

# Ethnomusicology

with Dr Marcia Ostashewski

## Talking points

### Knowledge

1. What creative practices are used to conduct research at the Centre for Sound Communities (CSC)?
2. What is meant by the term 'settler moves to innocence'?

### Comprehension

3. What is the difference between ethnomusicology and applied ethnomusicology?
4. What is an 'extractivist' mindset, and how can we avoid thinking in one?
5. In what ways can music education reinforce colonial worldviews?

### Application

6. Based on the article and your own knowledge, what inequities continue to affect Indigenous communities in Canada today? How can ethnomusicology help to counteract these inequities?
7. Why do you think that many of the CSC's projects focus on young people?

### Analysis

8. Why do you think the *Songs and Stories* project's first three phases increased in duration? How do you think each prior phase informed the next?
9. Historically, how have researchers interacted with and treated Indigenous communities in Canada? How are Marcia and her collaborators working to counteract these inequitable approaches?
10. What challenges do you think taking a community-engaged arts-based research approach entails that a conventional research approach doesn't encounter? What do you think are the advantages of a participatory approach that make these challenges worthwhile?

### Evaluation

11. What role does music play in your life? To what extent is music a part of your identity?
12. The CSC research assistants, Mark, Leim, Selina, Eric and Leena, all share their advice for young students interested in ethnomusicology. Whose advice resonates with you the most, and why? How could you use this advice to help you in your career?



## Activities

### Activity 1

The music that we hear as we are growing up can influence not only our music tastes and preferences, but also our outlook, our aspirations and our identity. Learning about someone's musical upbringing can help you connect with them and understand them better.

Interview someone who has had a different musical upbringing from your own. This could be someone who grew up in a different time (e.g., a teacher, a parent or a grandparent) or in a different place or culture. Find out about what music they listened to when they were growing up, why they listened to it and how it influenced them. Listen to some of the music together and share your thoughts with each other.

After you have completed the interview, take the time to reflect and write some notes. Consider:

What did you learn about your interviewee? What similarities and differences are there between your musical upbringings? How has your understanding of your interviewee changed as a result of the interview? To what extent did you feel connected to them before and after the interview?



**Top: Left:** ulian Kytasty hosting a Ukrainian music workshop at the Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Parish hall in Unama'ki Cape Breton, October 2022. © Marcia Ostashewski



**Bottom: Left:** Lassana Diabaté playing balafon with Wayn Hamilton and his son Khalifa on djembe at the UNIA African Nova Scotian cultural centre in Unama'ki Cape Breton, October 2014. © Ely Lyonblum, for the CSC



**Middle:** Marcia and Lassana Diabaté with community members gathered for an evening of music and culture to celebrate African Heritage Month at Centre Communautaire Étoile de l'Acadie in Unama'ki Cape Breton, February 2017. © The CSC

**Middle:** Marcia and CSC research team members Laurianne Sylvester, Dean of CBU's Unama'ki College, and Shauna MacDonald, CSC's Associate Director, accepting the SSHRC impact award in 2024 with CBU's President David Dingwall. Canadian Museum of History (Gatineau, Quebec), November 2024. ©SSHRC

**Right:** The opening of a new Ukrainian Museum in Unama'ki Cape Breton with Cape Breton University (CBU) President, David Dingwall. Exhibits were collaboratively researched and created by parish members and Marcia, along with CSC research assistants and co-researchers including archivist Jane Arnold at CBU's Beaton Institute.

**Right:** Marcia, Laurianne and several CBU students at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka in Aotearoa New Zealand with Dr Brian Diettrich, who worked with Marcia, Laurianne, and several Māori and Pasifika faculty, museum curators, artists and practitioners to facilitate their 'Field Course: Indigenous Arts', July 2024. © Marcia Ostashewski



## Activity 2

Explore the tracks and albums available on the [Smithsonian Folkways Recordings website](#). You can filter by genre, geographical location and artist, so it is easy to discover music that you wouldn't normally listen to.

Find an album that resonates with you and that broadens your musical horizons. Listen to the excerpts available on the Smithsonian website and try to find the songs online. While listening to the music, answer the following questions:

How does the music compare to other music that you know?  
 How does the music make you feel?  
 What do you think the music might be expressing?  
 Do you feel that you understand the music, or do you find it challenging?

Now, find out more about the album, the musicians and the place where the music is from. Read the album's 'liner notes' (accessed from its webpage on the Smithsonian website), watch videos about the artist/s or musical practice on YouTube, and research the background behind the music or album. Think about the following questions:

How have the musicians' culture and musical upbringing influenced the music?  
 What instruments or musical techniques have the musicians used to create the album?  
 In what social/cultural/political context was the album created?  
 Why did the artist, the producer or the record label create the album?

Now, share what you learned from this experience with a friend or family member, write a short description, or make a video or audio recording. How did your understanding and appreciation of the album change once you had a better understanding of the artist/s and their musical/social/cultural contexts? Will this experience change how you listen to music in the future?

## More resources

- Visit Marcia's Futurum webpage where you can find a podcast and a PowerPoint exploring her research and career: [futurumcareers.com/how-can-innovative-ethnomusicology-research-foster-diversity-inclusivity-and-equity-in-the-music-industry](https://futurumcareers.com/how-can-innovative-ethnomusicology-research-foster-diversity-inclusivity-and-equity-in-the-music-industry)
- The CSC's YouTube channel hosts videos from many of the projects discussed in Marcia's article: [youtube.com/@soundcommunities](https://youtube.com/@soundcommunities)
- Listen to the CSC's *Sound Stories* podcast to learn more about their research and the work of different team members: [podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/sound-stories/id1813205815](https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/sound-stories/id1813205815)
- Explore the 'music pathways' on the Smithsonian Folkways website to gain a deeper understanding of different musical cultures: [folkways.si.edu/learn](https://folkways.si.edu/learn)