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# **All My Relations: Celebrating Canada's Indigenous Peoples**

Music Alive Program TEACHER GUIDE

Written by Sherryl Sewepagaham



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***Author’s Note:*** The traditional First Nations teachings and historical content contained in this document are representative of teachings obtained through various Cree elders, drum teachers, and family members. They do not represent all First Nations or indigenous peoples throughout Canada. The teachings vary within families, communities, and nations, but share commonalities on a general level.

**Cover photo:** A dancer with the Great Plains dance company (Saskatchewan) performers in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre’s Prairie Scene festival (Photo Credit: Paul Dickie)

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# Table of Contents

## First Nations People

Background and History.....	2
First Nations Music.....	3
The Courting Flute Story.....	5
Lessons and Activities.....	6
Magpie’s Laughter (grades 4-9).....	6
Being a Song Holder (grades 4-6).....	8
Nisakihaw (Love Song) (grades K-6).....	10
Sheet music: “Nisakihaw (Love Song)”.....	11
Heart of the Water Song (grades 6-12).....	12
Sheet music: “Heart of the Water Song”.....	13

## The Métis People of Canada

Métis People.....	14
Métis Symbols.....	14
Métis Music and Dance.....	15
John Arcand – The Métis Waltz (grades 3-6).....	17
Métis Sing-Along Songs (grades 4-9).....	19

## Residential Schools in Canada

Rita Joe’s “I Lost My Talk” (grades 4-6).....	21
Poetry Analysis (grades 7-12).....	23
Poem: “I Lost My Talk”.....	25
Sheet music: “I Lost My Talk”.....	26
A Survivor’s Story of Indian Residential Schools.....	28
Class Book Project (grades 7-12).....	29
Story: “They Called Her Ikwîwak”.....	31
Art Activity (grades 7-12).....	32
KWL chart.....	34
Poem: “I Cried Dry Tears”.....	35

## Rhythmic Fun

Music Alive Song Activity (grades 4-6).....	36
Sheet music: “Music Alive”.....	37
Music Alive Speech & Body Ostinato.....	38
Vocal Improvisation (grades 4-12).....	39
Raps ‘n Rhymes – Writing a Rap Song (grades 9-12).....	42
Raps ‘n Rhymes for Younger Grades (grades 4-6).....	45

About the Author: Sherryl Sewepagaham.....	47
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# **First Nations People**

## **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

### **Families Working Together**

First Nations people harvested food and traditional medicines from the earth, which they called Mother Earth, in the fall. They picked various berries and mint for food and took traditional plants like tobacco, fungus, sage, sweetgrass, pine, and cedar for medicines. Different plants and roots were used for different ailments and sicknesses. For instance, “rat root,” also called muskrat’s food, grows in the water and is a common medicine that is still used today for a cold, a cough, a sore tooth, or a sore throat. Whatever was taken from Mother Earth was replaced by laying down tobacco in its place as an offering of thanks and gratitude.

### **Parents’ Roles**

All family members helped in hunting and harvesting as a part of survival. Men and older boys would hunt, trap, and fish, and the women and older girls would gather berries, mint, wild rice, and wild carrots and onions. The men and boys would travel and hunt farther away from the camp, and the women and girls would gather closer to the camp. The mothers would take the babies along in moss bags carried on their backs as they travelled and made baby swings out of rope made from hide when stopped at their gathering places. Everyone worked together to help in everyday chores and to prepare for the winter.

### **Children’s Roles**

The boys started practicing their hunting skills by hunting little animals such as rabbits, squirrels, and prairie chickens with bows and arrows and slingshots. The girls made dolls out of straw and learned to sew doll clothes. They also learned how to cook. In the spring when there was a lot of water around the camps, the children would dig little ditches to create streams to divert the water away from the camp. They would be rewarded with tiny carved canoes, and the children would put pebbles inside and watch them float down their streams. Boredom was not a part of everyday living on the land because there was always something to do.

### **Grandparents’ Roles**

In the winter months, the grandparents told legends to the children before bed. The legends were similar to boogeyman legends but each of the legends had a lesson to teach about respecting and interacting with each other. Disciplining of children was done through these legends, to teach, about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

### **Animal Uses**

First Nations people hunted moose, deer, caribou, buffalo, and elk in the fall. When they killed an animal, they thanked the animal’s spirit for giving up its life to feed the people. The animal meat would be cut up to make dry meat and pemmican (pemmican is pounded dry meat mixed with berries and animal fat). Pemmican provided food in the long winter months and could be stored for long periods of time when food was scarce. Fats were an important part of the diet for cooking. Tanned moose hides were used for clothing and other items such as moccasins, mittens, vests, drums, etc. The rawhides were used for drums and rattles. Rawhides could be sewn together to make tipi shelters before canvas was used. Bear hides were used as blankets or rugs on the tipi floor. Rabbit skins were used as liners inside moccasins, and newborn babies were wrapped in

rabbit skin to keep them warm. Muskeg moss was collected and dried to use inside of babies' moss bags, to prevent skin rashes. No part of the animal was wasted; every part was used. For example, the antlers were made into gun racks or used for hanging jackets, pots, pans, etc. They used the leg bones for tools such as scrapers and knives.

When a young boy successfully hunted his first moose, there was a large feast to celebrate his accomplishment, because this meant food in the winter, clothing to keep warm, and new tools for survival.

### **Traditional Games**

Traditional games were created to play for enjoyment and to pass the time after the work was done. Adults, children, and even visitors played together.

## **FIRST NATIONS MUSIC**

### **Instruments**

Hand drums, powwow drums, log and box drums, water drums, and rattles/shakers are used in First Nations music across Canada. Animal skins from moose, deer, caribou, elk or buffalo are used in making hand drums, depending on which animals inhabit the region. The drum's appearance and construction varies for each nation, but the common elements are animal hides, wooden frames of various wood types, and sinew or cut hide to make a long leather piece for tying the hide together over the frame or to bind the skin to the frame.

The stomach of the animal is sometimes used in making the rattles, as the skin is thinner. Rattles are filled with tiny pebbles, dried corn, rice, or beads to create the shaker sound once the skins are dried. Traditional drum and rattle instruments are used when singing songs. They are also used for celebrations, games, ceremonies, and in prayer.

To see various images of drums on the internet, type in "Cree hide drums," "Iroquois water drums," or "powwow drums" in the search box.

### **Song Varieties**

The structure and use of the drums varies across the many First Nations groups across Canada. Coast Salish songs in the west are considerably different from M'ikmaq songs of the east; Cree songs are different from Blackfoot songs; northern songs are different from southern songs. Even within a single First Nation, traditional drum songs are different from contemporary drum songs; rattle songs are different from drum songs; sacred and ceremonial songs are different from social and dance songs; round dance songs are different from powwow songs; and hand game songs are different from stick game songs. It is important to know that the songs vary in the melodies, meanings, purposes, chants, and rhythms for each nation, but each song is very important to the nation, family, or individual.

### **Oral Tradition**

Favourite and special songs can be shared over many tribes and nations. Songs can be passed down through the generations and to family members through the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> Some songs are even

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<sup>1</sup> **Oral tradition** is the passing on of traditional knowledge orally (without written language). Oral tradition has long been used to share songs, stories and legends, hunting practices, language, and knowledge of medicine gathering, traditional cooking, etc. The learner observes and listens to what is being said and taught and follows along in the learning process. Once the knowledge is learned, the learner has earned that knowledge and can pass it onto others through the same process.

known to be over 400 years old! Modern technology allows social and traditional songs to be learned quickly, even across great distances. Sacred songs stay within the appropriate ceremonies and are rarely shared with outsiders or recorded.

When songs are sung, it is important to acknowledge where they come from and, if known, what is their history and background. Songs that are recorded on CD or written in musical notation are meant to be shared with others who want to sing them, but it is still respectful to acknowledge who or where the song each song comes from.

### **Song Holders**

Some people are known to be song holders and have had many old songs passed onto them by Elders and senior song holders. They are given the task of preserving, creating, and sharing songs with others, especially the younger generation. They know which social songs to share and which to keep sacred for special ceremonies. The song holders can pass them along at their own will. When others are interested in learning specific songs from the song keepers, they go to them and follow the protocol<sup>2</sup> of requesting a song. Song holders can be as young as teenagers, as long as they have earned and have been given the right to that title by the community. The protocol varies within each tribe across Canada, and the request can be granted or denied. This decision is respected, and the reason behind each decision depends on the song holder. (*See lesson plan on Song Holders*).

