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Inuit student teachers’ agency, positioning and symbolic action: reflections from a qallunaat on music teaching in the Canadian Arctic

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Abstract
This article examines how three Inuit student teachers in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program invested their social and cultural capital during a music course for classroom teachers, which the author taught in the Canadian Arctic. She describes how, through the musical games they invented for use in Inuit classrooms, these students positioned themselves as agents of their own learning and as wielders of power in the context of emergent Inuit education. Three examples of their invented musical games are presented to illustrate these processes. The author concludes that in increasingly culturally diverse teaching contexts it is important to be conscious of our students’ habitus – the embedded history, the unconscious set of ideas, beliefs and emotions that guide how we think, feel and act – in our decisions regarding content, goals and evaluations of achievement.

Key words
habitus, social and cultural capital

Introduction
This article focuses on the musical games that three Inuit student teachers in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) invented during a music course that I taught in the Canadian Arctic. Graduates of the NTEP, offered to Inuit men and women in selected Arctic communities, are certified by the Ministère d’Éducation du Québec to teach Inuit children in Nunavut elementary schools. The programme prepares students for general classroom teaching. The course – Music, Movement & Communication – is designed for classroom teachers with no formal music training. Through an analysis of the content of three games I explore how Annie, Mary and Rose, three women in my course, invested their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993) in a course assignment and thus exercised agency in their learning. I interpret their creations in terms of their symbolic and educational value in an Inuit educational context. The goal is to uncover how, through their actions, they positioned themselves as future key players in the education of Inuit children. I will show that through
their invented games, they also affirmed their musical potentials and capabilities, widened their musical access conceptually and strengthened their professional practice (Burnard, 2005). I will suggest that, in the context of the course, musical outcomes were secondary in importance to the social processes and outcomes. I conclude the article by explaining how my experiences in the North as a qallunaat teacher have been a source of inspiration for the evolution of my own thinking as a teacher educator, and I reflect the general implications of my Northern experiences for music teaching.

**Historical background**

Nunavut was established in 1998 as a geopolitcal territory in the Canadian Arctic. Its Inuit population of about 27,000 is scattered over an area of approximately 2 million square hectares. There are two languages (Inuktut and Inuinaktuun), two writing systems and many dialects. Communities range in size between about 400 to about 6000 and, in smaller communities, members are related to one another through blood, marriage and adoption: everyone belongs to someone. It is not uncommon in NTEP classes to find that all the students are related. After generations of cultural suppression by government and church policies and practices, Nunavut schools – and other schools serving indigenous populations – are currently struggling to decolonize the curriculum. As Battiste (2004) states, ‘it is in the interest of . . . society at large, to . . . entertain the idea that indigenous knowledge is important and a transformative knowledge’ (p. 14). The geopolitical, historical and cultural contexts of Nunavut require that teachers in Nunavut schools shape their teaching approaches in culturally appropriate ways. The mission statement of the Nunavut Department of Education (2005) reflects on this aim:

> Education provides the path and guides the life-long learning journey of Nunavummiut by providing excellence in education and training so that Nunavummiut benefit from their past and create their own future for a productive, prosperous society.

The task of decolonization presents Inuit – and qallunaat – educators with many questions. How might Inuit children, living in remote areas with severe climate conditions, be prepared for modern life while at the same time affirming and reclaiming traditional values? How might Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or IQ – traditional Inuit knowledge – be preserved and accommodated to new social realities? How might Inuit students be guided through an educational system that is organized around qallunaat educational traditions, values, goals, conceptions of knowledge and pedagogies? What should the content be, who should teach it and how should it be taught? How should students’ learning be evaluated? Whose cultural and social capital should be invested in the curriculum and who should make these decisions? What would be considered authentic music-making in such a context, and authentic by whose definition and by what criteria? These and other questions were in my mind as I prepared to teach in the Arctic.

Curriculum development for Inuit schools and for Nunavut Arctic College is an urgent, but slow and cautious, process. The Nunavut Department of Education’s Teaching & Learning Centre states that reference books are to accompany teaching units on: ‘Walrus, Fish, Land, Water, Ice & Snow, Sewing, Legends’ (Nunavut Department of Education, Teaching & Learning Centre, 2004).

