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Conversations on Music, Allyship, and Reconciliation with Indigenous Music Therapists in Canada

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Received 25 February 2025; Accepted 19 April 2026; Published 1 July 2026
Editor: Susan Hadley
Reviewers: Sue Baines, Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa
Copyeditor: Marcus Bull

Abstract

This study aims to connect discourses about allyship and reconciliation to music therapy by centring the voices of Indigenous practitioners. Canada is working toward reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and aspiring allyship is a way to guide this pursuit both in general and in therapy settings. Music therapy researchers have discussed components of allyship through explorations of anti-oppressive practice, social justice, and cultural competence, but this field of scholarship is continuing to emerge. In this study, the experiences and stories of three Indigenous music therapists in Canada are analyzed within narrative inquiry and phenomenological frameworks. Data represent the personal stories, perspectives, and lived experiences of these practitioners related to the dimensions of allyship. A co-developed framework for allyship emerged that includes becoming informed, advocacy, listening and openness, collaboration and relationship, accountability, reflexivity, words and actions, and individual and community contexts. Building on this framework, the co-authors discuss allyship's congruences with therapeutic skills and music therapy contexts to build opportunities for reconciliation in Canada.

Keywords: allyship; Indigenous; Reconciliation; music therapy

Publisher: GAMUT - Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre (NORCE & University of Bergen)

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v26i2.4529

Introduction

Allyship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada is informed by a unique historical context and current conditions. Allies are defined as "dominant group members who work to end prejudice in their personal and professional lives, and relinquish social privileges conferred by their group status through their support of nondominant groups" (Brown & Ostrove, 2013, p. 2211). In Canada, the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) documented the history of colonialism, defined reconciliation within the Canadian context, and presented calls to action for the government and people of Canada (TRC, 2015a, 2015b). Reconciliation, which "is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country" (TRC, 2015b, p. 113), must include "awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour" (TRC, 2015b, p. 113). Given the longstanding and ongoing impacts of colonialism, allies' efforts in Canada should be centred in decolonization and Indigenization, as well as building awareness of the effects of historical trauma (Barker, 2012; Gone, 2009; Heart, 2003; Schmidt, 2019). Decolonization means "confronting the systemic inequalities that privilege non-Indigenous People while simultaneously disadvantaging Aboriginal Peoples" and involves reflection and action on individual and nationwide levels (Smith & Simon, 2016, p. 7). Allyship with Indigenous Peoples includes engaging in education, reflexivity and critical thinking, consulting with and listening to Indigenous sources, acknowledging privilege and oppression, and building relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals (Barker, 2012; Smith & Simon, 2016; Swiftwolfe, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Music therapy can be a space for allyship by centring Indigenous voices. Scholarship exists on the role of allyship in other healthcare professions (e.g., Grzanka et al., 2019; Holloway et al., 2022; Thorne, 2022). However, the term allyship has been scarcely applied in music therapy literature, except implicitly through anti-oppressive practice, social justice, and culture-centred approaches (Baines, 2013, 2021; Baines & Edwards, 2015; Lindan, 2019; Stige, 2016). Archibald et al. (2012) found that music and art are "important tool[s] in safely addressing individual and historic trauma" (p. 72). Therefore, music therapy may be uniquely positioned to address challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and contribute to reconciliation.

Australian and Canadian music therapists have engaged in research and scholarship with Indigenous Peoples and pointed to a need for allyship. Research has emphasized cultural humility and safety (Hutchings, 2021; Truasheim, 2014; Williams & Abad, 2005) and the use of culturally significant instruments and musics (Eley, 2013; Neuenfeldt, 1998). In Canada, Kenny (2017) drew attention to the value of allyship and reconciliation in music therapy. She asserts:

> Canadian music therapists come in contact with the Native people of Canada on a daily basis…[H]ow can we [employ] a kind of radical mutuality when it comes to our relationships with the Native people of Canada so that settler and the original peoples of this land can be in true relationship in every context in which we participate? (p. 100)

Similarly, Bell (2018) notes the lack of Indigenous voices in music therapy research and asserts the value of investigation into the relationship between music therapy and Indigenous healing traditions.

Music therapy can be an avenue for truth and reconciliation when Indigenous musics and ways of knowing are honoured and respected, and when Indigenous Peoples are represented in music therapy education, scholarship, and practice. Through in-depth narrative interviews, this research aims to connect discourses about allyship and reconciliation to the music therapy profession by centring the voices of Indigenous

practitioners. This study sought to explore music, allyship, and reconciliation with Indigenous music therapists practicing in Canada.

By amplifying voices from Indigenous music therapists who co-developed this research, we hope to offer an opportunity for Canadian music therapists to reimagine their roles as allies and their relationships with Indigenous Peoples, musics, and cultures.

Method

Positionality Statement

The first and last authors are Canadian, female, white settler music therapists. The co-authors, hereafter referred to by their first names, are Tiffany Sparrow Brulotte, Tatyana Dobrowolski, and Tinaya Iron-Entz. Co-authors described their Indigeneity and heritage as Métis, French and Nêhiyaw/Cree (Tiffany), Métis and Brazilian (Tatyana), and Cree and white (Tinaya).

Kaitlyn

I acknowledge that my identity as a white person of settler descent influences my views, beliefs, values, and knowledge systems. As a music therapist and psychotherapist, I aim to consistently and reflexively work toward reconciliation. I endeavour to approach my clinical work and this research as an ally, who aims to learn, unlearn, and relearn how to engage meaningfully and equitably with Indigenous clients and colleagues. I recognize that, as a white person and an inexperienced scholar, I participate within the system in ways that perpetuate colonial dynamics. Both in the context of this research and beyond, I am committed to furthering my ability to recognize and acknowledge instances of harm and seek opportunities to centre the voices of Indigenous colleagues and scholars.