### **Song Types**

Songs are classified into various categories. They can be sacred or social and can also be further classified as ceremonial, honouring, prayer, dance, celebration, flute, etc. Each song has a purpose and is important to the tribe, nation, family or individual. This is because when you are singing these songs, you are preserving the song – others can hear it and learn it – and the essence of the language or chant style with the drum or rattle is shared. It is said the spirit of the people's history or family lines are within those songs. Some people can identify the general area where a traditional song comes from geographically, based on the characteristics of that song.

### **Flute Songs** (as interpreted by Amanda Lamote, Upper Nicola First Nation, BC)

The flute is a form of prayer through melody. When one plays the flute, it's often an interpretation of how the player is feeling. For example, when a flute player is asked to play for an event, in the final song, the flute player will play a song for the people travelling home. He/she will think of the people on their journey, and the flute is played like a prayer so that people will arrive safe and sound. Like the traditional hide drum, the flute is played to celebrate First Nations people and culture. Songs are played from the heart and can be improvised in the moment as well as composed. A flute player takes care of the flute as one takes care of the drum, as both flute and drum are more special than ordinary objects. The flute is treated with care, and the player is careful that it doesn't get wet, dirty, cold, or damaged. It is often kept in a cloth bag or a wooden container.

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<sup>2</sup> **Protocol** describes the appropriate and suggested procedure to follow when knowledge is requested from an Elder or another person who possesses a great deal of knowledge in the community. When someone requests the teaching (song, prayer, ceremony) from the Elder or knowledge keeper, gifts are given in thanks and in exchange for the teaching. Gifts can include a pouch of loose tobacco, a blanket, a meter of broadcloth, a braid of sweetgrass, something handmade, etc. It is important and respectful to ask the person directly beforehand what protocol should be followed and what gifts should be offered, as protocol items vary within and among First Nations groups

## **The Courting Flute Story**

By Walter MacDonald White Bear

**I** was taught that the flute was a gift to a young warrior who could not speak. When he was initiated into manhood, he went on his vision quest as a rite of passage.

Fasting on the mountain for four days is a part of the process. The young man prayed and asked for guidance and, like all human beings, he wondered about his purpose.

On the third day of his fasting ceremony a bear came out of the woods and presented the young man with a flute and stated, "From this day forward, this will be your voice."

He returned to his people as a newly born warrior. There was a young woman whom he always admired from afar, and he started to play a beautiful, haunting melody. It resembled the call of a loon, which some say is the sound of a warrior that lived long ago, expressing his longing at the door of the spirit world which he is not able to enter to be with his loved one.

Upon hearing the music, the young woman was enchanted and she accepted the young man as her husband. And that is how the flute received the name on *The Courting Flute*.



*Dancers from Saskatchewan's Great Plains dance company performing in Ottawa during the National Arts Centre's Prairie Scene festival (Photo Credit: Paul Dickie)*

# LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

## **Magpie's Laughter**

First Nations Flute song by Walter MacDonald White Bear

**Target grade(s):** 4-9

### **General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding**

**Alberta:** listening, expression

**Saskatchewan:** Learning to Hear (the natural environment); Ideas and Inspirations (the arts as inspiration)

**Manitoba:** Understanding Music in Context (experience and develop awareness of a variety of music traditions); Valuing Musical Experience (form personal responses to and construct meaning from others' music)

**Materials:** flute song recording, writing paper, drawing paper, coloured pencils

**Introduction:** The traditional First Nations flute was used for spiritual healing, meditation, connecting with nature, and for courtship. It is hand carved and made out of specific types of wood such as redwood, cedar, cherry, etc. Most flutes have a minor pentatonic scale system and have between 5-9 holes. The music is soothing and expressive. The playing of the flute is passed down through generations.

### **About "Magpie's Laughter":**

The secret of life is inside of you. The magpies are seen as custodians of the spirit and the earth and as cleaners of the earth. They are believed to take away emotional "garbage" such as heartbreak, negative thoughts, or anger. They take those emotions off of your spirit and take them away to where no one can get hurt. The bouncy melody of the song mimics the sound of the magpie.

**Objective(s):** Students will listen to the sound of the traditional flute and interpret what they hear and understand through artwork. The artwork should reflect a natural environment either as a landscape or as an abstract form to reflect emotions.

### **Procedure:**

- Before listening to "Magpie's Laughter," think of images in nature such as a river flowing, a dense forest, birds, animals grazing on the land, trees swaying, grassland fields, etc. Perhaps you can remember a time when you were camping, hiking, travelling through a forest road, being on a canoe or horse, going for a walk, etc.
- Play "Magpie's Laughter."
- Close your eyes and listen. Write down images that initially come to mind. Think of a time when you were out on the natural land. Try and remember what you saw and felt when being there. What was around you? Were there rivers, hills or mountains, or large trees? Did you see any animals?
- Listen once or twice more throughout the art-making process to guide your creation.



- Share your artwork with others and describe what your inspiration was for your art.

**Closure:**

- Do you feel you were able to capture your visual image in your art?
- What could you have done to enhance or change your artwork?
- Did the music inspire you to create? How?

**Extension Activity:**

- Look at the recurring motif in the “Magpie’s Laughter” score.
- Even if you are not a music reader, do you feel the flute player was able to capture the essence of the magpie in the notation? How?
- Play the motif on another melodic instrument. Does that instrument’s sound capture the same essence of the magpie?

## Magpie's Laughter

First Nations Flute Song

Walter MacDonald White Bear



\*The performer is playing the motif ad lib and may vary on the notated melody.

# Being a Song Holder

**Target Grades:** 4-6

**Objective(s):** Students will discuss the significance of being a holder of a special song. Students will also discuss the meaning of “value.”

**Materials:** Three song lyrics sealed inside envelopes

## Preparation:

- Write or type out three “special” songs and seal them inside three envelopes.
- Prepare the song lyrics to be viewed later on the SmartBoard or on chart paper.
- Prepare the songs for listening on YouTube or through another source.
- Song suggestions can include John Lennon’s “Imagine,” Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” or The Beatles’ “I Wanna Hold Your Hand.”
- Research the impact the songs had on the world to lead the discussion.

## Procedure:

- Select three song holders to keep the secret songs safe. Give the selected students the envelopes and have them leave the room for 10 minutes. Each song holder will have a character role. The roles are:
  - A teenage male youth who earned the song holder title from fellow community members.
  - A grandmother to whom the songs were passed down from her father.
  - A wise elder whose ancestors were also song keepers.
- Divide the remaining students into three equal groups. Ask each group to select a scribe to write for the group and a speaker to speak for the group.
- Each group will discuss 4-6 ways that the song can be requested, based on the needs and character of the song holder. Ideas can include trading a song, performing a helpful task (chopping wood, carrying heavy items, making things), telling a joke or a story, or giving a handmade gift. Useful gifts could include blankets, clothing, hunting or carving tools, moccasins, food, etc. The scribe will write ideas down.
- Once each group has 4-6 ideas, the song holders will return to the room.
- Each chosen speaker will take the scribed list and request the song from any of the song holders.
- If the song holder feels that offers and ideas are satisfactory and of value, the song holder will open up the envelope and read the name of the song and the composer for later listening and discussion.
- Once all groups have finished learning the name of their song, listen to the song and look at the lyrics to see why these songs are special and why the composers might have been reluctant to share these songs.
- Discuss the lyrics and the messages contained in the lyrics.

**Closure:**

- What did you learn about sharing special songs?
- What did you learn about the meaning of value?
- How important is it for a song holder to be selective when sharing songs?
- How would you feel if the song holder decided not to share their song?
- Do songs have to have lyrics to be special? (up to interpretation)
- What if someone took the special song that was shared and claimed it for him/herself?



*A drummer performing at the Pow-Wow to Hip-Hop event during the National Arts Centre's Prairie Scene festival (Photo Credit: Paul Dickie)*

## **Nisakihaw (Love Song)**

**Target grade(s):** K-6

### **General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding**

**Alberta:** singing, rhythm, playing instruments

**Saskatchewan:** Learning to Hear (the voice); Making Sense of Things (beat, cultural style)

**Manitoba:** Understanding Music in Context (music from various cultures); Valuing Musical Experience (construct meaning from others' music)

**Materials:** frame drums with mallets, rattles, maracas, congas, bongos, or other percussion instruments of your choice

**Objective(s):** Students will learn a traditional-based Cree song and play along to the simple beat. Students will discuss the meaning of the song and how they interpret the song to their own personal reflection.