Curriculum developers are striving to produce culturally relevant texts, lessons and programmes in all subject areas for Nunavut schools; as the qallunaat world rapidly encroaches through communications technology and the availability of air travel, this is an
enormous challenge. Student teachers in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program are Inuit, but teachers in the NTEP program are qallunaat and the turnover rate among these teachers tends to be high. Inuit adults transmit traditional and qallunaat musical forms and genres in informal and ritual settings. Sunday-school songs, hymns and square-dance music are well known in Nunavut, but it is probably safe to say that qallunaat have little familiarity with traditional Inuit musical practices. Can traditional Inuit musical boundaries be expanded in a qallunaat-derived model of teacher education? How can Inuit teachers position themselves as agents and collaborators in the production of new and hybrid musical activities that will be culturally meaningful for children in Nunavut classrooms? What might such activities look like? Could they be also suitable for southern, urban classrooms so that qallunaat children might become familiar with Inuit culture through the performance of Inuit-invented musical games and other musical activities?

It is obvious that Inuit teachers must be an essential resource in the processes of benefiting from the past and creating their own future ‘for a productive, prosperous society’. What could Inuit student teachers contribute to the process of decolonizing the music curriculum they will be teaching to Inuit children in the years to come? Inuit teachers, like Annie, Mary and Rose, are critical guides in the ‘life-long learning journey’ of Inuit children. They are expected to exercise agency in the sociocultural environments of Inuit education.

## Conceptual perspective

Critical theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1993) offers a framework for interpreting acts of agency in particular social and cultural contexts. Bourdieu explains that our positionings mediate our identity, our agency and our learning within particular sociocultural environments. Our bodies, according to Bourdieu, are the repositories and contested ground of the thoughts, voices and identities that comprise our *habitus* – our embedded history, the unconscious set of ideas, beliefs and emotions that govern how we think, feel and act. Mauss (1975) explains that *habitus* denotes a set of dispositions that are inscribed in the body, shape its habits and skills, and transmit the effects of social power into the person. *Habitus* thus contains within it the attributes of both power and skill, shapes our ways of being in the world and, in so doing, shapes our world. Our *habitus* is constituted in practice within structured systems of social relations such as the family, and social institutions such as workplaces, schools and classrooms. *Habitus* influences our sense of investment and social direction, our positions within a system of social relations. Accumulated *habitus* conditions our access to cultural tools and shapes how we position ourselves with respect to these tools. As a critical theory construct, *habitus* is said to condition the practices we develop in relation to the social privilege and inequalities that accompany these practices.

Social and cultural capital are key conceptual terms in Bourdieu’s critical social theory. Social capital refers to the network of social resources to which individuals have access; cultural capital may be conceptualized as the totality of meaningful resources that are available to the individual. Individuals may invest this capital in their learning environments when given opportunities to do so (Lee, 2005). Northern classrooms, as sites of decolonization, represent a unique convergence of vastly different bodies of social and cultural capital existing in tension with one another. A look at conceptual terms in music offers insight into these tensions.

Traditions and practices in music education evolve from the social and cultural capital that students and their teachers bring to the learning environment, which is itself constructed out of an embedded history in particular contexts of time and place. For
instance, ‘music’ and ‘musicianship’ are socially constructed terms that enable us to enter into dialogue with one another because we assume that we have shared understandings about what these terms might mean. When I hear or use words such as ‘music,’ ‘musicianship’, ‘music education’, ‘musical goals’, ‘song’ and ‘singing’, I am reminded of my experiences in the Canadian North. These experiences cause me to pause, and to remember that these are contested terms that refer to culture-specific practices that do not necessarily transfer in a one-to-one correspondence to the practices of other cultures. katajjait refers to an Inuit traditional practice that involves the disciplined production of rhythmic patterns of sound, performed in two-part canon, by means of a sophisticated manipulation of the breath and vocal apparatus. Many of these patterns are inspired by environmental sounds such as the sound of sled dogs running on the snow. As English speakers we call katajjait ‘throat singing’ and we refer to the patterns of sound that are produced as ‘songs’ because we do not have an equivalent word for katajjait. However, if we were to present katajjait to a qallunaat audience expecting to hear songs and singing, they might be surprised. When we work in cultures different from the ones we are familiar with, we need to be sensitive to alternative conceptions, experiences, backgrounds, expectations – in short, to the habitus of those with whom we interact. When we work with colonized populations we need to pay particular attention to the ways in which these populations reclaim, modify and adapt old and current practices to suit their educational purposes (e.g. Mans, 2000). Inuit student teachers taught me about reclaiming, modifying and adapting old and current practices and their relevance to education. Bourdieu’s theory of practice offers a way of understanding individuals’ relations or positions within particular sociocultural settings and within the larger context of society. Bourdieu focuses our attention on how power is conserved and converted through access to cultural tools and opportunities for self-authoring within multiple systems of social relations. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the music classroom can be viewed as a field of cultural production – a sociocultural setting, or arena within the larger, nested social contexts (Maguire, 1994) of schools, communities, political institutions and so forth. In the field of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, students may be conceptualized as having access to cultural tools, and social resources, as investors of social and cultural capital derived from their embedded history. They may also be viewed as positioning themselves as agents of their own learning in the learning environment, and their decisions and behaviours may be interpreted as symbolic actions reflecting their sociocultural realities. Annie, Mary and Rose invested their social and cultural capital through their inventions of culture-specific, culturally relevant musical activities.

