

Dolloff, L. (2015). A Quallunaaq on Baffin Island: A Canadian experience of decolonizing the teacher. Forthcoming In Bartleet, B.L., Bennett, D., A. & Sutherland, N. (Eds). *Arts-based service learning with First Peoples - Towards respectful and mutually beneficial educational practices*. NY: Springer Publishing.

Culture. A bigger part of music than most of us perceive. Many of us are guilty of dismissing the importance of music as a cultural factor and how it serves as a community builder and possibly as a cultural tradition.

It saddened me to hear once again about the residential schools. Their cultural practices were banned, including their musical practices. Only new musical practices of hymn singing were encouraged. It is sad that they were being repressed and deprived of their rights. Their rights to freely practice their cultural traditions. Although we as a society have evolved past much of this discrimination, this is still a prevailing negative attitude that is being expressed today.

I want to know why this is. Part of me links it to ignorance. We are far more likely to regard something, such as a culture, as “strange” or insignificant if we know nothing about it. Gaining perspective could solve many of the world’s issues, including cultural barriers. It was eye-opening when Dolloff explained how comfortable we are to fix the Inuit in time and not bring them into the present day. We see them as a simple culture, rather than learning about their complexities.

I think it is fabulous that Dolloff has had a first hand experience of what the Inuit tradition and culture is truly like. What a better way to learn of their cultural practices than to experience it. I found the few paragraphs near the end that explained some of the fellow teachers’ experiences the most interesting. One of them stating how these new experiences often conflicted and gave discomfort to their tradition southern Canadian culture, and how this reflects how we have a centre of the universe mentality. I don’t like how accurate this statement is, but I like how powerful it is. I think if we all came to realize this, then maybe we would be able to take a step back and reflect on our assumptions or generalizations of other cultural practices that exist here in Canada.

“Music education can foster healthy concepts of cultural identity.” (Dolloff, 11). I too believe in the importance of establishing relationships in the community, and healthy ones at that. Coming from a small town to London was a bit of a culture shock for me. Not that it was a bad shock, but London has a higher level of diversity than my town with a population of 500 does. Diversity is definitely a step in the right direction. Exposing children to a population they are not used to, or might not experience on a daily basis, as Dolloff states, will help children to understand their traditions and values. Once they understand why they practice or celebrate the things they do, appreciation and respect will follow.

I do, however, want to comment on the author’s idea of incorporating meaningful service in education that meets ‘curriculum’. For me, this makes curriculum more of a

checklist than an interactive element. It places the emphasis on the fact that children must meet a certain standard, than how they are growing. I instead think we should find a balance with curriculum and culture interaction by creating a curriculum that allows children to be exposed to culture and experience first hand.