learning among collaborators, manifested through partner programs, was widely discussed in the preceding chapters. From improvising together in workshop activities, to allowing trust to emerge through relational engagement, to numerous expressions and demonstrations of agency and solidarity among and across culturally diverse collaborators, there was no shortage of generative dialogue in these creative spaces. So, we are now left to think more deeply about "how" these spaces and practices facilitate intercultural dialogue and how they are well suited (given the right conditions) to do so. We can further reflect upon how they might be used to promote colonially resistant and empowering opportunities in aggrieved and underserved communities.

In this concluding chapter, I will reflect on the supporting research questions asked in Chapter 1, with the aim of elaborating upon the two key areas of research focus: "Emergent

and collaborative project design and engagement" and "Improvisatory and intercultural learning and change." As I present some summative reflections on this work, I would like to invite readers to reflect on the questions and ideas explored throughout this chapter. As you do, I hope that something you've read, heard, seen in this doctoral project has informed, reinforced, shifted, or challenged how you might respond to these questions. I conclude the dissertation with an eyes-forward visioning on where to go from here. What was this all for and what might it provoke in the future? This chapter concludes the written content of this dissertation, but it does not mark the end of this work or this exploration.

Emergent and collaborative project design and engagement

In what ways do existing structures perpetuate imbalanced institutional-community relationships?

As I elaborated in Chapter 3, post-secondary institutions are built to be exclusive. From competitive recruitment to the provision of advantages and privileges in prospective job markets, exclusivity is among the foundational functions of the academy. Access to post-secondary spaces is gained through educational and financial mechanisms where "talent," "productivity," and "diversity" are all filtered through the financial value they hold for the institution. There are widespread examples acknowledging and critiquing the colonial and capitalistic nature of the academy (Absolon & Dion, 2017; Hall & Tandon, 2017; hooks, 2003; Robinson, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Institutional scholars will find themselves regularly positioned to reaffirm colonial and capitalistic knowledge ecosystems through the formal and commercial demands related to coveted research grants, corporate sponsorship, and publication in profit driven, elite scholarly journals. Academics who care deeply about

questioning the exclusive and exploitative nature of the academy may struggle, as I have, to fundamentally shift the core foundations of these institutional behemoths. Troublesome relationships with community partners are often perpetuated by the academy's authority and inherent drive to gather and commodify human resources and knowledge. This commodification serves the institution, as the currency of scholarly publication perpetuates the narrative of the academy as the authoritative knowledge broker in our society.

Where knowledge outside the academy is abundant and apparent, scholars are encouraged to go find it, gather it, and brand it as knowledge that has been collected, analysed, and affirmed by the "experts" (Biddle, 2012; Hall & Tandon, 2017; Heble, 2017). Hence, institutions expropriate and commodify the lived knowledge of communities as their own (Robinson, 2020). As post-secondary agents, we must also navigate the centering of the English language, the establishment restrictive authorship and writing standards (ICMJE, n.d.), and the sheer cost of participating in academia as just a few of the other filters that keep aggrieved and underserved community members outside scholarly institutions.

It bears acknowledging that many scholars and programs within the academy celebrate and support the work of community, even when at their core institutions keep them at arm's length. It was through my work through the Critical Studies in Improvisation program at the University of Guelph that I was given the time, space, and indeed research funding, to engage with, learn from, and contribute to my collaborators throughout *Improvising in-between*. We need to honestly, but humbly, celebrate these relationships and the positive and powerful work that is being done, without obfuscating the facts of the overwhelming structures and barriers that trouble them.

To what extent do improvisatory project design principles serve as vehicles through which to challenge colonial and oppressive structures?

Dominant academic research paradigms are built on the positivist privileging of generalization and consistency. Many of those who dedicate their passion and energy to community-based and arts-based practices will affirm that they are seldom generalizable and consistent. Improvisatory engagement, grounded by an honest and fluid commitment to acknowledging the inconsistencies of our collaborators and our environments, frees us to take the veil off idealized or theorized notions of relationship and practice. As Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) describe, those engaged in research-creation view it "as a form of intervention because it is contradictory to a hierarchy of research significance that places the scientific method at the pinnacle of models for knowledge production and dissemination" (p. 11). It grounds us in the moments and the realities we encounter, as we encounter them. It would be fantastic if there really were "best practices" that were magically adaptable to any circumstance, but we know this is not true. Communities of people don't live and work under laboratory conditions.

The freedom of and commitment to emergent and reciprocal practice serve as vehicles to weave through restrictive institutional mechanisms and rehumanize them. Bringing ourselves, our skills, and our ideas into a space, then allowing the environment and the people within it to determine if and how those tools are adopted is a strategy that is applicable in both institutional and community spaces. If we restrict our practice to premeditated models and plans when we engage in social spaces, we limit possibilities and actively ignore the diversity and liveliness of our environments and collaborators. As Charles Briggs advocates in his 2021

book, *Unlearning: Rethinking Poetics, Pandemics, and the Politics of Knowledge*, "Don't limit yourself to safe, predictable situations that are under (your) control" (Briggs, 2021, p. 44). Just as institutions limit flexibility and promote confining factors, so too do communities. If we bring the same spirit of negotiating relationally and creatively into both spaces, we may find that we've enabled something inconsistent and generative to occur.

I admit to not being inclined toward shaming or intentionally provoking arguments with scholars and institutional actors with whom I have differences. I will also admit to a deep discomfort with scholarship that perpetuates (often unintentionally) the colonial, neoliberal, and positivist scholarly practices that I contend to be reductive at best and harmfully exploitative in their worst forms. I'd lack self-awareness if I thought I was not enmeshed in these structures, practices, and in my own ways perpetuating and benefitting from them. Within an improvisatory project design approach, however, a certain license is permitted to be less beholden to these troubling structures, to be allowed to question them, and to openly explore means to subvert them. Grounding institutional engagement in the relational and the personal significantly helps here. Meeting the people behind the protocols and recognizing that, if we are willing to listen and act with integrity and care toward people, there is room to find a way through.

In many ways, scholars and advocates (and advocate scholars) have limited power and authority to change the fundamental structures in which we work. Frankly, those who have gained the authority to make change within existing post-secondary structures are often those who affirm and thrive within these structures and are less likely to feel the pressing need for change. Regardless of our limitations, community-engaged and social justice-oriented scholars

can be insistently (if vulnerably) honest and open with both our community collaborators and the institutional authorities that bind us.

Being honest about what ethical and relational engagement looks like involves openly discussing when and why you will or will not participate in normalized academic structures. This may take the form of clearly describing how you will engage in community-informed consent processes despite them appearing to be inconsistent with institutional ethics guidance. A more careful glance, however, helps us see that interpersonal and culturally informed consent is not just permitted under current protocols but may represent the emergent (if fledgling) acknowledgement of the limitations of institutionalized ethics models. Our ethical honesty can also come in the form of our refusal to share specific community-engaged learnings through an exploitative peer-review process, while simultaneously highlighting the palpable missing truths in our academic writing, as exemplified by the 'Stories I Can't Tell' in Chapter 5.

Our ethical honesty can happen in our writing and through formalized channels, but it is crucially upheld through reciprocal, responsive, care-filled, and creative relationships with our community collaborators. Our creative and improvisatory engagements reassert humanity throughout our scholarly relationships, dulling the history of depersonalization and commodification that still dominates academic operations. Systemic hierarchies will ensure that we remain accountable to their authority, but it remains the personal and collaborative responsibility of community-engaged scholars to hold ourselves persistently and flexibly accountable to those who remain disempowered by institutional structures.

Within community-university partnerships, what roles might an ethical community-engaged scholar need to fulfill (e.g., a translator, a buffer, an advocate) and how might an improvisatory ethic be enacted in these roles?

When speaking with scholars and academics, I've heard the frank, resigned, and honest admission that we need to "play the game" (Waterfield et al., 2019). Yet, it is much harder to admit in our academic outputs that "the game" is flawed, not just in its influence on what gets written, but in how scholarly works are written and distributed. Throughout *Improvising in-between* I've attempted to communicate these limitations and infuse each element of my work with a straightforward acknowledgement that what we aspire towards and what we practice are distinct. Our aspirations are in so many ways admirable, but we must still be attentive to the inevitable blurring of the line between our aspirational notions and the honest communication of our enacted practices and lived experiences. As we play the game, we are performative and we are improvisatory, but we need not be inauthentic. We need not play the game strictly by the rules that have been laid out for us. Especially when we recognize them to be misaligned with our co-creative principles and practices.

Prior to active community-based field work, I conceived that in intercultural, community-engaged spaces, I can play a variety of roles. I reduced them into three categories, and described them as those of a translator, a buffer, and an advocate. In our own ways, my collaborators and I have fulfilled each of these roles as the circumstances demanded. Roles that I did not formally conceive or acknowledge, but ultimately did enact, were those of a participant and a peer. These roles represented far more horizontal relationships in terms of how we related and engaged. In Chapter 4, I reflected on the fact that I considered my

collaborators to be friends, or at least that we had established a friendly alliance. It would be ignorant and irresponsible to dismiss the privilege or positionality that I held in these roles, but by intentionally deformalizing and rehumanizing my relationships with collaborators at all levels of my practice, the nature of our work and our trust could build. Within these emergent, reciprocal, and friendly roles, I translate, buffer, advocate, and improvise as a means to resist the formalized distancing and antagonism of bureaucracy and hierarchy. This is not to say they don't impact our relationships and our work, but with a strengthened understanding, negotiation, and consensual enactment we can navigate structures together. We can work to name them and make them visible when they manifest as exploitative and exclusive. Identifying and naming these tensions allows us to question and challenge them. If we wish to engage in truly consentful and improvisatory approaches, then our commitment to an emergent and negotiated practice establishes a powerful base upon which our collaborators can truly determine if and how they choose to engage with our scholarship.

What existing fissures and emerging opportunities are available within institutional spaces that allow for meaningful empowerment of and reconciliation with aggrieved communities?

It is in the emphasis on relational practice and personalizing our creative scholarship where I have found hope and opportunity throughout this research initiative. In my examination and navigation of institutional structures, from funding models to publication structures to authoritative regulatory frameworks, I've found the colonial, classist, and neoliberal roots to be deep and solid, wide ranging and nimble. Their ability to avert risk (e.g., through legalistic ethical frameworks) and defend the status quo (e.g., by promoting positivist

scholarship and market-based accountability structures) are as impressive as they are formidable. That's not to say they are omnipotent or beyond challenge.

I've not found much hope in identifying fissures in the bureaucratic labyrinth of processes and policies upon which the academy and similar institutional entities are built. But I have found hope in the recognition that they are still managed and administered by people. When we identify a barrier or a tension point, we can find our way through by bringing the same relational ethic we bring to our community-engaged and creative practices. This takes the form of a concerted effort to understand the language, the culture, the history, the fundamental humanity of the environments in which we are working, and the individuals that exist within them.

As scholars who have been trained in this system, while we may not always feel at home in it, if we have reached a graduate level of study, we have developed some capacity to navigate it. As creative, improvisatory scholars, we have additionally committed to learning and enacting dynamic, reciprocal practices grounded in listening, in engagement, and in the transformation of our relationships with others and our environments. Many community-engaged and social science researchers have determined that institutional consent protocols are ill-suited or at least insufficient in many non-academic spaces (Absolon & Dion, 2017; Cocks, 2006; Garakani, 2014; Sherwood & Parsons, 2021). As noted in Chapter 3, this reality is acknowledged by the TCPS (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). It is in this space that we rely on our reciprocal and relational ethics to navigate a reframing of what ethical engagement looks like. We think about what informed consent means in a space where

a legalistic written consent procedure is untenable, and we remind ourselves that we need to co-learn with our collaborators.

Throughout our practice, we must openly describe what "research" means, what it looks like, why it's happening, and who it's for. This will happen when we formally introduce ourselves to our collaborators for the first time, but for the community-engaged scholar this continues to happen over lunch, in the quiet corner while creative activities are in full swing, as the scholar sits in solitude and toils over whether or not they've done right by their collaborators, and especially in the final stages before the community-engaged writing gets shared. We communicate this to our community-based collaborators, our research ethics boards, and our academic colleagues. It is in the honest communication of our practices and findings that we subvert expectations. We make space for what is said and experienced outside of our theorized, idealized, and generalized academic frameworks. We insist that what we see, hear, and feel throughout our explorations not only effects the substance of our scholarship, but is often a truer and more honest representation of it.

Within what spaces are community-based, non-academic voices legitimized and honoured within institutional structures and how might an improvisatory approach help facilitate this?

Frankly, this is probably the space where I've been able to generate the least progress or optimism throughout my doctoral study. It would be easy and legitimate to rehash my displeasure with the academic authorship and publishing structures. But in all honestly, I must reflect that this type of collaborative work is difficult, even in the most ideal of circumstances. Without making excuses, at the time of writing this dissertation, my community partners are still navigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The time, trust, and resources needed to

navigate between community and institutional spaces is immense and the pandemic strained these reserves beyond measure. I've been privileged to engage in both institutional and community spaces. I have had the pleasure of getting to know community members, youths, and facilitators. I've observed, participated in, and/or led arts-based practices with all three partners. I've shared with them, and they've shared with me. But I am limited in the extent to which I can amplify their voices. I have seen how Art Not Shame, Bridging Worlds Through Music, and CIRQINIQ continue to legitimize their own practice and value to and with their own communities. I want to celebrate that. At the same time, I'm left feeling that knowledge mobilization that meaningfully captures community voices, reflects their lived experiences, and affirms community knowledge remains on the periphery of the academy. Community voices remain a low priority for the academy, when compared with post-secondary student recruitment, tuition priorities, and the successes of scholars whose value is affirmed institutionally by the grants they receive and peer-reviewed works they publish.

I hope that in my own way I've honoured the voices of my collaborators and their work. They continue to carry out powerful work despite the systems that are not designed to sustain them. The life-affirming and sometimes life-saving work of arts-based programs is widely known and sometimes celebrated. Recall the feedback from ANS's Fuck Perfect program, the contributions to the social circus manifesto, and the young men in Tanzania who pursued music against the odds described in Chapters 4 and 5, or the striking quote from civil rights activist Jerome Smith cited in Chapter 1 who credited the artists he engaged with in his youth as having "invented something that prevented us from committing suicide" (qtd in Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2019, p. 19). On the other hand, while the power and importance of cultural and arts-based

programming is widely acknowledged, there persists this nagging insistence that we affirm it through the lens of a market-based value assessment (OECD, 2022).

In the Chapter 5 narrative, “Community Impact Speaks for Itself; Institutions Need to Listen,” Michelle and I discussed the ever present and flawed obsession with counting our impacts. It can be difficult to represent the sometimes subtle and often slow impact of emotional affirmation, or the feeling of being validated and understood. This is especially true when engaging with aggrieved, underserved, and traumatized young people. As scholars (or managers, consultants, and advisors) in empowered positions within institutions, we can help to legitimize and honour community-based, non-academic voices, not by speaking for them but by asking our colleagues to stop and listen (as good improvisers must frequently do). We can redouble our efforts to build structures that encourage and facilitate meaningful time where institutional authorities not just listen to community, but engage in community. When engaging in community outside of institutional spaces, I (like many scholars) feel a loud and imposing feeling of cognitive dissonance between my ethical values and my institutional roles. As I journaled from my hotel room one evening following a particularly emotional day of workshops with one of the partner programs, I exasperatedly wrote, “Metaphorically thinking about obscure improvisatory art as a model of social change can feel irresponsible in this context. These youth needed (and need) someone to care for them . . . The art (the improvisation) needs a foundation of trust, care, wisdom, access, resources, and power.” The further we stay from the community, the quieter this dissonance becomes and the palpable need for resolution diminishes. When we regularly engage in both spaces and enact an improvisatory, creative praxis the dissonances intensify and call for resolution.

Communities continue to communicate and express their creativity, their needs, and their stories. In Chapter 1, I referenced a range of activist and advocacy movements where aggrieved and underserved communities have fought for societal change (i.e., Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, the Arab Spring, Me Too). In Chapter 3, I shared several examples of how aggrieved communities have communicated ethical research frameworks that are widely available and easily accessible to institutional scholars (Asante, 1983; OFIFC, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In Chapters 4 and 5, I included many examples of how the arts-based collaborators in *Improvising in-between* have actively shared their stories and demonstrated their impact. It's fairly clear, if we care to listen, that communities have voices, and they regularly share their stories and needs. Communities continue to offer the tools, language, and vehicles for a dynamic and emergent conversation. The power and the responsibility to legitimize, honour, and respond to community-based, non-academic voices rests with institutional authorities. With the means available to us as institutionally-affiliated scholars and through our critical and creative capacities, we can apply the diverse aspects of improvisatory practice explored throughout this thesis to advocate and negotiate between communities and institutional actors.

Improvisatory and intercultural learning and change

It's worth recalling that my initial collaborative aspirations would have brought participants from ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ together for an ambitious co-creative engagement or event. If you've read this far, you may have observed that this never occurred. The impetus for several of these intercultural questions was grounded in exploring what would happen if participants from these diverse programs and communities came together creatively. The

potential and the possibilities of this are exciting, but practical and financial limitations (and a global pandemic) meant that this dream was never realized. In the emergent spirit of this initiative, this did not prevent or limit the extent to which intercultural learning and expression manifested within each of the collaborating organization's own programming. As an interloper, friend, and collaborator, I had the pleasure of observing and contributing to these manifestations. It this through this lens that I reflect upon the improvisatory, intercultural learning and change that were actualized during *Improvising in-between*.

What differences can be observed about how cultural/personal identities or narratives are expressed by participants' diverse improvisatory environments?

As *Improvising in-between* developed, the extent to which people were willing to share about themselves and their identities was informed by how safe they felt and the extent to which the improvisatory environment aligned with their needs and their sense of self.

Through CIRQINIQ, participants actively express their culture and their other artistic interests (such as visual art, music, and dance). Exercises where youth were invited to express themselves were supported by their freedom to self-determine how they chose to engage. The multidisciplinary nature of circus allowed for youth to find themselves through artistic and expressive practices that suited them. Not everyone wants to be a clown. The acrobat may want to demonstrate their quiet strength, while another confidently shares Inuit legends upon which creative performances can be based. What I found particularly affirming for Inuit youth was the way they used social circus as a way to express and share their culture.

Another example of identity affirmation came in the form of the relief expressed through the Reimagining Possibility campaign by a Fuck Perfect participant. He expressed joy

and pride when other participants shared his musical tastes in the song he selected during the workshop. A more explicit experience of identity affirmation was expressed by ANS artist witness Audrey Szabo, “As a member of a community of people unlearning the various ways society had taught them to be ashamed . . . to allow ourselves the freedom to just . . . be . . . to say the least, this experience was a very good start” (Szabo, 2022, para. 1).

I sang songs in Kiswahili along with participants, while we learned songs in English together. I experienced the spine-tingling tone of Tanzanian vocalists as an expression of self and culture that I simply cannot embody. It was an honour for me to have found my own voice within the beauty of theirs. Singing with them, I felt like more of a singer than I than I do when I sing on my own. When the young men in Mwanza sang Leonard Cohen and the Beatles, they expressed and asserted their confidence and joy in the choruses of “Hallelujah” and “All Together Now”. They rejoiced in the new and the familiar in an intercultural experience that emerged dynamically through a collaborative desire to learn and create together. Like the young men in Mwanza, the church musicians in Kalangalala, Geita consistently asserted their faith through their creative expression, while simultaneously displaying their pride as musicians. Within these creative spaces they could embody two passions: their faith and their musical spirit.

These are but a few of the immeasurable examples of how participants in community-focused, diverse, creative spaces are asserting and affirming themselves and their communities.

How does familiarity with fellow improvisors/co-creators effect the nature of how participants express themselves?

As we came to know one another, the nature of our collaborations changed. When I arrived in Montreal for the Cirkaskina trainings, there was a distance between me and other participants. Through openness and playfulness, the nature of the creative engagement between collaborators shifted and the distance lessened. As the youth from Nunavik and Nunavut got to know each other, their collaborations became more integrated and personal (e.g., singing "Qalluppa, qalluppa" together). Youth became increasingly willing to share their stories with me and one another as we developed a trust where vulnerability was possible, welcomed and encouraged through a commitment to care and safety. This contrasted starkly with the challenges expressed to me by the researcher I met in at the Cirkaskina gathering. The impersonal and formalized research engagement created some frustration for the researcher in spite of the significant resources behind the study.

Not unlike the Inuit social circus participants, music students in Mwanza and Geita entered the into the learning space unfamiliar with me and with different levels of familiarity with one another. Through musical engagement they navigated these differences by finding and asserting themselves. While some young men brought musical experience or an aptitude for the guitar or piano, others struggled. The strugglers would contribute their own creative assertions through their voice or in the contribution of percussive beats. When the young students at Rich Hill School were empowered to conduct their fellow students in a musical exercise, the ease with which they fell into laughter came more freely. Their familiarity and comfort with their teacher-classmate seemed to have lifted some of the uncertainty they may

have felt in front of their adult teachers (particularly the unusual looking, strange sounding Canadian one). The concern that they might get something wrong seemed to melt away in front of their peer leader, as the playful stakes of learning took over from the expectation to get it right.

As described in the Chapter 5 narrative, "A Space for Outsiders" Inuit youth (and other social circus participants from across Canada) identified social circus as an inclusive creative space where they are seen and accepted. This translated to a willingness to share their experiences and traumas with trusted participants in these spaces. Not only did I observe Inuit youth expressing themselves in group circle exercises, such as the one following the incident with the man in the park (p. 274), but many participants shared their own personal stories (some of them quite traumatic) with me, as they got to know me and embraced me as an ally.

In the spirit of affirming the voices shared by community partners through their own means and networks, I share here how quotations of ANS participants on the ANS website give us insights into their work and help us to respond to this research question. It is fair to note the selective bias of organizational public communication materials. We know that ANS is putting their best foot forward in its public facing communication. I argue that, because we know this, we can hear this material in the spirit it is intended: as community voicing with a purpose, with no deceptive pretense of "objectivity" or "authority." A photo on the image scroll on the "Our Impacts & Outcomes" page captures a note written by a participant indicating that they never have to "apologize for the space their body requires" ("Our Impacts & Outcomes," 2023). In the ANS 2020-2021 annual report a Fuck Perfect participant shared that "I felt so nourished, so witnessed, and held. Getting to explore in this container, with these folks and prompts has

been so lovely, and offered me these slices of peace, and rest that I didn't know I was missing" (ANS, 2021, p. 9).

It was expressed implicitly in participants' bodies and explicitly in their words that familiarity and, perhaps more importantly, a feeling of being seen and accepted allowed participants to share their sense of self. This occurred in spaces where their contributions and identities were welcomed and affirmed. We find this expression in emergent and improvisatory spaces but, as explored in the reflection on trauma-informed practice in Chapter 4, this can only be expected when people feel safe and seen. Throughout *Improvising in-between* I've had the pleasure to observe how these environments have manifested (relative to their sociocultural context) through the programming offered by ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ.

How does familiarity with fellow improvisors/co-creators effect the nature of how participants interpret the creative expression of their co-participants?

The collaborations that occurred through *Improvising in-between* did not result in clear and explicit examples of this. Through partner programming the enactment of responsiveness and playfulness demonstrated how participants hear and respond through creativity. They laughed together, they consoled one another, and they opened up to one another. While the program participants rarely spoke about how they interpreted the creative expressions of their co-participants, they showed a level of trust, support, and empathy throughout the workshops. As some social circus participants self-identify as "misfits," they allow their expressive and eccentric creativity to be put into the world. Perhaps the way their creative expressions are interpreted is less important than the simple fact that they are affirmed and embraced.

In Rich Hill, as I moved exaggeratedly to express and share the beat of the music, I saw some children playfully mimicking my movements. In this playfulness, I would observe as their classmates played along to the rhythm that a sheepish or a mischievous smirk would creep across their faces. This would be followed by a collective feeling of relaxation as a sense of joyful energy would spread around the room. Then there were the percussive rhythms and solos in Mwanza. Participants would lead their co-learners in a rhythm and alternatively play with them then solo freely on the body of their acoustic guitar which, in the absence of other percussion instruments, served as their hand drum. The percussive interactions would iteratively drift into and away from the repetitive rhythmic pattern sustained by their fellow students, who used coins and school desks to create their own percussion instruments. Some soloists were comfortable staying apart from their fellow percussionists for longer stints, while others settled in happily with them. How participants felt and heard through these interactions will vary just as their performative choices did.

As an engaged, improvisatory scholar, I'm less concerned about what the participants heard and more interested in creating the conditions where they are encouraged and provided with opportunities to be heard. In our subtle interactions, not necessarily our purposefully creative ones, we consciously and sensorially hear our fellow participants. We will receive and perceive this communication in different ways. In the spaces in which I have the pleasure to engage, we never explicitly asked one another to interpret or explain what we thought about one another's creative expression. However, participants showed a range of dynamic responses and a celebration of one another's creativity that ran through the creative spaces. None of the playful, inquisitive, or accepting practices were heavy-handedly manufactured. The

establishment of a relational, caring, dynamic space that was modeled (but not regulated) by facilitators and coordinators laid the foundation for expression to be shared and received. If or when a creator needed or wanted their expression to be understood, they had means to share and explain (some specific examples are described in response to the two questions below that ask specifically about intercultural exchange).

How do the environmental/contextual/cultural differences between communities affect the nature of their creative expression?

In Chapter 4, I shared a superficial look at the diverse spaces in which the programming of each of the collaborating organizations operated. The physical environment we are in, the accessibility of it, when it is available, who we share the space with, and what tools and resources are available in the space in so many ways impact what and how we create. It's important to consider as well, how the outside environment impacts our inside space. Did participants need to travel far? How might the weather affect us? Are there other events happening that are competing with the programming? We seldom have significant control over these things, but they impact how people feel and consequently how they will contribute within a space.

When reflecting on gender in Chapter 4, I highlighted a distinctive difference in the engagement with circus exercises when they were delivered in physical education classes compared to the local recreation centre in the Northern village of Inukjuak. I'll focus more closely on the two boys who were at home and diligently, if a bit brashly, exploring the juggling blocks (known in circus circles as cigar boxes) and diabolo juggling during physical education classes. The school gymnasium was their domain, and they were developing some new skills.

They were consequently invited to the evening workshops at the community recreation centre only to see a larger group of predominantly female participants engaged in circle exercises. Their enthusiasm evaporated quickly. This was no longer their space, and their instinct was to leave. As described in Chapter 4, we were able to make a space for them, but they were no longer the leaders but had become outsiders within in a new physical and social space. They did persist and continued to work on honing their new juggling skills, but never fully engaged in this new space and opted out of the public performance. Conversely, many of the same female participants who sat on the sidelines during their gym classes were suddenly front and center during a public performance at the end of the week of workshops.

The young men at the Mwanza School of Music and the AICT Church in Kalangalala had very different experiences of space. In certain ways, I applied similar musical concepts and learning strategies in both places. The means and opportunities to explore them shifted markedly depending on their environments. In Mwanza, the young men were new learners who would spend upwards of 5 or more hours in their music room at the Mwanza School of Music with their teacher Paul Malifa (my time with them was upwards of 3-4 hours a day). They had their own space but relatively sparce instruments and materials, and limited other musical opportunities. I recall one day of workshops when we needed to switch everyone to vocals, acoustic guitar, and percussion when we lost electricity for the three functioning electric keyboards (remember that for percussion instruments we repurposed desks, guitars, and coins). In Kalangalala, we had a small room that was often needed for other choir rehearsals or church meetings. The young men were active participants in the church's worship teams and therefore had many opportunities outside of our workshop time to perform with other

musicians and in front of church congregations. In our small room, we had limited space for instruments, but had access to keyboards, an electric guitar, a bass guitar, an acoustic guitar, and electric drums. Within the church environment, the context, the space, and the opportunities meant that though we explored similar notation, theory, and rhythm concepts but our application of them and our time with them was used very differently. In Kalangalala, we had more intensive, condensed lessons that built on their musical experiences. In Mwanza, we could explore and apply musical concepts more slowly and freely, but the participants had far fewer external opportunities for learning and less diversity of access to instrumentation upon which to learn.