### **Introduction:**

Nisakihaw in Cree means "I love him/her" and in this song, it is referring to our mother and father. The words "nisakihaw nikawiy, nisakihaw nohtawiy" mean "I love my mother, I love my father." This song is to honour the love we have for our parents and caregivers. Even if they have passed on and are not with us physically, or even if we've never met them, we can still share our love for them.

### **Procedure:**

- Teach the song a cappella.
- Discuss the meaning of the song and how it can relate to one's parents or caregivers.
- Select a few students to play the frame drums when singing again.
- Add in rattles to play along on the beat with the drums.
- The song can be sung repeatedly as many times as you like.
- The song can be instrumentally arranged to your liking. Try adding the rattles in during the second section of the song, or making other instrumental variations.
- Encourage the students to think about their own parents or caregivers when singing this song.

### **Closure:**

- Is it important to acknowledge our parents or caregivers? Why?
- What does this song mean to you?
- Why is it important to learn songs from other languages and cultures?

# NISAKIHAW (LOVE SONG)

SHERYL SEWEPAGAHAM  
CREE-DENE

♩ = 108

VOICE

NI - SA - KI - HAW NI - KA - WIY AY HEY AH HEY\_

HAND DRUM

6

VOICE

YA HEY AH NI - SA - KI - HAW NOH - TA - WIY, AY HEY AH HEY AH.

HD

11

VOICE

AY HEY AH HEY AH. AY HEY AH AY HEY\_ AH. AY HEY AH HEY\_

HD

16

VOICE

YA HEY AH. AY HEY AH AY HEY\_ AH. AY HEY AH HEY

HD

20

VOICE

AH. AY HEY AH HEY AH.

HD

Cree words:

Nisakihaw nohtawiy = I love my mom

Nisakihaw nikawiy = I love my dad.

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## **Heart of the Water Song**

**Target grade(s):** 6-12

### **General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding**

**Alberta:** singing, rhythm, playing instruments, moving

**Saskatchewan:** Learning to Hear (voice); Making Sense of Things (beat, cultural style)

**Manitoba:** Understanding Music in Context (music from various cultures); Valuing Musical Experience (construct meaning from others' music)

**Materials:** frame drums with mallets, rattles, maracas, congas, bongos, or other percussion instruments of your choice

**Objective(s):** Students will experience and learn a First Nations chant song and play along to the slow beat. Students will also experience movement as they sing.

### **Introduction:**

First Nations songs can be about emotions and nature. These songs are meant to provide a space for self-reflection and for looking within yourself to figure out how you are feeling at that moment. Songs can uplift the spirit and can be healing for the soul. Songs can also remind people of being outside in a natural environment. This song has a feeling of softly drifting on a boat or padding with oars.

### **Procedure:**

- Teach the song a cappella.
- As this song reflects being outside in nature and the feeling of drifting, it can also be about experiencing the feeling of paddling a boat.
- Emphasize the 1-2-3, 4-5-6 rhythm, but play on beats 1 and 4. The paddling feeling is two paddles on each side of the body on the beat. This will emphasize the downbeat.
- Select a few students to play the frame drums as you sing again.
- The song can be sung repeatedly as many times as you like.
- The song can be instrumentally arranged however you like e.g. adding the rattles in during the second section of the song.

### **Optional activity:**

- Create a fluid movement or dance sequence with the body or by using props (such as scarves) to accompany the song.

### **Closure:**

- Has a song ever uplifted your spirits or mood?
- Did the visual image of paddling the oars or drifting come to mind when singing the song? Describe what you saw.
- Did the action of paddling the oars help you to feel the slow beat in the song?

# HEART OF THE WATER SONG

SHERYL SEWEPAGAHAM

FLOWING ♪ = 150

VOICE

HAND DRUM

5

9

1. (GO TO BAR 3)

2.

HI YO WEY HEY YA HI YO WEY HEY YA HI YO WEY HEY YA HI YO WEY HEY YA HIY HIY YO. YO.

THIS SONG CAN ALSO BE PLAYED WITH THE SOPRANO RECORDER OR OTHER WIND INSTRUMENT.

THIS DRUM SONG WAS CREATED TO SHARE WITH THE YOUTH. IT IS MEANT TO HONOUR THE WATER AND TO CAPTURE THE FEELING OF PADDLING ON A CANOE OR DRIFTING ON A BOAT ON THE WATER WHILE WATCHING THE TREES AND CLOUDS PASS BY WITH THE LULL OF THE WAVES UNDERNEATH YOU. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THIS SONG WAS MEANT TO CAPTURE THE FEELING OF BEING SAFE, CALM, AND AT HARMONY WITH ONESELF.

THIS SONG IS DEDICATED TO JACOBY WHO HELPED IN THE NAMING OF THIS SONG BASED ON THE MOOD IT CREATED FOR HER.

# **The Métis People of Canada**

## **Métis People**

The Métis people are of First Nations and European ancestry, including French, Scottish, and English lineage. They are often referred to as the sons and daughters of the fur trade. The Métis people had a strong presence before the struggle of Louis Riel's time, and today, the Métis are still thriving, independent, and fiercely resilient. In 1982, the Métis were recognized as Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Constitution Act and their contribution to Canada's history and to contemporary Canada has been recognized.

For more information on the Métis people, visit the Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture at: [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)

For more information on the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 – Section 35, visit: [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation\\_gr6/blms/6-3-2c.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation_gr6/blms/6-3-2c.pdf)

## **Métis Symbols**

Métis Flag: The Métis national flag bears an infinity symbol against a blue background, which represents the Northwest Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. It also represents the joining of two cultures, and others say it represents an adaptable people that will exist forever. The Métis hunting flag depicts the infinity symbol against a red background.



Métis sash: The Métis sash is worn with pride by the Métis and holds a lot of meaning. It became a symbol of Métis culture during the Fur Trade era. The sash is finger-woven and made of wool. It is worn over the clothes and tied around the waist with the fringes hanging down when worn by men, and draped over the shoulder across the body when worn by women. Today, you can still see Métis people proudly wearing the sash at cultural events. Other cultures that still wear the sash include French-Canadians, Acadians, and Eastern Woodland peoples. The primary colour of the Métis sash in western Canada is red, and blue is a common sash colour worn in eastern Canada. The Métis sash has many meanings in its thread colours and has many useful purposes.



- Meanings: blue and white represent the colours in the national flag; red and white represent the colours of the Métis hunting flag; black (as seen in some sashes) represents the dark period after 1870; green and gold (or yellow) represent fertility and growth.



- Uses: The strongly woven sash was traditionally used for a medical tourniquet, a washcloth, towel, emergency bridle, saddle blanket, belt, scarf, rope, etc. The fringes on the ends could be used for emergency sewing kits and holding keys and tools.

For more information about the Métis flag and sash, visit: [www.metisnation.org/culture--heritage/symbols-and-traditions](http://www.metisnation.org/culture--heritage/symbols-and-traditions)

### **Louis Riel (1844-1885)**

Métis leader Louis Riel was born in Manitoba and is recognized as a leader and a hero by the Métis people. He is also considered one of the most controversial figures in Canadian history. Louis Riel led the Red River Resistance of 1869 and the Northwest Resistance, including the Battle of Batoche, of 1885. He was a defender of Métis people, land, and rights, and was often called upon from wherever he was working or living to return to his homeland to represent the Métis.

For more information about Louis Riel, visit: <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/louis-riel>

### **Gabriel Dumont (1837-1906)**

Gabriel Dumont, like Louis Riel, was also a prominent Métis military leader. He was fluent in French and six First Nations languages and was a hunter, trapper, and fisherman. Gabriel Dumont led large buffalo hunts in the Fort Carlton area and was the president of a local government created by the Métis in Saskatchewan.

For more information about Gabriel Dumont, visit: [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/dumont-gabriel/](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/dumont-gabriel/)

### **Métis Music and Dance**

There are many prominent and well-known Canadian Métis fiddlers who have helped to make this grassroots music accessible to all people. Fiddlers include John Arcand, Reg Bouvette, Andy Desjarlais, Calvin Vollrath, Lawrence “Teddy Boy” Houle, Ryan D’Aoust, Daniel Gervais, and Sierra Noble, among many others. Many of these fiddlers also teach the fiddle to aspiring fiddlers of all ages who carry on the Métis music tradition.