Tiffany

Hello, Bonjour, Tansi! I am a Métis person born in Peace River, Alberta originally as Tiffany Morin Brulotte. I come from the Morin clan from Green Lake and Duck Lake Saskatchewan and the Brulotte clan from High-Prairie Alberta. I was raised surrounded by English and French-Canadian culture and language in Northern Alberta and am fluent in French. Unfortunately, I did not learn much about Métis Nêhiyaw culture growing up. There are many reasons for this. My parents were born at a time when racism was high and assimilation was valued so they also didn't learn. My great-grandmother had to revoke her treaty rights for marrying a Métis man. Also, nimosôm (grandpa) died as a result of racism so there has been pain in my family about this. It's only in the last 10 years or so that I've started to learn some Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) language and about Nêhiyaw culture from Elders in the Edmonton community.

Music has been my way into the Nêhiyaw culture. I've started learning ceremony songs and co-writing songs for performance with another Métis person that blend Nêhiyaw chants, phrases and words with English and French lyrics. I've done this with care and reverence, attending some language classes and making offerings (cistêmâw) to Elders for teachings. I've also had the honour of working with a handful of Indigenous youth in the community through music therapy. I often feel my attraction to music as a healing vessel and my instinct to become a music therapist is largely because of my Indigenous background. As most music therapy courses will tell you, music has been used for healing in global Indigenous cultures for time immemorial. Music has always been more than entertainment for me, even now whether I'm in a therapy session or doing a performance. Music is about transformation through connection: deeper connection to self, connections

between individuals, and connecting spirit with the physical world. This is how I endeavor to approach any kind of work I do with music, especially in music therapy sessions. Kinanâskomin merci to Kaitlyn for the opportunity to collaborate on this paper and thank you to those who are reading. Ayihi.

Tatyana

I am a person who lives in many worlds. My family tree belongs to the diaspora of many people from Europe, South America, and so-called Canada. I am a queer person who has lived in urban and rural settings. I have spent my life exploring my many lenses while living in a world dominated by the perspectives of others. I approach my work and research through Indigenous, feminist, and queering perspectives. As an educator, music therapist, and researcher, I am passionate about equity and accessibility to education for all, particularly for those from Indigenous and rural communities. I have lived with a certain amount of privilege as a light-skinned person from a supportive home, and I strive to use my privilege where I can. I believe having more conversations about allyship, Indigenization, and decolonization will give others the courage to do the same and open up more paths for those who live on the margins.

Tinaya

I am a branch in a family tree whose roots are found in the Nehiyaw (Plains Cree), French, and Scottish cultures. I have spent my whole life navigating and honouring my Indigenous and western cultural roots. I am a musician, mother, and clinician who seeks to integrate the various ways of knowing passed on to me in both my personal and professional life. As a light-skinned woman, I recognize and acknowledge that I occupy a place of privilege and aim to leverage it where I can to forward the aim of truth and reconciliation.

Elizabeth

Like Kaitlyn, I acknowledge my position as a white person of settler descent. For generations, my family has benefited from living on lands that were colonized, and our white privilege has enabled us to look away from the harms, past and present, faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada. As a psychotherapist, music therapist, and music therapy scholar and educator, I am committed to ongoing learning regarding the ways that colonial and racist perspectives and values have infiltrated my life and work and to seeking allyship with those whose voices our field and our society have historically marginalized and silenced.

Research Design and Data Analysis

Historically, research involving Indigenous Peoples has been conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, has not honoured Indigenous knowledge or traditions, and has been a source of colonial harm (CIHR, 2018; Hayward et al., 2021). This research study was approached from a place of “respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity” (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1). Elements of Indigenous research paradigms, including the value of narrative and relationality, informed this study’s design, data collection, and analysis (Abolson, 2011; Archibald et al., 2019; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Narrative inquiry was selected as the primary methodology because its values align with Indigenous storytelling practices and traditions (Abolson, 2011; Behrendt, 2019; Kenny, 2005, 2006). Narrative inquiry takes control away from the researcher and gives power to the storyteller (Kovach, 2009). Phenomenological inquiry also informed the research because of its focus on contributors’

lived experiences and the thematic presentation of stories (van Manen, 1990). This study received approval from the Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University (#7085).

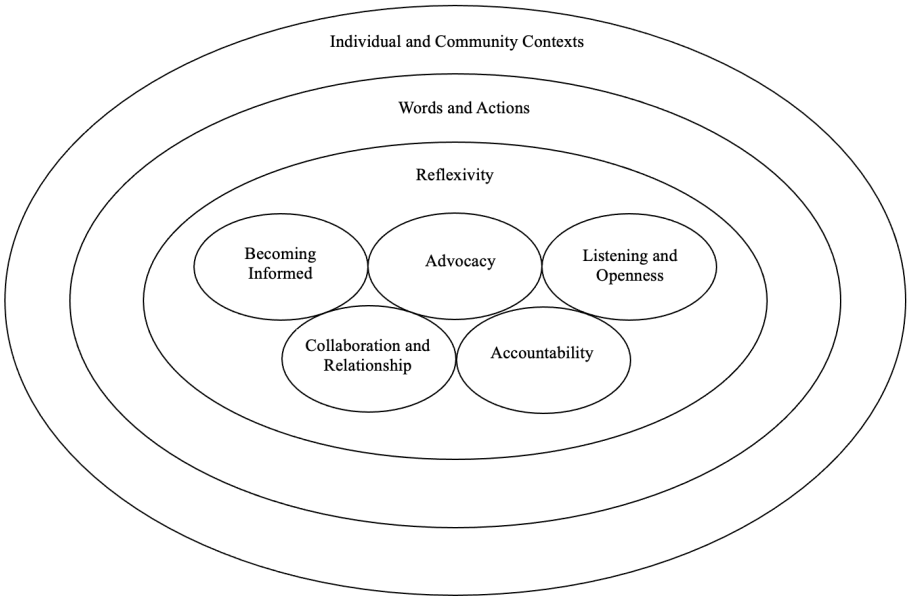
Three self-identified Indigenous music therapists from Canada engaged in this research. Each contributor is a certified member (MTA) of the Canadian Association of Music Therapists (CAMT) who was working in the music therapy field at the time of the research. Recruitment occurred through email communications sent via CAMT. The first author presented co-authorship as an option for contributors in an effort to centre their voices and approach this research as a collaborative endeavour. All three music therapists consented to co-authorship, being directly identified, and participating in individual and group semi-structured virtual interviews (Clandinin, 2007; Hadley & Edwards, 2016; Kenny, 2005). Although all co-authors consented to the group interview, one was unable to attend. In this meeting, co-authors reviewed and expanded upon emerging themes and continued the conversation in a relational context.