A deeper exploration of ANS's Art in Hard Times mural project and its Art in a Just Recovery mural project would make for a fascinating case study on the effects of space on creative practice. Art in Hard times was conceived and conducted online in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social artist, Melanie Schambach, described learning in the online space with a spirit of optimism and curiosity during the Reimagining Possibility campaign. She marveled, "I think our minds were blown in such a beautiful way because we learned all these different processes and ways of being with each other, games, activities, ways to go deeper that we didn't even know existed." At the unveiling of the mural for the Art in a Just Recovery project, I found that ANS had extended this learning in a post-pandemic world, where we now have ways of reaching a hybrid community and can conceptualize communal spaces in more fluid and dynamic ways. As an ally and a hands-off researcher/observer, I was able to actively participate, and feel part of the Art in a Just Recovery event, by sharing space with artists and participants. I could see and read about artists' multimedia works. I conversed with participants

in a way that felt connected and engaged (without feeling like an intrusion). It was my engagement in this in-person celebration that inspired the writing of the Chapter 5 narrative, "Community Impact Speaks for Itself; Institutions Need to Listen." The influence of the environment (virtual and shared space) and the context (the COVID-19 pandemic) on the experiences of participants was undeniable. It is powerful to see how the learning from Art in Hard Times carried forward into Art in a Just Recovery. As the pandemic waned, the multimodal reach and engagement expanded. ANS applied lessons learned about the accessibility of online engagement to supplement opportunities to engage in shared physical spaces.

Did intercultural exchange result in a change in awareness/perceptions about the others with whom participants were not previously familiar?

It is always fascinating to me to see individuals engage, listen, and share across cultures and lived experiences. As I confessed, my initial dream for this work would have been to see youth in Ontario, Nunavik, and Tanzania engage and share creatively with one another. I am privileged and exceedingly grateful that I've been able to engage, share, and learn in these spaces. While this original vision was never realised, it does not diminish the diversity of creative and relational interactions in the spaces facilitated by ANS, BWTM and CIRQINIQ.

ANS expresses their commitment to opening space for awareness and learning through difference in the approaches they share on their website, "We invite participants, leaders, and community members into our learning and unlearning about how we can actively work against stigma and discrimination of all kinds" (ANS, 2023b). As the ANS Executive Director Michelle Peek explained through the Reimagining Possibility campaign, "We were already an organization that centered equity, that really tried to meet people where they were at . . . that

valued open communication and transparency." This spirit was also expressed through the campaign by social artist Melanie Schambach who reflected, "I've been many moments [sic] learning from very specific things around mental health, on accessibility, on creating spaces that are more welcoming and inclusive, and so in that way I do feel very much as an apprentice."

The Cirkaskina gathering represented a fascinating intercultural space as social circus programs from across Canada came together. From the Inuit, CIRQINIQ perspective there were many powerful moments of sharing and learning. From the Inuktitut sharing and learning across Nunavut and Nunavik dialects to the praise and embrace of social circus collaborators from across Canada for the workshops led by Tupiq A.C.T. members. Perhaps one of my favourite moments was not a specifically creative or artistic interaction (though it was certainly improvisatory and somewhat performative in nature). During a lunch break, I sat at a table with CIRQINIQ youth and two young participants from Halifax Circus. The Inuit youths from the Northern Villages of Kangirsuk and Kuujjuaq (villages in which I've lived) described the contexts of their northern lives ranging from their language to the climate to the foods they eat to the fact that water is delivered to homes via truck. All the while, the young Nova Scotians (the province in which I grew up) listened inquisitively and intently. It was a heartwarming affirmation for the Inuit youth as the Halifax youth engaged with curious admiration.

I've previously elaborated upon sharing English language folk-rock/popular music with the young men in Mwanza. This co-learning integrated second language learning and musical concepts with the more familiar experience of learning a song. These intercultural moments included subtle ways of communicating culture, including my efforts to introduce new exercises and concepts that didn't conflict with or undermine those already mobilized by their longer-

term teacher Paul Malifa. As with Cirkaskina, however, it was often in the side conversations and engagements where we interrogated and shared our cultures and where intercultural learning manifested more explicitly. As I mentioned, I was given several short Kiswahili lessons. I had private, but honest, conversations with school and program staff on subjects ranging from corporal punishment in schools, sexuality, and patriarchal structures. I discussed the political climate in Tanzania and learned more subtle interpersonal linguistic customs, like how to greet individuals based on their position in the community (one must say 'shikamoo' to an elder, while the more common 'mambo' can be used in a more casual greeting).

In the trust-filled, relational spaces that these arts-based programs are trying to establish, the interpersonal sharing quickly becomes intercultural as we seek to get to know one another. The emergent and improvisatory nature of social life is amplified when we bring it into creative spaces, where there is intentional space made for it to be generated, expressed, and reciprocated.

Did intercultural exchange result in a change in awareness/perceptions about participants' own identity, community, or culture?

As I was identified as a leader, as an outsider "expert," I knew I did not have the capacity or lived experience to lead or communicate in many specific cultural or creative contexts. This is when I humbly asked my collaborators for their cultural leadership. Paul (in Geita) and Paul (in Mwanza) translated, providing much-needed linguistic and cultural awareness to my foreign and experimental teaching and learning style. Emerging Inuit leaders in the social circus spaces spoke in Inuktitut and affirmed their identities through the learning they led, as they worked to understand both the colonial structures they must navigate and the resilience of their cultural

traditions. Deep learning about how to make space for difference through ANS's programming, especially related to mental health and trauma, meant that participants could stop being ashamed of neurodivergence, mental health, and disabilities.

As reflected in the Chapter 5 narrative, "Western Music is East Africa" Paul and Paul both expressed an interest and desire to learn and share Western music theory. I never felt fully at ease with my inability to speak to or share in their musical traditions, but it was made clear to me that gaining access to formalized Western music was both interesting and valuable to them. I felt and heard some confusion and mild resistance to some of the improvisatory, student-centered approaches that I applied. I interpreted this as participants reaffirming and asserting their own knowledge and cultural understandings. This polite but clear questioning felt to me to be an affirmation of their interests and desires. This assertion of their needs and interests felt most palpable to me in Kalangalala where after a day of mostly improvisatory musical exploration, the students firmly declared their desire to learn Western music theory and music notation. Program coordinators and students also expressed the desire for a formal certificate of participation, with my signature, for all participants. I sheepishly questioned how valuable this would be for participants, but for them, the formal opportunity for music training from a music educator and doctoral researcher from a Canadian post-secondary institution carried weight. They affirmed and asserted their needs and interests, making sure they were heard. In Kalangalala, what delighted me most about these interactions was that as we concluded, the young men started to consider how to take the new musical ideas to which they'd been exposed and bring them into their existing musical practices and traditions. At the final gathering on our final workshop, I'll never forget how the students gathered around a

mobile phone listening to jazz and blues piano recordings. One participant excitedly expressed his desire to bring jazz, popular, and traditional Tanzanian music together to create something new. I felt that opportunities to express and share new senses of self and cultural identity were just beginning to emerge.

In Chapter 3, I shared an article by Schwan and Lightman (2015) in which they suggest that challenges facing the CIRQINIQ program, such as attrition, tardiness, and inconsistent commitment, might be understood "as a sign of cultural survival rather than a risk to cultural survival" (p. 27). An explanation for some of the sustainability and uptake challenges the CIRQINIQ program has faced over the years might be attributable to youth resistance to the "macro forces of colonialism" (Schwan & Lightman, 2015, p. 22). Interestingly, during the implementation of *Improvising in-between,* a new article was published on the CIRQINIQ program, by Lavers, Burtt, and Bochud (2022) entitled "Cirqiniq: the decolonising of social circus in Nunavik." In it they suggest, "This grounded research gradually revealed a process of decolonisation of the circus program in Nunavik" (p. 181). What we see here over the span of nearly a decade of research is that coordinators, youth, and communities are wrestling with colonial struggles and demonstrating the challenges. We also see how is change reflected through this learning. The members of Tupiq A.C.T. that I engaged with, and that Lavers, Burtt, and Bochud (2022) cite in their article, have embraced both the Inuit and the circus traditions. They perform as Inuit with Inuit, while training and learning alongside circus artists that come from a non-Inuit circus tradition. During the Cirkaskina gathering and the community visit in Inukjuak, I saw Inuit legends, Inuit songs, and cultural references incorporated into workshops and performances. I also saw young people choose to disengage with activities that did not

meet their personal or cultural needs. There are self-affirming lessons to glean from when and how Inuit engage with and express their culture. This cultural exploration is not a zero-sum game. Their efforts are neither fully colonial nor staunchly anti-colonial. There is a complex navigation at play.

ANS's commitment to creating inclusive spaces has been discussed throughout this dissertation. In terms of self-awareness and self-perception, the range of people who expressed that they felt they could be themselves and express themselves through ANS programming stands out. From Melanie Schambach's reflection on learning about accessibility to the participant who wrote that they never have to "apologize for the space their body requires" ("Our Impacts & Outcomes," 2023), ANS collaborators found ways to assert themselves. Through the range of modes of expression embraced by ANS, from movement to text to music to visual art, participants were enthusiastically invited to share and explore their sense of self.

The common thread across these programs is a belief and a commitment to artistic expression as a means to explore yourself in a welcoming and encouraging space. There is care, curiosity, and playfulness in each space through which participants can determine if, how, and when to express themselves. It would be disingenuous to suggest that each participant had the same opportunity or capacity to reflect on their own identity and find hope and confidence through that reflection. At Rich Hill School, I shared a classroom with approximately 150 students across four different classes. The linguistic gaps and the limited opportunity for more personal interactions makes it difficult to assess which students, or how many, reflected upon their identities or cultures in those large spaces. I can recall joy and learning among many (though I'm sure not all) of the students. I can only imagine what creative and cultural thoughts

went through most of their minds watching and hearing an unusual, English speaking, white Canadian bound around in front of them. So many of the intriguing personal narratives that may emerge from this work will remain a mystery to me.

Are any of the observed/reported changes likely to effect participants' choices and relationships going forward?

By no means can we be certain that specific interactions, engagements, creations, or lessons during *Improvising in-between* will have instigated a sustainable change. Add this to the ongoing challenges of sustainability for arts organization aligned to fragile funding and resource availability and this question becomes even more difficult to respond to with certainty. Do I believe that there will have been moments that participants will carry with them and that will affect their lives in the future? Given how program participants have communicated the ways in which they have been affected through interviews, reports, and off-the-record interactions, it would be surprising if similar effects did not persist into the future.

The extent to which creative program engagement has affected participants has been shown through the establishment of Tupiq A.C.T. out of the CIRQINIQ program, or how BWTM teacher Paul Pambe described in an interview "when I joined with others, I can share with the others about the music. It helped me to help more friends, speaking about the music and the songs." Before his untimely passing, throughout the writing of this dissertation Paul and I regularly connected through WhatsApp to discuss music and our lives. ANS participants discuss how they felt safe and inspired to engage in art practices where they had not before. Through the Reimagining Possibility campaign, a Fuck Perfect participant described having a great

connection with the ANS facilitators elaborating that “it’s really cool to have that sort of contact. They mean quite a bit to me [laughs] cuz they’ve changed my life.”

Not all individuals can remain within and sustain these programs, but the dedicated leaders and passionate advocates for these organizations know that they are having an impact. They see it and hear it consistently through their interactions with program participants. It’s not coming in the form of satisfaction surveys or even necessarily in the creative products at the end of their programming. They hear it when participants tell them that they felt seen and heard. They hear it when someone who felt excluded and alone found a place where they belonged. They hear it when participants have found (or re-found) a capacity to express themselves in ways previously didn’t know they could.

Perhaps for some, the most sustaining realization that emerges from these creative spaces is a community of trust that participants can turn to, or at least call back upon, in times of need. It’s been a privilege to have connected to these communities of trust. I hope to continue to find ways to contribute to conditions that will encourage the sustained reach and impact of their efforts.

This creation is open ended

Early in the development phase of this doctoral work, I was asked by my graduate advisory committee member, Dr. Rebecca Caines, why I wanted to explore co-creation with young people in underserved and aggrieved communities. In response, I remember describing a strong sense of connection, trust, friendship, and affinity with past collaborators in a diversity of intercultural contexts. That conversation inspired me to interrogate how I’ve worked with

community and what elements of my approach to engagement have contributed to my strong, but undefined sense of what it means to engage with community.

Through *Improvising in-between*, I have considered how care, wisdom, and a determined dedication to repersonalizing ethical engagement have served as guiding principles for my own practice and exploration. As I've explored how we improvise creatively, socially, and practically, I repeatedly encountered how my social justice-orientation towards improvisatory engagement was given meaning by a range of moral and political conceptualizations. An understanding of and grounding in trauma-informed, relational, power-transparent, anti-racist, feminist, participatory, and decolonizing principles (to name a few) were fundamental to how I understood improvisation as a social practice. The extent to which improvisation can be conceived as a vehicle for social change is well served by an honest admission that, on their own, improvisatory actions and interactions can be as destructive and exclusive as they can be generative and affirming. One need only look at contrasting protest movements (e.g., the 2020 Wet'suwet'en pipeline protests and the 2022 Trucker Convey in Canada) to see how emergent, improvisatory movements can manifest differently depending on moral and political ideologies.

As we seek to enact a socially engaged, empowering ethic, it behooves us as empowered scholars to be transparent and honest with ourselves and our collaborators about the structures that bind us. As scholars in the academy, we are responsible for adhering to policies and regulations enacted by institutional authorities (e.g., authorship standards and institutionalized ethics protocols). To thrive, we are often reliant upon the market-based interests of our benefactors (e.g., through compliance with the "accountability industry" or through the endorsement of our morally dubious corporatized sponsors). Despite opportunities

within the academy to see and name problematic authority structures, we often lack the power to change them and sometimes even to resist them.

As we engage with collaborators, we may find ourselves being careful about what we can and cannot offer them. Our ability to share or control access to resources and opportunities may never be as equitable as we might dream. This makes me reflect again on Thomas King's adoption of the label "hopeful pessimist" (2003, Lecture 4). It inspires me to express a desire to remain ambitious, hopeful, and determined without losing the healthy skepticism. We may need this generative skepticism to help us to resist a well-worn path toward a dehumanizing, commodifying, hyperbolic trap which manifests through deceptive and manipulative narratives that emerge out of relationships between institutional powers and aggrieved and underserved collaborators.

Throughout this dissertation, I've reflected on the legitimization and honouring of non-academic voices in institutional spaces. I've asserted that our scholarly inclination toward highly rhetorical, generalized, or hyperbolic concepts can feel distant from and dissonant with the lived experiences and practices embodied in aggrieved and underserved communities. Improvisatory, community-engaged praxis presents us with opportunities to be human, to resist the depersonalizing and objectifying nature of many scholarly and institutional practices. In building trust and relationships with partner representatives and ultimately program participants, I steadfastly assert that as we seek to repersonalize relationships within and across institutional and community spaces, we must hold the wellbeing and interests of our collaborators in the highest regard. Consequently, our actions must follow. This may mean that our academic or creative aspirations need to be deprioritized when faced with the reality of our

collaborators. Despite our intentions and expectations, our interests and priorities may not affirm the wellbeing and interests of the people with whom we seek to engage. This is true of my work during *Improvising in-between*. It manifested through the decision to forego partnerships and practices that were impractical or inappropriate, such as choosing not to document some Inuit cultural workshops or deciding not to press collaborators for creative or narrative contributions that had proved practically untenable.

When we conceive and practice improvisation, it remains important that we think broadly and critically about "yes, and . . ." as an improvisatory ethic (Johnstone, 1987; Rea, 2018). In intercultural, power-infused spaces we must enact ethical, creative, interpersonal, and wise practices that fully recognize, and aim to empower, those with whom we share space. Getting to know each other means recognizing that there will be a diversity of thought, ability, experience, and beliefs in any space. It may be unrealistic to expect that we'll be capable of fully understanding all these differences, but as scholars it is our responsibility to inform ourselves about practices that allow us to create environments where these differences can be expressed and affirmed. We need to be persistent in creating spaces "where 'no' can flourish" (Chaney, n.d., para. 1), where resistance, uncertainty, and obscurity are welcome, and where protocols (such as pro forma consent documentation) cannot be allowed to impose an authoritative implication of binary consent empowering institutional researchers over their collaborators. Before, during, and after our improvisatory engagement we must prepare, enact, and reflect on how an environment of consentful relationships can be realized through all phases of our collaborations.

Improvisation is more than just "making things up as you go." It is enacted through an expression of and negotiation with our experiences, our skills, our relationships, and our environments. It takes on so many forms, from the playful to the virtuosic to the revolutionary. As Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz (2013) assert, improvisation "can serve as a key crucible for human rights" (p. xiv), it "promotes personal confidence" (p. xv), and is a model for "mutual respect and collective responsibility" (p. xviii). As community-engaged scholars, we must first have the wisdom to understand the nature (or natures) of the improvisatory practices in which we are engaged. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I spent more time than I would have liked immersed in a distant exploration of institutional and theoretical conceptions of ethical, improvisatory practice. At these levels, I found improvisation to be an interesting foil to the institutional efforts to standardize, generalize, and control a dynamic and inconsistent world. I found that the way we conceive of reciprocal, responsive, and creative engagement in arts-based, improvisatory spaces was useful in terms of rethinking how we navigate the subjugation imposed by institutional rigidity and stagnation. Just as we respond to dynamic individuals and environments to negotiate creative and novel responses in arts-based collaborations, so too can we bring that dynamic mindset into our negotiations with an unforgiving system. The interpersonal, relational engagement that allows us to build trust with our community collaborators can be employed as the foundation of our navigation of and resistance to the colonial, market-driven institutional structures. When we transgressively make the policy personal or expose the regulation as reductive, we embody a bit of creative chaos. By rehumanizing the way that we work, rather than simply playing the academic game, we resist the status quo that has always been fixed against aggrieved and underserved communities.

As an evaluation consultant, I was often encouraged to reflect on the data and on the learnings and attempt to answer the question "So what?" In other words, can I confidently say that what I've done or learned matters or that it has been consequential? If I were to consider this dissertation to be the culmination and the crowning achievement of my doctoral work, then I'm not sure how confident I can be in the significance of my research. But then, for me, this doctoral work never was about academic outputs or scholarly arguments. It was about exploring creative learning and socially engaged ethics in practice: working together to discover and share improvisatorially with my research collaborators, ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ. Do I believe that what the questions I've asked and the insights I've gained are important? Absolutely. I've felt quite passionate about and animated by the ideas and the explorations herein. But do I anticipate that my writing will contribute to widespread or impactful learning and change? I can't say.

What I can say is that the relationships I've established and the engagements I've had with my community collaborators, bring me hope. I know that the community-engaged, care-filled, and creative ways I met with my collaborators have contributed to change. The changes experienced by those with whom I've collaborated will no doubt vary in both substance and intensity. Throughout this dissertation I have shared a range of voices who have expressed how their engagement in art-based, social justice-oriented programs have made them feel seen, confident, affirmed, educated, and happy. Admittedly, I can't confidently speak about how each collaborator has experienced change. I can share how my engagement with them has changed me. I have been filled by a steadfast commitment to honouring the identities and the stories that have been shared with me. Their trust and openness has taught me about the power of

emergent, creative practice and how we can bring a rehumanizing and dynamic praxis into the colonial, institutional spaces that trouble them. Perhaps this academic, largely inaccessible dissertation is not the ideal vessel for consequential change that I'd like it to be, but the enactment of the relationships and practices explored herein might be.

So now what? In many ways, my identity as a PhD researcher and my affiliation with the University of Guelph is what liberated and empowered me to engage with my creative collaborators throughout *Improvising in-between*. With that formal relationship coming to an end, what does that mean for the relationships I've formed and the ideas we've been collaboratively exploring? It is bittersweet in the sense that I may not have the same dedicated time and resources to share with ANS, BWTM, and CIRQINIQ that I've had during my doctoral research. However, I now feel that I am free to engage with them in a more community-focused way, in a way that no longer imposes external pressures, inappropriate expectations, and depersonalizing mechanisms. I aspire to continue to engage with and support these programs (and others like them) with a stronger and more determined foundation. I may have less time for them, but the time I do have can focus upon meeting their needs and interests without concern for the transactive, commodifying impositions of the academy. I have more work to do translating my learnings from *Improvising in-between* into multimedia narratives (e.g., digital stories); practical, plain-language learnings; and program sustaining advocacy resources. I am grateful for the co-learning we've done together. I believe that I still have a continued responsibility to support my collaborators (to the extent that this support is needed and wanted) as they navigate (and where possible, resist) the troublesome colonial, market-based accountability industry. Outside the peering and hungry eyes of the academy, I have a lingering

desire to follow up with the stories I can't tell, to see where they might lead. This may mark the end of this doctoral dissertation, but this creation is open ended.

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Appendix A

Rich Hill English Medium and Primary School Music Lessons

RICH HILL ENGLISH MEDIUM AND PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC LESSONS

Bridging Worlds Through Music

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TEACHING TIPS AND ADVICE

MAKE THE ACTIVITIES PLAYFUL.

- If you can make a lesson into a game or interactive activity this will be fun and will help students to learn to work together.
- Call and response activities are easy and fun.
- It can be very helpful to use humour to keep the students interested and happy to be with you.
- Even practicing and repeating activities can be made to be fun.

BUILD CONFIDENCE IN BASIC SKILLS BEFORE MOVING AHEAD WITH MORE DIFFICULT SKILLS.

- Students may struggle to sing because they can't match pitch or are not supporting their note by breathing properly.
- Students struggle to read a rhythm because they can't feel the beat, or don't understand how the beat and rhythm are related.
- Be sure that the skill you are teaching matches the students age (vocal range, size, and strength change as children grown)

GIVE STUDENTS A CHANCE TO CREATE AND LEAD IN THE LESSONS.

- Allow students to suggest rhythms or notes during lessons.
- Ask students to suggest songs or ideas to add to songs.
- Allow students to create their own songs.
- Have students lead or conduct warm up activities or exercises.

USE SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES (SMALL GROUPS HELPS TO GIVE EVERYONE A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE AND TRY THINGS).

- Break the class into small groups (3 to 8 students)
- Allow them to sing, play, create music and help each other learn new music ideas

TRY TO FIND EXAMPLES OR SONGS THAT INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT MUSIC SKILLS AND IDEAS.

- It is important that students understand how different music ideas can fit into other songs and music.

BE SUPPORTIVE OF STUDENTS AND THEIR DIFFERENCES (TRY TO INCLUDE ALL STUDENTS IN EVERY LESSON).

- If students are not able to do something, try a different way of teaching and showing them.
- Different students will be stronger with rhythm, singing, instruments. Different students learn differently.
- Gender should not decide which songs, activities, or instruments that the students play (all students can play any music).
- Be humble. Sometimes the student struggles because the teacher is not being clear or is teaching using ideas or strategies that do not work well for the students. Be willing to try new things and even ask the students what they need or want.

USE MOVEMENT AND THE BODY AS PART OF TEACH MUSIC IDEAS.

- Breathing, dancing, posture, technique are all important parts of learning and performing music.
- Feeling music is one of the most important aspects of being able to learn and express music.

AVOID GETTING ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED WITH STUDENTS.

- If students are misbehaving, try not to get angry or punish them. Try talking to them first. Find ways to include them.
- Find something that they enjoy and can have success with, then use that to build on and introduce new ideas.

FORM 3 LEARNING GOALS AND GUIDES

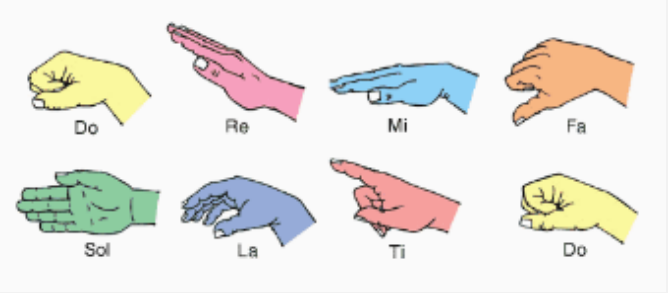
TOPIC	SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE	ACTIVITIES
FEELING THE BEAT (METER)	The ability to count and move your body to the beat in 4/4 time.	Counting 1,2,3,4 with the beat Clapping (or percussion) and counting to the beat Walk in time with the beat (can be just with a beat and to a song) - Walk in circles (*change direction after 4, 8, or 16 beats*) - Use different stepping/clapping patterns when walking on the spot - Use left and right leg, clap hands, tap body with left/right hands Use simple songs in 4/4 time have students create movements or dances with the beat Using percussion instruments (or clap) have students play on different (alternating) beats (for example, assign beats 1 and 3 to half the class and beats 2 and 4 to the other half *or* break into four groups and assign each group one beat and have them play through 1,2,3,4)
UNDERSTANDING PITCH	The ability to distinguish (both hearing and performing) higher and lower pitches. - Play and sing higher/lower pitches.	Have students sing glissando (slide the pitch) - From low to high and from high to low - Have students move their bodies up and down with the pitch Have students identify which pitch is higher or lower - Sung and played on an instrument Have students sing or play one pitch then have another student sing a higher or lower pitch - The actual pitches are not important, just that they recognize higher and lower pitches

		Sing songs with ascending/descending melodies (e.g., Nyota/Twinkle, Twinkle) - Have students move their bodies up and down with the melody
SIMPLE RHYTHMS	Reading and saying simple rhythmic notation in 4/4 time (i.e., crotchet, quaver, minim, semibreve). Clapping, saying, playing, and moving to simple rhythms in 4/4 time.	Introduce crotchet (quarter note) as the same length as the beat - Have students clap 4 crotchets as you point to the note, then conducting the beat - Have students say 'ta' as the sound for a crotchet Introduce quaver (eight note) as a pair (two quavers to one crotchet) - Have students clap 8 quavers as you point to the note, then conducting the beat (highlight there are 8 quavers in 4 beats) – a quaver is half of a beat - Have students say 'titi' as the sound for a pair of quavers Combine crotchets and pairs of quavers in 4/4 time and clap them and say them together - Say the rhythms as students clap or walk to the beat - Have students create their own combination of rhythms in 4/4 Create two simple quaver crotchet rhythms, half have the students clap or play (on percussion) one rhythm while the other half plays the other Introduce 2 beat minim (half notes) as "ta-a" (repeat exercises above) - When students make their own patterns using minim, make sure they don't make patterns that are long than 4 beats Introduce 4 beat semi-breve (whole) as "to-o-o-o" (repeat exercises)

		- When students make their own patterns using semibreve, make sure they don't make patterns that are long than 4 beats
TRIPLE METER	The ability to count and move your body to the beat in 3/4 time.	Counting 1,2,3 with the beat Clapping (or percussion) and counting to the beat Walk in time with the beat (can be just with a beat and to a song) - Walk in circles (*change direction after 3, 6, or 12 beats*) - Use different stepping/clapping patterns when walking on the spot ○ Use left and right leg, clap hands, tap body with left/right hands Use simple songs in 3/4 time have students create movements or dances with the beat Using percussion instruments (or clap) have students play on different (alternating) beats (for example, assign beat 1 to half the class and beats 2 and 4 to the other half *or* break into three groups and assign each group one beat and have them play through 1,2,3)
MATCHING PITCH	Accurately being able to match single pitches within a small vocal range (e.g., middle C to the C above). Accurately match pitches in short melodies (range of a 5^{th}).	Play and sing examples of matched pitch - Demonstrate matching pitch using a glissando (gliss into a unison from above and below) Using 'la', 'oo' or 'do', 're', 'mi' to practice matching one pitch at a time - Match one pitch between middle C & the C above (using 'la' or 'oo') - Match pitch singing 'do' to 're' moving from one pitch to the other

	Accurately match pitch in harmony with one other note (3^{rds}, 4^{ths}, 5^{ths})	- Match pitch singing 'do' to 'mi' moving from one pitch to the other Using 'la', 'oo' match a pitch with one other pitch (Middle C to C above) - Provide a bass note then have whole class sing a major third above - Provide a bass note then have whole class sing a Perfect 4^{th} above - Provide a bass note then have whole class sing a Perfect 5^{th} above
VOICE TONE	Working on different tones and timbres of the voice. The ability to distinguish and produce various vocal qualities. - Use good posture and breathing.	Sing notes in a variety of different tones and timbres (soft, rough, open, tight, silly, pretty, etc.) - Have students try to imitate the different tones and timbres Focus on matching vowel sounds ("aw", "ee", "oo", "ay", "eye", etc.) on a single pitch - Give examples of sing different vowel sounds, then same vowel sounds (e.g., some sing, "ee-aw-oo" others sing "ay-eye-oo") Practice good vocal posture - Have students relax (stretch, warm up exercises, dance, etc.) - Stand/sit tall, feet flat on the ground, knees relaxed, stomach/chest open and expanded, and everything else relaxed (i.e., shoulders, neck, jaw, and tongue) Practice breathing and supporting singing notes - Breathe deeply into your lower lungs (stomach expands) *NOT upper lungs (chest and shoulders lift up)* - Breathe in and out in time (e.g., break in for 2 beats out for 4 beats, in in for 4 beats out for 4 beats, etc.) Breath in and sing notes (on pitch) - Two beat and one beat breathe in and long tone ("oo" and "la")

		- Quick breath in crotchet notes (“ta-ta-ta-ta”) for four beats

SINGING MELODIES USING SOLFEGE AND LYRICS	Beginning introduction to pitches as part of scales (solfege).
	