The Red River Jig is both a dance style and the name of a famous Métis fiddle tune and it is the most well-known, lively dance of the Métis. Its accompanying tune, “The Red River Jig”, is referred to as the unofficial Métis anthem. The dance form is a combination of French-Canadian, Scottish, Irish, and First Nations footwork. It is danced with the arms down at the sides while the intricate footwork, or “changes”, challenge the fiddle player and showcase the dancer’s skills. Traditional jigging style consists of footwork that is closer to the ground with the arms at the sides of the body and contemporary jigging steps display elements of tap dance and high clogging steps with the arms displaying slightly more loose movement. Some traditional jiggers even learn the dance by balancing a hard-cover book on their head! This allows only the feet to move and keeps the head

and shoulders steady with minimal movement. The origin of the “Red River Jig” tune is unknown; therefore, it is public domain to anyone who is skilled enough and willing to record it.

To hear Alberta Métis fiddler Daniel Gervias play the “Red River Jig”, see the video included on the DVD that accompanies this guide, or visit: <https://youtu.be/6xzd7Xkk7Z0>

For more information about the Red River Jig from the words of Métis dancer Yvonne Chartrand, visit: <http://www.vnidansi.ca/company/interview-yvonne-about-red-river-jig>

To see the Red River Jig danced by 9-year old dancer Courtney Anderson, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sQa6uGnxKQ>

### **Métis Language**

The Michif language is a mixed language of Cree and Métis French with an additional mix of English, Ojibwe, and Assiniboiné languages. The language was spoken by the Métis people and is still spoken today, but the number of fluent speakers has declined greatly to approximately 830. In an effort to preserve the language, many Michif speakers teach the language to young people.

## **John Arcand – The Métis Waltz**

**Target grades:** 3-6

### **General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding**

**Alberta:** Rhythm, Form (binary, rondo), Moving (folk dance), Listening

**Saskatchewan:** Inspiration from Life Around Us (folk songs); The World of Music (music in our lives)

**Manitoba:** Music Language and Performance Skills (form, rhythm); Understanding Music in Context (music from cultures, meaning of music in communities)

### **Introduction:**

The waltz is one of the many favourite dances of the Métis people. Traditionally, in Métis communities, people would travel for long distances and gather together to feast and celebrate family and friends through live music and dance. Many slow waltz songs are played by the fiddle and recorded for partner dancing.

### **Preparation of Materials:**

Visit John Arcand's website and listen to "Teardrop Waltz": <http://johnarcand.com/>. Teach the concept of form (form is the structure of a composition where the letters A, B, C, etc., represent the sections or phrases). Prepare to share some information with the students about John Arcand, his life, his music, and his accomplishments.

**Objective(s):** Students will listen critically to a Métis waltz song and identify its form using the letters A and B. Students will experience the Métis waltz individually and in pairs.

### **Procedure:**

- Watch the slideshow video of John Arcand's "Teardrop Waltz". What do you notice about the clothes worn by the Métis people in the slides? Are they similar to clothes worn today, or are they different? How?
- Listen to "Teardrop Waltz". As a class, identify its instrumentation (fiddle, guitar) and its form (AABB – form repeats three times).
- Listen to the rhythm of the waltz. If you were to use numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. to identify the rhythm, what numbers would you use for the waltz? (1-2-3, 1-2-3).
- Count the rhythm aloud together and emphasize the "1" when counting. Like a conductor, move your right hand down-right-up, down-right-up while counting 1-2-3, 1-2-3.
- Stand facing a partner and move your feet side to side in small steps (without the music):
  - With your partner, decide which direction you will move first. The direction has to be mirroring your partner!
  - Move your feet as left-right-left, right-left-right, left-right-left, right-left-right, etc. while counting aloud. You can also think of this foot movement as side-together-side (moving to the right or left) and side-together-side (moving to the left or right). Joining hands can help enforce moving in the same direction.

- When you and your partner are comfortable with the movement and direction you are moving together, silently count and add the music “Teardrop Waltz”.

**Closure:**

- Who is John Arcand? Why is he called Master of the Métis Fiddle?
- What is one thing you learned about John Arcand?
- Were you able to feel the 1-2-3 waltz rhythm in your feet when mirroring your partner?



*John Arcand*  
*Photo Credit: JohnArcand.com*

# Métis Sing-along Songs

**Target grades:** 4-9

## General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding

**Alberta:** Singing, Listening

**Saskatchewan:** Inspiration from Life Around Us (folk songs); The World of Music (music in our lives)

**Manitoba:** Music Language and Performance Skills (singing); Understanding Music in Context (music from cultures, meaning of music in communities)

**Resources:** song “Hunting My Nita” performed by Daniel Gervais, Daniel Gervais’ clogging demonstration vide by Daniel Gervais (both can be found on the DVD that accompanies this guide), student copies of all the lyrics (may need to be typed)

## Website Resource:

Refer to *Métis Songs: Visiting Was the Métis Way* (online resource) in this lesson:

<http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/03146.MetisSongsVisitingWasTheMetisWay.pdf>

## Introduction:

A great way to experience Métis music is to sing it or follow along with the lyrics. Review these songs, listen to the YouTube recordings, and become familiar with the music and lyrics. The lyrics can be found in the online resource *Métis Songs: Visiting Was the Métis Way*.

- “Hunting My Nita” (to the tune of Waltzing Matilda), lyrics on page 59  
Listen to Daniel Gervais’ “Hunting My Nita”
- “The Métis” by Ray St. Germain, lyrics on page 64-65  
Watch Ray St. Germain sing “The Métis” on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/7PrtTfmEcAs>

These Métis songs are also very well-known and can be introduced to the students:

- “À la claire fontaine” YouTube video with slide show: <https://youtu.be/VpAGW3QBG-k>  
French and English lyrics: <http://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=141&c=22>
- “Proud to be Métis” music and lyrics: <http://backtobatoche.org/metis-national-anthem.php>

**Objective:** Students will sing Métis songs together and discuss the importance of learning and experiencing songs of the Canadian Métis people. Students will discuss important historical events or Métis leaders that may be described or mentioned in the songs.

## Procedure:

- As a class, read through each of the songs before listening to the recordings.
- Discuss what historical points or emotions are contained in the songs.
- Sing along or follow along while reading the lyrics of the songs.

**Closure:**

- Why are the lyrics of these songs so important to the Métis people?
- Which Métis leaders are mentioned in the songs?

**Extension Activity #1 - Clogging**

- View Daniel Geravais' clogging instructional video.
- While seated with shoes on your feet, follow along and listen to the rhythms of your feet on the floor. Notice how the feet are alternating and how the heel is used.
- The key is not to worry too much about whether you are doing the footwork perfectly, but rather to experience clogging rhythmically to the music as Métis fiddle players or dancers do.
- Was it difficult to sit and tap your feet and heels on the floor?
- Were you able to achieve some of the taught rhythms in your feet?
- Do you think you could achieve this while standing?

**Extension Activity #2 – Musical Spoons**

- View Daniel Gervais' wooden spoons instructional video.
- Listen to the rhythmic sound of the spoons that enhance the Métis song.
- Do the spoons mimic the sound of clogging feet?
- If you have access to wooden spoons, follow along to Daniel's instructions.
- To make your own musical spoons, try assembling two kitchen spoons with elastics and, for beginners, a small spacer. A spacer is used to maintain a space between the spoons, and it can be made from one or two centimetres of any hard material (wood, metal, thick cardboard, etc). *See the photo below as an example.*
- More advanced players may use a finger instead of a spacer to keep the spoons apart.



# Residential Schools in Canada

## Rita Joe's "I Lost My Talk"

**Target grades:** 4-6

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies, English Language Arts, Music

**Preparation:** Research the biography and work of Rita Joe and residential schools.

- "I Lost My Talk" poem: <http://www.greens.org/s-r/05/05-32.html>
- The Canadian Encyclopedia: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rita-joe/>
- Legacy of Hope Foundation: <http://www.legacyofhope.ca>

**Materials:** Rita Joe poem "I Lost My Talk"; chart paper or Smart Board; mp3/DVD recording of "I Lost My Talk," composed and sung by Sherryll Sewepagaham

**Objective:** Students will explore a poem, discuss the content, and write their own poem about what it feels like to lose something that is valuable to them.