Context

The long-term goal of the NTEP is to have more certified Inuit teachers teaching Inuit children, to depend less heavily on importing non-Inuit teaching staff. Nunavut schools are populated almost entirely by Inuit children who are supposed to receive instruction in Inuktitut – which uses a syllabic writing system – or, depending upon the region, Inuinaktuun. After Grade 3 (9 years of age), teaching in English usually begins. Qallunaat teachers, brought in from the ‘South’, may have little knowledge of Inuit cultures or languages, and their commitment to the North is often short-term, due to unmet expectations, personal, social or other reasons (Tompkins, 1988). Some of the Inuit student teachers in the three communities where I taught were already part-way through the certification programme and were employed as teachers’ aides or as specialists in language or Inuit traditional knowledge (IQ).
The course, comprised of an intensive 3-week instruction in music, movement and communication, is one that I have taught many times at McGill University to mostly urban qallunaat students enrolled in teacher education programmes. Based on Dalcroze eurhythmics, the aim is to develop musical perception, using the body-as-instrument in structured and improvised activities, individual and group work, singing and movement. During the three teaching contracts I was able to observe the positionings, agency and symbolic actions of 19 students in the programme.

The communities in which I taught are isolated from Canadian urban centres and from one another by great distances, absence of roads, and severe weather conditions for much of the year. Travel today is mostly by small plane and is always at the mercy of weather conditions. Days can go by when nothing can move in or out of the community. No roads link the communities. Here there are no trees, the ground is stony and dry, and because permafrost is about six inches below the ground, all buildings are constructed on pylons and are set above the surface of the ground. Most building materials are shipped in from the south, and arrive in the once-per-year sailing. Here, the salt sea freezes to depths as much as 8 feet. Here, in these Northern landscapes, is where I had a sense of how recently some Inuit had come into contact with Europeans. A middle-aged Inuit man who had spent his early years in a family camp on a remote part of Sanikiluaq told me, ‘When I was young I thought we were the only people in the world’. A dinner companion who is my age told me that when she was young she lived in an iglu. A young singer related that her mother moved into a house only at the age of 12.

As a qallunaat teacher I was aware of my ‘outsider’ status. A major challenge for me was to find ways of making the course worthwhile for the students. With Burnard (2005), Elliott (1995), and others, I am a proponent of praxial music education. I looked for musical activities we could ‘do’ that students would find engaging. As I looked through the repertoires of contents and pedagogies that I draw on in my teaching at McGill, I became increasingly aware that many of the images and references contained in the songs and activities reflected my habitus. Much of my collection seemed to have little relevance to the North. Consider, for instance, the song ‘A Hunting We Will Go’ in which the fox gets away; this is an unthinkable outcome for an Inuit child (Russell, 2006). Moreover, it was clear that some of the activities that worked well with my large classes at McGill would be less successful with the small classes (four, eight and seven students, respectively) in the North. Dancing and other types of movement, singing games, small percussion, etc. seemed most appropriate for the context. I chose the materials carefully and hoped to find out what would and what would not be well received. I approached the ‘field’ with an ethnographic posture (Wolcott, 1992), an open mind, ears ready to listen in the hope that I would learn what the students would find worth doing. I hoped to be able to build on that knowledge.