	Develop confidence hearing, singing, and playing ‘do’, ‘re’, ‘mi’, and ‘la’.
		First interval to teach from solfege is ‘do’ down to ‘la’ back to ‘do’
		- Add ‘re’
		- Add ‘mi’
		  o Focus on matching pitch and singing together in time
		  o You may sing using simple quarter notes or add new rhythms
		
		Practice singing ‘do’, ‘re’, ‘mi’ and ‘la’ (below ‘do’, no above) in different patterns
		
		If you feel comfortable as a teacher, you may choose to learn the solfege hand symbols (you can teach these to the students which they can use to create their own solfege patterns)
		 

PIANO	Play the first five notes of the C major scale (with the right hand only).	Identify and number the fingers on the right hand (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 is thumb, index, middle, ring, and little) Play each of the first five notes of the C major scale (one note at a time) using the correct fingering - For added interest have each note played using different rhythms

		Play C,D,E up and down using correct fingers Play C,D,E,F,G up and down using the correct fingers
SONGS	Find simple songs to practice matching pitches and tone. Find one song that can be sung as a round.	Each lesson should include songs where students can practice different skills - https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=ec&c=123 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4I40EzVR2Py9VsaVJMp1pA

SKILLS TO DEMONSTRATE BY THE END OF FORM 3

(When evaluating and testing skills this can be done playfully and in small groups. Students who have difficulty with these skills should be encouraged to keep trying and supported to learn. It is okay for students to be at different levels, and they will learn skills at different times).

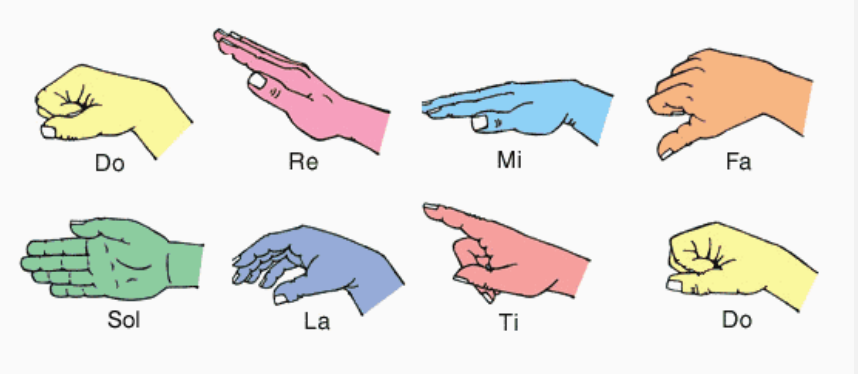
- **Keeping a steady beat**
  - Walking, clapping, counting out loud in time with a song
  - Simple dances and body movements in time with the beat (in 4/4 and 3/4 time)
- **Able to identify higher and lower pitches**
  - Listen to pitches and identify if one pitch is above or below the other one
  - Be able to sing higher and lower pitches compared to another note
- **Reading, playing, and naming simple rhythms**
  - Name semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), and quaver (eighth note) rhythm symbols
  - Say simple rhythms in 4/4 and 3/4 time using rhythm syllables (e.g., ta-a, ta, titi)
    - While clapping the beat
  - Clap or play (percussion and small drums) simple rhythms
    - While saying the rhythm syllables
    - While counting the beat out loud (e.g., “1,2,3,4” or “1,2,3”)
- **Matching pitch and singing short melodies**
  - Students can sing a note on pitch (between middle C and the C above)
  - Students can sing a note on pitch in harmony with another pitch (other pitch must be a 3rd, 4th, or 5th)
  - Can sing short, simple melodies on pitch (using only notes from the pentatonic scale)
- **Demonstrate good singing technique (breathing, posture, and tone)**
  - Demonstrate ability to match vowel sounds with open tone

    - Sing notes with good posture and well supported by breath
- **Piano**
    - Students can find the notes C, D, E, F, and G on the keyboard
    - Students can play simple rhythms on a single note
    - Students can play C to G ascending and descending with the proper fingering with their right hand
- **Perform a song**
    - Performing songs should be fun, while still demonstrating good skills (beat, rhythm, pitch, tone, etc.)

FORM 4 LEARNING GOALS AND GUIDES

TOPIC	SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE	ACTIVITIES
FEELING THE BEAT (METER)	The ability to count and move your body to the beat in 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 time.	Walk in time with the beat (can be just with a beat and to a song) - Walk in circles (*change direction after 2, 4, or 8 measures*) - Use different stepping/clapping patterns when walking on the spot - Use left and right leg, clap hands, tap body with left/right hands Create dances that fit and show the different feeling of 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 (have dances that emphasize beat 1 of each measure)
UNDERSTANDING PITCH	Identifying and singing simple intervals (3^{rd}, 4^{th}, and 5^{th})	Sing and play different music intervals (have students learn to hear, identify, and sing them) - 4ths and 5ths ascending and descending - Major 3^{rd} ascending (do-mi) - Minor 3^{rd} descending (do-la) Call and response using different rhythms and intervals - For example, have students create two different four beat rhythms, have half the class sing one rhythm on a single pitch, then have the other half sing the other rhythm on a different pitch (a 3^{rd}, 4^{th}, or 5^{th}) - Add words to the rhythms to create mini songs

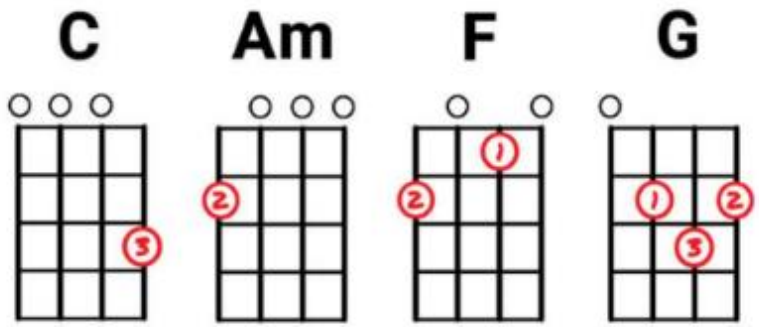
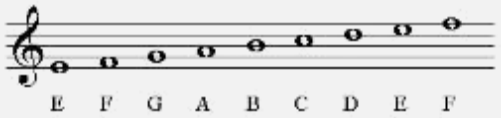
SIMPLE RHYTHMS	Review semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver. Introduce semiquaver, “syncopa”, as well as rests (crotchet and minim)	Play rhythm tag: Kids are assigned notes (semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver), they can move at their speed saying the sound (smaller notes can go faster). The large notes are trying to "eat" the smaller notes. Once they're eaten they become the larger note until everyone is a whole. Have students prepare their own 2 to 4 bar rhythmic patterns - Introduce bar lines (ensure that rhythms created by students have the correct number of beats for each bar) Students conduct the class in rhythm exercise - Divide the class into groups (start with 2 groups, move to 3 or 4 groups) - Assign each group a simple rhythm (e.g., ta, titi, syncopa) - Have a student create beats/rhythms by “conducting” the groups by pointing to the different groups creating beats and grooves
TRIPLE METER	The ability to count and move your body to the beat in 3/4 time.	Repeat simple rhythms exercises in 3/4 time
MATCHING PITCH	Matching pitch with up to three-part harmony (singing intervals and triads) Practice matching pitch while moving intervals (2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths)	Play call and response games using 3^{rds}, 4^{ths}, and 5^{ths} - Sing pitches melodically (separately) and harmonically (together) Divide classes into three groups have students sing major triads
VOLUME (DYNAMICS)	Introduce dynamics (loud and soft) Breath support and tone quality at different volumes	Have students playing rhythms and/or beats on percussion instruments changing the volume by using hand signals (high/big hand movements for loud, low/small hand movements for soft) Using the voice to make soft and loud sounds (does not need to be singing). Ask students to imitate loud sounds (e.g., cars, animals) and soft sounds (e.g., wind, birds).

		- You can create a simple story of loudness and softness using the different sounds (this can be done with or without following a beat) Now try to sing notes (between middle C and above) at soft, medium, and loud. Focus on supporting the note well with breath and trying to keep a good vocal tone at all different volumes.
SINGING MELODIES USING SOLFEGE AND LYRICS	The ability to sing pentatonic scales ascending and descending. Able to move around with the different pitches in the pentatonic scale (melodically)	Full pentatonic scale (still no 'fa' or 'ti') *If you feel comfortable as a teacher, you may choose to learn the solfege hand symbols (you can teach these to the students which they can use to create their own solfege patterns)*  Create simple melodies with the pentatonic scales and sing them with the class - Use simple minim or crotchet notes (can be conducted or rhythms can be written on the chalk board) - Have students choose different notes from the pentatonic scale (do, re, mi, sol, la) to create their own melodies Singing a song that has a pentatonic melody - Trying singing the song using the solfege syllables ('do', 're', 'mi')

PLAYING IMPROVISING MELODY AND RHYTHM	Using simple rhythm and pentatonic notes to create	Using only do, re, mi and la (below do) have students create their own vocal melodies - These can be written out first and/or created out loud by ear only - Students can use solfege syllables (e.g., do, re, mi), general syllables (e.g., 'la la la', 'mee mee mee'. 'doo, doo, doo') or words Using only C, D, and E on the piano, have students create their own improvised rhythms and melodies Students can use hand symbols for 'do', 're', 'mi' and create their own simple improvised songs as a "conductor/composer" Create a "giant piano" using student voices as the notes - Using spots on the floor (like a giant piano) set the notes of the pentatonic scale - Step from note to note and have students sing the pitches you are stepping on (start without a beat, then try to move in time and improvise a simple melody) - Start simple and get faster and more complex as students improve - Allow students to play the giant piano by stepping on the spots on the floor and having the class sing (or play on the piano) the notes they step on on the floor - See this example by Bobby McFerrin: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ne6tB2KiZuk
PERCUSSION	Learn simple basic technique on different percussion instruments	Demonstrate technique for playing simple beats and rhythms on hand drum, sticked percussion (e.g., wood block and cow bell), shakers, and tambourine

		Create percussion songs by having students create simple beats/patterns for different percussion instruments (using the techniques they've learned)
		
		Use the beats and patterns as the "groove" for students to improvised percussion solos (free play)
		- Allow students to play their own "giant drum set"
		  o Assigned between 2 to 4 different drum sounds to separate groups of students in the class
		  o Give each student an opportunity to create their own drum beat by pointing to the group in the class that they want to make the sound
		  o Try to emphasize that students must keep a steady beat (this can be in 3/4 or 4/4 time)

UKULELE	Fingerings for C and F chords (add G and Am depending on student confidence) Strum chords to the beat	Change from C chord to F chord (4 beats each) - If students struggle when playing 4 crotchets, have them play each chord first as a semibreve, then as 2 minims (work up to the crotchet) - Repeat exercise with G and Am (once students master C and F) Accompany a simple song (two chords) as other students sing – strumming on quarter notes

		
PIANO	Letter names of treble clef notes (middle C to G above) Play pentatonic scale in the keys of C, F, and G (right hand only) Sight read rhythms on piano playing on a single pitch	 Match the notes on the piano to the notes on the treble clef Play a learning game: - Put letter names on the wall around the room, select lines and spaces and have students got to the letter in the room then sing the note On the piano practice pentatonic scales in the keys of C, F, ang G (still no black keys needed). – right hand only - Practice scales by playing the first three notes (up and down) then the next three notes (up and down) - Play the whole scale (with correct fingering)

C

Notes: C, D, E, G, A, C

Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3

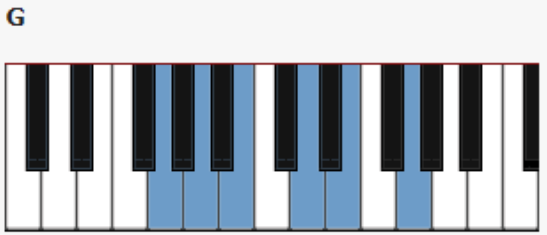
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3

F

Notes: F, G, A, C, D, F

Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3

Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 4

		 Have students create written rhythms in 4/4 and 3/4 time and have students play these rhythms on a single note on the piano - Create fun new musical creations by dividing class into groups and have them play different notes (in 3rds and 5ths) and the same rhythm - Then have them play different notes and rhythms at the same time
SONGS	Combine singing, percussion and ukulele (ukulele must be two chord song)	Introduce songs that can be played as a round (one melody starting at a different time) Each lesson should include songs where students can practice different skills - https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=ec&c=123 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4I40EzVR2Py9VsaVJMp1pA

SKILLS TO DEMONSTRATE BY THE END OF FORM 4

(When evaluating and testing skills this can be done playfully and in groups. Students who have difficulty with these skills should be encouraged to keep trying and supported to learn. It is okay for students to be at different levels, and they will learn skills at different times).

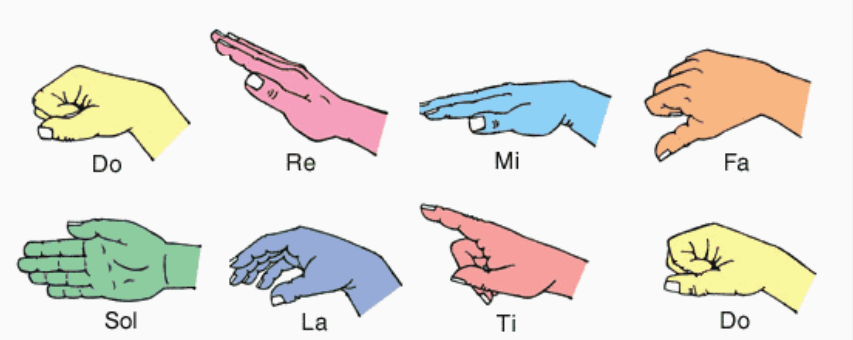
- **Keeping a steady beat**
    - Walking, clapping, counting out loud in time with a song (in 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 time)
    - Simple dances and body movements in time with the beat (in 4/4 and 3/4 time)
- **Reading, playing, and naming simple rhythms**
    - Name semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) rhythm symbols, and syncopated rhythm
    - Say simple rhythms in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 time using rhythm syllables (e.g., ta-a, ta, titi, tika-tika, and syncopa)
        - While clapping the beat
    - Clap or play (percussion and small drums) simple rhythms
        - While saying the rhythm syllables
        - While counting the beat out loud (e.g., "1,2,3,4" or "1,2,3")
    - Read rhythms with minim and crotchet rests in them
- **Playing solos on percussion**
    - Students can play an improvised solo on the djembe while the class keeps the beat
- **Matching pitch and singing short melodies**
    - Students can sing a note on pitch (between middle C and the C above)
    - Students can sing a note on pitch in harmony with another pitch (other pitch must be a 3^{rd}, 4^{th}, or 5^{th})
    - Can sing short, simple melodies on pitch (using only notes from the pentatonic scale)
    - Can create their own simple melodies with the pentatonic scale
- **Demonstrate good singing technique (breathing, posture, and tone)**
    - Demonstrate ability to match vowel sounds with open tone
    - Sing notes with good posture and well supported by breath
- **Singing simple solos**
    - Students can sing a simple song (matching pitches) using notes from the pentatonic scale
    - Students can create and sing short melodies (up to 4 measures long)
    - Students can sing their own short improvised melodies using 'do', 're', 'mi'

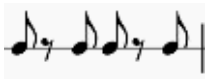
- **Piano**
    - Students can name all the letter names of the white keys on the piano
    - Students can name the note names of the lines and spaces of the treble clef
    - Students can play pentatonic scales in key of C, F, and G with proper fingering
        - C pentatonic – C, D, E, G, A
        - F pentatonic – F, G, A, C, D
        - G pentatonic – G, A, B, D, E
    - Students can play simple rhythms changing notes (using only C. D, E, F, and G)
    - Students can play C to G ascending and descending with the proper fingering with their right hand AND left hand
- **Ukulele**
    - Students can play C and F chords with a steady beat and can change from one chord to another
- **Perform a song**
    - Performing songs should be fun, while still demonstrating good skills (beat, rhythm, pitch, tone, etc.)
    - Add drumming and simple piano and ukulele parts to a simple song

Useful link: **https://www.music-for-music-teachers.com/beginner-piano-music.html**

FORM 5 LEARNING GOALS AND GUIDES

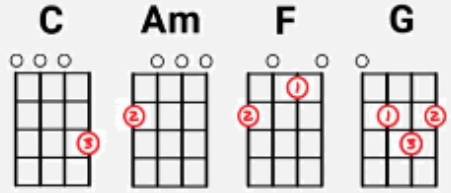
TOPIC	SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE	ACTIVITIES
FEELING THE BEAT (METER)	Fast and slow tempos in 4/4, 2/4, and 3/4 6/8 time	Practice drumming and dancing patterns that use a 4/4 pattern (start with medium tempos, slow down, then speed up) Practice drumming and dancing in 3/4, (start with medium tempos, slow down, then speed up). Once you've sped up, to quite a quick speed, transition to a 6/8 feel. Play the "giant drum set" activity from Form 4 lessons (add 6/8 time as an option). Focus on keeping good time.
UNDERSTANDING PITCH	Identifying more intervals (2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, 4^{th}, and 5^{th})	Major 2^{nd} ascending (do-re) and descending (re-do) - Also, re-mi ↑ and mi-re ↓ Minor 2^{nd} ascending (ti-do) and descending (do-it) - Also, mi-fa ↑ and and fa-mi ↓ Major 3^{rd} ascending (do-mi) and descending (mi-do) Minor 3^{rd} descending (do-la) and (la-do) 4ths and 5ths ascending and descending Look for songs that including these intervals (link the sounds to songs they know and/or will learn).
SINGING MELODIES USING SOLFEGE AND LYRICS	Sing the full major scale Sing melodies that include the 4^{th} (la) and the 7^{th} (ti) of the major scale.	Full major scale (start no lower than A below middle C up to as high as second E above middle C)

		If you feel comfortable as a teacher, you may choose to learn the solfege hand symbols (you can teach these to the students which they can use to create their own solfege patterns) 

SIMPLE RHYTHMS	- Introduce quaver rest (eighth note)
	- Introduce writing rhythms in 6/8 (barring three quavers)
		Using a slow 4/4 time, start by introducing the 'off beat'
		- Have some students play the downbeat while others play the off beat
		- Take away the down beat
		- Introduce the idea of counting the off beat as 'and' (subdividing)
		  ○ When writing it out you can simplify 'and' as '+'
		  ▪ 1+2+3+4+
		- Clap, move, and sing along to the off beat (find the groove)
		- Show how to write 'off beats' using quaver rests
		- Create new rhythms including quaver rests
		- Say, sing, play, and clap the new rhythms together
		  ○ Have students create dance moves that capture the notes of each rhythm
		
		Introduce the 'shuffle feel' in 6/8
		 
		- Play and move to the 'shuffle'

TRIPLE METER	- The ability to count and move your body to the beat in 6/8 time.	Practice djembe patterns (first using left and right hands, then dance with left and right legs) - Play/move to two djembe patterns at the same time - Play/move to three djembe patterns *In these djembe patterns, the bottom line is the left hand (or foot) and the line above is the right hand (or foot)* Djembe 1 Djembe 2 Djembe 3
MATCHING PITCH	Practice matching pitch while singing intervals (2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths) Matching pitch with up to three-part harmony (singing intervals and triads)	Play call and response games using 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths - Sing intervals melodically (separately) first and then have them this the intervals harmonically (together) - Divide class in two and assign one pitch to each group. Point/conduct when each group should sing their pitch (you may create rhythms to make it more interesting). Go back and forth between the groups focusing on each group singing the correct pitch. - Finally, point to both groups at the same time to have them sing the pitches in harmony. - Repeat activity with 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths.

		Divide classes into three groups have students sing major triads - Repeat the same exercise as with two pitches, except that will have three groups and will sing the pitches of a major triad.
VOICE TONE	Focus on matching vowel sounds Find student vocal ranges Matching different voice timbres (tones)	Start with middle C go down the major scale until out of range, then go up the scale until out of range - First practice with solfege (do, re, mi) - Then using different vowel sounds (e.g., 'oo', 'ah', 'ee', 'oh', 'ay') Play the 'make a noise' game - Have one student make any sound, then have other students try to imitate the sound o Describe the sound - Work with different sounds and look for different styles and tones that work well for singing o Find words to describe different singing tones o What is it that makes the singing sound nice? o How does it feel to sing the nice sounds?
PLAYING IMPROVISING MELODY AND RHYTHM	Create new rhythms and melodies using pitches from pentatonic scale and drum patterns in different key signatures (4/4. 3/4, 6/8)	Using the full pentatonic scale (do, re, mi, sol, la) have students create their own melodies by singing or piano - Can be written first and/or created out loud by ear only - Students can use solfege syllables (e.g., do, re, mi), general syllables (e.g., 'la la la', 'mee mee mee'. 'doo, doo, doo') or words Students can use hand symbols for 'do', 're', 'mi', 'sol', 'la' and create their own improvised songs as a "conductor/composer" Use "giant piano" using the class as singing - Using spots on the floor (like a giant piano) set the notes of the pentatonic scale

		- Step from note to note and have students sing the pitches you are stepping on (start without a beat, then try to move in time and improvise a simple melody) - Start simple, get faster and more complex as students improve - Allow students to play the giant piano by stepping on the spots on the floor and having the class sing (or play on the piano) the notes they step on on the floor - See this example by Bobby McFerrin: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ne6tB2KiZuk Create a drum patterns (2 to 4 measures long) using rhythms and time signatures that students have learned. - Have students perform improvised melodies (sung or on piano) and drum solos over top of the rhythm - Break the class into small groups (trios or quartets) to create their own improvised music.
UKULELE	Fingerings for C, F, G, and Am Strum chords to the beat Strum chords using different strumming patterns (rhythms) using quavers	Change from C chord to F chord (4 beats each) - Repeat exercise with G and Am Accompany a simple song (two chords) as other students sing – strumming on quarter notes  Try different strumming patterns on 4/4 time using quavers. (practice strumming patterns and have students create their own) **Strum pattern 1:** **1** + **2** + **3** + **4** + ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

Pattern 1 (notation):

Strum pattern 2:

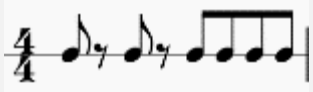
1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
↓		↓	↑	↓		↓	↑

Pattern 2 (notation):

Strum pattern 3:

1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
↓		↓		↓	↑	↓	↑

Pattern 3 (notation):



PIANO

Review letter names of the treble clef

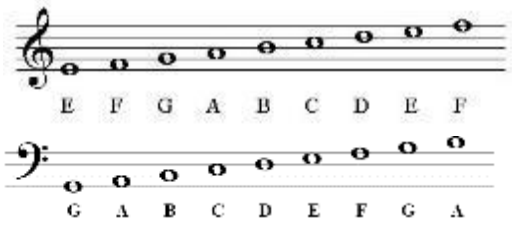
Introduce letter names of the bass clef

Introduce the notes F# and Bb

Play all 8 notes of the C major, F major and G major scale (ascending in the right hand only).

Play C major, F major and G major triads (harmonically and melodically) – right hand only with bass note in the left hand

Play simple melodies (right hand only) in the key of C, F, and G.



Slowly practice finger cross under (see fingering charts – Appendix III)

- When playing F major and G major (pay careful attention to Bb and F#)
- Demonstrate scales without flat and sharp to help understand why these notes are added (play scale and have students identify which is the “wrong” note). Have the students sing the correct

		note, then find it on the piano. Name the note and explain how and why a note is labelled flat or sharp. Have students sing major triads (C, F, and G), then find the notes of each triad on the piano. - Practice playing the notes of the C, F, and G major triads on the piano harmonically (at the same time) and melodically (each not separately as an arpeggio) in their right hang. - In the left hand play the bass note of each chord
SONGS	Find simple songs to practice matching pitches and tone. Find one song that can be sung as a round.	Each lesson should include songs where students can practice different skills - https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=ec&c=123 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4I40EzVR2Py9VsaVJMp1pA

SKILLS TO DEMONSTRATE BY THE END OF FORM 5

(When evaluating and testing skills this can be done playfully and in groups. Students who have difficulty with these skills should be encouraged to keep trying and supported to learn. It is okay for students to be at different levels, and they will learn skills at different times).