### Introduction:

- Have you ever lost or misplaced something of value to you?
- How did it make you feel when you lost or misplaced it?
- Where did you look? How long did you look for it?

### Procedure:

- Read through Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe's poem "I Lost My Talk".
- Reflect and discuss:
  - ❖ What is the poet talking about when she writes, "I lost my talk?" What was taken or "snatched away?" (First Nations language, culture, freedom, family bond, self-esteem, etc.)
  - ❖ Who is the "you" she is talking about in the poem?
  - ❖ What does "scrambled ballad" mean?
  - ❖ What are the poet's feelings that are reflected in this poem?
  - ❖ What other languages do you speak? What language do your parents or grandparents speak? Is it still spoken at home?
  - ❖ How would you feel if you were not allowed to speak the only language you knew and were forced to learn a new language you did not know?
  - ❖ How would you communicate with one another without understanding each other's language?
- Compose your own poem beginning with "I lost my \_\_\_\_\_. Think of what you lost that was of great value to you (not necessarily monetary value), or think of something that you are afraid to lose and how it would make you feel if you were to lose this.

- Share your poems with the class.
- Listen to the song, “I Lost My Talk” sung by Sherryl Sewepagaham
- Discuss any feelings or thoughts the song may bring up in relation to the previous discussion.

**Closure:**

- Do you have a better understanding of the poem and the impact of losing one’s language?
- Do you have a better understanding of what it feels like to lose something of value?



*Rita Joe*



## Poetry Analysis for “I Lost My Talk”

**Target Grades:** 7-12

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies, English Language Arts, Music

**Materials:** Rita Joe poem “I Lost My Talk,” chart paper or copy of poem displayed on Smart Board, mp3 recording of “I Lost My Talk,” sung by Sherryl Sewepagaham

### Useful Websites:

- Legacy of Hope Foundation: <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/about-residential-schools>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission:  
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>
- The Canadian Encyclopedia:  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/residential-schools/>
- Video from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:  
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=513>

**Objective:** Students will work together in groups of 2-3 to create a poem, song or story from the perspective of a First Nations child in a Residential School.

### Introduction:

- What are Indian Residential Schools?
- What is assimilation?
- Define and discuss “reconciliation” as a class.

### Procedure:

- Read the poem, “I Lost My Talk”, by Rita Joe
- Reflect and discuss:
  - ❖ What is the poet talking about when she writes, “I lost my talk?” What was taken or “snatched away?” (First Nations language, culture, freedom, family bond, self-esteem, etc.)
  - ❖ Who is the “you” she is talking about in the poem?
  - ❖ What does “scrambled ballad” mean?
  - ❖ What are the poet’s feelings that are reflected in this poem?
  - ❖ What other languages do you speak? What language do your parents or grandparents speak? Is it still spoken at home?
  - ❖ How would you feel if you were not allowed to speak the only language you knew and were forced to learn a new language you did not know?
- Create a poem, song, or story from the perspective of a child who has lost his or her language.
- Include how you would feel about the loss and how you would feel about being forced to learn a new language.
- Share your poem, song, or story with others.

**Closure:**

- Allow students to discuss any feelings or thoughts that may have arisen through this activity.
- Listen to the recording of “I Lost My Talk”, sung by Sherryl Sewepagaham.
- Do you feel the singer has captured the emotion of Rita Joe in the song?

**Extension Activities:**

- Change the last line of “let me find my talk” into a First Nations language.
- Write your own song with the poem, “I Lost My Talk.”
- Write your own lyrics inspired by Residential Schools.

## **I Lost My Talk**

By Rita Joe

I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.  
You snatched it away:  
I speak like you  
I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my world.

Two ways I talk  
Both ways I say,  
Your way is more powerful.  
So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.

# I LOST MY TALK

ARRANGED BY SHERRYL SEWEPAGAHAM

POEM BY RITA JOE

MODERATE ♩ = 116

GUITAR: E<sub>m</sub> C G B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> E<sub>m</sub>

VOICE

10 C G B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> E<sub>m</sub>

VERSE 1: I LOST MY TALK

18 A<sub>m</sub> C

VOICE

THE TALK YOU TO - OK A-WAY. WHEN I WAS A LIT-TLE GIRL AT SHU - BEN-

23 G B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> E<sub>m</sub>

VOICE

A - CA-DIE SCH - OOL. YOU SNATCHED IT A-WAY: I SPEAK LIKE YOU

27 A<sub>m</sub> C G

VOICE

I THINK LIKE YOU I CRE - ATE LIKE YOU THE SCRA-MBLED BAL-LAD,

32 B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> C G B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup>

VOICE

A-ABOUT MY WORLD... CHANT CHORUS: WEY HEY A HEY HIY YD. WEY HEY

38 A<sub>m</sub> C G B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup>

VOICE

HIY YD. WEY HEY WEY A HEY HIY YD. WEY HEY

46 A<sub>m</sub> B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> E<sub>m</sub> C G

VOICE

HIY YD. HEY YD.

55 B<sub>m</sub><sup>7</sup> E<sub>m</sub> A<sub>m</sub>

VOICE

TWO WAYS I TALK BOTH WAYS I SAY

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60 C G

VOICE

64 Bm7 Em Am

VOICE

69 C G Bm7 C

VOICE

75 G Bm7 Am C *CHANT CHORUS:*

VOICE

83 G Bm7 Am C *BRIDGE:*

VOICE

90 G Bm7

VOICE

95 Am C G Bm7 *CHANT CHORUS:*

VOICE

102 Am C G

VOICE

108 Bm7 Am Bm7 Em

VOICE

# **A Survivor's Story of Indian Residential Schools**

By William Sewepagaham (Cree-Dene)  
from the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta

Mary Madeline (Boucher) Sewepagaham  
1907- July 25, 1987



# **Class Book Project for “They Called Her Ikwiwak”**

**Target Group:** 7-12

**Subject areas:** Social Studies, English Language Arts, Music

## **Preparation before class:**

- Ask the students to come to class prepared to talk about a woman in history who has had to overcome great hardship.
- Ask the students to write a short paragraph describing any challenges their mothers or caregivers have had to face as parents (general statements only and not private family information).
- It is important that students are aware of the Canadian history of Residential Schools and the genocidal cultural impact it had on First Nations children as well as the impact it continues to have today before beginning this activity.

## **Useful websites about residential schools:**

- Legacy of Hope Foundation: <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/about-residential-schools>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission:  
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>
- The Canadian Encyclopedia:  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/residential-schools/>

**Materials:** art paper, art materials (coloured pencils, markers, charcoal, etc.), binding materials

**Objective:** Students will create illustrations of a survival story to make into a book as a culminating class project.

## **Introduction:**

- Can you think of women in history who have had to overcome hardship?
- Before electricity, running water, and central heating of today, what hardships would women and their families face on a daily basis in the past?
- Do challenges differ for women and for men when it comes to raising children in hard times? What great challenges have you had to overcome?

## **Procedure:**

- Read the story “They Called Her Ikwiwak”, by William Sewepagaham
- In working groups, look at the story and write down chronological events that could be illustrated such as enduring the cold winter months, wolves surrounding her camp, her children being taken away, etc.
- Jot down what points can be illustrated and plan how many illustrated pages you will create for the story.
- Decide together what each illustrated page will contain and what will be drawn.

- Decide who will illustrate and who will handwrite or type the story sections to match the illustrated pages.
- Decide who will be responsible for binding the finished product.
- Sharing with other classes:
  - ❖ As a class, decide how you can share the story and your illustrated book with younger grades in your school or nearby schools. Perhaps you want to read to residents of seniors' homes.
  - ❖ After reading the story with your chosen group, share the book making process and what you learned about residential schools. Be sensitive to violent content when sharing with young children.