Interview transcription involved noting both what was said and how it was said (emphasis, silences, etc.) to aid in the investigation of the underlying meaning of the narratives. Transcripts were coded using NVivo software and following a modified phenomenological approach that searched for the essential meaning of lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). The first author completed initial coding and then shared this with the co-authors during the group interview, inviting them to collaborate in forming themes and ensuring that the analysis was accurate to their intended meaning. In integrating narrative inquiry and phenomenology, we endeavoured to maintain the narrative integrity of the codes, recognizing that meaning can be lost when data is broken into small parts, and that narratives often contain meaning beyond phenomenological categories (Hadley & Edwards, 2016; Kenny, 2005).

Findings: Steps Toward Allyship & Reconciliation

The overarching theme that emerged from the interview data was *Steps Towards Allyship and Reconciliation*. Subthemes included *Becoming Informed*, *Advocacy*, *Listening and Openness*, *Collaboration and Relationship*, *Accountability*, and *Reflexivity*. Further, these components of allyship and reconciliation were considered within the broader themes of *Words and Actions*, and *Individual and Community Contexts* (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A framework for allyship based on reflections from Indigenous music therapists.



Becoming informed

Becoming informed is a core component of allyship and reconciliation and involves informal and formal learning. It encompasses a broad range of topics including cultural values and practices, as well as current and historical experiences, issues, and social justice actions related to Indigenous Peoples. As noted by Tatyana:

> Start watching movies and reading books. It doesn't even just have to be the sad documentaries, watch a couple of those, but also start taking in other literature…You're never going to fully get it, but the more you expose yourself to the voice, versus other people with your voice speaking about them, you'll start to get it more.

Further, Tatyana urges allies to intentionally search for diverse continuing education opportunities by "analyzing practices and asking: 'What are the spots that I am lacking knowledge in?' and putting extra education in [those areas]."

Seeking understanding should involve considering not only what is learned, but how it is learned. Engaging with Indigenous teachings and practices must be respectful and reciprocal. Tiffany shared that making offerings (cistêmâw) and receiving permission is important when learning traditional music and practices. She states, "Not only is this respectful but it also ensures that we're valuing and ready to receive the lessons, and that the teachings aren't coming from a person and their ego but from Creator spirit." Tinaya offers examples of how she seeks input from Indigenous musicians and clients:

> It goes back to seeking understanding from Indigenous People. I've asked lots of Indigenous drum carriers and rattle players, "How can I integrate this music into my practice?" Each person has to go through their own process of asking questions and saying: "What am I comfortable with offering and what do I have the knowledge to offer?" If you feel like something would be valuable, but you don't have quite enough knowledge, then go looking for it.

While looking for knowledge, Tinaya advocates for the importance of Two-Eyed Seeing[1], which is "to have a Western eye, and Indigenous eye, and look at things through both lenses, knowing that both sides…have something of value to offer." This resonates with Tinaya's understanding of reconciliation being "realized when both sides have been heard and we recognize that there is value in the way both parties see something."

Tinaya also encourages music therapists to consider how small shifts in understanding might acknowledge Indigenous ways of knowing:

> Music therapy . . . is further ahead than the medical system in understanding that people need holistic care, and so I don't think it would be hard for us to recognize that we align closely with an Indigenous understanding of health … For example, assessing people based on the seven domains of health. What if you tweaked the list a bit and asked about relationships? Indigenous People are very relational, and to understand a person, you need to understand their relational context. So, what is a person's relationship with their bodies? What is a person's relationship with their mind? What is their relationship with their spirit? What is their relationship with their family and with their town?

These small shifts may be significant steps toward reconciliation. Becoming informed through learning from Indigenous sources can lead to increased respect for Indigenous knowledge and musics.

[1] Two-Eyed Seeing is defined as paired or parallel knowledge sharing that preserves both Western and Indigenous Knowledge (Marshall et al., 2015; Peltier, 2018).

Consulting Indigenous People should be balanced with individual efforts to become informed. Tatyana urges allies to:

> Open up and start . . . doing a lot of the work on your own so that when you approach somebody, you're not asking them for everything. You've read some books, you've watched some films, and now you can ask the questions that haven't been answered for you already, rather than putting all that weight on your Indigenous colleagues.