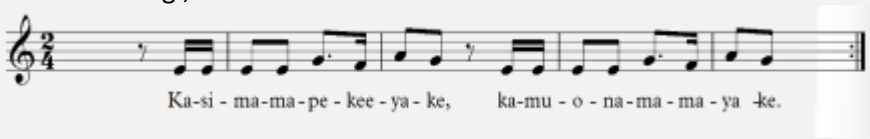
- **Keeping a steady beat**
  - Walking, clapping, counting out loud in time with a song (in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8 time)
  - Simple dances and body movements in time with the beat (in 4/4, ¾, and 6/8 time)
- **Reading, playing, and naming simple rhythms**
  - Name semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) rhythm symbols, and syncopated rhythms and rests
  - Say simple rhythms in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8 time (including minim, crotchet, and quaver rests) using rhythm syllables (e.g., ta-a, ta, titi, tika-tika, and syncopa)
    - While clapping the beat
  - Clap or play (percussion and small drums) rhythms and rests in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8
    - While saying the rhythm syllables
    - While counting the beat out loud (e.g., “1,2”, “1,2,3,4” or “1,2,3”)

- **Playing solos on percussion**
    - Students can play an improvised solo on the djembe while the class keeps the beat in 4/4 and 6/8 time.
- **Matching pitch and singing short melodies**
    - Students can sing a note on pitch (A below middle C up to as high as second E above middle C)
    - Students can sing a note on pitch in harmony with two pitches (major triads)
    - Can sing short, simple melodies on pitch (using notes from the major scale)
    - Can create their own simple melodies with the pentatonic scale]
- **Demonstrate good singing technique (breathing, posture, and tone)**
    - Demonstrate ability to match vowel sounds with open tone
    - Sing notes with good posture and well supported by breath
    - Students can sing various vocal timbres and tones (e.g., soft open tones, loud harsher tones)
- **Singing simple solos**
    - Students can sing a simple song (matching pitches) using notes from the major scale
    - Students can create and sing short melodies (up to 4 measures long) in 4/4 and in 6/8 using notes from the major scale
    - Students can improvise vocally with the pentatonic scale in the keys of C, F, and G
- **Piano**
    - Students can name all the letter names of the white keys on the piano
    - Students can name the note names of the lines and spaces of the treble clef and bass clef
    - Students can play major scales scales in key of C, F, and G with proper fingering
        - C major – C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C
        - F pentatonic – F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F
        - G pentatonic – G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G
    - Students can play simple rhythms changing notes (in the key of C, F, and G)
    - Students can play major scales in key of C, F, and G ascending and descending with the proper fingering with their right hand
- **Ukulele**
    - Students can play C, F, G, and Am chords with a steady beat and can change from one chord to another
- **Perform a song**
    - Performing songs should be fun, while still demonstrating good skills (beat, rhythm, pitch, tone, etc.)
    - Add drumming and simple piano and ukulele parts to a simple song

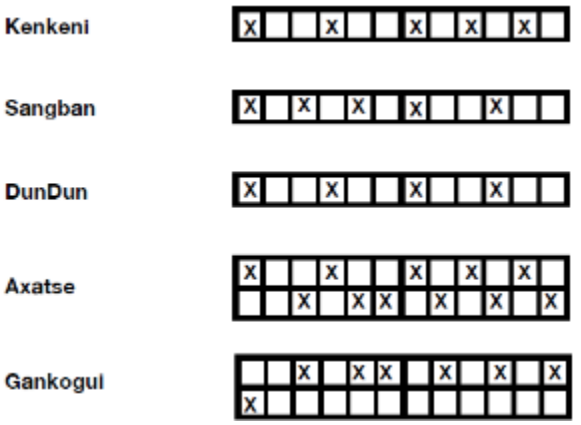
- **Useful link**: **https://www.music-for-music-teachers.com/beginner-piano-music.html**

FORM 6 LEARNING GOALS AND GUIDES

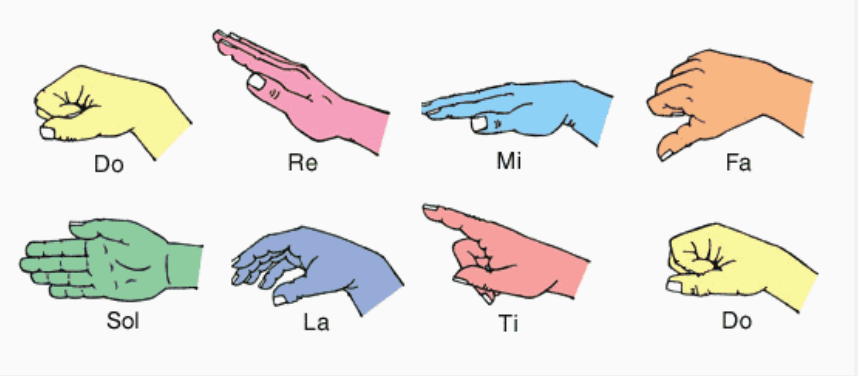
TOPIC	SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE	ACTIVITIES
FEELING THE BEAT (METER)	Being able to play more complex rhythmic patterns while keeping a steading tempo	Use a metronome to set a tempo, and practice keeping the beat along with the steady metronome. - Stop the metronome and try to keep the beat steady without the metronome, then restart the metronome to see if you have kept a steady beat Have students play beats that have long rests in between them. Try to encourage students to keep the beat in their heads so that when they all try to play the beat together it is exactly at the same time (do not conduct the students, try to have them feel the beat) - Do a similar exercise with two different groups and assign a different rhythm to each group (make sure there are long rests (i.e. 2 or 3 beats between each rhythm) between each rhythm ○ First help the students keep time by conducting, then have them try to keep steady time without conducting These exercises can be done at various tempos (slow, medium, fast) and different time signatures 4/4, 3/4.and 6/8.
UNDERSTANDING PITCH	Identifying simple intervals of the major scale using solfege Able to hear and sing most common intervals in tune ascending, descending, and harmonically (including major and minor 2^{nd}, major and minor 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5^{th}, major and minor 6^{th})	Use the piano to consistently give examples of intervals - Where possible find examples of intervals in songs Practice intervals in musical ways, look for harmonies and playful ways to sing and play rhythms that bring the joy and beauty of interval into practice - Have students act emotionally to how the different intervals make them feel (does the sound feel happy, sad, scary, funny, etc.)

RHYTHM	Introduce the dotted notes dotted minim, crotchet and quaver
	
	Introduce the “pick up note” (i.e., starting a song on a beat before beat one of the song)
	
	Create rhythmic patterns in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8 using any combination of rhythms and rests learned from Form 3 to 6.
	
	Play rhythmic patterns with up to 4 different parts at the same time.
	
	Clap, tap, say rhythmic patterns.
		- Teach students about dotted notes
		  o If Semibreve is 4 beats and minim is 2 houw do we make 3 beats? (add a dot)
		  o If minim is 2 beats and crotchet is 1, what if we want 1.5 beats (add a dot)
		  o If crotchet is 1 beat and quaver is half a beat how do we get ¾ of a beat (add a dot)
		  o This can be like a math game at first, but should always be accompanied by practicing the rhythms by saying, singing, playing and moving bodies to these rhythms so that students will feel them
		
		- Find examples of songs with a pick-up note
		  o Teach the song first then explain the “pick-up”
		  o Find where the beat one of the song is. What words start on beat one, then count into the song and have students find which beat the lyrics start on.
		  o E.g., Kasimama Peke Yake
		 

PERCUSSION AND RHYTHM	More advanced 6/8 patters (multiple parts at the same time) Listen to and learn traditional drumming Create new multiple part percussion patterns to play as a class	Play djembe parts (from Form 5 lessons). Play additional rhythms. Add them one at a time as students are able (play all if students are able)

		 Listen to and learn traditional drumming, practice these patterns and work with class to identify the time signature Use the rhythms and patterns that students have learned to create new percussion pieces that can have up to four different drum patterns at the same time (when students are comfortable allow them to play improvised drum solos over the drumming patterns)
MATCHING PITCH	Students match pitches G below middle C and second G above middle C Students can match pitches while singing melodies that follow a step-by-step scale pattern and interval leaps of up to a major 6th. Students can sing C, F, G, Bb, and D major scales accurately.	Find student ranges: start with middle C go down the major scale until out of range, then go up the scale until out of range Practice singing major triads, then have the students singing the 3rd, lower the pitch by a semi-tone to create a minor triad. - This can become a creative game as you learn about the bright happy sound of major compared to the sadder/darker sound of minor - Have students tell a story, when the class sings a major chord, have the story be happy, but when they change to minor have the story change to face some trouble

	Students can sing major and minor triads.	Continue practice with major scales (in the keys of C, F, G, Bb, and D major) - have students singing using solfege - have students sing with different vowels (e.g., 'oo', 'ah', 'ee') - give careful attention ot matching pitch sing in small groups (2 to 5 students) to help students hear themselves clearly
VOICE TONE	Explore higher and lower pitch voice ranges. Introduce dynamics (loud and soft)	Work on extending vocal range by supporting vocal technique with proper posture, breath support and open mouth/throat - Go up and down major scales with well supported tone to support and strengthen vocal range of students Practice scales and rhythmic activities using loud and soft volume - Sing and play (on the piano) scales softly, then play them loudly (try to ensure that the tone and the rhythm remain strong at both loud and soft volumes) - Then practice gradually increasing and decreasing the volume as you sing and play scales ascending and descending.
READING SIMPLE MELODIES FROM NOTATION	Students can read simple melodies from music notation and can sing and play them on the piano Melodies can be simple: mostly pentatonic, with simple rhythms (mostly minim, crotchet, and quaver), uses a small note range, with few large interval leaps	Students can sing pentatonic melodies by reading music notes off of the staff (use solfege to help identify the correct pitches) - Start reading notes on the staff by identifying them as solfege names - Begin slowly make sure students are getting the correct pitches and rhythms before going more quickly - After practicing with solfege try to sing some simple melodies by singing using vowel sounds (e.g., 'oo'. 'ah', 'ee') - After practicing singing the notes, practice reading the notes and playing them on the piano (they can sing the solfege as they play the piano if they are able and it is helpful) - If the melody has lyrics, have students sing the words of the song

		○ If they are able have them sing the words as they play the notes on the piano - If the melody does not have words (for example, a melody that the students created on their own), then you can work with them to add words and make their own short songs. *If you feel comfortable as a teacher, you may choose to learn the solfege hand symbols (you can teach these to the students which they can use to create their own solfege patterns)* 
PLAYING IMPROVISING MELODY AND RHYTHM	Create new rhythms and melodies using pitches from pentatonic scale and drum patterns in different key signatures (4/4. 3/4, 6/8)	Continue exercises from Form 5, if students are comfortable, add ukulele, piano, and drums as the accompaniment (e.g., using a I, IV, V chord progression) and then have individual students improvise their own solos using pentatonic scales and or their own words over the top. Using the full pentatonic scale (do, re, mi, sol, la) have students create their own melodies by singing or piano - These can be written out first and/or created out loud by ear only - Students can use solfege syllables (e.g., do, re, mi), general syllables (e.g., 'la la la', 'mee mee mee'. 'doo, doo, doo') or words

Students can use hand symbols for ‘do’, ‘re’, ‘mi’, ‘sol’, ‘la’ and create their own improvised songs as a “conductor/composer”

Use “giant piano” using the class as singing

- Using spots on the floor (like a giant piano) set the notes of the pentatonic scale

Step from note to note and have students sing the pitches you are stepping on (start without a beat, then try to move in time and improvise a simple melody)

- Start simple and get faster and more complex as students improve
- Allow students to play the giant piano by stepping on the spots on the floor and having the class sing (or play on the piano) the notes they step on on the floor

Create a drum patterns (2 to 4 measures long) using rhythms and time signatures that students have learned.

- Have students perform improvised melodies (sung or on piano) and drum solos over top of the rhythm
- Break the class into small groups (trios or quartets) to create their own improvised music.

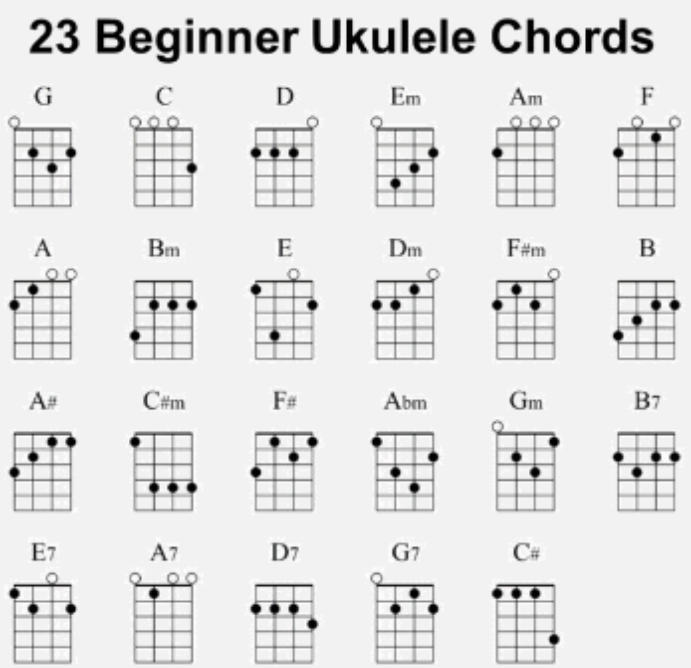
See this example by Bobby McFerrin:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ne6tB2KiZuk

UKULELE

Explore other easy ukulele chords.

Accompany simple songs with up to 5 different chords using different strumming patterns.

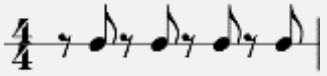
Practice playing chords using plucking patterns

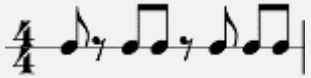


Play different chord patterns (from simple songs) using strumming patterns from Form 5 and these two new patterns (add new patterns if the students are feeling confident)

Strum pattern 4:

1	**+**	**2**	**+**	**3**	**+**	**4**	**+**
	↑		↑		↑		↑

Pattern 4 (notation): 

		Strum pattern 5:
		1 + **2** + **3** + **4** +
		↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑
		Pattern 5 (notation): 
		- Picking patterns - String numbers 1, 2, 3 ,4 (4 is on top and 1 is on bottom)
		  - 4231
		  - 123-124
		  - 4321
		  - 324142
		  - 1324
		  - 4132
		  - 142324
		  - 1421-4232
		  - 413121
		  - 411311211

PIANO	Students can play major scales with correct fingering (keys of C, G, D, F, Bb) - Left and right hand Students can play major and minor triads (keys of C, G, D, F, Bb) - Left and right hand Students can play major and minor triads in the keys of C, G, D, F, and Bb - Left and right hand	Slowly practice the finger cross under (see fingering charts – Appendix III), especially in left hand - When introducing Bb major and D major (pay careful attention to the introduction of Eb and C# notes) - Demonstrate scales without flats and sharps to help understand why these notes are added (play scale and have students identify which is the “wrong” note). Have the students sing the correct note, then find it on the piano. Name the note and explain how and why a note is labelled flat or sharp.

	Students can play a I-IV-V chord progression in the keys of C, F, and G in their right hand (bass note only in their left hand)	Have students sing major triads (C, F, G, D, Bb), then find the notes of each triad on the piano. - Build a triad off of the second note of each major scale to create a minor chord (have students sing Dmi, Gmi, Ami, Emi, and Cmi chords then find them on the piano with both their left and right hands Have students practice moving a I-Vi-V chord pattern just playing the bass note in their left hand - Then have them add the I-IV-V major triads in their right hand (play each chords as a semibreve first, give students lost of time to move their fingers and find the triad). As they get comfortable to may have them play two minims, or 4 quavers per chord. Finally, if students show a lot of confidence, create interesting rhythms for them to play on each chord o such as a “Charleston rhythm”:
SONGS	- Find simple songs to practice matching pitches and tone. - Find one song that can be sung as a round.	- Each lesson should include songs where students can practice different skills - https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=ec&c=123 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4I40EzVR2Py9VsaVJMp1pA

SKILLS TO DEMONSTRATE BY THE END OF FORM 6

(When evaluating and testing skills this can be done playfully and in groups. Students who have difficulty with these skills should be encouraged to keep trying and supported to learn. It is okay for students to be at different levels, and they will learn skills at different times).
** Not all students must be able to do all these skills, these are simply examples of appropriate skills that students could attain with proper lessons.*

- **Keeping a steady beat**
    - Playing rhythm and accompaniment at various tempos (staying in time, do not speed up or slow down)
- **Reading, playing, and writing rhythms**
    - Rhythms include any combination of durations from semibreve to semiquaver (including rests)
        - If students feel ready, crotchet and quaver triplets may be added
    - Rhythms can be played, read, and written in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8
- **Sight singing short melodies**
    - Students can sing simple melodies (pentatonic scales) by reading them
        - Can be sung using solfege and/or song lyrics
    - Rhythms should be mostly minim, crotchet, and quaver.
- **Dance**
    - Students can keep a steady beat and perform a group dance with a song (either while singing or to music played by others)
- **Demonstrate good singing technique (breathing, posture, and tone)**
    - Can consistently match pitches of at least one and a half octaves (e.g., A below middle C to second E above middle C)
- **Piano**
    - Students can play major scales with correct fingering (keys of C, G, D, F, Bb)
        - Left and right hand
    - Students can play major and minor triads (keys of C, G, D, F, Bb)
        - Left and right hand
    - Students can play I-IV-V chords along with simple songs (keys of C, G, D, F, Bb)
        - Root note in the left hand and triad in the right hand
        - If students are playing well, vi or ii chords can be added
- **Percussion**
    - Students demonstrate techniques on various percussion instruments
        - E.g., hand drumming, drumming with sticks, shakers, tambourine
    - Read rhythms and play them on different instruments

    - Play traditional drum as a group (focus on playing in time and in sync)
    - Accompany songs with various beats and rhythms
- **Rhythmic soloing**
    - Perform a rhythmic solo by reading and/or memorizing a percussion solo
    - Improvise a rhythmic solos/group improvisations over a beat (or without a beat)
- **Melodic soloing**
    - Perform a melodic solo by reading and/or memorizing a vocal or instrumental solo (e.g., piano, ukulele, or recorder)
    - Improvise a rhythmic solos/group improvisations over a beat (or without a beat)
- **Perform a song (solo and as a group)**
    - Performing songs should be fun, while still demonstrating good skills (beat, rhythm, pitch, tone, etc.)

Useful link: **https://www.music-for-music-teachers.com/beginner-piano-music.html**

Appendix I: Rhythm notation and syllables

‘Ta-a’ - minim (half note)

‘Ta’ - crotchet (quarter note)

‘Titi’ – quaver (eighth note)

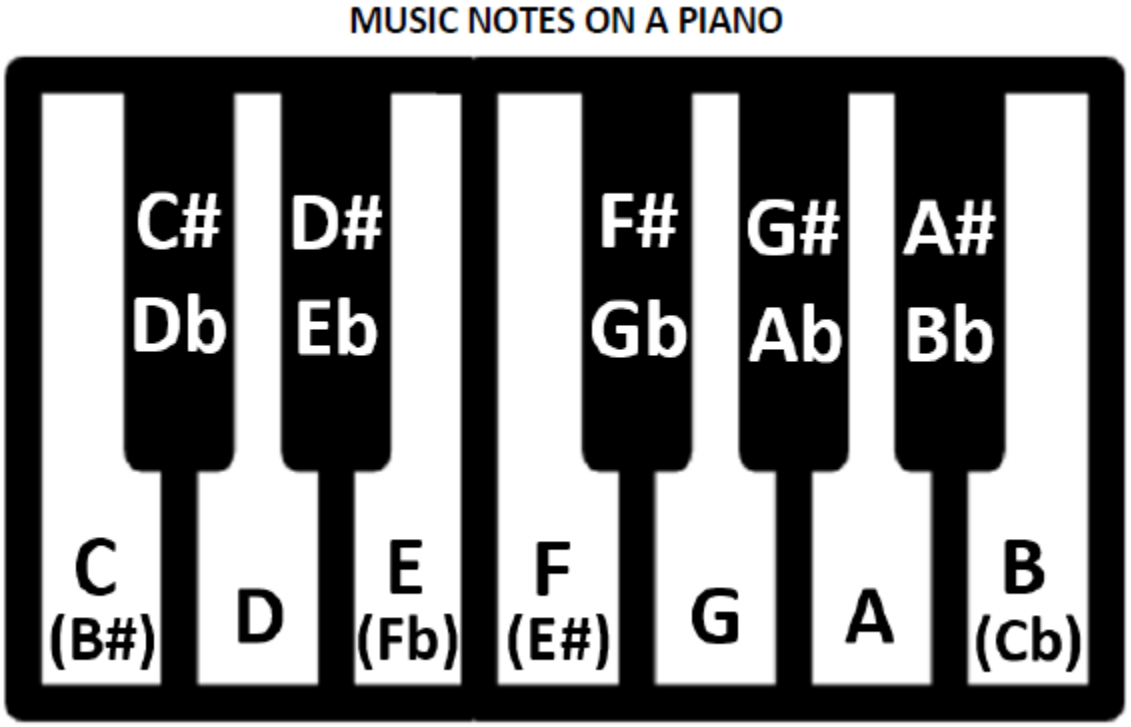
‘Tika tika – semiquaver (sixteenth note)

‘Syn-co-pa’ and ‘Ti-ta-ti’ – quaver, crotchet, quaver (eighth, quarter, eighth)

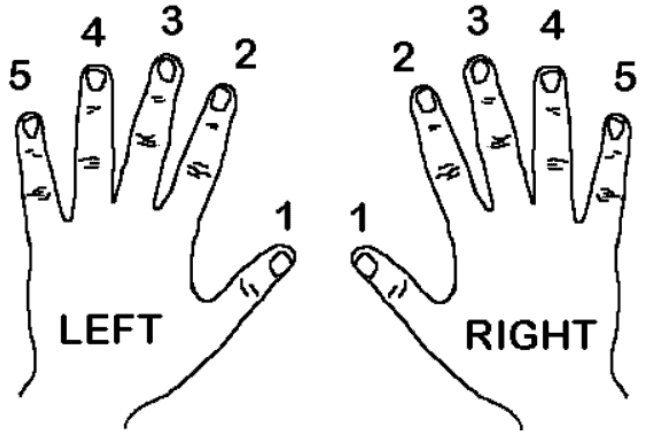
‘Ti tika’ – quaver and two semiquavers (eighth and two sixteenths)

‘Tika ti’ – two semiquavers and a quaver (two sixteenths and an eighth)

Appendix II: Notes on the Piano



Appendix III: Piano fingerings



Source: https://www.musicnotes.com/now/tips/do-i-really-need-to-follow-the-fingerings-in-my-piano-music/

C Major

Notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C

Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

D Major

Notes: D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#, D

Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

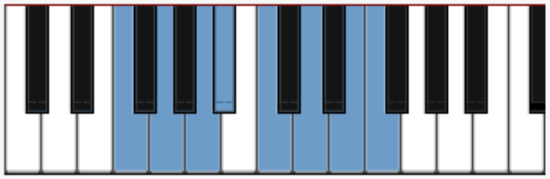
E Major

Notes: E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, E

Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

F Major



Notes: F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F

Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1

Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4

G Major

Notes: G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

A Major

Notes: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

B Major

Notes: B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#, B
Fingering (LH): 4, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

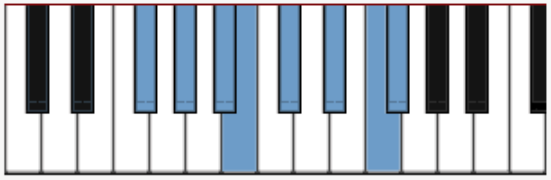
C# / Db Major

Notes: Db, Eb, F, Gb, Ab, Bb, C, Db
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2

D# / Eb Major

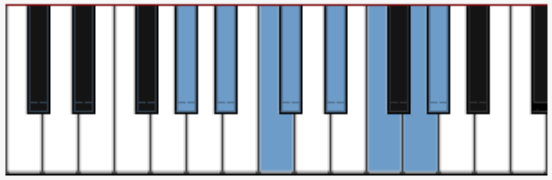
Notes: Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3

F# / Gb Major



Notes: F#, G#, A#, B, C#, D#, F, F#
Fingering (LH): 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 4
Fingering (RH): 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2

G# / Ab Major



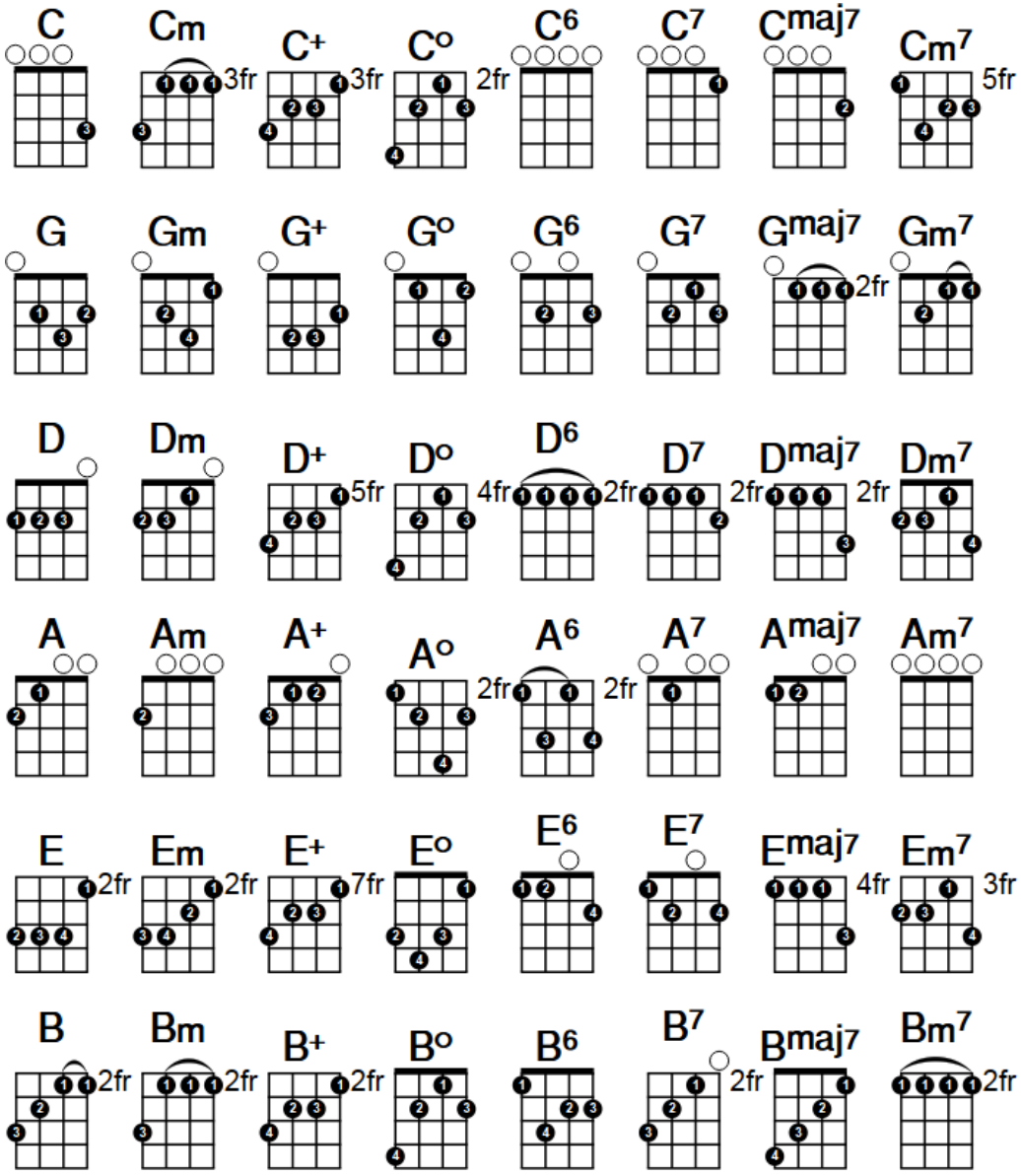
Notes: Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3

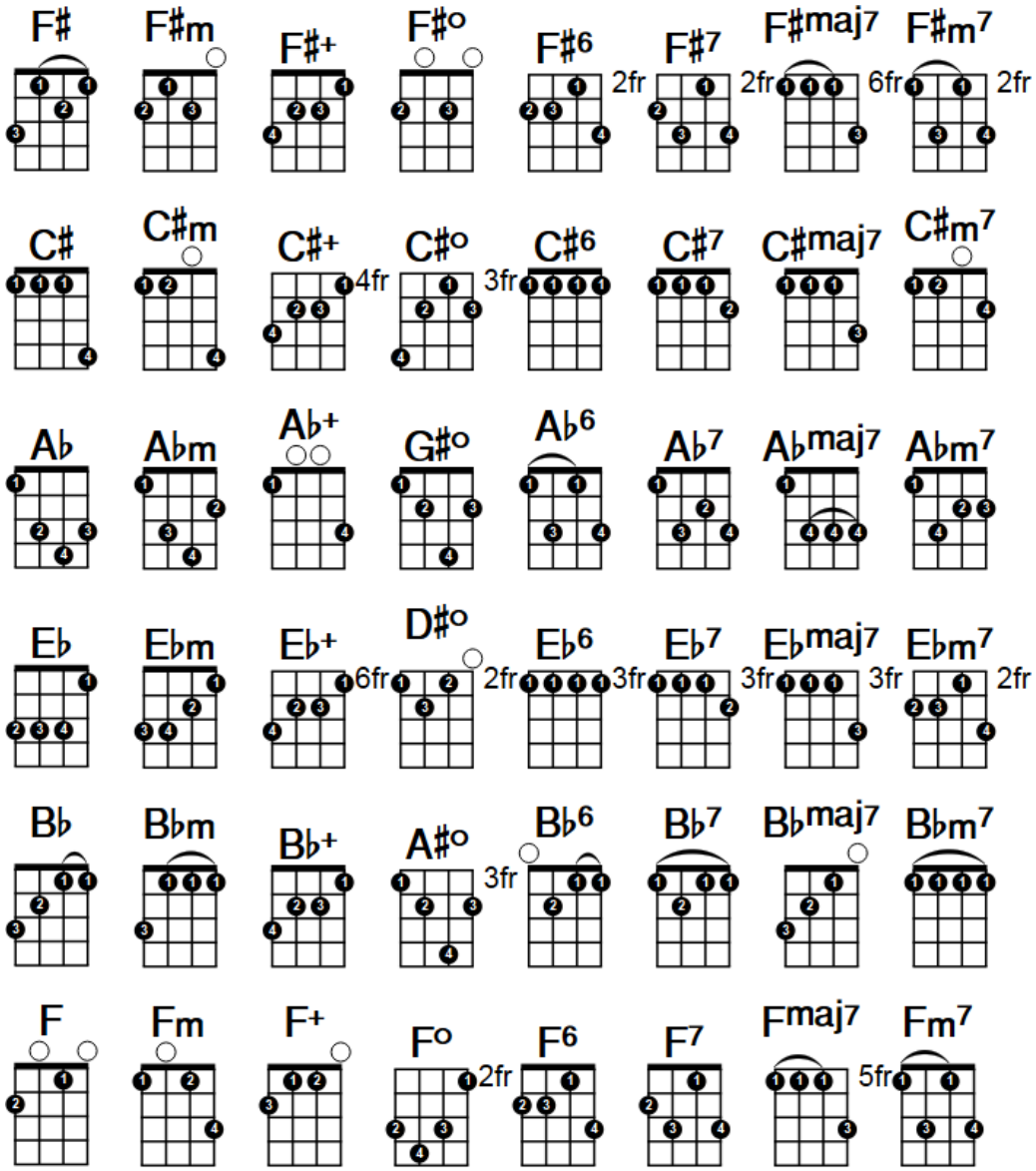
A# / Bb Major

Notes: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4

Source: https://www.pianoscales.org/major.html

Appendix IV: Ukulele fingerings





Source: https://ukulelechords.fm/chords/chart/

Appendix B

BWTM Adult Music Workshop Lessons and Workbook

ADULT MUSIC WORKSHOP LESSONS AND WORKBOOK

Bridging Worlds Through Music

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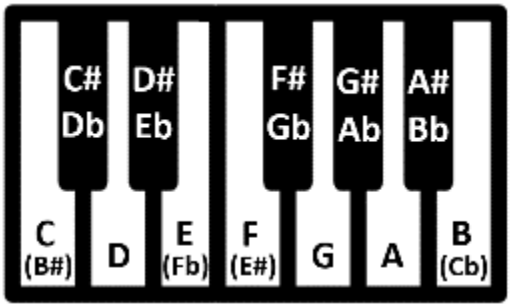
MUSIC NOTES ON A PIANO



UNIT 1: I-IV-V CHORDS

One of the most common patterns in music uses three different chords (*a chord is when three or more music notes are played at the same time*). Many songs use chords based on the 1st, 4th, and 5th notes of the song's "key". These chords can be called the **I**, **IV** and **V**.