#### **Closure:**

- How does the writer view his mother through the story?
- What things would have made life easier for the mother if she had the conveniences of today?
- Following the completion of the activity, organize a traditional feast of bannock with cooked blueberries or jam, and tea. Easy bannock recipes can be found online.
  - ❖ Music was always a part of the feast event and followed the meal. Some Canadian artists to accompany the feast can include:
    - Susan Aglukark – Inuit folk: [https://youtu.be/NrLL8n4fle8?list=PLj-tk78w-gYKhzQAJmNL\\_wVVjA263hF0z](https://youtu.be/NrLL8n4fle8?list=PLj-tk78w-gYKhzQAJmNL_wVVjA263hF0z)
    - Whitefish Jrs. – Round Dance songs: [https://youtu.be/HAcmyu64rQM?list=PLDZkAbumhLJ7dWI10hNoTJE\\_N1xtsMKb5S](https://youtu.be/HAcmyu64rQM?list=PLDZkAbumhLJ7dWI10hNoTJE_N1xtsMKb5S)
    - A Tribe Called Red – First Nations electronic: <https://youtu.be/GGraLbhPDS0?list=RDGGraLbhPDS0>
    - Sherryl Sewepagaham – First Nations contemporary: [https://www.reverbnation.com/sewepagaham?profile\\_view\\_source=header\\_icon\\_nav](https://www.reverbnation.com/sewepagaham?profile_view_source=header_icon_nav)
    - Asani – First Nations and Metis trio: <http://www.last.fm/music/Asani> (subscribe for free)
    - Camerata Nova – Renaissance, Aboriginal-infused choral: <http://www.cameratanova.com/12/index.php>
    - Daniel Gervais – Métis fiddle: <https://youtu.be/IAPLiqkFX9k>
    - Walter White Bear MacDonald – Folk-Style Songs and Native Flute: <http://waltermacdonaldwhitebear.com/listen/>



## **They Called Her Ikwiwak**

By William Sewepagaham

**M**y mother was Cree and Dene from Northern Alberta. She was a strong and healthy woman. She beaded and mended clothes for our family. She tanned moose hides, made tipis, and made drymeat.

In 1948, my dad Pierre, passed away at the age of 42 years, from an infection caused by tuberculosis. My mother had to take over the role of provider by trapping and hunting. She had a dog team, which she used for trapping. Life was very harsh and difficult, but she had to take care of her family. In the winter, she camped in a tent in the middle of nowhere. During this time, her oldest daughter took care of her children at home in a log cabin.

In the summer, my mother hunted moose, bear, and small game. Her hunting skills proved to be important for the survival of her children. Sometimes a pack of wolves would surround her, but she did not kill them. She respected animals and birds that were not meant for food.

All of her children were taken away and brought to the Residential School. This broke her heart and she was lonely during this time. She was unable to resist when her children were taken forcibly. The government authorities threatened her with jail if she refused to let them go. As she watched her children taken away crying and screaming, she was heartbroken and devastated. She cried many days and nights, missing her children.

The Indian Residential School was a two day trip by dog team. She tried to go and see her children during the winter but was denied permission. She stood outside the fence, watching her children. She pushed some candy through the fence and held their hands briefly. In the summer, her children would come home for July and August. Then the pattern of crying and screaming would be repeated every September and for ten months she wouldn't see her children.

In 1987, my mother passed away due to sicknesses she endured during the harsh winter months while she was trapping. Being lonely for her children and her husband also contributed to her death.

I pray to the Great Spirit to keep her happy and healthy, for she deserves all the happiness she has earned here on earth. I miss my dear mother. She was an inspiration to me. I inherited her perseverance and persistence.

**\*Ikwiwak** is pronounced as "ek-wee-wuk," which is a term of endearment or a nickname and does not have a specific meaning.

## **Art Activity for “I Cried Dry Tears”**

**Target Group:** 7-12

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies, English Language Arts, Art

**Materials:** art materials (various types of paints, brushes, canvas, charcoal, art paper, markers, or pencil crayons); chart paper; poem: “I Cried Dry Tears”; KWL chart

**Objective:** Students will discuss the meaning of a poem with classmates and share their interpretation of the impacts of trauma through an art form of their choice.

**Preparation:** It is important that students are aware of the Canadian history of residential schools and the genocidal cultural impact it had on First Nations children as well as the impact it continues to have today.

### **Useful websites about Residential Schools:**

- Legacy of Hope Foundation: <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/about-residential-schools>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission:  
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>
- The Canadian Encyclopedia:  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/residential-schools/>

### **Introduction:**

- Using a KWL chart, have the students brainstorm individually:
  - ❖ What do I **know** about residential school survivors?
  - ❖ What do I **want** to learn about residential school survivors?
  - ❖ Leave the last section blank until the end of the activity.
- Before reading the poem, discuss what it means when the poet says, “I cried dry tears.”

### **Procedure:**

- In six groups, analyze and discuss each paragraph of the poem to interpret what the poet survivor is expressing through his words. Select a scribe and spokesperson within the group. The scribe will write down ideas on chart paper for later sharing.
- Questions to ask and discuss:
  - ❖ Is the poem from a first person perspective or an observer?
  - ❖ Who do you think the strangers were?
  - ❖ Who are the penguins in the poem?
  - ❖ Why did wet tears turn to dry tears?
  - ❖ Why did he have no feelings for his mother?
  - ❖ Why do you think he felt blame?
  - ❖ What is the transition of the poet survivor from the beginning of the poem to the end of the poem?
  - ❖ What is trauma and what impact can trauma have on a person?

- ❖ What long-term effects can trauma have on society?
- The spokesperson presents what was discussed in the group with the class.

### **The Art Project**

- Individually, choose one part of the poem to illustrate in a drawing or painting. You can choose to illustrate or paint in abstract form, illustrate or paint a scene, sketch a portrait, or paint, draw, or sketch the poet's emotion using various mediums.
- When finished, include your selected paragraph as part of the finished piece. This can be typed or handwritten.
- Be prepared to discuss and share your work with others and to explain why you chose the selected paragraph as inspiration for your artwork.

### **Closure:**

- What did I **learn** about Residential School survivors?
- Discuss and share what you learned and how this activity has or has not changed your perspective on this topic of Residential School survivors.

## KWL Chart

Topic: Residential School Survivors

K	W	L
What do I <b>know</b> about Residential School survivors?	What do I <b>want</b> to know about Residential School survivors?	What did I <b>learn</b> about Residential School survivors?

## **I CRIED DRY TEARS**

By William Sewepagaham, Residential School Survivor

Long ago when bruises hurt  
I cried many wet tears.  
Long ago when loneliness came  
I cried many wet tears.

When I was sick I cried wet tears  
My mother cured the sickness.  
When children teased me, I cried wet tears  
My mother wiped away my tears.

One day some strangers took me away  
I travelled for many days and nights on boats and wagons.  
This long travel was lonely and scary  
I cried many tears but no warm arms were present.

After many days and nights, I reached a strange place  
I thought about my warm tipi back home.  
I saw strangers who looked like penguins in a maze  
That night I lay on a steel bed and cried myself to sleep.

I spent many days and nights in this spooky place  
I cried many tears as I lay alone in this dark place.  
After many days and nights, my tears were gone  
My eyes had no more tears as I lay all alone.

When my mother passed away  
I kissed her but still no tears came.  
As people lowered her casket, I felt cold  
I tried to cry but no tears came, only blame.

# **Rhythmic Fun with Music Alive**

## **Music Alive Song Activity**

**Target Grades:** 4-6

### **General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding**

**Alberta:** Rhythm; Playing Instruments; Singing

**Saskatchewan:** Making Sense of Things (beat, form); Learning to Hear (the voice)

**Manitoba:** Music Language and Performance Skills (making music in an ensemble, understanding timbre and form)

**Objective(s):** Students will learn an 8-beat ostinato pattern and transfer it to speech, body percussion, and non-pitched percussion to perform and sing together in a class-decided form.

**Materials:** “Music Alive” score; speech and body percussion score; non-pitched percussion instruments: triangles/jingle bells, rhythm sticks/claves, hand drums, large drum/timpani with mallets, etc.

### **Procedure:**

- Introduce the song “Music Alive” in preparation for the following music activities:
- Divide students into four groups.

### **Speech Ostinato:**

- Teach the speech ostinato.
- Assign each group an ostinato line and teach until each group is independent and can perform simultaneously with other group lines.

### **Body Percussion Ostinato:**

- Introduce each group’s body percussion line.
- Follow the same teaching pattern as the speech ostinato.

### **Non-Pitched Percussion:**

- Select one or two students from each group who demonstrated strong rhythmic accuracy in their group.
- Hand them each a percussion instrument assigned to their scored line and have them play the rhythms with their instrument.
- Assign each student or pair of students an ostinato line and teach until each of them is independent and can perform simultaneously with other lines.