Relying too heavily on Indigenous People can be injurious to building collaborative relationships. Tatyana considers the challenge of working with people who "are passionate about being allies and decolonizing, but don't see that they are tokenizing their Indigenous colleagues." Tatyana described incidences in which colleagues emphasized the Indigenous parts of their heritage and ignored or minimized the other aspects of Tatyana's cultural identity and lived experience. Allies should also be cognizant of consulting the appropriate source. Tinaya reflects on her experience with a misplaced effort to consult: "We had a frank conversation and said, 'We are not a replacement for Indigenous Elders … but this is our connection, and this is how we will help.'" Increased expectations for Indigenous leaders to be involved in numerous projects and initiatives can be met with mixed feelings. Tatyana describes how "It is a double-edged sword. It is something that I really am grateful for, but also, it's challenging." Tinaya has also felt that if she does not drive the conversation, it does not happen. Allies must balance their desire to learn from Indigenous People with awareness of how tokenism and overly relying on Indigenous leaders are damaging to allyship and reconciliation initiatives.

Advocacy

Advocacy, defined as "action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others," (Alliance for Justice, 2013) is an important component of allyship and reconciliation. Advocacy is a part of Tinaya's definition of allyship:

> To be an ally is to stand, in collaboration and understanding and advocacy, for a certain group or a person. To align oneself with someone else, or with another group, to add your voice to theirs, to celebrate them, to make their voice bigger, and to fight for them and with them.

An important form of advocacy occurs in elevating Indigenous voices, along with the voices of those from other non-dominant cultures. Tiffany states:

> I think over time it will end up coming to a place of . . . co-creating on an even level, but right now, it might just involve elevating Indigenous voices. I think it's too soon to go, "We need to be even." There's been so much imbalance for so long, we're so story-suppressed, culture-suppressed, that there needs to be space to just let it blossom. With space, Indigenous voices will grow and rise in time.

Another element of advocacy is using your own voice to raise awareness and promote change. Tatyana urges allies "to be loud and keep challenging different peoples' perspectives. Other people just don't get it, and so you get tired but … keep having those uncomfortable conversations." Allies can use the privilege granted by their social location, including sex, gender, race, class, nationality, etc., to bolster others' voices.

Decentring the self also relates to advocacy. This means not overpowering when advocating for a marginalized group. Using your voice to amplify the voices of others should be a short-term solution. Tatyana reflects:

> I think a good ally is somebody who is doing the work . . . but they're not centring themselves . . . The ultimate goal is to have those voices speak for themselves. It's important to be reflective . . . using our privilege to lift voices, and then as those voices are lifted to step back.

Being "bulldozed" by allies has caused Tinaya and Tatyana to remove themselves from conversations and feel as though they cannot disclose their perspective. The goals of advocacy are to encourage listening, embolden others to speak out, and empower communities to act. As Tatyana notes, this is complex because everyone is on their own journey:

> It's tricky because the people that you are trying to lift are also in a variety of places. People who are not ready to have those conversations may be really appreciative and be like, "Wow, you're such a powerful ally," but then people who are ready to have those conversations will feel like you're drowning them out.

Tatyana suggests that taking a reflective, nuanced approach to advocacy occurs often in the context of music therapy and music-making:

> When I'm doing a vocal group, I sing really loud in the beginning because people are scared, and they are singing quietly underneath me. I always say, "You're never going to be as loud as me so just sing away," but I'm always listening, and if I can feel them becoming more confident, I peel back . . . That same philosophy needs to be used with allyship: be loud when people are too scared . . . But be hyperaware and notice, "Are the other people getting more confident?" Still talk, maybe at the same volume, but as they get more confident, harmonize . . . help behind the scenes and eventually drop out.

Allies can use their knowledge and social position to advocate for change related to allyship and reconciliation initiatives. Elevating others' voices or using your own should be approached with sensitivity so that the issues, and not the allies, become the focus.

Listening and openness

Becoming informed and advocating requires listening to others' perspectives, especially representatives of marginalized groups. Tatyana urges music therapists to be educated allies to Indigenous Peoples and "approach it in that same way [that you approach other client populations], with an open heart and mind—be inquisitive and curious." Tiffany summarizes the value of listening and openness by reflecting on her experiences:

> I watched a lot of people, especially as some of the grave sites were being uncovered[2], running around, "We want to do something, we want help." Understandable and noble but also maybe avoids feeling the impact of what has been done. My instinct in that is *listen*. Let Indigenous clients take the lead as much as they're comfortable. You don't need to force it, but just have that open space to allow them to show and guide you from their experience, as opposed to assuming what will be useful.

Openly listening to and respecting the experiences and perceptions of others is an essential part of allyship.

[2] In May of 2021, 215 unmarked gravesites were uncovered using radar technology at the former site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School by the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation (Dickson & Watson, 2021). Since then, hundreds of gravesites have been located at numerous former residential school sites across Canada (Canadian Press, 2022).

Another aspect of listening is not making assumptions about other allies. Tinaya asserts that "Part of allyship is being sensitive to when people have the energy to have the conversation … Not assuming that we enjoy those conversations and want to have them all the time." Tatyana agrees that asking allies about their willingness, comfort, and ability to lead, or even be involved in certain initiatives, is very important:

> It is about not making the assumption that what was right with this person is right with this other person, and also just because it was right with this person yesterday, doesn't mean it's right with this person today . . . There's been some really passionate allies who are . . . leading almost all the time. They should ask, "Is this one I should lead, or do you think that you might be better to lead this one?"

Listening to and checking in with fellow allies and social justice leaders regarding their readiness to engage in conversations and initiatives is an important part of advocacy and building equal, collaborative relationships.

Collaboration and relationship

Enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion by increasing the visibility of marginalized people in educational and clinical spaces is valuable for Indigenous clients, students, and all music therapists. Tatyana and Tinaya share moments in which their identity was significant for those they serve:

> Tatyana: The kids (students), didn't know right away because of my light skin, but when we would talk about our Grammas making us fry bread and stuff, they were just so excited—"I've got an authority figure that has a shared background to me!"

> Tinaya: I had a client interaction with somebody, he passed away shortly after the session, but he heard a song in his native language in the hospital, which was so powerful for him to be in this medical setting and hear his mother tongue.