To find the **I**, **IV** and **V** for a piece of music you start with the **I** which is the first note of the "key" (e.g., A, B, C, D, E, F, G, Ab, Bb, Cb, Db, Eb, Gb, F#, C#). *More information about "keys" and key signatures are discussed in Units 2 and 3.* To find the **IV** chord you count four letters away from the **I.** For example, in the key of A, you count A, B, C#, D. Since D is four letters away from A, D will be the **IV**. To find the **V** chord you count five letters away from the **I.** For example, in the key of A, you count A, B, C#, D, E. Since E is five letters away from A, E will be the **V**.

*Note: that starting in different keys means, you may need to add sharps (**#**) or flats (**b**). This will be explained in Units 2 and 3. A sharp (**#**) is when you go up half a tone from a note and a flat is when you go down half a tone (**b**).*

Table 1 shows you the **I**, **IV** and **V** in all the different keys.

Table 1: I, IV and V chords in different keys

I Chord (the key)	**IV** Chord	**V** Chord
A	D	E
B	E	F#
C	F	G
D	G	A
E	A	B
F	Bb	C
G	B	D
Ab	Db	Eb
Bb	Eb	F
Cb	Fb	Gb
Db	Gb	Ab
Eb	Ab	Bb
Gb	Cb	Bb
F#	B#	C#
C#	F#	G#

Note: it is possible to play in the keys of Fb, A#, B#, D#, E#, and G#, but they are very difficult and unpopular (this will be talked about in Unit 2).

When playing **I**, **IV** and **V** chords, the most common pattern will be **I-IV-V-I.** Here are examples of how this looks in some different keys.

Key of C:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**
C	F	G	C

Key of E:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**
E	A	B	E

Key of Ab:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**
Ab	Db	Eb	Ab

ACTIVITY 1: FILL IN THE I-IV-V-I CHORDS FOR THESE OTHER KEYS.

Key of G:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**

Key of F:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**

Key of A:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**

Key of Bb:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**

The order of the **I-IV-V** chords can be changed. Songs often start with the **I** chord and almost always end with a **I** chord. Most songs will also end with the **V** chord right before the **I** chord at the end (this is called a 'perfect cadence'. Here are a few examples of how you could combine **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords. The tempo, the number of beats, and the rhythm for each chord can be different for different songs.

Key of D:

I	**IV**	**V**	**I**	**V**	**I**
D	G	A	D	A	D

Key of Eb:

IV	**I**	**IV**	**V**	**I**
Ab	Eb	Ab	Bb	Eb

Key of B:

V	**IV**	**V**	**IV**	**V**	**I**
F#	E	F#	E	F#	B

You can end a song with the **IV** *chord going to the* **I** *chord but this does not happen as often as the* **V** *chord going to the* **I** *chord. In some hymn songs, they will end with the* **IV** *chord going to the* **I** *chord when they sing 'amen' (this is also called a 'plagal cadence').*

Key of Db

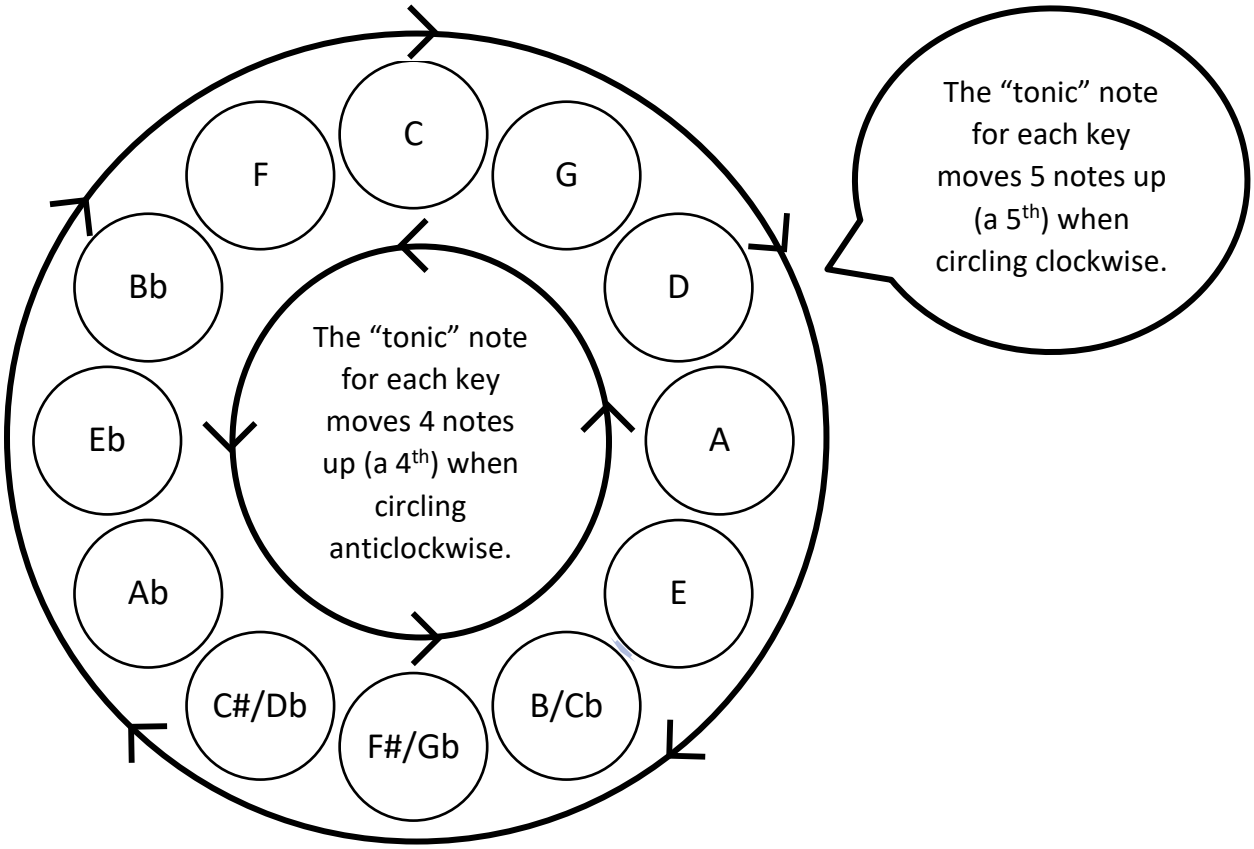
A -	*MEN*
IV	**I**
Gb	Db

♫ ***PRACTICE: Play or listen to some of the I-IV-V patterns above (you may use notes or chords depending on your skill level). Listen carefully. Do your best to listen and hear how each of the I, IV, and V sound in relation to one another.***

UNIT 2: CIRCLE OF FIFTHS

The circle of fifths is very useful (in reverse it can also be called the circle of fourths). It can help us with key signatures, scales, and chords progressions. Starting with a C, and going clockwise, we list the different keys (by their "root" or "tonic" note[44]) increasing by 5s going around the circle.

Figure 1: The Circle of Fifths



For example, when we are going around the circle in a clockwise direction, if our starting or "tonic" note is a C, we will count up five notes (C, D, E, F, G) to get to the tonic note of G. From the G we will count five notes up (G, A, B, C, D) to get to the tonic note of D. If we move around the circle anticlockwise, then we will count up by 4. For example, from C, we will count up four notes (C, D, E, F) to get to the tonic note of F.

[44] The "tonic" and "root" are words is used to mean the note or the chord that is used as the main or starting note/chord that a piece of music is built around.

Why is the circle of fifths helpful?
The most popular way to use the cycle of fifths is to help learn which sharp notes and flat notes are needed when you are playing scales and chords in different keys (i.e., with different tonic notes).

Clockwise:

- Going clockwise (from G around to C#) we can add one sharp to each key as we go around the circle (these are called key signatures). For example, scales and chords in the key of G will have one sharp (F#), while scales and chords in the key of D will have two (F#, C#). The order that each sharp gets added starts at F# then follows in order clockwise around the circle (all key signatures will be discussed in Unit 3).

Anticlockwise:

- Going anticlockwise (from F around to Cb) we can add one flat to each key as we go around the circle. For example, scales and chords in the key of F will have one sharp (Bb), while scales and chords in the key of Bb will have two (Bb, Eb). The order that each sharp gets added starts at F# then follows in order clockwise around the circle (all key signatures will be discussed in Unit 3).

When we know the key signatures (from the circle of fifths) we can also understand which notes need to be flats and sharps when we start our scales on a certain note.

- For example, we know that a scale starting on C there will be no sharps or flats. If we go clockwise around the circle, we know that starting on a G we will be adding an F# to the scale. For a scale starting on D, we know that we will need to add an F# and a C# (more information about scales will be discussed in Unit 4).
- For example, we know that a scale starting on C there will be no sharps or flats. If we go clockwise around the circle, we know that starting on a G we will be adding an F# to the scale. For a scale starting on D, we know that we will need to add an F# and a C# (more information about scales will be discussed in Unit 4).

The circle of fifths also helps to identify the **I**-**IV**-**V** chords in a given key (longer and different chord patterns that will be discussed in Unit 11).

When starting with any note/chord as your **I** chord, you can easily find the **V** chord (five notes away) by moving clockwise around the circle to the next note/chord. For example, if we start with C as **I** and go clockwise, we get a **V** of G. If we start with Eb as **I** and go clockwise, we get a **V** of Bb.

When starting with any note/chord as your **I** chord, you can easily find the **IV** chord (four notes away) by moving anticlockwise around the circle to the next note/chord. For example, if we start with A as **I** and go anticlockwise, we get a **IV** of D. If we start with Bb as **I** and go anticlockwise, we get a **IV** of Eb.

ACTIVITY 2: USE THE CIRCLE OF FIFTHS TO FILL IN THE IV AND V CHORDS.

Key of G:

I	IV
G	

Key of B:

I	V
B	

Key of F:

I	V
F	

Key of C:

I	IV
C	

Key of Ab:

I	IV
Ab	

Key of E:

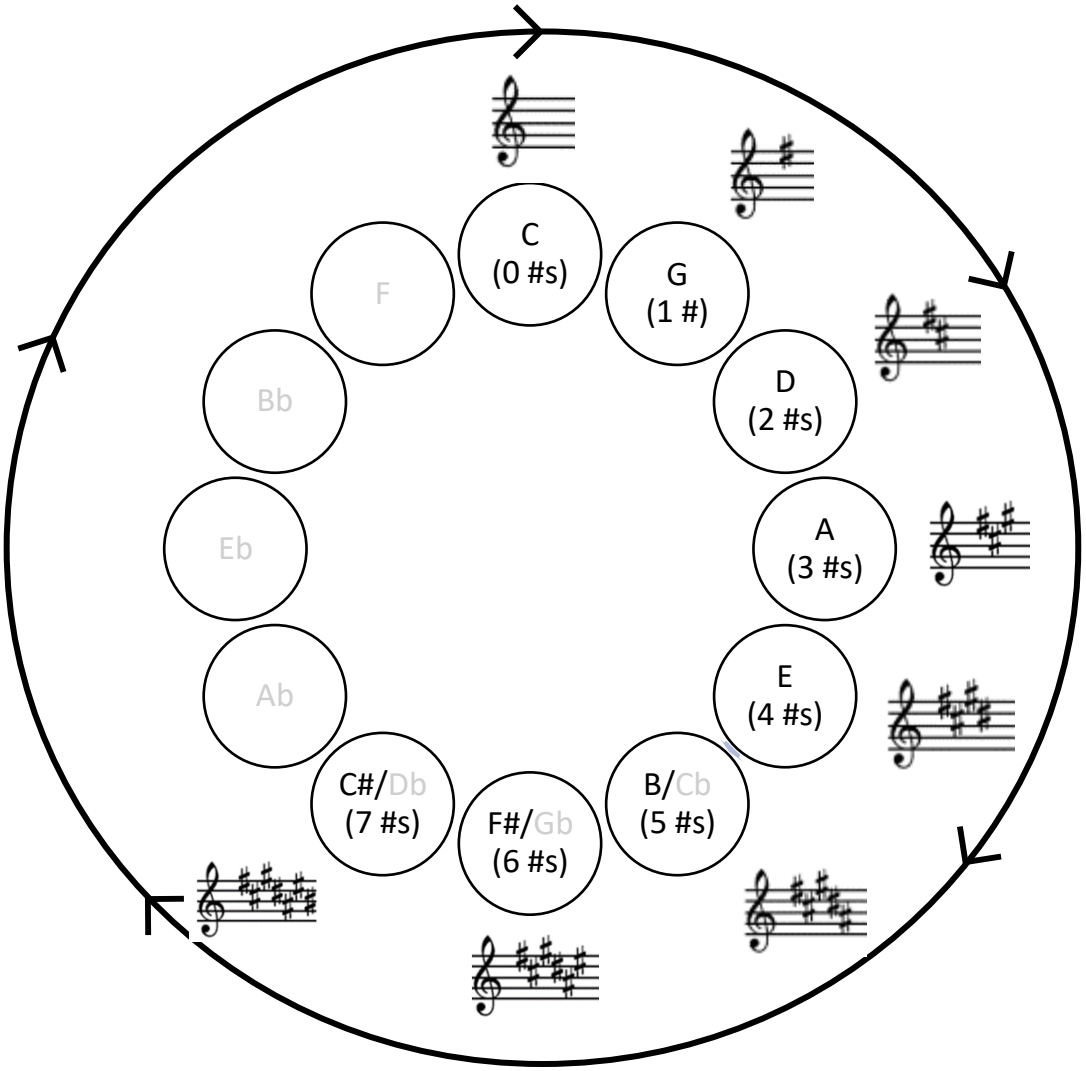
I	V
E	

UNIT 3: KEY SIGNATURES

As discussed in Unit 2, we can use the circle of fifths to help us understand which sharps and flats need to be added (and in which order) to each musical key. A 'key' is the word we use to describe that a piece of music is built around a specific note (the note that we build a song around is called the 'tonic' note). Key signatures are used to show which sharps and flats we need to use in a song.

The image below shows how all the sharp (#) notes (seven in total) can be added to each key around the circle of fifths. *The image below uses the "treble clef", the same keys will be listed in the "bass clef" in Unit 8.0*

Figure 2: The Circle of Fifths and sharp key signatures



The circle of 5ths also helps us to remember the order that we add the sharps to a new key. Starting on G, the one # is an F#. For D, the two sharps are F# and C#. As we add new sharps to each musical key, we can add them in the order that they appear clockwise on the circle. Complete the sharp key signatures below by following the pattern around the circle.

ACTIVITY 3: FILL IN THE BLANKS - COMPLETE THE SHARPS IN EACH KEY SIGNATURE

G (1 #): F#

D (2 #s): F#, C#

A (3 #s): F#, C#, G#

E (4 #s): F#, C#, G#, ___

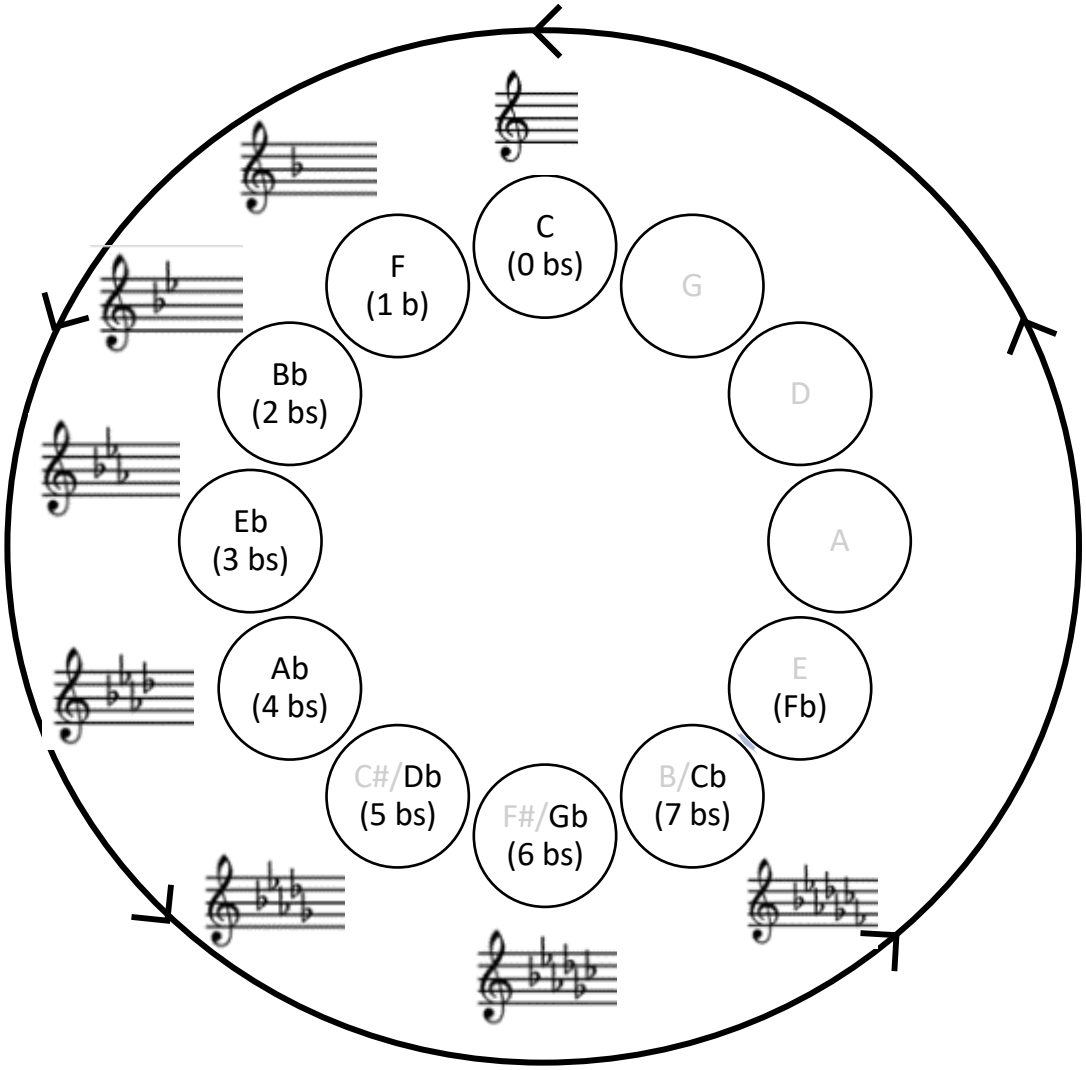
B (5 #s): F#, C#, G#, ___, ___

F# (6 #s): F#, C#, G#, ___, ___. ___

C# (7 #s): F#, C#, G#, ___, ___. ___, ___

The image below shows how all the flat (b) notes (seven in total) can be added to each key around the circle of fifths. *The image below uses the "treble clef", the same keys will be listed in the "bass clef" in Unit 8.0.*

Figure 3: The Circle of Fifths and flat key signatures



The circle of 5ths also helps us to remember the order that we add the flats (b) to a new key. Starting on F, the one b is a Bb. For Bb, the two flats are Bb and Ed. As we add new flats to each musical key, we can add them in the order that they appear anticlockwise on the circle (starting with Bb all the way to Fb). Complete the sharp key signatures below by following the pattern around the circle.

ACTIVITY 4: FILL IN THE BLANKS - COMPLETE THE FLATS IN EACH KEY SIGNATURE

F (1 b): Bb

Bb (2 bs): Bb, Eb

Eb (3 bs): Bb, Eb, ___

Ab (4 bs): Bb, Eb, ___, ___

Db (5 bs): Bb, Eb, ___, ___, ___

Gb (6 bs): Bb, Eb, ___, ___, ___. ___

Cb (7 bs): Bb, Eb, ___, ___, ___. ___, ___

In Unit 7 and 8, we will look at how to add the flats and sharps to written music on a musical staff (as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3). In the next Unit, we will look at how we can use key signatures to create major scales.

UNIT 4: SCALES

Major scales - A major scale includes 7 different music notes (before returning to the note that it started on). Each of the 7 musical letters (A-G) will appear in alphabetical order in a scale, but they can start on different notes. You have probably heard people singing “do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do”. This is one way to sing the major scale.

As we saw in Unit 3, when we play music in the key of C, there are no flats or sharps. So, the notes of C major scale are: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. We also saw in Unit 3, that the basic musical keys will either include flats OR sharps (but not both). Using the key signatures from Unit 3, we can know which notes we need to make our scales.

For example, in the key of G, there is only one sharp (which is an F#). So, to make the G major scale, we start on G and when we get to F, we make sure that it is an F#. The notes in the G major scale would look like this: G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G

In the key of F, there is only one flat (which is an Bb). So, to make the F major scale, we start on F and when we get to B, we make sure that it is a Bb. The notes in the F major scale would look like this: F-G-A-Bb-C-D-E-F.

ACTIVITY 5: USE THE KEY SIGNATURE FROM UNIT 3 TO ADD THE SHARPS OR FLATS TO THE MAJOR SCALES

(*Hint: not all spaces/notes will need to have a sharp or flat added)*

D major scale: D, E__, F__, G__, A__, B__, C__, D

A major scale: A, B__, C__, D__, E__, F__, G__, A

E major scale: E, F__, G__, A__, B__, C__, D__, E

B major scale: B, C__, D__, E__, F__, G__, A__, B

F# major scale: F#, G__, A__, B__, C__, D__, E__, F#

C# major scale: C#, D__, E__, F__, G__, A__, B__, C#

Bb major scale – Bb, C__, D__, E__, F__, G__, A__, Bb

Eb major scale – Eb, F__, G__, A__, B__, C__, D__, Eb

Ab major scale – Ab, B__, C__, D__, E__, F__, G__, Ab

Db major scale – Db, E__, F__, G__, A__, B__, C__, Db

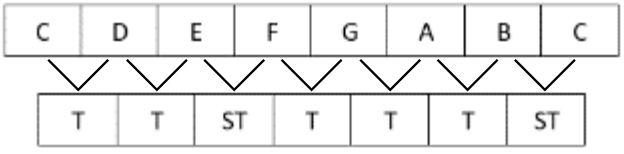
Gb major scale – Gb, A__, B__, C__, D__, E__, F__, Gb

Cb major scale – Cb, D__, E__, F__, G__, A__, B__, Cb

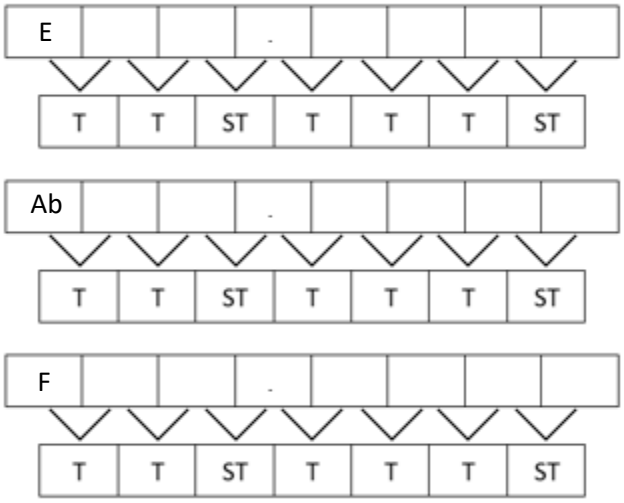
PRACTICE: use a piano (or an instrument of your choice) and practice playing major scales starting on different notes. If you are doing well, try going up and down the scale and singing "do, re, mi…" at the same time.

QUESTION: What do you notice about the C# and Db scales or the F# and Gb scales? Why do you think there are different names for these scales?

Semitones and tones – The distance between two notes in music is called an interval. In most music the smallest interval is call a semitone. Semitones (also called a minor 2nd) are two notes that are next to each other on a piano. For example, the semitone above the note *A* an *A#*, the semitone below is an *Ab*. The second smallest interval is called a tone. A tone is when you go up two semitones from one note to another. For example, a tone above the note *A* is a *B*, because one semitone above *A* is *A#* and one more semitone above *A#* is a *B*. A tone below an *A* is a *G*, because a one semitone below *A* is *Ab* and one more semitone below *Ab* is G. You can use tones (T) and semitones to figure out major scales. The pattern of T and ST for all major scales is the same. It goes like this: T, T, ST, T, T, T, ST. See the example below.



ACTIVITY 6: USING THE FIRST NOTE AS THE FIRST OF THE MAJOR SCALE, COMPLETE THE MAJOR SCALES BELOW



Pentatonic scales – In music, we can choose not to play all the notes of the major scale to make a simpler scale. The pentatonic scale has only 5 notes. People use this scale to create simple songs and improvise solos. The major pentatonic scale uses only the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th notes of the major scale. For example, starting with the C major scale, we would use C, D, E, G, and A as the notes of the pentatonic scale.

ACTIVITY 7: COMPLETE THE PENTATONIC SCALES BELOW USING THE 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th NOTES OF THE MAJOR SCALES YOU CREATED IN ACTIVITY 5.

G pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

D pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

A pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

E pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

B pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

F# pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

C# pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

F pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Bb pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Eb pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Ab pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Db pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Gb pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Cb pentatonic scale: ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

PRACTICE: have class/group play (or sing) through some I-IV-V patterns (you can use some examples from Unit 1 or create some new patterns). You can play in any key (try some different ones). Have one or two class or group members use the pentatonic scales to play (or sing) some solos.

Chromatic scale – The chromatic scale can start on any note but will always include the same notes. That is because the chromatic scale includes all notes in order, moving by semitones. If we start with the note A, the chromatic scale will include all twelve possible notes before returning to an *A*. The chromatic scale starting on *A* looks like this: A, A#/Bb, B, C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab, A.

Notice: some notes can have different names. One semitone up from A is A#, while one semitone down from B is Bb (the note above A and below B are the same note, that means that A# and Bb will sound the same). When playing a chromatic scale up from a low note to a higher note, it is common to use the sharp (#) note name (e.g., A, A#, B). When playing the chromatic scale down from a high note to a lower note, it is common to use the flat (b) note name (e.g., B, Bb, A). The chromatic scale is often used in songs to connect different notes and chords in new and interesting ways.

UNIT 5: RHYTHMS

In music, the notes can be played for different lengths. They can be long or short. We use different note symbols to show how long or short a note should be played. The most common rhythm symbols are listed below:

Semi-breve (whole note)

Minim (half note)

Crotchet (quarter note)

Quaver (eight note)

Semi-quaver (sixteenth note)

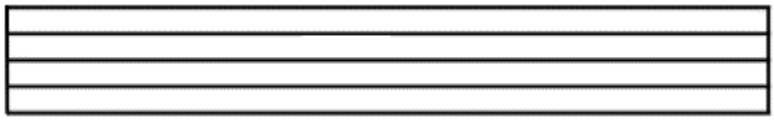
In most, common, and popular, music will have a steady pulse or beat that will carry through a song (more of this will be talked about in Unit 6 – Time signatures). The different music note symbols help us to understand how long to play a note compared to a songs pulse or beat. Here are the different note lengths in common time:

- Semi-breve gets 4 beats
- Minim gets 2 beats
- Crotchet gets 1 beat
- Quaver gets a half a beat
- Semi-quaver gets a quarter of a beat

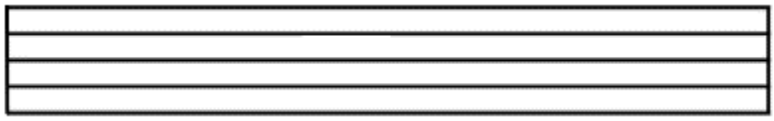
Many songs are made using a four-beat pattern. We count the beat of the song going 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. When we write music, we divide the music into measures (or bars). Each measure (or bar) has 4 beats, and we mark a new measure by adding a bar line, like this:

ACTIVITY 8: FILL IN THE CORRECT NUMER OF NOTES IN THE FOUR-BEAT MEASURES BELOW

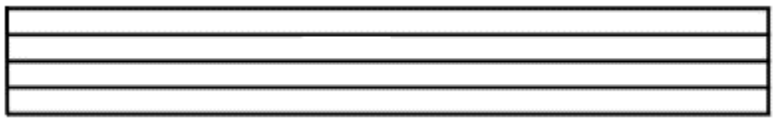
Semi-breve (whole note)



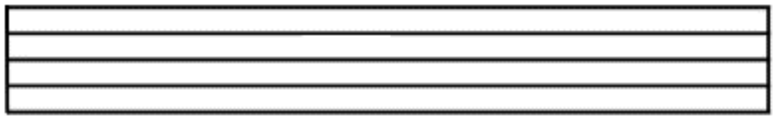
Minim (half note)



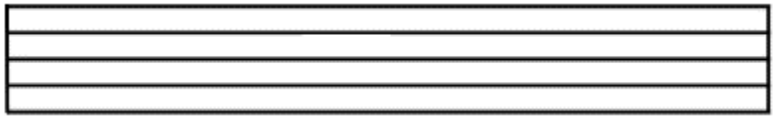
Crotchet (quarter note)



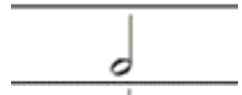
Quaver (eighth note)



Semi-quaver (sixteenth note)



Counting rhythms out loud using sounds – Sometimes we can use words and sounds to help us to count out rhythms.



Ta-a

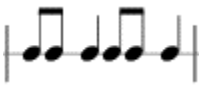
Ta

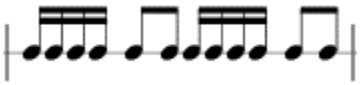
Titi

Tika tika

Note: when you have more than one quaver or semi-quaver, you can connect the flags as a beam (e.g. turns into and turns into).

PRACTICE: using the different rhythm sounds read the following rhythms. After saying them, try clapping or playing them on an instrument. After playing through these 4 beat patterns, try creating some of your own. Then try saying and playing two different patterns at the same time.





Creating new rhythms can be done by combining different rhythms together. Below are some common examples of how we can combine different rhythms together. Beside each one are sounds we can use to help count them.

'Ti-ta-ti' or 'Syn-co-pa'

Ti-tika

Tika-ti

The other way to create new rhythms is by adding space in between notes (rests). Rests can be the same length as notes and the symbols for each type of rest are as follows:

Semi-breve (whole note) rest

Minim (half note) rest

Crotchet (quarter note) rest

Quaver (eighth note) rest

Semi-quaver (sixteenth note) rest

♪♫ ***PRACTICE: Say, clap, or play through these 4 beat patterns, that include different combinations of rhythms and rests. Try creating some of your own (try making an 8 beat or 16 beat pattern). Then try saying and playing two different patterns at the same time. Notice, the stems on the notes can go up or they can go down.***

UNIT 6: TIME SIGNATURES

The beat (meter) of a song can be divided different ways to create different feelings and styles. When writing music, we show how the beat pattern (called the meter) using a time signature. The time signature has two numbers. The top number shows us how many beats there will be in each measure and the bottom number what type of note is used to keep the beat.

Common time ( ) is the time signature used most often. It includes 4 beats, and each beat is a crotchet (the 4 on the bottom of a time signature is meant to refer to a crotchet). All of the practice examples in Unit 5 were in common time. Common time looks this:

Most of the time, when a song uses a time signature, the first beat will feel like the strongest, most noticeable beat. The next strongest w be on the third beat, while the second and fourth beats will have a less strong feeling.

♪♫ ***PRACTICE: Clap, 1, 2, 3, 4, while counting out loud. Clap slightly louder on beats 1 and 3, and slightly quiter on beats 2 and 4.***

PRACTICE: "the back beat": many different styles of music also use a "back beat", this is when there is a strong feeling on beats 2 and 4. Try counting 1, 2, 3, 4 out loud, then clap only on beats 2 and 4.

In this section, we will look at three other time signatures. They are each used to give music different feelings.

We will look at $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ time signatures.

The $\frac{2}{4}$ time signature, is similar to common time. The difference is that in $\frac{2}{4}$ time, instead of four beats in a measure, there are only 2. It sounds similar, but the strong beat happens on beat one and soft beat happens on beat 2.

A measure of $\frac{2}{4}$ looks like this.

PRACTICE: Clap, 1, 2 while counting out loud. Clap slightly louder on beats 1, and slightly quieter on beat 2.

The $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, feels quite differently from $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$. The difference is that in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, instead of an even number of beats in a measure, there are 3 beats. The strong beat happens on beat one and soft beats happen on beats 2 and 3.

A measure of $\frac{3}{4}$ looks like this.

PRACTICE: Clap, 1, 2, 3 while counting out loud. Clap slightly louder on beat 1, and slightly quieter on beats 2 and 3.

The last time signature in this section is $\frac{6}{8}$. This time signature is different than the others because it is the quaver (8th note) and not the crotchet (quarter note) that is counted as the beat. The 8 on the bottom tells us that the quaver (8th note) is beat. The 6 on the top means there are 6 quavers in each measure.

The strong beats happens on beat 1 and beat 4 (beat 1, the "down" beat will be slightly stronger than beat 4). Softer beats happen on beats 2, 3, 5, and 6.

A measure of $\frac{6}{8}$ looks like this.

PRACTICE: Clap, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 while counting out loud. Clap slightly louder on beats 1 and 4 (beat 1 should be a little but stronger than beat 4), and slightly quieter on beats 2, 3, 5 and 6.

UNIT 7: NOTES OF THE TREBLE CLEF

The treble clef is used for higher pitched notes. Female singers, flutes, saxophones, trumpets, guitars, violins, and the right hand of the piano are all examples of instruments that usually have notes in the treble clef. Notes are written on a "staff" (a staff has 5 lines and four spaces). The "clef" helps us to know which notes go on which line and which space. As you can see in the image below, notes can be written on the lines and the spaces of the staff, they can also continue above and below the staff.

In the example below, the notes of the treble clef start (on the left) with middle C, the line below the treble clef. *As we will see in Unit 8, it is called middle C sits because it is on the line in between the treble clef and bass clef.* The notes move alphabetically up. There are only seven musical letter names. Once you reach G, the follow note will be an A. *Every note can have a '#' or a 'b' added to it.*

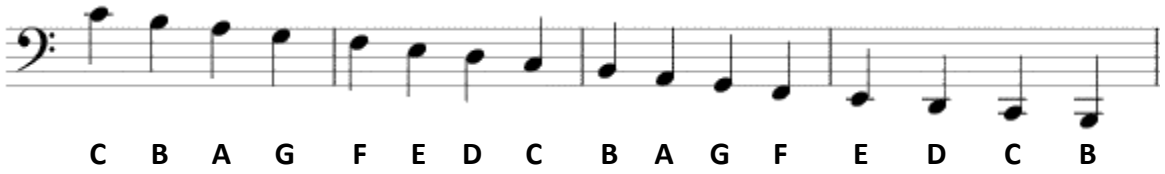
Note names for the treble clef:

ACTIVITY 9: NAME THE NOTE ON THE TREBLE CLEF

UNIT 8: NOTES OF THE BASS CLEF

The bass clef is used for lower pitched notes. Male singers, trombones, tubas, baritone saxophones, bass guitars, and the left hand of the piano are all examples of instruments that usually have notes in the bass clef. In the example below, the notes of the bass clef start (on the left) with middle C, the line above the bass clef. This middle C above the bass clef is the same note as the middle C that is below the treble clef. The notes move alphabetically down. There are only seven musical letter names. When going down the alphabet, when you reach the note name A, the following note will be a G. *As with the treble clef, every note can also have a '#' or 'b' added to it.*

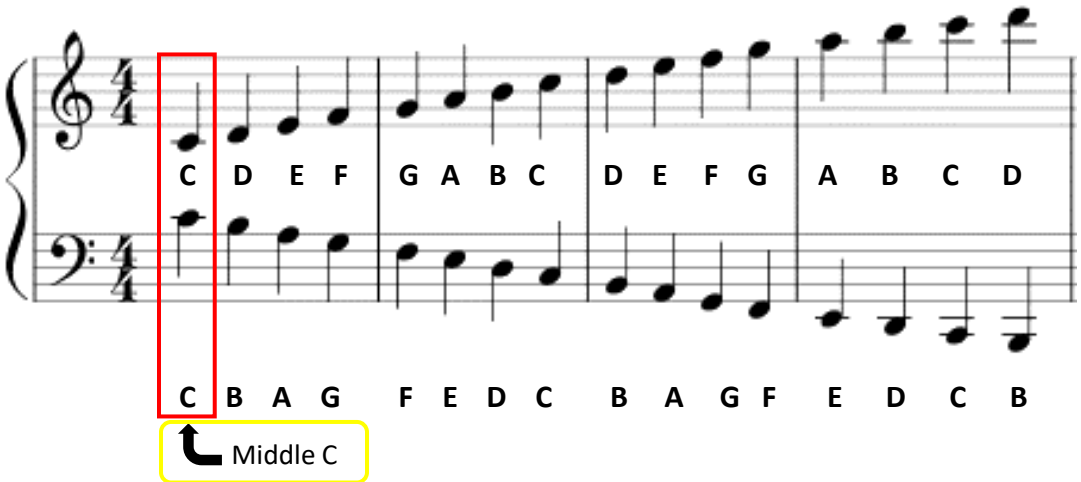
Note names for the bass clef:



ACTIVITY 10: NAME THE NOTE ON THE BASS CLEF

The Grand Staff

When the treble clef and bass clef are put one on top of the other, it is called the "grand staff". This is used most often for piano music when the piano can play both treble clef and bass clef notes at the same time.



In the example of the grand staff (page 18), the treble clef and the bass clef start (on the left) with the same note (middle C). On the piano the note in the red square is played using the same key.

UNIT 9: MAJOR CHORDS (REVISITING I-IV-V)

In Unit 1, we discussed **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords. In this section we will talk about how to know which notes will be in these chords and the reason we call them "major" chords.

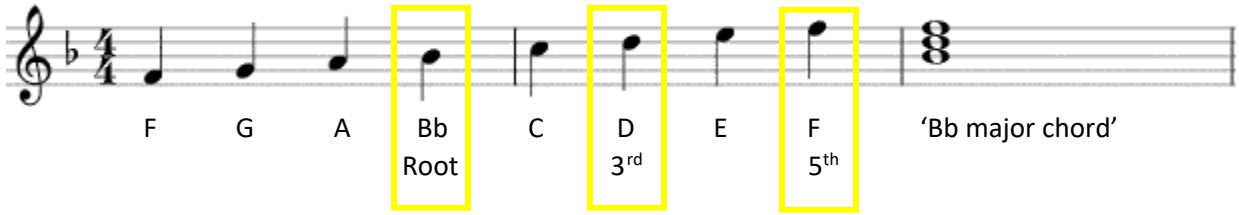
This section will only look at triads (chords that have three notes). Each triad chord will have a root, a third, and a fifth. The "root" is the main note of the chord and the note that is used to name the chord (e.g., the root of an 'A' chord is a 'A' note). In this section we will learn to find the notes of a major triad.

The **I** chord (see Unit 1) is based off of the first note of the major scale. For the I chord, the third and the fifth of the chord are also the third and the fifth of the scale. The example below is in A major. There is a rectangle around the root (A), third (C#), and fifth (E) of the chord. When these three notes are played together it makes the A major chord.

Making the I chord in the key of A major

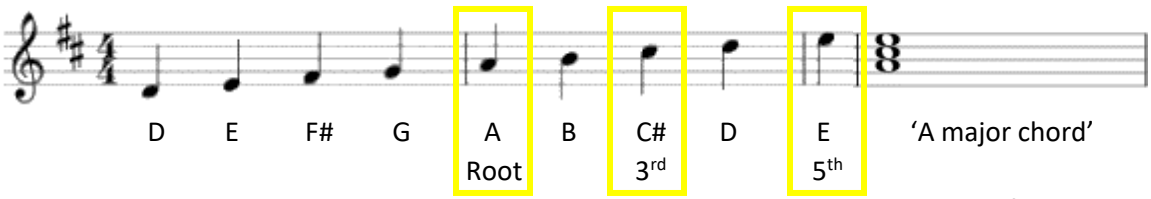
The **IV** chord (see Unit 1) is based off of the fourth note of the major scale. For the IV chord, the root starts on the fourth note of the scale, the third will always be two notes above the root and the fifth will be two notes about the third. The example below is in the key of F major. There is a rectangle around the root (Bb), the third (D), and fifth (F) of the chord. When these three notes are played together it makes the Bb major chord.

Making the IV chord in the key of F major



Making the V chord in the key of D major

The **V** chord (see Unit 1) is based off of the fifth note of the major scale. For the V chord, the third and the fifth of the chord are the fifth, seventh, and second (also called the 9th) notes of the scale. The example below is in the key of D major. There is a rectangle around the root (A), the third (C#), and fifth (E) of the chord. When these three notes are played together it makes the A major chord.



The **I**, **IV**, and **V** are all major triads because they are made using the same pattern of notes. The distance (interval) between the bottom two notes of the chord and the top two notes of these three note chords are the same. **A MAJOR TRIAD HAS TWO TONES (A MAJOR THIRD) BETWEEN THE ROOT AND THE THIRD AND A SEMITONE, PLUS A TONE (A MINOR THIRD) BETWEEN THE THIRD AND THE FIFTH.** For example, to get from the A to C# (the root to the third) in the A major chord, we go up two tones (A to B, then B to C#). To get from C# to E (the third to the fifth) we go up one semitone, then a tone (C# to D, then D to E). This is the same as the Bb major chord (the **IV** chord in the key of F major). There are two tones from Bb to D (Bb to C, then C to D) and one semitone and a whole tone between D and F (D to Eb, then Eb to F). In the examples above, we can also see that the **I** chord in the key of A major, has the same three notes as the **V** chord in the key of D major (A, C#, and E). In the exercise below, you can see that in the key of E, that the **IV** chord also has these same notes. You will find that in all the different keys the triads on the **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords will always be major.

ACTIVITY 11: FIND AND MAKE THE MAJOR CHORDS

Name the notes of the IV major triad in E major: ___, ___, ___

Name the notes of the V major triad in C major: ___, ___, ___

Name the notes of the I major triad in Db major: ___, ___, ___

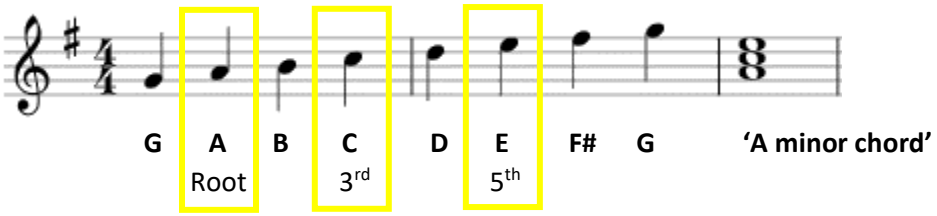
UNIT 10: MINOR, DIMINISHED, AND DOMINANT CHORDS

If we make more triad chords based on each note in the major scale, we will notice that most of the chords do not have a major sound. In Unit 9, we showed that chords **I**, **IV**, and **V** are major chords. As we make more triads from the major scale, we will find two other types of triad chords, minor and diminished.

In Unit 9, we learned that a major triad has a major third (two whole tones) between the root and the third of the triad and a minor third (a semitone, plus a whole tone) between the third and the fifth of the triad. The next triad we will look at is the minor triad. The minor triad is usually thought to have a sad sound, it has a minor third between the root and the third, and a major third between the third and the fifth.

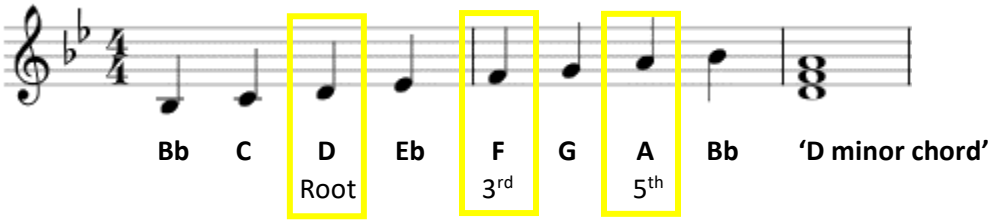
You can make minor triads from the major scale but building them off of the second, third, or sixth notes of the scale. The examples below show how to make minor chords in different keys.

Making the minor ii chord in the key of G major



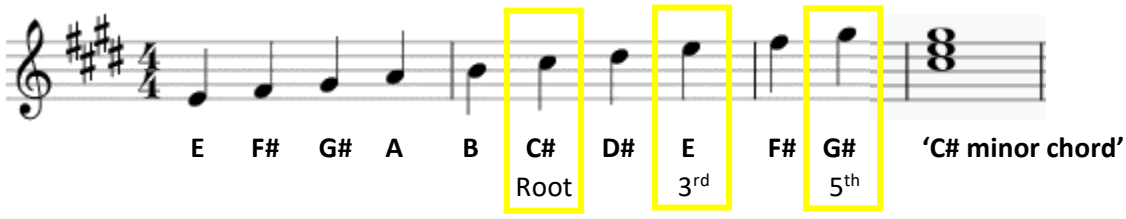
The triad from the second note of the G major scale, gives the notes A, C, and E. We call this an A minor chord. The A major chord has the notes A, C#, and E. The third of the A minor chord is one semitone lower (a C instead of a C#). That is the difference between the major and minor chord.

Making the minor iii chord in the key of Bb major



When we make a triad from the third note of the Bb major chord, we will get the notes D, F, and A. We call this a D minor chord. If it were a major chord, the 3rd of the chord would be an F#.

Making the minor vi chord in the key of E major



When we make a triad from the sixth note of the E major scale, we will get the notes C#, E, and G#. We call this a C# minor chord. If it were a major chord, the 3rd of the chord would be an E#.

ACTIVITY 12: FIND AND MAKE THE MINOR CHORDS

Name the notes of the ii minor triad in Ab major: ___, ___, ___

Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab

Name the notes of the vi minor triad in B major: ___, ___, ___

B C# D# E F# G# A# B C# D#

Name the notes of the iii minor triad in D major: ___, ___, ___

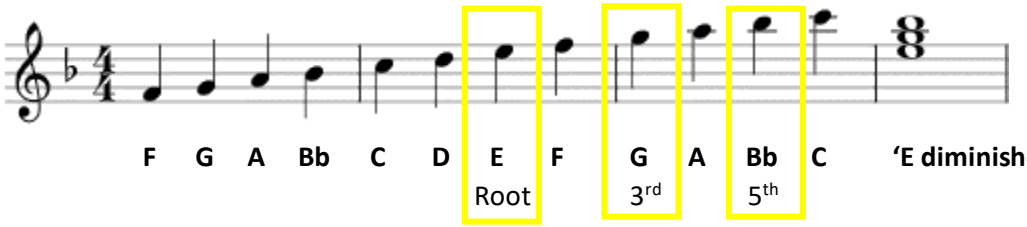
D E F# G A B C# D

The diminished triad

When we make triad chords out of the major scale, we can find one other type of chord. The triad build from the seventh note of the major scale is called a diminished scale. The diminished triad has a minor third between the root and the third, and a minor third between the third and the fifth. The diminished chord is usually thought to have an angry sound.

You can make diminished triads from the major scale by building them off of the seventh note the major scale. The example below show how to make a diminished chord in the key of F.

Making the diminished vii chord in the key of F major



'E diminished chord'

When we make a triad from the seventh note of the F major chord, we will get the notes E, G, and Bb. We call this an E diminished chord. If it were a major chord, the notes would be E, G#, and B. If it were a minor chord, the notes would be E, G, and B. For the diminished chord, both the 3rd and the 5th of the chord are lower by a semitone than the 3rd and 5th in a major triad.

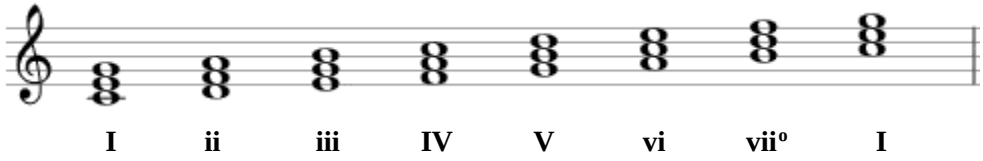
ACTIVITY 13: FIND AND MAKE THE DIMINISHED CHORDS

Name the notes of the vii diminished triad in Eb major: ___, ___, ___

Name the notes of the vii diminished triad in A major: ___, ___, ___

Major, minor, and diminished triad chords in a major scale

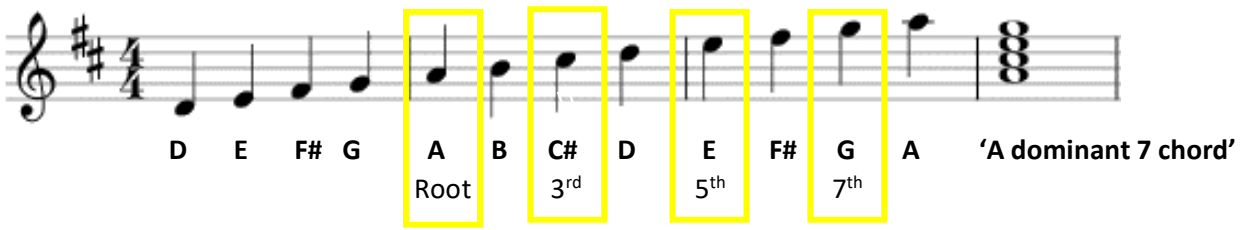
For all major scales, the pattern of the chords that you make a triad on top of each note. The triads on top of the first (**I**), fourth (**IV**), and fifth (**V**) notes will always be major. The triads on top of the second (**ii**), third (**iii**), and sixth (**vi**) notes will always be minor. Finally, the triad on top of the seventh note will always be diminished (**vii°**).



The dominant seventh (V7) chord

In Unit 1, we learned that most songs end with the **V** chord right before the **I** chord. We also learned that a chord is when three or more music notes are played at the same time. So far, we have only talked about triads (chords with three notes). Many chords have more than three notes. The most common chord that has more than three notes is the dominant seventh chord also known as the **V7** chord. In most cases the **V7** chord is used before the **I** chord. The **V7** has the same notes as the **V** chord but it adds one note (a seventh). The 7th of the **V7** chord will always be one tone and a semitone (a minor third) above the 5th. See the example below in the key of D major.

Making the dominant V7 chord in the key of D major



ACTIVITY 14: FIND AND MAKE THE DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS

Name the notes of the dominant seventh (V7) chord in C major: ___, ___, ___, ___

C D E F G A B C D E F G

Name the notes of the dominant seventh (V7) chord in Db major: ___, ___, ___, ___

Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db Eb F Gb Ab

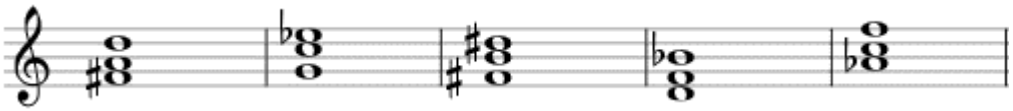
Name the notes of the dominant seventh (V7) chord in F# major: ___, ___, ___, ___

F# G# A# B C# D# E# F# G# A# B C#

Chords 'inversions'

The simplest form of a chord will have the root on the bottom as the bass (bottom) note. All the examples so far have been in "root position". In the examples below, are examples of chords that have the root, 3rd, and 5th in a different order (these are called "inversions").

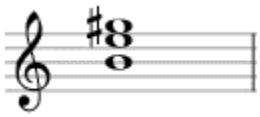
Examples of chords in inversion



Top note:	Root (D)	3rd (Eb)	3rd (D#)	Root (Bb)	Root (F)
Middle note:	5th (A)	Root (C)	Root (B)	5th (F)	3rd (Ab)
Bass note:	3rd (F#)	5th (G)	5th (F#)	3rd (D)	5th (C)
Chord name:	D major	C minor	B major	Bb major	F minor

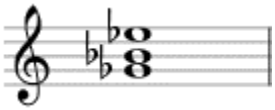
ACTIVITY 14: NAME THE NOTES AND THE CHORD NAME OF THESE CHORDS IN CONVERSION

Name the notes each chord, then name the chord:



Top note _____
Middle note _____
Bass note _____

Chord name: _____



Top note _____
Middle note _____
Bass note _____

Chord name: _____

Top note _____
Middle note _____
Bass note _____

Chord name: _____

UNIT 11: CHORD PROGRESSIONS

Unit 1, talked about playing songs using the **I**, **IV**, and **V**. There are many other ways to use different chords in songs (including the **ii**, **iii**, **vi**, and **vii°** chords from Unit 10).

One of the easiest ways to make new chord patters in songs (also called progressions) is to add the **vi** chord to your **I-IV-V** chord progression**.** These chords are used in many popular songs, and you can play them in any order. Remember that the vi chord is a minor chord. There are different ways to label minor chords. Below, minor chords are labeled using the root note followed by '*mi*' (short for minor).