**Investing social and cultural capital**

The student teachers shared a common habitus. Indeed, in two of the course locations all students were related to one another by blood, marriage or other social customs such as adoption. They were familiar with and enjoyed qallunaat music such as hymns, Sunday-school songs, country and western, as well as Inuit traditional genres such as lullabies, juggling and counting songs, string games, and the more personal pisiq and ayaya song stories (Joyce, 2005). I noticed that clapping games, circle games, partner games that involved singing or rhythmic chanting accompanied by actions were among the activities that elicited a lively response from the students. I also noted that these types of activities fitted well with the traditional Inuit games and dances that the students taught to the class.
One of the assignments I gave asked students to ‘create a musical activity based on something that we have done in class. Use visual images, words, ideas, instruments, movements, songs, chants or other resources in ways that are appropriate to Inuit traditions and experiences.’ They were then required to write up the activity as a lesson, teach it to their classmates, and circulate copies of the lesson to their peers to add to their growing collection of music resources. The assignment aimed to give the students experience working with different musical ideas, using their skills to teach a new musical activity; it was also an opportunity to use traditional cultural knowledge in perhaps new ways.

Some of the submissions were highly inventive, others less so. A thematic analysis of the lyrics they borrowed, modified or invented, and of the actions and stories that the actions told revealed an emphasis on ‘the land’. More specifically, the focus was on hunting, fishing and camping. That is, the games portrayed historically embedded, culturally situated, socially relevant traditions and practices. Where there were lyrics, they were to be sung and chanted in Inuktitut, or with rhythmic nonsense syllables. They wrote their descriptions of the activities in syllabics, in roman orthography transliterated to Inuktitut or Inuinaktuun, and in English. In the next section are the activities that Annie, Mary and Rose invented, which I interpret as exemplars of land-based musical activities – or products from the field of cultural production.

Three products from the field of cultural production

**Annie’s camping trip**

Annie was surrounded by many relatives and knew everyone in the village where she has always lived. ‘I can’t imagine living anywhere else,’ she told me. Calm, diligent and confident, she contributed much to the positive atmosphere in the class. When she, along with every other family in the village, received her share of fresh whale meat brought in by hunters one evening, she invited me to watch how she processed it. ‘I’m going to smoke the whale,’ she said. ‘You can bring your camera.’ I helped her gather dry twigs to make a smoky fire to dry the salted strips of the rich red meat. Annie and other village women, bundled up against the relentless Arctic wind, took turns, keeping watch over the meat, their presence discouraging hungry gulls and foxes. Tea and conversation helped to pass the time. Once fully dried, the whale meat would be a treat for picnics and a staple for a camping trip.

Annie’s activity – Going Camping – was an enactment of getting ready for camping; the musical component she chose to use was tempo, and the device, tempo change. Her lesson asked students to perform a sequence of movements portraying the various steps involved: first, showing JOY! [sic] at the decision to go camping; then, shopping for supplies, packing the four-wheel Honda, driving to the camp site, breaking for ‘tea’, etc. Using a hand drum to produce a steady beat, Annie gave the cues for changing to the next set of movements with sudden, dramatic changes of tempo. Students were required to listen to the drum, to recognize the change of tempo and to remember the sequence of movements.

By means of a sequence of enacted symbolic actions, the students represented Inuit traditional activities that have value beyond that of mere recreation. Used in a school setting the activity would remind Inuit children of the ‘packing-to-go-camping’ steps and the joy of going out on the land; the game would reinforce the value of this traditional activity. Annie invested her social and cultural capital in the production of a culturally relevant curricular activity, and in doing so, positioned herself as a bearer of Inuit traditional knowledge (IQ).
Mary and the seal

Mary, a young, single woman, contributed a sense of playfulness to the class. Her mother made delicious bannock for our class picnic, which took place in summer in a selected spot ‘on the land.’ Driving across the tundra on an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) we were protected from the fierce Arctic wind by parkas, long underwear, sweaters, mitts and hats. Seated on the rocky ground we feasted on traditional foods – smoked whale, goose, muktuk – and qallunaat food; wiener, pork chops, potatoes and carrots.

Mary chose to focus on the seal hunt. She invented a sequence of verses, the lyrics of which described the movements that are involved in a seal hunt: looking for the seal, pointing, shooting, pulling the seal out of the water, etc. Alternating with each descriptive verse was a two-line, repeated set of nonsense syllables, chanted rhythmically; this resulted in a rondo form. One student, designated as the seal, imitated the animal’s movements. The activity finished with students pretending to cut up the meat and eat it, rubbing their tummies to show enjoyment of the meat. Investing her traditional cultural knowledge in a game that replicated the seal hunt with symbolic actions, Mary affirmed the importance of hunting in Inuit culture. In the written part of the assignment Mary noted that the activity could support two other important areas of the curriculum: the development of fine motor skills and ‘knowledge of hunting skill’ – two skills essential for survival on the sea ice in winter.