True diversity is supported by the collaboration of people with a wide variety of appearances, experiences, and perspectives. Tatyana expresses that we need to:

> Have all those faces in leadership . . . We all need to lead so that the visible person doesn't get tokenized and seen as *the* Indigenous experience. We need to have more of a spectrum of experiences so that people go, "Oh wait, Indigeneity looks like this, this, this, and this, that's so diverse."

Another dimension of allyship is working to minimize power imbalances in relationships. Referencing Kenny (2006), Tinaya reflects, "In music co-creation, in that Field of Play, there isn't a hierarchy. Taking that understanding into your sessions, *each* session, is important. Even if you're not working with an Indigenous person, tenets of reconciliation are valuable." For Tiffany, acknowledging and mitigating power dynamics can involve maintaining a non-expert attitude and empowering clients to lead their therapy. She advocates for music therapists to:

> Approach the work as an ally, a support, but not necessarily as an authority . . . Make attempts to be informed or to learn, but put the clients in the driver's seat, if they're comfortable. As much as possible, try to eradicate any kind of hierarchy . . . It's really about them and their relationship to their culture.

The Milken Institute of Public Health (2020) outlines equality, in which "each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities," and equity, which "recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources

and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome." Understanding the difference between these concepts is paramount in diminishing power dynamics. Tatyana argues that "if you're treating everybody equally, you are continuing to uphold the hierarchies." Considering equality and equity necessitates an understanding of the history of discrimination and mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples. Resisting and dismantling societal hierarchies is an overarching goal of allyship. Acknowledging power dynamics involves being accountable to privilege and power inside and outside of the therapy space.

Accountability

Aspiring allyship involves a personal process of acknowledging your place within a societal context of oppression. Becoming informed about injustice is not enough; allies must also take ownership of their role in systemic issues. Tatyana reflects on accountability:

> People say: "Acknowledging you have a problem is the hardest part, that's half the battle," but people aren't ready to acknowledge the problem or their part in it. Every single person in this nation has a part in it. You didn't do residential schools, you didn't write the Indian Act, but just us existing in the same place, we have a part in it. We need to acknowledge it, we need to feel the sadness, and then we can move on to reconciliation.

Fear of fault and judgment can prevent allies from being accountable. Tiffany shares:

> I see there's this tendency for people to avoid looking at reconciliation for fear of, "That means I have to take on … shame for my ancestors and my people, and I wasn't there" … I don't think that's reconciliation either, it's making it more about self rather than the relationship.

Focusing on one's guilt and shame can shift the focus away from allyship and be detrimental to building relationships. Tiffany considers a balance that can be achieved:

> There's a difference between blame and shame and ownership and responsibility or the ability to be empowered to do something about it from one's own self. The action and the empowerment of action is about finding peace and forgiveness within self.

Acknowledging harm and taking ownership requires the courage to examine oneself and sit with discomfort.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity, or ongoing critical examination of one's feelings and actions, is an underlying thread through all of the previous sub-themes. Reflexivity involves what Tatyana identifies as, "being open to change and different points of view and trying to challenge ego." As allies become informed, they can reflexively shift the ways that they advocate, listen, collaborate, and take ownership. Tatyana emphasizes:

> Humility is so important and decentring is so important . . . and that's something that allies need to be constantly reflecting on. You see people reach this tipping point. They start curious and wanting to help and then they reach this point of fame or expertise and then this ego comes in.

In terms of reconciliation, Tinaya describes the value of reflexivity:

> You need to address your self and the attitudes that you hold. I know that it's possible even for myself to prejudice one side of me over the other . . . Where is that bias coming from?

> What are those core beliefs . . . that are giving rise to . . . prejudice? It takes a lot of self-awareness and perhaps professional help.

Reflexivity is a component of accountability and involves learning not only to sit with discomfort but to analyze it. According to Tiffany:

> A good ally analyzes their discomfort and grows from it, figures out where their place is, and is ready to shift their place, is ready to say sorry, and is ready to take on new information. A good ally engages in constant reflection and revision.

Reflexive questioning of self, others, and the world is a useful strategy to expand upon reflexive practice.

Aspiring allies can *Reflexively* work towards *Becoming Informed*, *Advocating*, *Listening* with *Openness*, building *Collaborative Relationships*, and taking *Accountability*. These steps then need to occur through both *Words and Actions*, within *Individual and Community Contexts*, to fulfill the steps towards allyship and reconciliation.

Words and Actions

Allyship and reconciliation should involve both words and actions. Promises and apologies are important steps in making change, but they must also be followed by action. Tiffany reflects on the complex interaction of words and actions in allyship:

> What does sorry really do? I mean it's a good starting point, and we need that, and at the same time, you can just say something and then just keep doing the same thing you said you're sorry for. So, reconciliation takes time, and for me, it has to do more with actions. And listening and witnessing are actions.

When balance is achieved between meaningful words and actions, reconciliation is a process that requires both reflection and response. Tatyana considers the value of acknowledging emotion:

> People need to process their initial emotions and their reactions before they can dive in. People need to feel safe to express that they feel guilty without being judged, or that they feel confused, or to just get out their grief first . . . People need to feel safe to admit that they're behind and . . . then they start working harder.

Taking time to grieve is essential. Although action is important, rushing the process can be detrimental to allyship. Tatyana contemplates a crucial phase of reconciliation:

> I had a couple of Elders say this when I was doing an outdoor education program in Haida Gwaii, and this is really important, it's *truth* and reconciliation, and it's truth first, then reconciliation. There are *so* many people who want to jump to reconciliation but don't want to acknowledge the truth, and they don't want to feel the truth, they don't *want* to hear the stories because it's too uncomfortable . . . Everybody needs to grieve what happened, not just the Native people.