♪♫ ***PRACTICE: play (on guitar, piano, bass or another instrument) or sing the following chord patterns that use the* I-IV-V-vi *chords.***

Key of C:

I	**vi**	**IV**	**V**
C	A*mi*	F	G

Key of Ab:

IV	**vi**	**I**	**V**
Db	F*mi*	Ab	Eb

Key of E:

I	**IV**	**V**	**vi**
D	G	A	B*mi*

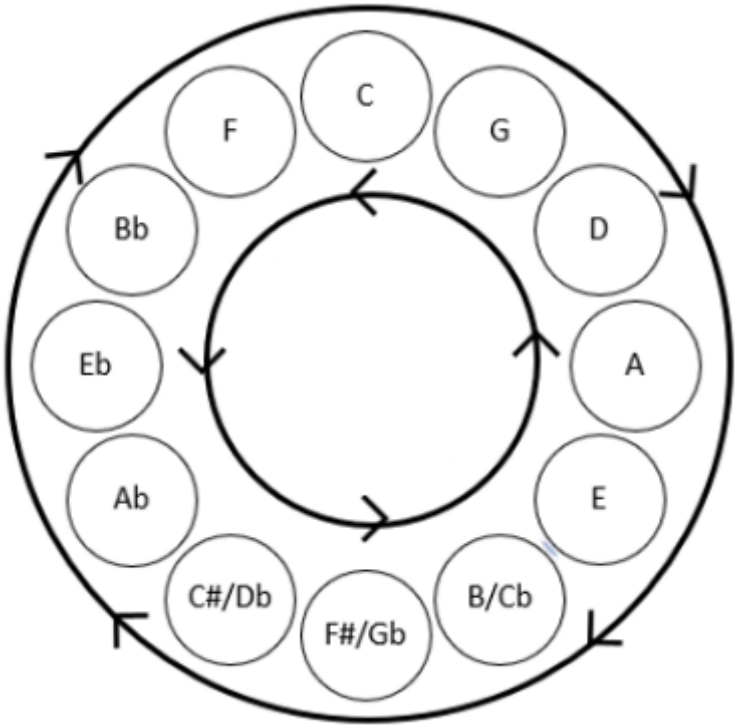
Key of F:

vi	**V**	**IV**	**I**
D*mi*	C	Bb	F

*Note: you can play these chords in this order and end the song at any time (but in most cases songs will still end using the **V** or **V7** chord before finishing with the **I** chord).*

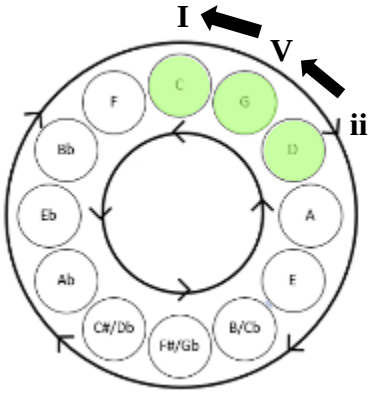
Another way to create chord progressions is to use the circle of fifths (from Unit 2). Making songs using the chords from the circle of fifths can provide many different chord patterns. To create chord progressions, you can pick any note/key on the circle, then use the circle to decide how many chords you want to use and the order that you should put them in.

Circle of fifths



Creating a ii-V-I progression

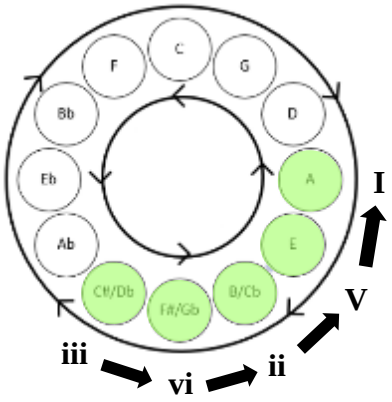
The **ii-V-I** chord pattern is used in many different styles of music including classical music, jazz music, and popular music. If we choose the key of C major, the **I** chord will be the C chord. To create a three-chord pattern in the key of C, we move two chords clockwise till be get to D (the D is the **ii** chord). If we work anticlockwise back to the **I** chord (C major). Looking at the image below, you can see that the **ii** is a D minor chord, the **V** is a G major chord (you could also make this a **V7** chord), and the **I** chord is C major. The **ii-V-I** in C major goes **D*mi*-G(7)-C**.



Creating a iii-vi-ii-V-I progression

If we follow the same pattern from the **ii-V-I**, and continue around the circle, we can make a longer chord progression. The **iii-vi-ii-V-I** pattern is also used in many different pieces of music. We can create the **iii-vi-ii-V-I** pattern using the circle of fifths (remember that in a major key, the **iii**, **vi**, and **ii** chords are all minor chords).

If we choose the key of A major, the **I** chord will be the A chord. To create this five-chord pattern in the key of A, we move four chords clockwise till be get to C# (the C# is the **iii** chord). If we work anticlockwise back to the **I** chord (A major) we can find the other chords to fill in the pattern. Looking at the image below, you can see that the **iii** is a C# minor chord, the **vi** is an F# minor chord, the **ii** is a B minor chord, the **V** is an E major chord (you could also make this a **V7** chord), and the **I** chord is A. The **iii-vi-ii-V-I** in A major goes **C#*mi*-F#*mi*-B*mi*-E(7)-A**.



You can create **ii-V-I** and **iii-vi-ii-V-I** in all the different keys by using the circle of fifths as a guide. One other small change you can make to your chord progression is that in most cases, you can replace the **ii** chord with the **IV** chord.

PRACTICE: play (on guitar, piano, bass or another instrument) or sing the following chord patterns that use the ii-V-I and iii-vi-ii-V-I.

Key of E:

ii	V	I
F#*mi*	B	E

Key of Db:

ii	V	I
Eb*mi*	Ab	Db

Key of A:

ii	V7	I
Bmi	E7	A

Key of F:

iii	vi	ii	V	I
A*mi*	D*mi*	*Gmi*	C	F

Key of G:

iii	vi	ii	V7	I
B*mi*	E*mi*	A*mi*	D7	G

Key of Bb:

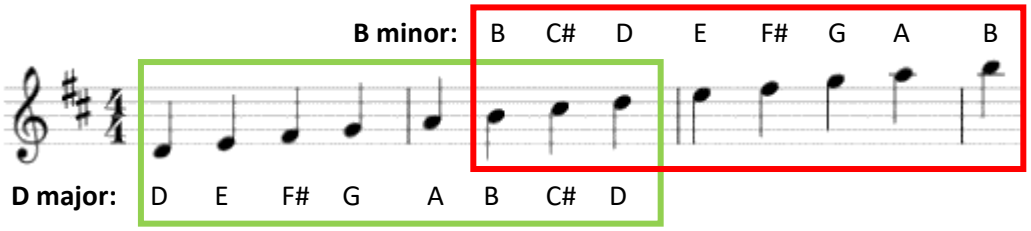
iii	vi	IV	V	I
D*mi*	G*mi*	C*mi*	F	G

*Note: you can change a **V** to a **V7** chord or a **ii** to a **IV** chord in most cases (sometimes it is the other notes in a song that help to decide which chords will sound best).*

UNIT 12: MINOR SCALES AND THE BLUES

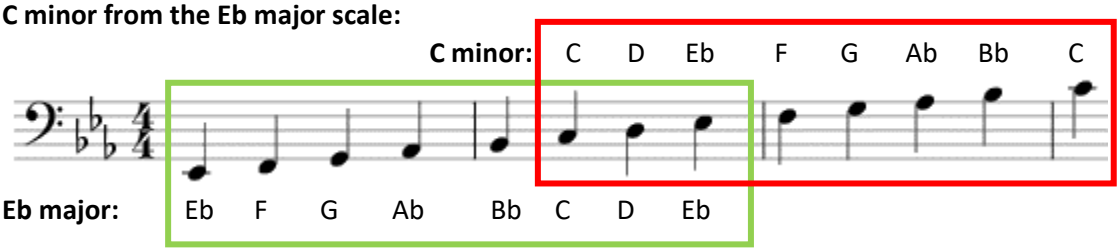
For every major scale, there is a minor scale that uses the same notes (this scale is called the "natural" minor scale). The minor scale with the same key signature and same notes has the major scale starts on the sixth note of the major scale (remember, the chord from the sixth note of the scale is also minor). The example below shows how to make the B minor scale (notes written above staff) based on the 6th note from the D major scale (notes written below staff).

B minor from the D major scale:



The next example uses the key of makes a C minor scale from the Eb major scale. **LOOK! This example is written in the bass clef!**

C minor from the Eb major scale:



ACTIVITY 16: Using the major scale, create the relative minor scale

A major	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
F# minor								

G major	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
E minor								

Bb major	Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb
G minor								

E major	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
C# minor								

Different types of minor scales:

In this section we only focus on two types of minor scales (the natural minor and the minor pentatonic). There are many different minor scales that are less commonly used.

The "**harmonic**" minor scale is the same as the natural minor, except that the 7th note is raised by one semitone so that it is one semitone below the tonic note).

The "**melodic**" minor scale is different when going up the scale and coming back down. It changes from the natural minor scale but raising both the 6th and 7th notes when going up the scale, but it lowers them back down again when going back down the scale.

Finally, there are two other minor scales (called modes) that you can make out of the major scale by starting on different notes. The "**Dorian**" minor scales starts on the 2nd note, and the "**Phrygian**" minor scale starts on the 3rd note of the major scale.

Minor pentatonic scale and the blues scale:

Like major scales, minor scales also have pentatonic scales. The minor pentatonic scale has the same notes as the major pentatonic scale, but it starts on the same note as the minor scale (the 6th note of the major scale.

Pentatonic in C major and A minor:

- C major pentatonic

Tonic	**2nd**	**3rd**	**5th**	**6th**
C	D	E	G	A

- A minor pentatonic

Tonic	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**7th**
A	C	D	E	G

ACTIVITY 17: Using the major pentatonic scale, create the relative minor pentatonic scale

Eb major pentatonic

Tonic	**2nd**	**3rd**	**5th**	**6th**
Eb	F	G	Bb	C

C minor pentatonic

Tonic	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**7th**

B major pentatonic

Tonic	**2nd**	**3rd**	**5th**	**6th**
B	C#	D#	F#	G#

G# minor pentatonic

Tonic	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**7th**

F major pentatonic

Tonic	**2nd**	**3rd**	**5th**	**6th**
F	G	A	C	D

D minor pentatonic

Tonic	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**7th**

A major pentatonic

Tonic	**2nd**	**3rd**	**5th**	**6th**
A	B	C#	E	F#

F# minor pentatonic

Tonic	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**7th**

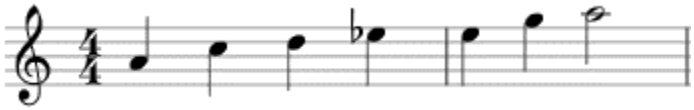
The minor pentatonic scale is also used to create the "**blues scale**". To change the minor pentatonic scale to a blues scale, you simply need to add what is called the "blue" note. The blue note is the semitone in between the 4th and the 5th of the minor pentatonic scale. To change the A minor pentatonic scale to an A blues scale, we can add the Eb between the D and the E.

- The A blues scale looks like this:

Tonic	3rd	4th	Blue note	5th	7th
A	C	D	Eb	E	G

Below is a list of blues scales in different keys:

- A blues scale



A C D Eb E G A

- Bb blues scale

Bb Db Eb E F Ab Bb

- B blues scale

B D E F F# A B

- C blues scale

C Eb F F# G Bb C

- C# blues scale

C# E F# G G# B C#

- D blues scale

D F G Ab A C D

- Eb blues scale

Eb Gb Ab A Bb Db Eb

- E blues scale

E G A Bb B D E

- F blues scale

F Ab Bb B C Eb F

- F# blues scale

F# A B C C# E F#

- G blues scale

G Bb C C# D F G

- Ab blues scale

Ab Cb Db D Eb Gb Ab

♪♫ ***PRACTICE: playing the blues! On guitar, piano, bass or another instrument or sing a solo using the notes of the blues scale. Other players play along with the soloist by playing the blues chord progressions in the keys below.***

12 BAR BLUES IN C (USE THE C BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

C7 / / /	F7 /	C7 /	G7 /	C7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

12 BAR BLUES IN D (USE THE D BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

D7 / / /	G7 /	D7 /	A7 /	D7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

12 BAR BLUES IN A (USE THE A BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

A7 / / /	D7 /	A7 /	E7 /	A7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

12 BAR BLUES IN E (USE THE E BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

E7 / / /	A7 /	E7 /	B7 /	E7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

12 BAR BLUES IN F (USE THE F BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

F7 / / /	Bb7 /	F7 /	C7 /	F7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

12 BAR BLUES IN Bb (USE THE Bb BLUES SCALE)

Chord progression in $\frac{4}{4}$ time:

Bb7 / / /	Eb7 /	Eb7 /	F7 /	7 /
4 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures	2 measures

UNIT 13: MINOR KEY SIGNATURES

Just like scales, every minor key has a major key that shares the same key signature. Below in activity 17, all the key signatures are listed with the major and minor scale names.

ACTIVITY 17: Using the key signatures below, list the sharps or flats for the minor (major) keys

A minor (C major)

(No flats or sharps)

E minor (G major)

___#

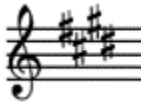
B minor (D major)

___#, ___#

F# minor (A major)

___#, ___#, ___#

C# minor (E major)

 ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#

G# minor (B major)

___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#

F# major (D# minor)

___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#

C# major (A# minor)

___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#, ___#

D minor (F major)

___*b*

G minor (Bb major)

___*b*, ___*b*

C minor (Eb major)

___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*

F minor (Ab major)

___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*

Bb minor (Db major)

___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*

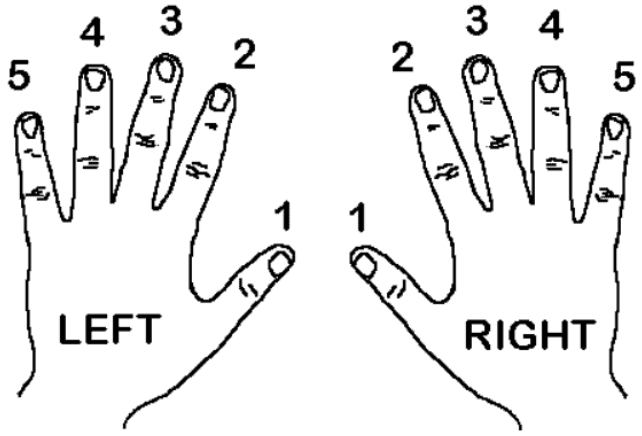
Eb minor (Gb major)

___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*

Ab minor (Cb minor)

___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*, ___*b*

Appendix I: Piano Fingerings



Source: https://www.musicnotes.com/now/tips/do-i-really-need-to-follow-the-fingerings-in-my-piano-music/

C Major

Notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

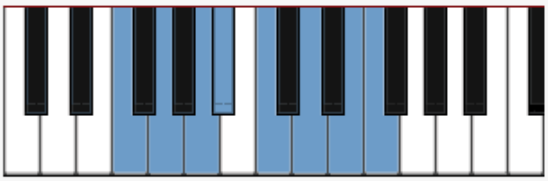
D Major

Notes: D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#, D
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

E Major

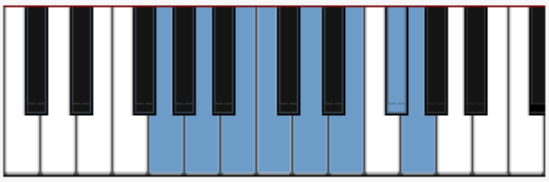
Notes: E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, E
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

F Major



Notes: F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4

G Major



Notes: G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

A Major

Notes: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A
Fingering (LH): 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

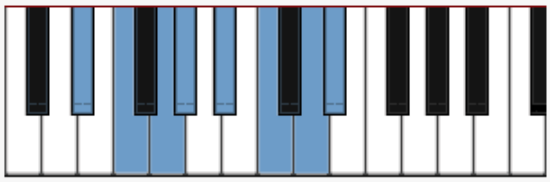
B Major

Notes: B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#, B
Fingering (LH): 4, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1
Fingering (RH): 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

C# / Db Major

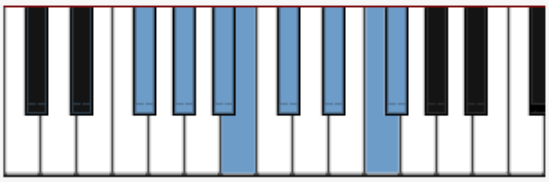
Notes: Db, Eb, F, Gb, Ab, Bb, C, Db
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2

D# / Eb Major



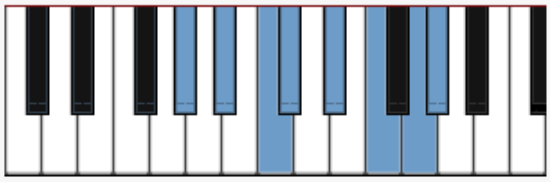
Notes: Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3

F# / Gb Major



Notes: F#, G#, A#, B, C#, D#, F, F#
Fingering (LH): 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 4
Fingering (RH): 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2

G# / Ab Major



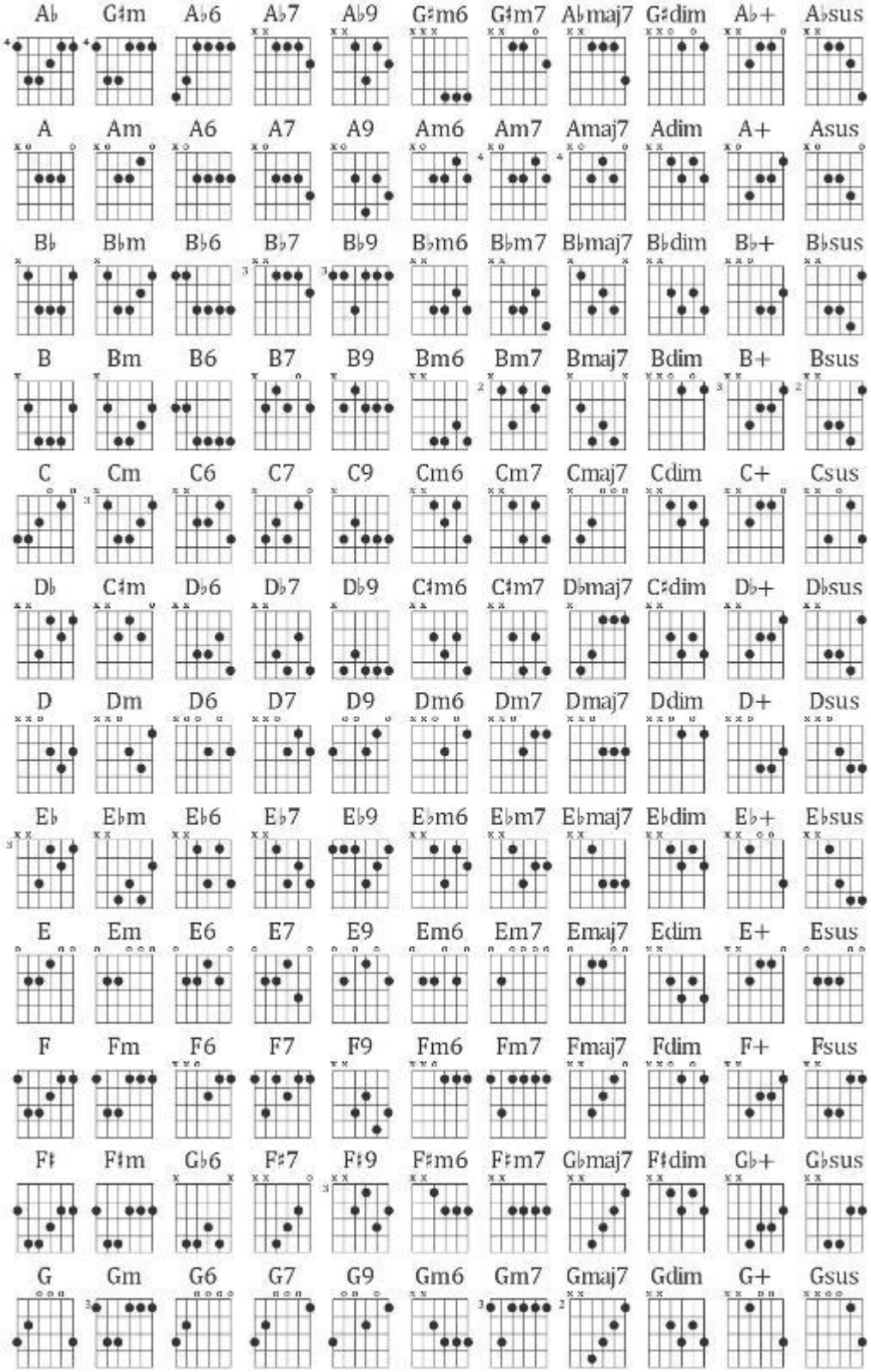
Notes: Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3

A# / Bb Major

Notes: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb
Fingering (LH): 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3
Fingering (RH): 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4