It is appropriate to mention here that the relationship between Inuit and seals is said to be a spiritual one (Pelly, 2001). Certainly in the not-so-distant past, and, at times, in the present also, the ability to kill a seal could mean the difference between life and death for a hunter and his family group that depends on his skill. The seal also figures prominently in Inuit art and legend. A poem by Tumasi Quissa (1988, p. 253) explains the importance of the seal:

Come to Our Place Since You Got a Seal

Come to our place, we will eat, we will eat, we will eat.  
If I eat alone, I will not eat well.  
I remember when we use [sic] to be hungry and wanted bannock.  
Wild meat was always scarce, always, always, always.  
I remember seal hunting, searching for our catch,  
Not ever finding our search for wild meat.  
Come to our place, come.  
Come to our place, we will eat, we will eat, we will eat.  
If I eat alone, I will not eat well.

Quissa’s poem keeps alive the memory of times of near-starvation; Mary positioned herself as a keeper of memory through symbolic actions in a context of play.

Rose and the polar bear

Rose focused on the polar bear, a powerful and dangerous animal much respected by Inuit for its capacity to cause harm to humans. Rose invented new lyrics to the tune of ‘London Bridge is Falling Down’. Like Mary’s seal hunt game, each verse describes a different stage of the hunt for the polar bear. The game was played like this: the class was divided into two groups, the hunters and the polar bears. Students acted out the movements of the hunt. The sequence of steps – getting up, getting dressed, packing the ski-doo, searching for a bear, loading the rifle, shooting at the bear, missing the bear, and so forth. Excitement occurred when the hunters missed; the bears chased the hunters, who scrambled for safety.
Once the hunt was successful, the hunters celebrated with a drum dance, a traditional way of celebrating important events. Rose’s last verse ‘I’m dancing, dancing because I killed my first kill of a Polar Bear’ expresses the great joy derived from the successful hunt.

The polar bear figures prominently in Inuit art, especially in carvings, tapestries and prints. In Rose’s school lobby a stuffed polar bear stands as a sentinel by the main entrance, serving as an ever-present reminder of its size and power. It also has economic value: some women process polar bear skins for sale to qallunaat customers, and Inuit hunters earn money by taking tourists on polar bear expeditions for photographing or hunting. Like Annie and Mary, Rose invested her social and cultural capital in the production of a culturally relevant activity that involved singing and musical form. Thus Rose also positioned herself as an agent of cultural knowledge production.

Reflecting on Northern experience

I did not anticipate the activities that the students invented, although it should not have been surprising, given the multiple cues in the ‘field of cultural production’. By Brody’s (2000) definition, Annie, Mary and Rose are inheritors and bearers of the traditions of an Arctic nomadic hunting culture. At the same time, as the future providers of pathways to learning for Inuit schools, these student teachers were, through the design of their musical activities, engaged in a life-long process of negotiating their Inuit identities in a post-industrial model of schooling that is at odds with indigenous ways of teaching and learning. As such, they are in a unique position between Inuit and qallunaat cultures – two fundamentally different cultures in terms of history, social organization, relations with the land and its living creatures. Embedded history, the source of Inuit habitus is apparent in the artifacts, images, legends, foods, architecture, behaviours and personal stories that abound in Nunavut. School lobbies, libraries and other public spaces are adorned with pelts, knives, kayaks, kamiks, and other cultural artifacts that are daily reminders of the economic, social, cultural and symbolic importance of hunting. Inuit art, including carvings of stone, antler and bone, prints and tapestries, is well known to art collectors around the world. Moreover, art is practised widely by ordinary folk, not only by those labeled as ‘artists’. It was not uncommon for someone to approach me on the street or in a restaurant, hand outstretched offering for sale a creation made from stone or bone. These cultural products depict aspects of hunting, camping, fishing, family life on the land, the lone hunter on the frozen sea, poised motionlessly over a seal’s breathing hole. Art works in which animal and human figures merge into one reveal the spiritual connection of Inuit to the land.