Tiffany discusses the complexity of this action-oriented process:

> Reconciliation takes time. I think people want it to happen nicely and quickly and neatly. Several hundred years of a certain way of treatment just doesn't just get rectified overnight. Even amongst Indigenous communities, there're tricky things too, there's stigmatization, conflict, there's all kinds of stuff going on, so it can get really complex.

Reconciliation as an individual, emotional process involves reflexivity and leaning into discomfort. Recognizing the importance of the truth phase and allowing people time and space can contribute to building the trust that is essential for continuing to make change.

Individual and Community Contexts

Allyship and reconciliation must occur on individual and community levels. The dimensions of *Becoming Informed*, *Advocacy*, *Listening and Openness*, *Collaboration and Relationship*, *Accountability*, and *Reflexivity* are relevant to individuals, groups, and society. Working to achieve sweeping, systemic change can be overwhelming. Tinaya believes that:

> It starts at the individual level. Thinking about systemic change can be overwhelming, so pull back and say: "This starts with me." For me, it starts with my relationship with myself and understanding the two sides of me. For somebody else, it might be coming to terms with their own identity and what that implies, and then seeking understanding of the other side.

Contemplating the significance of individual efforts can be empowering and might reduce fear or guilt about taking action. Tatyana encourages allies to consider the impact of their individual actions:

> You need to be empowered that every book you read is going to shape the conversations you have with people … You're going to have these micro-conversations that make people have micro-changes in their perspective. That *can* be enough. It makes a difference.

Individual actions do not occur in a vacuum. Changing how we interact with clients and colleagues may ripple out to affect the community. Tiffany considers that reconciliation can begin in an individual context:

> I think there's a lot of healing that has to come from within different communities. With any kind of forgiveness, it's always coming from within self and coming to a place of peace with things with self. People can say "sorry, sorry, sorry," or say all kinds of things, but until that is made better in self, it doesn't really land. This is where true forgiveness arises, in self, not to condone, but to set us both free to be in a new kind of relationship.

Individual allyship efforts can inform and impact the momentum of reconciliation and social justice within the broader scope of one's workplace, community, and profession.

The co-authors emphasize that allyship and reconciliation in a community context involve making changes to the field of music therapy, beginning with training programs. Improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the education system will eventually be mirrored in the professional community. Reforming prerequisites and curricula is one component of making classrooms more diverse and inclusive (Sewepagaham et al., 2022). Tiffany reflects on the importance of Indigenous perspectives in music therapy education:

> Universities need to incorporate more Indigenous content, acknowledgement, customs, and awareness. Land acknowledgements were a start but now we need more. Acknowledge by displaying the languages, the traditions, consult with and bring in Elders and those who still live it. Don't just pay it lip service. I think it could make our university spaces better, more relational, more connected to past and future, to the land, to each other. I don't think there's too much of that happening yet, and it's a part of the history of the land that we're on. Why are we not learning about that? Why are we not incorporating it?

Expanding inclusivity and diversity in education also involves incorporating Indigenous musics in training and acknowledging non-Eurocentric approaches to music education.

As discussed above, learning from Indigenous sources is an important component of allyship. In terms of educational reform, this involves consulting Indigenous Elders and

educators and incorporating experiential learning opportunities. Tatyana advocates, "Every program should have a resident Elder attached to it." Tiffany explains that students and therapists could develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing by:

> Seeking out Indigenous Elders, getting genuinely curious about events and celebrations, and making offerings to learn. Also, recognize that everything is relational and that these relationships take time and are not usually on our agenda. This could lead to invitations to attend Indigenous ceremonies, such as sweats, pipe or blanket ceremonies. Then, rather than just telling the mythical story that 'Music therapy is founded on Indigenous practices' . . . students can experience a part of that and understand the roots of music therapy in a more embodied and lived way.

Incorporating Indigenous perspectives in music therapy education across Canada can be facilitated by the fact that the first training program was co-founded by Carolyn Kenny (Colin, 2018). Tatyana wishes for this to become widely recognized:

> Canadian music therapy started with Indigenous roots. This could be a beautiful thing that could set us apart . . . if we acknowledge that we were founded by an Indigenous woman and start noticing how much of our philosophies align with, and could be enhanced by, Indigenous perspectives.

Tiffany compels music therapy students and educators to expand their awareness of the connections between music therapy and Indigenous ways of knowing:

> The foundation of almost every music therapy training I've been to is, "Music has been used for thousands of years in Indigenous cultures." If we are going to stand on the shoulders of that, then let's stand beside that with our actions as well.

Respecting Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in music therapy training programs demonstrates allyship in an educational context. Further, this could positively impact the future of the music therapy profession by encouraging more Indigenous representation in the field. In this way, allyship and reconciliation efforts can grow and expand as students bring this knowledge into their work and communities.

Action at the community level involves changes beyond education. Incorporating Indigenous musics in therapy spaces and including non-Western understandings of health are ways of introducing or centring Indigenous perspectives in clinical practice. Tinaya describes the integration of Indigenous and Western ways of knowing in her work:

> I want to know what's going on in their heart, their head, and their spirit as they experience care because we've got a whole host of practitioners who are worrying about their bodies . . . You need to have both the Western and the Indigenous ways of knowing integrated into your practice because I want to be able to understand what's happening with their body and be supportive, but I know that their spirit, their emotions, and their thoughts are going to play into their physical health as well.

Acknowledging, appreciating, and working with the whole person is an important part of allyship within music therapy practice. Although conversations and action on allyship and reconciliation are gaining momentum in professional organizations, there could be more effort made to create spaces to learn about and discuss current issues. Tinaya recommends creating a task force on Truth and Reconciliation or cultural considerations, bringing more attention to presentations on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and reaching out to membership when relevant nationwide events occur.