Source: https://www.pianoscales.org/major.html

Appendix II: Guitar fingerings

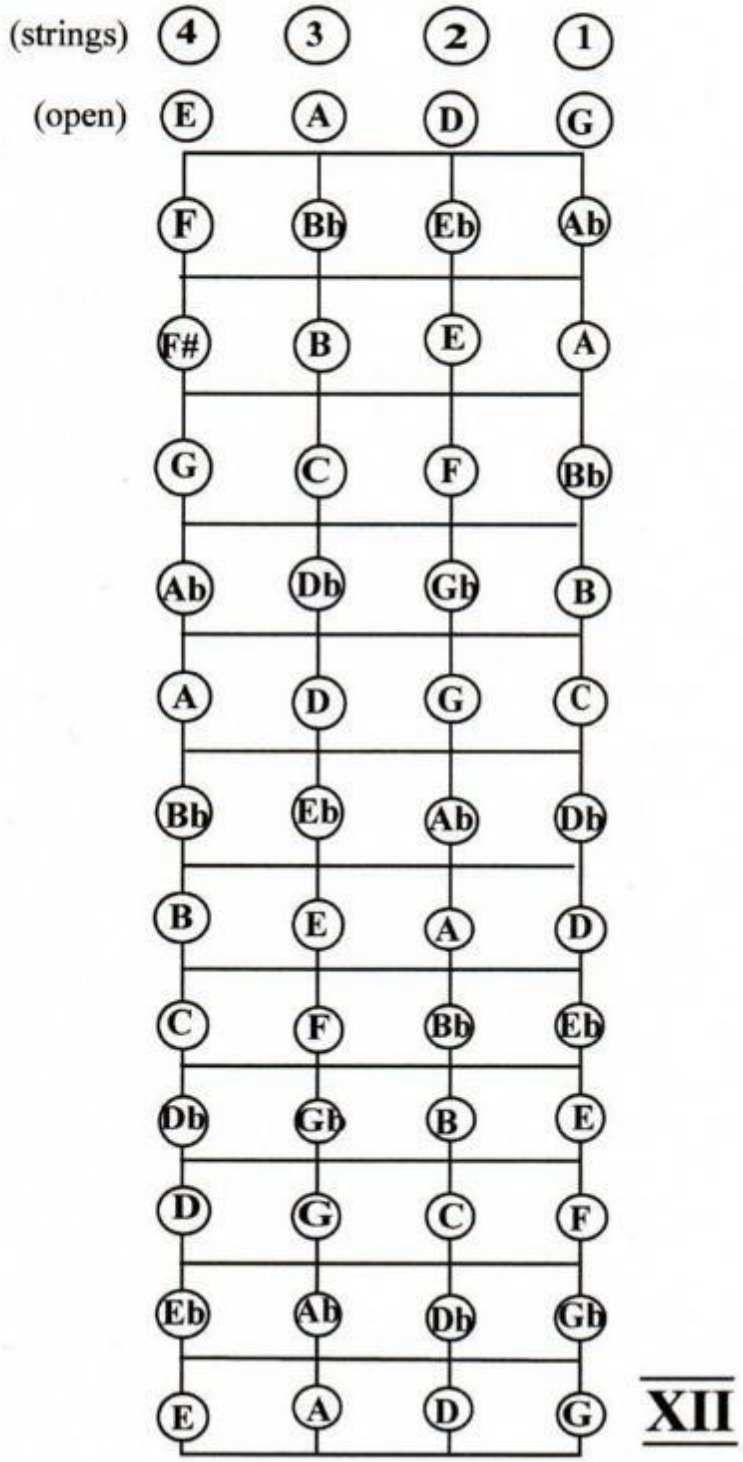


Source: https://lessons.com/guitar-lessons/guitar-chords/guitar-chords-chart

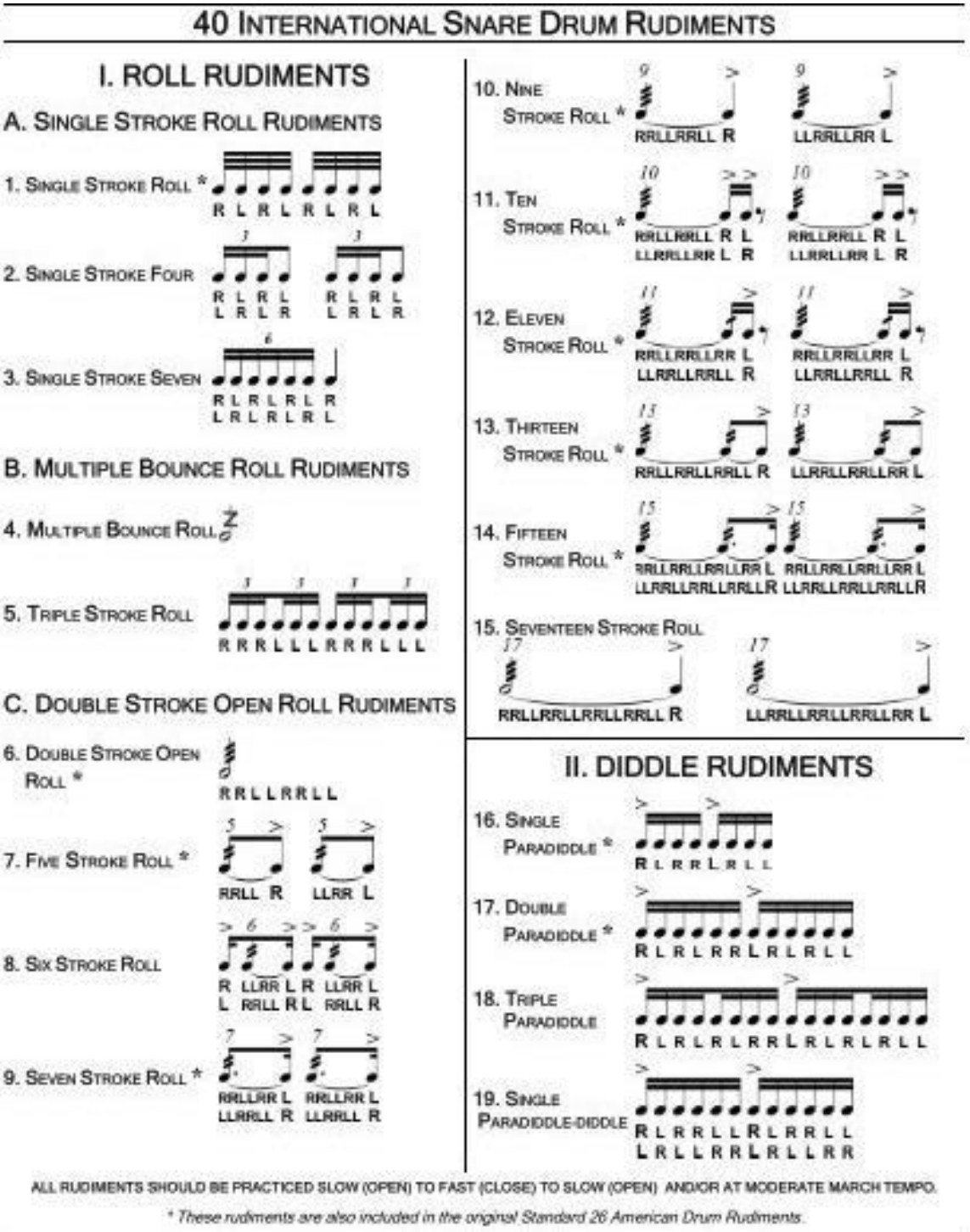
Appendix III: Bass fingerings

4 string bass fingerboard chart

www.steve-nelson.co.uk
Educational resource.
21/3/06

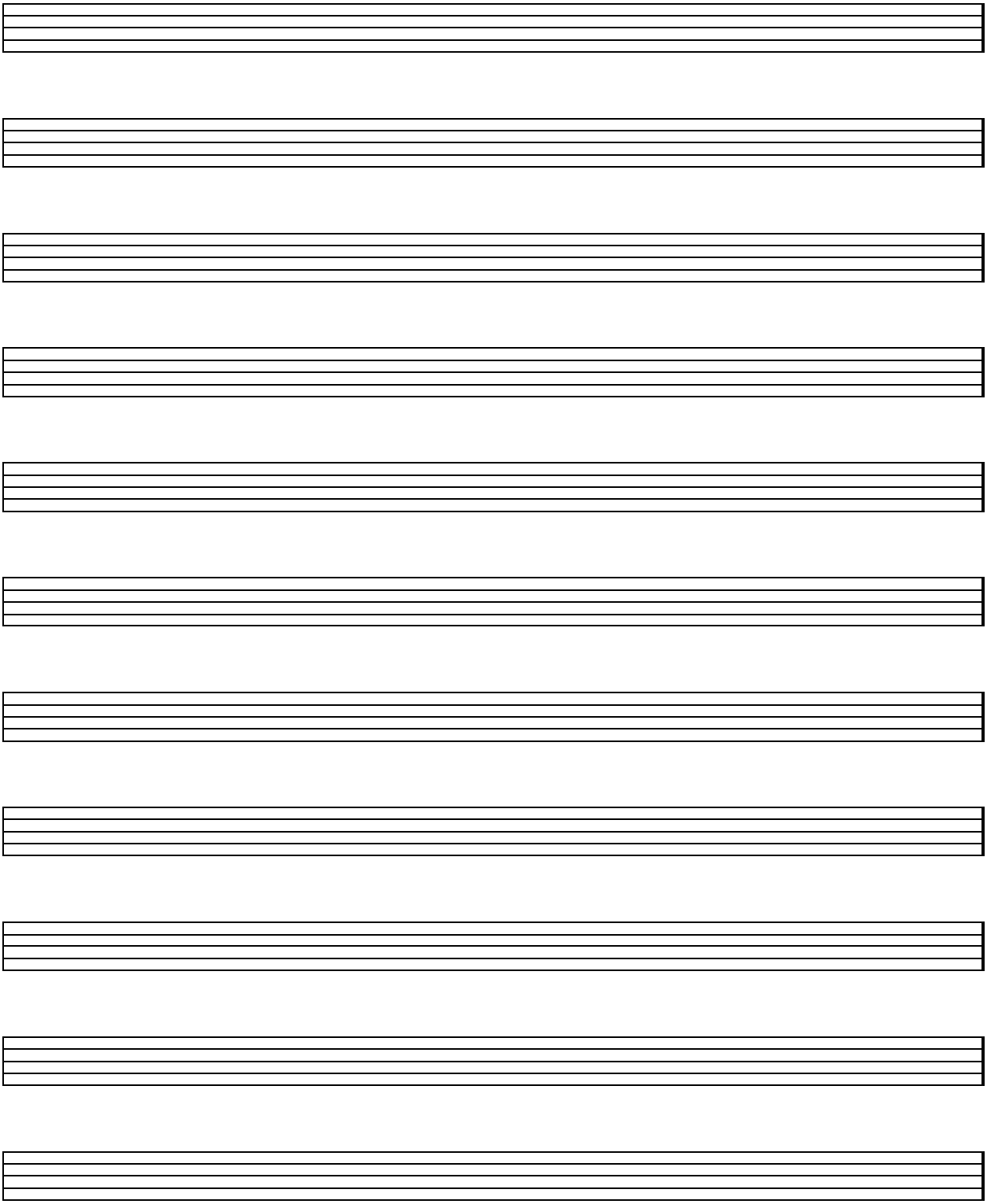


Appendix IV: Drum rudiments



Source: https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11858784/drum-lesson-rudiment-pdf-

Appendix V: Staff paper



Appendix C

Bridging Worlds Through Music on YouTube

In this appendix you will find links to publicly available YouTube videos that include clips from workshop activities that took place during the *Improvising in-between* project.

RICH HILL MUSIC CLASSES BWTM 2022

Weblink: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSdQmr1oDxk&t=5s

ADULT MUSIC WORKSHOPS - GEITA 2022

Weblink: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygOBwzAIuwI

MWANZA SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Weblink: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_jiIMYJx28

Appendix D

Art Not Shame - Reimagining Possibility Campaign

Art Not Shame – Reimagining Possibility Interviews:

- Reimagining Possibility… with Melanie Schambach (https://vimeo.com/657571051)
- Reimagining Possibility… with Kavya Yoganathan (https://vimeo.com/654669137)
- Reimagining Possibility… with Brendan Johnson (https://vimeo.com/654667865)
- Reimagining Possibility with… Jace & Rich (https://vimeo.com/653836318)
- Reimagining Possibility with… Michelle Peek (https://vimeo.com/651308878)

Reimagining Possibility - Art Not Shame's *deep purpose*

These Reimagining Possibility interviews were cut and edited by David Lane to align with around the four pillars of ANS's *deep purpose*:

- Reimagining Possibility… Creativity (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zJu1c4uN0dEcOorp1xI0NwJiMVMDM60l/view?usp=drive_link)
- Reimagining Possibility… Community (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vYdWCMP0yeQLKsfAvuanGFveU2eC9btc/view?usp=drive_link)
- Reimagining Possibility… Well-being (https://drive.google.com/file/d/19TnQVFnvKLrWM2OaW6J3LgoYU0g2A-KN/view?usp=drive_link)
- Reimagining Possibility… Social Justice (https://drive.google.com/file/d/18VSVVsz7VG5GWSBU8BNmChlU6Jjv-B2v/view?usp=drive_link)

Appendix E

Multimedia Creations from Inuit Social Circus

- Arctic Voices in Social Circus – interviews with CIRQINIQ, Tupiq A.C.T., and Artcirq - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mph2WDlmd_P55h06JToPZr0qrQzeRYGP/view?usp=drive_link
- CIRQINIQ photo story – mp4 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UDpZ60dBQOrimDz6RRWHypDS7mpWl5my/view?usp=sharing
- CIRQINIQ photo story – PDF https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-VileXhtZGAdtCsH9nTXmKrp5tqiyQwx/view?usp=sharing
- CIRQINIQ Community Performance https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B-ccoO2Zkrh_O64eMOUAiCBXv_rSURuI/view?usp=sharing
- Artcirq and CIRQINIQ at Cirkaskina https://drive.google.com/file/d/15kyV8XVADKPq-BZGkijNlYRmEoExXpsn/view?usp=drive_link

Appendix F

Arts-based/Creative Evaluation Open Access Resource List

Resource Title	Author/ Organization	Source (Weblink)
Art-Based Evaluation	By Margot Charlton for Art Reach Toronto	https://www.artreach.org/_files/ugd/8d56b2_81896efc095b47c297bb79da80fb48d6.pdf
Arts-Based Evaluation Methods	Art For Social Change (ASC!) - evaluation	http://www.ascevaluation.ca/course.aspx?type=step4abe#ArtsBasedBasic http://www.ascevaluation.ca/examples.aspx?method=arts-based&back=true
Arts-Informed Evaluation	By Julie Frost & Leah Burns	https://www.slideshare.net/lindar/arts-informed-evaluation
ArtsPulse Evaluation Toolkit	Rotherham MBC - Arts Council of England	https://www.artsandhealth.ie/guidelines/artspulse-evaluation-toolkit-pdf/
Community Mapping Guide	UN HABITAT	https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Community%20Mapping%20Guide%20%2C%20A%20youth%20community%20mapping%20toolkit%20for%20East%20Africa%20-%20Volume%203.pdf
Digital Story Telling Toolkit	DST – Digital Storytelling Toolkit	https://digitalstorytellingtoolkit.uk/
Digital Storytelling Toolkit	Women Win	https://playground.womenwin.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Digital-Storytelling-Toolkit.pdf
Examples Of Creative Evaluation Techniques	Aston-Mansfield	https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.ucl.ac.uk/dist/c/605/files/2018/10/Creative-evaluation-methods.pdf

Framing Community - A Community Engaged Art Workbook	Ontario Arts Council	https://www.arts.on.ca/news-resources/resources/framing-community-%E2%80%93-a-community-engaged-art-workbo#:~:text=Framing%20Community%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Community%2DEngaged%20Art%20Workbook%20provides%20guidance%20on,Vital%20Link%2C%20published%20in%201998.
Neighbourhood Arts Network: Arts & Equity Toolkit	By Skye Louis & Leah Burns for Toronto Arts Foundation	https://torontoartscouncil.org/TAC/media/tac/Reports%20and%20Resources/Reports%20by%20outside%20organisations/Arts-and-Equity-Toolkit-Updated-Links-v-3-July-2021.pdf
Photovoice Ethical Photography for Social Change	PhotoVoice	https://photovoice.org/
The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique	Rick Davies and Jess Dart	https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf

Appendix G

Emergent and Collaborative Research Documentation (Samples)

SELECTED JOURNAL NOTES

Transcribed from David Lane's handwritten field journal notes

May 16, 2022 – Montreal (Cirque hors Piste)

- During the free jam, some did silks, others hand-to-hand (with guidance from CHP), several boys did tumbling and some Inuit games, [Redacted] did contortion and some did juggling
- [Redacted] led silks
- [Redacted] led juggling (which I failed at miserably)
- During lunch, I sat with the Nunavut youth and [Redacted] asked me if there were any words that I wanted to know in Inuktitut (I said friend… but can't remember the word)

May 17, 2022 – Montreal (Cirque hors Piste)

- They continued with the Junior Instructor training
    - As they sorted their responses to the various social circus principles, [Redacted] ask the youth to expand (they often contributed more than they actually got from the youth) – [Redacted] contributed "improvisation" unprompted by me.
- I asked questions based on what they know… what advice would they give to someone in their community, what resources to they have in their community
- [Redacted] suggested "no fear"… [Redacted] noted that fear is ok and normal (I said I'm scared all the time) – it was changed to "not letting fear own you"

September 5, 2022 – Mwanza

Today was a full one

- After last evening's concert with ugali and beef and live music (incl. songs in Swahili, also Leonard Cohen and Alicia Keys).
- This morning was delayed by an hour and a half due to major rain.
- I took the time in my mind to think about daily plans (good thinking, but likely not usable).
- I brought guitar strings and picks to Anza Kwa Imani Centre.

September 19, 2022 – Geita

- In many ways, I wanted to lean into more exploratory free play… it was more fun and aesthetically pleasing, but ultimately that simply reaffirmed their already proficient, but limited vocabulary.
- They expressed an interest in how music works and in new musical concepts.
- They seemed to enjoy new rhythmic ideas

    - > Time signatures (i.e., 3 and 6)
- Though they struggled a bit with it at first, introducing minor and dominant chords gave them some new sounds to play and improvise with.

September 22, 2022 - Mwanza

- Modeling is important when language is a barriers
    - > I try to show what it's like to be creative, inclusive, friendly, determined, flawed, etc.
- I'm not unconvinced about my conceptual framework, but I'm not sure I've been purposeful in actively exploring it…
- I'm working with organizations where youth and children need income, housing, and healthy food. Where does music/art fit if these things are not met?

November 2, 2022 – Inukjuak

- Now that I've done visits, I need to reflect on what CIRQINIQ wants going forward
- There is a sense that social circus is a space for outcasts . . . how do we communicate this → safe space? Inclusive?
    - > Circus provides an alternative space for youth who are less engaged in other spaces?
    - > What does this say about these gendered spaces?
- These gendered spaces were not designed
    - > Without purpose (ethical, moral frame) these spaces will reflect/default to social expectations
- Neutral, free improvisatory spaces don't exist . . . the transgressive improvisation that is discussed in our program is as or more politically motivated as any other discipline
- Making space is active. The curation or establishment of an improvisatory space is not a removal of limits, it is the intentional act of pushing away convention and challenging imposed structures
    - > There is nothing neutral about this.

November 4, 2022 – Inukjuak

- As youth play and explore, they do gravitate to things, Their willingness to take risks (challenge themselves) will vary – some are not keen to take risks…
    - > Some like a challenge and don't mind being seen to struggle
    - > Others will struggle and only try if no one is looking
    - > Some will need someone to guide them/be their safety net
    - > Making space for these various engagements is necessary
- Some are bold and defiant, others are timid and compliant… etc.
- Youth need to feel that the space fits them, not that they have to fit the space

INTERVIEW AND DISCUSSION GUIDES

Youth Participant Interview Guide

1. If you had to describe yourself to someone for the first time what would you tell them?
2. What creative activities have you done as part of this project?
    a. How long have you been part of this project?
    b. What is the most important thing you have learned?
3. What have you learned about the people you've met through this project?
    a. How did you learn this?
4. What is something you have learned about yourself since you joined this project?
    a. How did you learn this?
5. When you are trying to learn something difficult or to overcome a challenge, what strategies (what do you do) to try to figure it out?
6. When you think about how you were when you first joined the project, what would you say is the biggest difference between how you were then and how you are now?
    a. Why do you think this change has occurred?
7. What is your favourite memory of being part of this project?
    a. Why is this your favourite memory?

Partner Facilitators/Coordinators Guide

1. How would you summarize purpose and goals of your organization?
2. What creative practices do you use?
    a. Why do you use these approaches?
    b. What are some of the core principles of these approaches?
3. How do the creative practices help to achieve your purpose and goals?
    a. What would an ideal version of your practice look like?
4. When young people are trying to learn something difficult or to overcome a challenge, what do facilitators/coordinators need to do to support them? What strategies do young people use?
5. What conditions contribute to your initiatives being successful?
6. What conditions serve as impediments to realizing your purpose and goals?

Community leaders, elders, parents

1. What is your relationship with the program and/or your community?
2. How would you describe your community?
3. How would you describe the arts and culture in your community?
4. What social and cultural messages do you think is important for young people to learn in your community?
5. What do you feel your community needs to be able to support social and cultural learning for the young people in your community?
6. What are your hopes for the young people in your community?

Group discussion with youth

Techniques to be used: Sticky notes, Dotmocracy, and Flipchart paper/chalk board/white board

1. Where are you from and what is one thing you would like others to know about you? (circle introductions – turn-taking)
2. What is the most important thing you have learned from the teachers/instructors? (sticky notes)
3. What is the most important thing you have learned from other youth you've met? (sticky notes)
4. What is your favourite part of being part of this project? (turn-taking, flip chart/chalkboard/white board)
5. If you had to convince someone else to join this project, what is a story would you tell them to try to make them interested? (turn-taking, could be drawn or told).
6. What is one idea you think would make the project better? (i.e. more fun, interesting, welcoming, or useful)? (turn-taking, flip chart/chalkboard/white board)
7. What kinds of creative activities are you hoping to do next?

EMAIL CORRESPONDANCE WITH COLLABORATORS

From: David Lane
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2023 1:16 PM
To: [Redacted]
Subject: David CIRQINIQ notes from PhD

Hi [Redacted],
Thanks for meeting yesterday! Here is the link for the sections of the PhD thesis that talk about CIRQINIQ:
David Lane - CIRQINIQ references in PhD research

Here are the links to the photo slideshows and videos as well:

- Photo stories
- Photo slideshow
- Inukjuak community show
- Cirkaskina
- Interviews

From: David Lane
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 2:37 PM
To: [Redacted]
Subject: Articles on CIRQINIQ

Hello!

I just remember this afternoon to send along research articles I've found that reference CIRQINIQ (including a newer one that I've just seen for the first time that was released last year).

I've also included two articles that talk about social circus in Quebec (but they don't talk about CIRQINIQ specifically). There are also two more about education in Nunavik that you might also find interesting.

Cheers!
Dave

David Lane, MSc, BEd, BA
PhD Candidate, Critical Studies in Improvisation
University of Guelph

From: David Lane
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 12:11 PM
To: [Redacted]
Subject: Safe space stories from CIRQINIQ

Hi [Redacted],

Great to meet with you today! Here are the notes and ideas to share with the youth. I recommend we target youth that are 16+ (it is clearer and easier from a consent perspective). I am happy to hear from any CIRQINIQ youth, but if it is someone I met in person in Montreal or Inukjuak (e.g., they know who I am) I think this would add a nice element of trust and awareness for those who participate.

I've also attached the formal university approved consent material. You are very welcome to use these if you'd like, but verbal consent to participate is completely fine as long as you feel the youth is happy and comfortable to participate.

Background:
- David is working on a PhD that looks at how arts programs (like CIRQINIQ) give youth a chance to be creative and to learn about themselves and build relationships with others.
- He is a friend and collaborator of CIRQINIQ and has joined us for a community visit and a circus gathering in Montreal.
- We are wondering if you'd be willing to share your thoughts and feelings about CIRQINIQ with David for his research.
- He will share all the stories back to CIRQINIQ for us to be able to share our stories with others so people can learn about us and hopefully provide us with support.
- David can include your name in the stories or you can keep your name private (anonymous). You can just say which choice you like better.
- If you would like to talk to David or ask him questions he will be very happy to talk to you! (Facebook, email, or Zoom)

Consent:
- Would you like to tell and share your thoughts and stories for this project?

Story prompt(s):
- What are some things about CIRQINIQ (social circus) that make you feel welcomed and safe? Can you share a memory or a story from your time in CIRQINIQ that made you feel welcomed and safe?

Please feel welcome to adjust or supplement these prompts. I tried to keep it simple and clear. It is fine if the conversations are very short (5 minutes or less is totally fine!).

Thanks!
Dave
David Lane, MSc, BEd, BA

PhD Candidate, Critical Studies in Improvisation
University of Guelph
From: David Lane
Sent: Thursday, November 11, 2021 10:45 AM
To: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Connecting you with [Redacted] (interviews re: matching campaign)

Good morning [Redacted],

I had a good chat with [Redacted] yesterday. Happy to connect and to chat with you (phone, Zoom, Red Brick?) or we can update through email.

[Redacted] and I talked about possibly setting up Instagram live interviews (then saving the videos for possibly cutting/editing clips that might also get used for other messages/social media posts). I'm happy to participate in the interviews and/or ask questions in any way that helps.

Some questions/topics for consideration we briefly discussed included (feel free to adopt or dismiss as you feel it is valuable):
- What is it about ANS that inspires you to support/work with them?
- What do the relationships formed and facilitated through ANS mean to you?
- Can you recall an interaction, observation, or experience that you feel exemplifies the type of change that ANS creates?
- Looking forward what do you feel ANS needs to support its efforts broaden its reach and deepen its impact?

A few other questions I thought of included:
- What is your favourite memory of your time with ANS?
- What do you feel is the most important change/impact that has been realised through ANS programming? How/why do you think this change occurred?
- If you had to explain to someone why ANS's work is important/special what would you tell them?

Happy to connect when you are available. I'm fairly flexible today and only have one meeting tomorrow (from about noon till 3pm).

Best!
Dave

David Lane, MSc, BEd, BA
PhD Candidate, Critical Studies in Improvisation
University of Guelph

UNUSED MUSIC WORKSHOP PLANS – BWTM

BWTM WORKSHOP PLANNING IDEAS

Pre-workshop discussions:

- Identify 2 or 3 songs that we can build exercises around
    - Getting these before I arrive would be great!
- How many participants, students/teachers/other guests (this can be flexible)?
- What space(s) do we have?
    - Church hall, outdoor meeting space, school?
- Teachers (guest artists) and translators
    - Who can help teach?
    - Do we need added translators? (to help workshops and maybe translate written material into Swahili/local languages)
- Technology/instruments
    - What music gear, instruments, technology is available?
    - Are there other instruments, gear, or technology that will be helpful?
- Teaching and learning materials
    - What sort of printing options are available?
        - Bring books/paper can be challenging, but possible.
    - What kind of books, notebooks, would be helpful?
    - Can we get some things in Dar or Mwanza?
- Food/drink
    - Can/should we try to have drinks, snacks, or lunch available?

GEITA - EXPLORING MELODY, RHYTHM, AND HARMONY

Introductions (All participants get to know each other)

- 'Name', 'where you're from', 'your family', 'what is your favourite way to spend your time and why?'
- A new, get to know each other activity every morning

Understanding and discussing the project with community/students

- Describing project
    - Different ways we might record or write about the workshops/activities (written notes, photos, videos, etc.)
    - Who we might share stories with
    - Where the stories/photos videos might be shared
    - Deciding as a group how/if we will share our experiences, creations and stories together
    - Agreement (consent) to participate - everyone can decide if/how they want to participate

Morning musical sharing (daily)

- Local teachers and students share their music
    - Every day starts with a musical sharing moment (students/local teachers can teach Dave to sing part of a song in Swahili, to dance, or play a drum beat)
    - Musical sharing moment will end with trying to find ways to add to or change the music into something new

Vocal/rhythmic warm-up exercises/call and response melodies/rhythms (daily)

- Loosening the body through voice and movement exercises

Rhythm and drumming (days 2-5)

- Circle drumming
- Duple meter (two beat), triple meter (three beat)
- Drum set
    - Human drum set (creating a drumbeat using body percussion)
    - Straight rock, afro/Latin beats
- Rhythmic patterns/beats
    - Different between rhythm and meter/beat
- Rhythmic improvisation exercises (over a beat)

Hearing and creating simple melodies and harmonies

- Pentatonic (5 note) major scales
    - Circle singing
        - Create simple pentatonic melodies in unison
        - Use movement to symbolize different notes
            - Teacher-led, then student led
    - Create multiple simple melodies with the pentatonic scale and create simple vocal harmonies by singing the short melodies together
        - Instructor-led, then student-led

Understanding scales and keys

- Solfège
    - Do, Re, Mi, Sol, La (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti)
- Singing and hearing harmonic tones
    - Sing tones melodically and harmonically
- What is a key in music?
- Notation on a musical staff

Song as story

- Listening and drawing exercise

GEITA - MUSIC, STORYTELLING, AND RECORDING

**** Continue daily music exercises and song writing activities***

Finding our voices

- What does music mean to me?
- How does playing music make you feel?
- What does playing music with others teach you about yourself and about others?
- What do you want others to know about you, your experiences, your community?
- What does the music that we are singing and playing mean to us?

Filming, photographing, and recording our songs and our stories

- Using recording equipment and cameras
    - *We can discuss what type of equipment makes sense (could be just an iPad or other cameras/recording devices)*
- Collaboratively documenting our experiences and our stories
    - *Use drawings as inspiration for songs/stories?*
- Creating videos and audio recordings together

- Deciding if and how we want to share our stories (editing our creations)
- *Optional activities: create visual art and/or a dramatic theatre performance based on our stories and our music.*

BWTM WORKSHOPS MWANZA - UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING SONGS

Morning musical sharing (Day 1)

- Local teachers and students share their music
    - Every day starts with a musical sharing moment (students/local teachers can teach Dave to sing part of a song in Swahili, to dance, or play a drum beat)
    - Musical sharing moment will end with trying to find ways to add to or change the music into something new

Vocal/rhythmic warm-up exercises/call and response melodies/rhythms (daily)

- Loosening the body through voice and movement exercises

Understanding song forms

- Listening to songs and understanding how they are built
- ABA (AABA), Verse/Chorus/Bridge
- Writing or drawing the story of a song (how does musical style tell a story?)
    - Listen to a piece of music and create a story or picture based on what you hear

Understanding melody, and harmony (day 2)

- Chords and chord progressions (hearing, singing, and playing chords)
    - Major triads
        - Listen to samples from the songs we are learning
        - Singing triads melodically (singing notes separately) and harmonically (separate notes together)
        - Playing on various instruments melodically and harmonically
    - Minor triads
        - Listen to samples from the songs we are learning
        - Changing from major to minor
        - Singing triads melodically (singing notes separately) and harmonically (separate notes together)
        - Playing on various instruments melodically and harmonically
    - The dominant V(7) chord
        - Listen to samples from the songs we are learning
        - Singing the dominant 'V7' chord
        - What is a V to I cadence and what does it sound like?
            - Listen to samples
        - Sing and play examples
    - I-IV-V/i-iv-V (in the keys of E, A, D, G, C, F, Bb)
        - Listen to, sing and play simple chord progressions
    - I-V-vi-IV (in varying orders)
        - Common 4 chord popular music chord progression
        - Sing and play 4 chord patterns (add pentatonic melodies)
- Finding pitches and keys (theory)
    - How do notes, chords harmonies relate to a key?
        - Key signature, notes, scales, and chords in a musical key
        - Hearing how the patterns are the same (even with different keys)
    - How do you listen, how can you communicate and share musical ideas?

- Words and ideas for communicating pitches, chords, and keys

Song writing

- Finding your song/story (inspiration for lyrics)
  - Can you share any folk tales or local stories
  - Daily life stories – what do you see and do in your daily life that is important to you?
- Deciding on a song style and song form
  - Style: rhythm, tempo, volume, feeling, major/minor
  - Form: sections (i.e., ABA, ABACB) and/or chorus/verse/bridge
- Creating melodies/lyrics
  - Start lyrically
  - Start melodically
  - Simultaneous (lyric and melody)

MWANZA - MUSIC, STORYTELLING, AND RECORDING

**** Continue daily music exercises and song writing activities***

Finding our voices

- What does music mean to me?
- How does playing music make you feel?
- What does playing music with others teach you about yourself and about others?
- What do you want others to know about you, your experiences, your community?
- What does the music that we are singing and playing mean to us?

Filming, photographing, and recording our songs and our stories

- Using recording equipment and cameras
  - *We can discuss what type of equipment makes sense (could be just an iPad or other cameras/recording devices)*
- Collaboratively documenting our experiences and our stories
- Creating videos and audio recordings together
- Deciding if and how we want to share our stories (editing our creations)

Optional activities: create visual art and/or a dramatic theatre performance based on our stories and our music.

LETTER OF INVITATION – ANZA KWA IMANI

ANZA KWA IMANI FOUNDATION TANZANIA.

P.O Box 6006
Mwanza
August, 26, 2022

Mr. David John Lane

INVITATION LETTER FOR DAVID JOHN LANE - [redacted]

On behalf of Anza Kwa Imani Foundation Tanzania,

I am cordially extending an invitation for you David John Lane - [redacted] to visit us in Geita, and Mwanza. This is due to our partnership that we have had with a Bridging Worlds Through Music, a charitable Organization which operates from Canada and Anza Kwa Imani Foundation in Tanzania.

During your visit you will take part in encouraging our music classes at Rich Hill Pre and Primary School in Geita and Amani Centre in Mwanza and of course record and report back of the progress of our classes when you are back in Canada.

You will be visiting us for three weeks from the 6th of September to September 25th 2022.

During your visit, your main host will be Rev. Samuel Limbe who works with AICT Geita, and while in Geita, you will stay at Lenny Hotel and in Mwanza you will stay at Palace Hotel. Thank you planning to visit us!

We are so delighted to receive you as our guest, and we cannot wait to have you. For any question please call or WhatsApp me at [redacted] Or email me at [redacted]

With very kind regards,

REV. SAMUEL LIMBE
DIRECTOR
ANZA KWA IMANI FOUNDATION-Tanzania

ANZA KWA IMANI FOUNDATION TANZANIA.