### **Form Finale:**

- As a class, decide and determine the form of the finale performance, which includes the song. Write on the board for reference.
  - An example: Body percussion – speech – non-pitched – song – simultaneous

# MUSIC ALIVE

ENGLISH/CREE VERSION

SHERRYL SEWEPAGAHAM

**LYALY** ♩ = 118

**5**

*mf* BRING- ING VOI- CES TO- GE-THER 'CROSS THE NA- TION.

**9**

TAKE A STAND! THIS IS OUR GEN-ER- A- TION. SING A- LONG, SING- ING STRO- NG.

**13**

WE'LL BRING THE MUS-IC A- LIVE. HEY NA NA HEY- AH HEY NA NA HEY- AH

**17**

NA- PE- SIS- AK, IS- KWE- SIS- AK. HEY NA NA HEY- AH HEY NA NA HEY- AH

SOH- KH MA-MA- WI NIK- A- MOK, SOH- KH MA-MA- WI NIK- A- MOK.

Translation of Cree lyrics:

Napisisak = boys

Iskwesisak = girls

Sohkih mamawi nikamok = Sing strong together

Woodland Cree Translation - Y Dialect:

Bill and Emily Sewepagaham

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## "Music Alive" Speech & Body Ostinato

Sherryl Sewepagaham

SN  $\frac{4}{4}$  Our gen - er - a - tion a - cross the na - tion.

CL  $\frac{4}{4}$  Voi - ces, voi - ces, voi - ces to - ge - ther.

PT  $\frac{4}{4}$  Sing ni - ka - moh, sing nik - a - moh.

ST  $\frac{4}{4}$  Mu - - sic a - - live.

SN = snap  
CL = clap  
PT = pat (on lap)  
ST = stamp



# Vocal Improvisation

**Target Grades:** 4-12

## General Music Skills, Concepts, and Understanding

**Alberta:** rhythm, creating, expression

**Saskatchewan:** Making Sense of Things (style, organizing sounds); Learning to Hear (the voice, the environment, human-made sounds)

**Manitoba:** Music Language and Performance Skills (making music in an ensemble); Creative Expression in Music (generate and use ideas to create music, develop ideas creatively); Valuing Musical Experience (demonstrate engagement while making and experiencing music)



*Throat singing with the Music Alive Program in Nunavut*

*Photo Credit: Ed Maruyama*

**Objective:** Students will use their voices rhythmically and melodically to create and explore natural, environmental, or percussive sounds.

**Materials:** large cue cards or regular sheets of paper, markers, whiteboard, mp3 recording of vocal improvisation sounds

### Introduction:

We are born with a natural melodic and percussive instrument – the voice. Our voice can make all kinds of interesting and wacky sounds using our lips, mouth, and tongue. By using our lips, mouth, and tongue together, we can mimic other environmental and natural sounds. We can buzz, pop, click, hum, or whatever we want to do. Just check out some videos of people who can beatbox! They can test the limits of their voices! Our voices can sing, scream, howl, laugh, and make other funny, dark, and interesting sounds. We need to take care of our voices so that they can last a lifetime.

### Vocal Exploration Lesson #1 (environmental, natural, and familial)

- Ask students to create the sound of an animal (a pet, in the wild, or in the zoo).
- Ask them how that sound would look if drawn. Have them draw it.
- Ask the students to think about and create the sound of the animal walking. Be imaginative! It can be made up. Draw it.
- Ask the students to create the sound of metal objects – saw, hammer, drill, or knife – then draw this sound.
- Ask the students to create the natural sound of water, wind, fire, trees swaying, leaves rustling, etc. and to draw their selected sound.
- Ask the students to mimic or create the sound of their siblings or family members. What do they sound like? Draw the sound.
- Ask the students to really think about what silence sounds like. Discuss and come up with a symbol or picture.
- Observe the drawn sounds, and select some examples to put on the chalk board or white board.

- Ask a student to be the conductor and point to the drawn shapes on the board while the students make the chosen sound all together.

### **Vocal Percussion Lesson #2**

- Have students stand in a circle and divide students into small groups of 2-4 for smaller groups, or 5-6 for larger groups.
- Assign easy, non-vocal parts by demonstrating and giving the sound away to each group when they can successfully follow your sound and rhythm. Write on cue cards or whiteboard to help remember assigned sounds if needed.
- If students volunteer percussive sounds, they can lead their group. ☺
- Examples could include (refer to the recording of Vocal Improvisation Sounds mp3/CD):
  - a. Zzzzzzzzzah! Zzzzzzzzzah!
  - b. Shhhhhh-oop! Shoo shoo shoo!
  - c. Click, pop, click, pop, tsss...(using the tongue and mouth)
- Perform all sounds together, in rhythm, to create an interesting and unique composition (listen to the example on the mp3/CD for inspiration). Percussive sounds can form the foundational 'backbeat' for the performance.

### **Vocal Soundscape Improvisation Lesson #3**

#### **Introduction:**

The students will create a "wall of sound" together to block out external sounds outside the circle space and room. There needs to be complete trust with each other and absolute focus for this to be successful. This activity can take anywhere from 5-10 minutes, or more depending on the group's direction and focus. It is important that individuals avoid disrupting the activity to try to make others laugh as this will cause the group to lose focus and the activity to crumble (this will be challenging!).

1. Begin by standing in a circle facing each other. You can choose to focus on a spot on the floor if it allows you to focus and feel comfortable.
2. You will begin by humming together on one note that is not too high or too low but somewhere in the middle. If you run out of breath, softly take a new breath and bring your voice back in as gently as you can.
3. Once the sound is continuous for a few minutes, one or two volunteers can begin to slightly change or bend the notes lower or higher. Try not to follow another's voice; create your own direction. This adds to the interesting sound.
4. Everyone will then be silently directed to open their mouths and pick a vowel "oo," "ee," "oh," "ay," or "ah" without changing their note.
5. New volunteers will bend the notes again in any direction they choose and changing their vowels as they choose. The group will be directed to sing louder or softer at any moment but they must do it together.

6. More volunteers will be asked to change their vowels and sounds in any direction they choose. There is no correct or incorrect way to do this – go in any direction. It won't sound pretty or melodic as it adds to the wall of sound, and that's not the aim. Just listen to how the voices can blend or contrast.
7. As the group approaches the climatic ending section, students who would like to contribute to more vocal additions can do so one by one. The idea is to explore the sound, create, and improvise.
8. For the ending, the teacher can choose to end the group strongly and abruptly, or to gently fade out.



*Sherryl Sewepagaham working with Music Alive Program students in Alberta (Photo Credit: Samantha Whelan-Kotkas)*

## Raps 'n Rhymes – Writing a Rap Song

**Target Grades:** 9-12

### General Music Skills, Concepts, and Learning Areas

**Alberta:** *Focused Listening* (Rhythm; Form; Style); *Music Making*

**Saskatchewan:** *Creative/Productive* (use voice, instruments, and technologies to express musical ideas; compose and perform sound compositions to express perspectives and raise awareness about a topic of concern to youth); *Critical/Response* (identify how arts expressions can challenge thinking about values, ideas, and beliefs); *Cultural/Historical* (discuss the role of artists in raising awareness or taking action on topics of concern).

**Manitoba:** *Making* (developing competencies for using tools and techniques); *Creating* (generates ideas from a variety of sources; experiments with, develops, and uses ideas; shares music ideas and creative work); *Connecting* (develops ideas about the influences and impact of music); *Responding* (applies new understandings about music to construct identity).

**Materials:** hand drum, recording software and microphone (optional)

### Useful websites for writing rap poetry:

- Power Poetry: <http://www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-tips-writing-rap>
- Writing a rap – getting started:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6NZoTqWLq4>
- How to Write a Rap Song – Hook Chorus:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7ZO71EHv6E>
- Anyone Can Rap!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6-s8bXi47c> (0:00-3:12 minutes)

**Objective(s):** Students will compose an original rap song to express their thoughts and feelings about a chosen topic to share with others.

**Introduction:** Rap music is said to have originated in the 1970s in New York's Bronx neighbourhood, where lyrics were spoken in rhyme over a scratch turntable. It's a form of music that comes out of oppression, depression, and self-expression. First Nations youth have taken a huge interest in rap music, as the music and lyrics reflect the similar societal issues of poverty, oppression, violence, racism, racial and gender stereotypes, family, relationships, self-empowerment, politics, and social justice. Writing rap songs is a creative way for songwriters to explore a new method of lyric writing and to express themselves, while exploring and extending the limits of rhythmic speech, rhymes, and organized form.