Discussion

Allyship Frameworks

The themes of *Becoming Informed*, *Advocacy*, *Listening* with *Openness*, building *Collaborative Relationships*, acknowledging *Accountability*, and engaging in *Reflexive Practices* resonate with the characteristics and parameters of allyship described by scholars in the field (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Gibson, 2014; Gordon et al., 2021; Jenkins, 2009; Williams et al., 2022). For example, Williams et al. (2022) outline racial justice allyship as "identifying and decentring whiteness, empowering people of colour, and confronting uncomfortable or shameful race-based topics through ongoing education, and engaging in reciprocal vulnerability and accountability" (p. 10). Further, Gordon et al. (2021) explore complexities within allyship and identify several actionable components, including "actively acknowledging privilege and power and openly discussing them, listening more and speaking less, doing the work with integrity and direct communication, not expecting to be educated by others…[and] embracing the emotions that come out of the process of allyship (p. 574). The allyship framework presented in this paper aligns with scholarship that explores the dimensions and nuances of becoming an ally.

Music Therapy Competencies

Skills related to allyship align with core competencies of music therapy (Canadian Association of Music Therapists (CAMT), 2022; Sperry, 2010). It is crucial to note that although these skills are connected, therapists should not assume that using clinical skills is equivalent to demonstrating allyship. Becoming an ally is an intentional process. Tatyana considers potential links between the skills of an ally and therapist:

> Therapy fields could be the leaders in these places because we've been taught to be inquisitive and open-minded . . . I see people with these big open hearts and big open minds in certain areas, and it's taking a while for them to connect and use those same beautiful skills in other areas.

Examination of our Codes of Ethics as music therapists can emphasize ways to connect therapeutic skills to allyship. In this section, examples from the CAMT Code of Ethics (2022) are connected to each component of the allyship framework outlined above. See the *Appendix* for more examples.

Becoming informed occurs in many dimensions of practice, from conducting assessments, planning and facilitating appropriate therapeutic experiences, practising cultural awareness and adaptation, and seeking ongoing educational opportunities. Principle I.7 specifically addresses the necessity of learning and unlearning related to "how helping professions have contributed to historical, political, and sociocultural harms endured by Indigenous Peoples" (I.7a) and developing "an approach to music therapy that supports reconciliation" (I.7b) (CAMT, 2022, p. 5-6).

Music therapists advocate in many areas, including for their clients' care, workplace policies and procedures, and through professional advancement and education. Principle I.5 outlines expectations for music therapists to "identify and dismantle all forms of discrimination" (CAMT, 2022, p. 5). Active listening is the basis of both verbal counselling approaches and clinical musicianship. Further, listening from a place of openness and non-judgement is related to client-centered approaches and the development of strong therapeutic rapport (Rogers, 1946). In principle I.1, music therapists are called upon to "demonstrate respect for the dignity, value, experience, and knowledge of all people," which includes openness to the diverse perspectives of both colleagues and clients (CAMT, 2022, p. 5). Principle I.16 identifies informed consent as an "ongoing process" that helps

to form and maintain the therapeutic relationship (CAMT, 2022, p. 7). This is one example of how music therapists are expected to listen to, check-in, and collaborate with those they serve. Effective therapeutic alliances are built upon equal collaboration, especially from a resource-oriented perspective (Rolvsjord, 2010). Principle III.6 acknowledges the importance of equitable relationships and stipulates that music therapists are obligated to "acknowledge and attend carefully to the power imbalance that inevitably exists in the therapeutic relationship" (CAMT, 2022, p. 13).

Therapists must be accountable to their clients, colleagues, and professional associations or regulatory bodies. Accountability involves a wide range of professional responsibilities, including ensuring adequate self-care, acquiring supervision, establishing appropriate boundaries, maintaining confidentiality, and complying with legislation. Principle IV.4 summarizes that music therapists are required to "help develop, promote, and participate in accountability processes and procedures related to their work" (CAMT, 2022, p. 15). Reflexivity, in the form of safe and effective use of self, is an essential component of professional development and ethical practice. Principle II.9 emphasizes the need for music therapists to "continuously evaluate how their experiences, attitudes, culture, beliefs, values, social contexts, individual differences, and stressors influence their interactions with others, and integrate this awareness into their work to support personhood, respect autonomy, and not harm others" (CAMT, 2022, p. 8). As demonstrated by these examples, therapists recognize and may intentionally draw upon their observations, personality, experience, skills, and insight in therapy and allyship spaces (Ahonen, 2018).

Complexity of Allyship

Although the co-authors formulated a coherent framework of allyship and reconciliation, living out these values and practising these skills is often not straightforward. Maintaining awareness of the nuance and plurality of allyship is necessary when engaging with Indigenous clients and colleagues (Gordon et al., 2021; Stephenson, 2024). For example, the co-authors discussed incorporating Indigenous musics into music therapy training and clinical work. However, music is closely tied to Indigenous cultural values and practices and may not be appropriate in all contexts (Sewepagaham et al., 2022; Truasheim, 2014; Williams & Abad, 2005). Furthermore, incorporating traditional music depends on the client's interests, emotional state, and context. Applying the principles of client-centered and client-led practice to working with Indigenous clients means becoming informed through appropriate consultation, but also refraining from making assumptions. Just as no two clients are alike, there is not only one way to be a music therapist or an ally. Allyship should be shaped by each individual, context, and moment in time. Music therapists can draw upon the above framework of allyship while continuing to acknowledge its complexity, which will hopefully inspire meaningful reflection and action.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research was limited by the fact that there are few Indigenous music therapists in Canada. Although each author presented their unique views and experiences, this study could be strengthened by the inclusion of more diverse perspectives. Hopefully, as conversations on reconciliation and Indigenization continue in educational institutions and beyond, music therapy will become a more diverse field. Another limitation was the influence of Kaitlyn's and Elizabeth's perspectives and backgrounds as white, settler researchers. I (Kaitlyn) endeavoured to approach this study as an aspiring ally, and also acknowledge that I have and will make mistakes. I strive to continue to learn, unlearn, and reflect, and I am very thankful to Tiffany, Tatyana, and Tinaya for their honesty and willingness to share their perspectives.