The games reveal how habitus was played out in a music course. They illustrate how the student teachers, as agents, acted out aspects of traditional Inuit culture. Like the activities they represent, the games also depended for success on collaboration and common bodies of cultural knowledge and skills. Inuit student teachers, like the ones portrayed here, have the obligation to position themselves as agents in the transmission of knowledge and values in their communities. Annie, Mary and Rose reinforced traditional Inuit knowledge (IQ) through the manipulation of musical concepts of tempo, rhythm and the use of invented lyrics to tell a story.

Using Bourdieu’s critical theory as a lens, it is also possible to interpret Annie’s, Mary’s and Rose’s musical activities as symbolic acts. Their musical games reflected their sense of their positions within the system of Inuit social relations, specifically the institution of formal schooling. They positioned themselves in the assignment as agents in their own learning, combining traditional knowledge with knowledge gained in the course. The course, given
in the context of the NTEP and all that NTEP strives to achieve, provided the ‘space’ (Addo, 2001), or, in Bourdieuian terms, the field of production to do this work.

Upon reflection, I believe that the musical value of these activities was subsidiary to their social and cultural value. The apparent satisfaction that the students derived from performing the activities was due less to the musical content, and more to the excitement of participating in the simulation of activities that are communal, often involve risk, and are the essence of Inuit mythology.

**What is to be learned?**

My experience in and of the North reminds me that my assumptions about music and music education, and those of my urban students, are situated in particular contexts of time, place and purpose. Neither music nor music teaching is culturally neutral; I am reminded that our stated aims in music teacher education should always be framed by our understanding that what we do is culturally situated. Alternative world views are more readily available when musical practices are understood in relation to their underlying traditions and the values these traditions represent. The activities described here would almost certainly provoke a negative reaction among many of my urban student teachers who have been raised on Disney films and have no experience of what it means to live a hunting culture. This type of encounter with ‘difference’, I think, can be a positive thing, a challenge to our students and ourselves to move beyond our comfort zones. Musical games such as the ones described here provide an opportunity to present our students with alternative world views, to understand that we share a world that differs vastly from ours.

By giving students the space to express what is meaningful to them in terms of their cultural values and social traditions, we invite them to position themselves as agents of their learning. My sense is that when we are able to create safe spaces where a variety of voices — especially those who are marginalized — can be heard in a non-judgmental way, our students will create learning activities that are meaningful to them. These activities can also become meaningful to others in the class who do not share the habitus of their colleagues. At the very least the symbolic meanings of such activities can be acknowledged, even if not embraced.

Elliott (1995) notes that what differs ‘between and among music education programs is kinds and levels of musical challenges inherent in the curriculum materials chosen for (and, perhaps, with the co-operation of) [sic] one’s own students’ (p. 260). Teacher–student collaboration in the making and adapting of curricular materials has a political dimension involving issues of agency and positioning, and we need always to remember this. Such collaboration is particularly worth considering in the context of Inuit education in the Canadian North. Wherever decolonization processes are under way, curriculum must be co-constructed. When curriculum builds upon the kinds of experiences that students have identified as meaningful, there is potential for increasing their awareness of their own sociocultural positionings. Many educators explore ways of providing learning environments that students will find worth investing in. The assumption is that students who feel that they have agency are likely to engage more fully with the subject matter. Authentic positioning, agency and symbolic action can be discerned by analyzing the thematic content of students’ creations.

**Learning from experience**

My experience in the North has led me to become much more flexible towards the invented activities of my urban students, especially the generalist students who may have had little or
no formal experience with music. I am now much less concerned with meeting prescribed objectives, standardized criteria for performance and emphasis on accuracy. I am now much more apt to encourage exploration and risk-taking, more likely to follow student-initiated, unexpected paths, which can lead to new and sometimes delightful insights. I am now more likely to be satisfied to see students position themselves as agents of their own learning, building on what they know and value, acquiring confidence as owners of their productions which, at times, are nothing short of brilliant.