### Questions for discussion:

1. Does rap music belong to a group of people from a specific cultural background?
2. Why is rap music a popular genre of music for youth?
3. What topics interest you in particular rap songs?
4. What makes a good or a bad rap song?
5. Is rap music gender specific?

### Procedure:

- Discuss subjects or topics that students may want to write about. Topics could be an important event in a student's life; an event in history; identity; social justice; politics; friends or family; the environment; school life; funny topics; parent rules; teenage life; another topic that is meaningful to them; or something simply about themselves.
  - **Note:** students will need to abide by school rules with regards to explicit topics and language.
- Encourage students to be honest about their topic as this is the easiest way to get their message across.
- A rap needs a "hook," which is the chorus of the song centered on the topic. This is the easiest place to start. The hook can also be sung. Perhaps there are aspiring singers in the class!
- The rap outline is: intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, verse, bridge, chorus, outro. Basically it should have a beginning, middle, and an end.
- Try to fit in rhyming words at the ends of sentences to add to the flow. Not all ending words need to rhyme perfectly. Words can also have similar sounds such as "fave" and "stage."
- Some students may need help to begin their rap writing. Possible prompt sentences could include
  - Who are you and where are you from?
  - What is the best thing about you and/or your family?
- Backbeat Options:
  - An organic backbeat: the beat to keep the flow and rhythm together can be made by a hand drum, vocal percussion, or beat boxing, or a combination of rhythms made by clapping or pounding on a desk/surface.
  - An electronic backbeat: there are various simple, online websites that offer free backbeats to download or stream online.
    - Flocabulary: <https://www.flocabulary.com/warp/beats/>
    - Mac's built-in GarageBand program offers built-in backbeats.
    - Students may also create their own electronic backbeats with a computer or electronic keyboard.
- Once the words are written out in the outline sections, have the students begin to practice speaking the words to get a sense of the rhythm to hear what fits and what needs editing. Encourage students to seek advice and suggestions from others too.
- Allow students sufficient writing time.
- Once students are satisfied with their finished work, have them begin to memorize the words and practice, practice, practice! The words will become more fluid.
- Explore ways to record student rap songs. There are many free programs. All you need is a microphone and a quiet space to record.
- Have fun!

### Closure:

- How does rap music reflect one's identity?
- Do you feel your rap song reflects your thoughts and feelings about your topic?

- Was the process difficult to complete? Were there factors that affected the process?
- Do you feel you could write more rap songs in the future?
- Now that you have written a rap song, what advice would you give to other beginner rap composers?

### Extension activity:

- Listen to the music of Canadian First Nations rap artists (pre-screen before showing to determine suitability of content, as this can vary from school to school):
  - Drezus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8Cy1Knyu6A>
  - Shawn Bernard, aka FEENIX: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaZ6pQH8pRA>
  - Eekwol: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XuYikRUl7g>
  - LightningCloud: <https://youtu.be/mxrfna843jY>
- United States Native American rap artists:
  - Supaman: [https://youtu.be/\\_0jq7jla34Y](https://youtu.be/_0jq7jla34Y)
  - Frank Waln: [https://youtu.be/5\\_1fmbKCMmY](https://youtu.be/5_1fmbKCMmY)
  - Tall Paul: <https://youtu.be/61V69jRF5ys>
- What is the general theme of these rap songs?
- Do you feel the artists are able to capture the passion of their chosen theme in their songs?
- Have these artists changed your perspective on the many styles of First Nations music?



*Left: Aaron “Godson” Hernandez performing in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre’s Northern Scene festival (Photo Credit: Trevor Lush); Right: Kathleen Merritt and Nelson Tagoona performing in Baker Lake for the Music Alive Program in Nunavut*

# Raps 'n Rhymes for Younger Grades

**Target Grades:** 4-6

## General Music Skills, Concepts, and Learning Areas

**Alberta:** *Creating; Rhythm; Listening*

**Saskatchewan:** *Ideas and Inspiration* (inspiration from life around us); *Making Sense of Things* (beat; organizing sounds; form; style); *Creative/Productive* (use voice to express musical ideas)

**Manitoba:** *Creative Expression in Music; Understanding Music in Context; Valuing Musical Experience*

**Materials:** hand drum, one or two pre-selected backbeats for student songwriting such as Flocabulary:

<https://www.flocabulary.com/warp/beats/>



*Music Alive student workshop in Nunavut with Nelson Tagoona*

## Useful websites for writing rap poetry:

- Power Poetry: <http://www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-tips-writing-rap>
- Writing a rap – getting started: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6NZoTqWLq4>
- How to Write a Rap Song – Hook Chorus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7ZO71EHv6E>
- Anyone Can Rap!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6-s8bXi47c> (0:00-3:12 minutes)

**Objective(s):** Students will compose an original rap song to share with classmates.

**Introduction:** Rap music is said to have originated in the 1970s in New York's Bronx neighbourhood, where lyrics were spoken in rhyme over a scratch turntable. It's a form of music that allows people to express themselves poetically and musically. First Nations youth often write music to express who they are and the things they struggle with. Writing rap songs is a creative way for songwriters to explore a new method of lyric writing and to express themselves, while exploring and extending the limits of rhythmic speech, rhymes, and organized form.

## Questions for discussion:

1. Does rap music belong to a group of people from a specific cultural background?
2. What topics interest you in particular rap songs?
3. What makes a good or a bad rap song?

## Procedure:

- Discuss subjects or topics that students may want to write about. Rap is like writing a poem. Topics could be an important event in a student's life; friends or family; the environment; school life; funny topics; parent rules; kid life; another topic that is meaningful to them; or something simply about themselves.
  - **Note:** students will need to abide by school rules with regards to explicit topics and language.

- Encourage students to be honest about their topic, as this is the easiest way to get their message across.
- A rap needs a “hook,” which is the chorus of the song centered on the topic. This is the easiest place to start. The hook can also be sung. Perhaps there are aspiring singers in the class!
- The rap outline is: intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, verse, bridge, chorus, outro. Basically it should have a beginning, middle, and an end.
  - Students struggling with the lengthy format can modify to a verse, chorus, and verse.
- Try to fit in rhyming words at the ends of sentences to add to the flow. Not all ending words need to rhyme perfectly. Words can also have similar sounds such as “fave” and “stage.”
- Some students may need help to begin their rap writing. Possible prompt sentences could include
  - Who are you and where are you from?
  - What is the best thing about you and/or your family?
- Backbeat Options:
  - An organic backbeat: the beat to keep the flow and rhythm together can be made by a hand drum, vocal percussion or beat boxing, or a combination of rhythms made by clapping or pounding on a desk/surface.
  - Students can also use the teacher’s pre-selected beats on *Flocabulary*. Play it often and allow students to fit their words into the beat sample.
- Once the words are written out in the outline sections, have the students begin to practice speaking the words to get a sense of the rhythm and to hear what fits and what needs editing. Encourage students to seek advice and suggestions from others, too.
- Allow students sufficient writing time.
- Once students are satisfied with their finished work, have them begin to memorize the words and practice, practice, practice! The words will become more fluid.
- Explore ways to record student rap songs. There are many free programs. All you need is a microphone and a quiet space to record.
- Have fun!

#### **Closure:**

- Does your rap song reflect who you are and your feelings? How?
- Was the process difficult to complete? Why?
- Do you feel you could write more rap songs in the future?
- Now that you have written a rap song, what advice would you give to other beginner rap composers?



## About the Author



*Photo Credit: Nadya Kwandibens*

**Sherryl Sewepagaham** is Cree-Dene from the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta and currently lives in Vancouver, BC with her 12-year old son. Sherryl holds a Bachelor of Education degree and has worked as a music teacher, teacher consultant, and children's choir director. She also holds a Level III Orff-Schulwerk certification through Carl Orff Canada and was an invited clinician for two national Orff conferences. Sherryl is a co-founder of the Aboriginal women's trio Asani, which received a 2006 Juno nomination. She released her debut solo album, *Splashing the Water Loudly*, in October 2014, which received a 2015 Indigenous Music Awards nomination for Best Indigenous Language or Francophone CD. She is a composer of children's drum songs, education and arts resources, and documentaries. Sherryl continues to work in schools and health organizations presenting music and holistic workshops while pursuing a Bachelor of Music Therapy at Capilano University.