As Indigenous knowledge becomes more recognized and respected in music therapy contexts, future research will have more opportunities to consider diverse perspectives on educational programs, clinical work, social justice advocacy, and professional reform. Other avenues for research might include more specific considerations of allyship in the context of clinical practice, for example, exploring the impact of intentional allyship on rapport development or the therapeutic process. Additionally, the ongoing development of allyship frameworks is recommended and could lead to the creation of a self-administered, reflexive assessment tool for allyship that could illuminate potential areas of growth for practitioners and organizations.

Conclusion

Through this conversation with three Indigenous music therapists, a co-developed framework for allyship emerged that included the elements of *Becoming Informed*, *Advocacy*, *Listening and Openness*, *Collaboration and Relationship*, *Accountability*, and *Reflexivity*. These dimensions of allyship, occurring through *Words and Actions* and in *Individual and Community Contexts*, illuminate steps toward reconciliation. This framework highlights congruences between therapeutic skills and allyship and encourages music therapists to intentionally draw upon clinical skills in their personal and professional lives. As Canadians continue down the path of reconciliation, music therapists can make strides toward becoming stronger allies who listen to, learn from, and elevate the voices of Indigenous clients and colleagues.

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Appendix

Table 1. CAMT Code of Ethics categorized into allyship framework.

Allyship Framework	CAMT Code of Ethics Principles
Becoming Informed	I.7 The MTA will engage in ongoing work to identify, understand, and unlearn any conscious or unconscious biases, and will work to understand how any such biases can and do impact their clinical approach and decision-making, their clients' experience in music therapy, and their therapeutic relationships, with the aim of transforming their practice. Ongoing professional learning and critical self- reflection should be inclusive of, but not limited to: a) work to cultivate an awareness of how helping professions have contributed to historical, political, and sociocultural harms endured by Indigenous peoples; b) work to cultivate an awareness of the past and current harms inflicted by colonization, and to formulate an approach to music therapy that supports reconciliation; I.8 The MTA will engage in ongoing professional learning and critical self-reflection in order to foster cultural safety. The MTA will also, at all times, aim to use culturally respectful and relevant, but not appropriative, music therapy approaches and strategies. II.4 The MTA will provide services to the best of their ability, and within their scope of practice, in all situations. They will only provide services and use music therapy approaches for which they have established competence through pre-professional or advanced training and supervision. II.6 The MTA will remain up to date with current music therapy research and the approaches that music therapy research is informing and validating. The MTA will do this by engaging in continuing education activities and seeking out supervision and peer consultation. IV.5 The MTA will contribute to the discipline of music therapy through the pursuit and sharing of knowledge, and the critical evaluation of self and the discipline, unless such activity conflicts with other basic ethical requirements. Pursuit and sharing of knowledge through any research activities with humans, for example, requires research ethics approval, and presentation of insightful client case material requires client or guardian/substitute decision-maker consent. IV.7 The MTA will participate in and contribute to continuing education and the professional growth of self and colleagues. IV.11 The MTA will work to develop, through participation in ongoing professional learning/continuing education, culturally and contextually sensitive and

	relevant knowledge and strategies, such as anti- racist, anti-ableist, and culturally centred practice, before beginning any work.
Advocacy	I.2 The MTA will acknowledge and affirm clients' rights to self-determination and autonomy, and their right to be integral participants in all decisions that affect them. I.5 The MTA will work to identify and dismantle all forms of discrimination. This includes individual, systemic, and societal discrimination and the internalization of oppressive norms. V.7 The CAMT staff and leadership will create regular opportunities for MTAs to engage in genuine dialogue with the CAMT staff and leadership and for MTAs to provide feedback surrounding organizational decisions and policies and how these intersect with emergent professional and social issues.
Listening and Openness	I.1 The MTA will demonstrate respect for the dignity, value, experience, and knowledge of all people. I.7 see listed under "Becoming Informed" II.6 see listed under "Becoming Informed" IV.6 The MTA will promote the highest standard of practice by soliciting or providing peer consultation as required.
Collaboration and Relationship	I.16 The MTA will approach informed consent as an ongoing process of reaching an agreement to work collaboratively, rather than as a formality or task that ends after having a consent form signed. III.6 The MTA will acknowledge and attend carefully to the power imbalance that inevitably exists in the therapeutic relationship. The MTA will also acknowledge and attend carefully to the power imbalance that exists in relationships such as supervisor/supervisee, employer/employee, and educator/student.
Accountability	II.16 The MTA will take every precaution to protect the confidentiality rights of clients, acknowledging that limits of confidentiality may be established by a variety of sources, including law and institutional regulations. IV.4 The MTA will help develop, promote, and participate in accountability processes and procedures related to their work.
Reflexivity	I.7 see listed under "Becoming Informed" I.8 see listed under "Becoming Informed" II.5 The MTA will continuously monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of services provided. II.9 The MTA will continuously evaluate how their experiences, attitudes, culture, beliefs, values, social contexts, individual differences, and stressors influence their interactions with others, and integrate this awareness into their work to support personhood, respect autonomy, and not harm others. IV.3 The MTA will engage in regular monitoring,

	assessment, and reporting (e.g. through peer review, and in program reviews, case management reviews, and reports of one's own research) of their ethical practices and safeguards IV.5 see listed under "Becoming Informed"