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Notes

1. For details about the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, which is offered through McGill University, visit: www.education.mcgill.ca/ofnie/history.html
2. These names are pseudonyms.
3. I capitalize North and Northern to indicate that it refers to more than a location on the globe; it is a frame of mind.
4. Note that Inuit (literally, ‘the people’) and qallunaat (non-Inuit people) are two key terms that will be used here.
5. For additional readings pertaining to making contents and pedagogies more culturally relevant, see, for example, Ado-Poku, S. (2005); Battiste (2004); Kanonhsonni/Hill & Stairs (2002); McConaghy (2000); Orr, San Salom/Paul, & Kelusilev/Paul (2002); Russell (2006); Tompkins (1988); Tuhiiwai-Smith (1999).
6. Campbell et al. (2005) present a range of perspectives on cross-cultural music teaching.
7. For further discussion of some culture-specific music practices in Nunavut see Russell (2004).
8. Known also as The Belcher Islands.
9. A typical qallunaat thing to do.
10. Although it would have been useful to try some of these activities with local school children, circumstances allowed us to do this only in a very limited way.
11. When Inuit groups go camping, fishing and hunting, they say they are going out ‘on the land’.
12. Mary explained that the nonsense syllables were like ‘gooly gooly’ in ‘A Ram Sam Sam’, a song with actions that I taught the class.
13. The legend of Sedna explains how seals and other sea creatures came into existence. Versions of the legend can be found by ‘googling’ Sedna on the Internet.
14. A kamik is a warm, hand-sewn, weather-proof boot made from animal pelts and duffel, often decorated with beads or embroidery.

References


Joan Russell is Assistant Professor and Director of Music Education at McGill University where she ‘does’ music with student teachers in the music specialist and generalist programmes, teaches graduate courses in the arts in education and supervises MA and doctoral students. She has presented research papers, workshops and a keynote address at conferences in Canada, the United States, Norway, Cuba and Brazil. She has published articles and book chapters in English and Portuguese. She is a member of several editorial boards, is a reviewer for numerous journals and book publishers, and was co-editor of the *Arts & Learning Research Journal* from 2001–04. Her reflections on her experiences as a musician, researcher and teacher in various locations in the Fiji Islands, Cuba and the Arctic have contributed to her interest in culturally relevant curriculum, community music, teacher agency, and critical multiculturalism. She was recently nominated for the Principal’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching at McGill.

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Abstracts

Les professeurs élèves Inuit, agencement, positionnement et action symbolique: réflexions d’un qallunaat ou l’enseignement musical dans l’arctique canadien

L’article examine comment Annie, Mary et Rose, trois professeurs étudiants de musique Inuit dans le programme de formation des professeurs Nunavut, ont investi leur capital social et culturel pendant un cours de musique pour les professeurs en classe pour lesquels l’auteur a enseigné dans l’arctique canadien. L’auteur décrit comment, par les jeux musicaux qu’elles ont inventé en classe Inuit, ces étudiantes se positionnaient comme agents de leurs propres apprentissages et exerçaient leur pouvoir dans le contexte de l’éducation émergente d’Inuit. Trois exemples de leurs jeux musicaux inventés sont présentés pour illustrer ces processus. Dans les contextes d’enseignement de plus en plus diversifiés culturellement, il est important d’être conscient de l’histoire des habitudes, de l’ensemble des idées de la croyance et des émotions inconscientes de nos étudiants ainsi que notre façon de penser, sentir et agir – dans nos décisions concernant le contenu, les buts et les évaluations de la réalisation.

Unterrichtende Inuitstudenten’s Vermittlung, Standpunkte und symbolische Handlungen: Ueberlegungen zu einem qallunaat bezüglich Musikunterricht in der Kanadischen Arktis


Agencia, posicionamiento y acción simbólica de los estudiantes de magisterio inuit: Reflexiones de un qallunaat sobre la enseñanza musical en el Ártico canadiense

Este artículo examina cómo tres estudiantes de magisterio inuit en el Programa de Formación del Profesorado de Nunavut utilizaron su capital social y cultural durante un curso de música para maestros generalistas que impartió en el Ártico canadiense. Describo cómo, mediante los juegos musicales que inventaron para ser usados en aulas inuit, estos estudiantes se posicionaron como agentes de su propio aprendizaje y como personas influyentes dentro del contexto de la emergente educación inuit. Para ilustrar estos procesos se presentan tres ejemplos de los juegos musicales que inventaron. Concluyo que en contextos educativos crecientemente diversos culturalmente es necesario ser consciente de los habitus de nuestros estudiantes – la historia personal, el conjunto inconsciente de ideas, creencias y emociones que guían cómo pensamos, sentimos y actuamos – al tomar decisiones sobre contenidos, metas y evaluación de logros.