WE STILL HERE

We Still Here

Hip Hop North of the 49th Parallel

Edited by
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Acknowledgments

The seeds for the creation of this collection on hip hop were planted at the 2012 IASPM-Canada Conference entitled "Sounding the Nation? Diaspora, Indigeneity, and Multiculturalism." As part of a plenary discussion focusing on hip hop in Canada moderated by one of the founding hip hop studies scholars, Dr Murray Forman, Mark and I met for the first time, and since that day in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, we have worked together on a wide range of hip hop-based projects and academic/artistic collaborations.

During the past eight years, Mark and I have also embarked on many major changes in our lives, which have had an impact on how this collection has transformed over time – these life changes include growing our families, seeking out and taking up new positions in the academy, engaging in new forms of art making, and developing new research programs. Throughout all of these, it has been a pleasure to work alongside Mark on this project, as well as to encourage and support his significant and timely contributions to new and meaningful methods of digitally archiving often marginalized or overlooked hip hop voices and knowledges.

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Charity Marsh

I would like to thank all the hip hop heads that inspire us to pursue the fifth element, especially my crew Bigger than Hip Hop. All of the scholars in this volume demonstrated enormous patience as the project evolved and were immensely generous. Thank you to Cassandra Ozog, True Daley, Sabra Ripley, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. To Gena, Kai, and Xavier, thank you for donating so many weekends, evenings, and trips to allowing this project to come to fruition. Rest in peace Rofromtheboro.

Mark V. Campbell

Figures

Foreword

Murray Forman

There was that time, circa 1988 or 1989, when a small crowd of us gathered in a muddy baseball field in Ottawa. Assembled in front of a makeshift stage that was erected at home plate, we eagerly awaited the appearance of a hip hop artist whose name has since receded from memory. Back then, live hip hop performances were still relatively new across Canada, and appearances – park jams or club shows – headlined by Canadian artists were even more rare. That early gig consequently attained event status among the local crews, the mud and threatening skies be damned.

In roughly the same period, Canada's first major rap sensation, Maestro Fresh Wes, was ascendant, riding the success of his album *Symphony in Effect*, featuring the hit singles, "Let Your Backbone Slide" and "Drop the Needle." While his Toronto-based hip hop peer Michie Mee was actually first to sign a major record deal in 1988 on the strength of her patois-inflected rap style and dynamic stage presence, Wes was out first with a full album. In an interview on CBC television in 1990 in which he discusses his early career trajectory, Wes explained that, up to that point, "no rap artist from Canada has really been that successful yet, so we must have been doing something wrong or maybe the Canadian music industry wasn't really opening their eyes or whatever."[1] The curious but timeworn Canadian tendency for self-deprecation and modesty shines through in the interview, as does the oblique reference to the nation that evidently gets it right, that cultural behemoth to the immediate south. Wes goes on to admit, perhaps somewhat sheepishly, that Canada was not even his main market at the start and that his primary focus was on the United States and England because, as he puts it, "that's where rap is alive."

Belying this comment, however, his second album, *The Black Tie Affair* (1991), features a profoundly Canada-centric track, "Nothin' At All," with its politically astute critique of neo-fascism and police state tactics (citing the "Oka Crisis" military siege at Quebec's Kanesatake Mohawk reserve), discriminatory government policy shaped within the weak discourses of multiculturalism, and the implicit and explicit biases against Black and Indigenous Canadians. With a flow that channels some of the best artists of the era (Rakim, Big Daddy Kane) and a lyrical potency equal to that of peers such as Chuck D of Public Enemy, Wes delivers a powerful invective that is forged in love, anger, and concern for his country, the memory of its past, its immediate present, and its future. That he ends with an extended tribute to under-acknowledged Black Canadian athletes and to artists across musical genres as well as shouting out a roster of the Toronto hip hop community confirms Wes's underlying positivity and his commitment to hip hop's presentational conventions.

We Still Here: Hip Hop North of the 49th Parallel captures and elaborates on the very themes that Maestro Fresh Wes raises in "Nothin' At All." The editors Charity Marsh and Mark V. Campbell have curated an impressive collection of chapters and assembled an array of smart and insightful authors who span the nation, encompassing a range of locales and communities at the macro and micro scales, and who fully embrace the wider scope of racial, ethnic, gender, and generational identities that inform this ongoing work in progress called Canada. With such a wide scope, it is to be expected that Canadian hip hop's distinct inner mechanics and contradictions will be exposed and, indeed, they are in this collection. But the editors and authors do not shy away from the tough issues, accepting the complexity of the nation's hip hop scenes and the socio-political fields within which they emerge and thrive, as if to say, "Yeah, Canadian hip hop can be messy. But these chapters are about *our* mess and how we understand and deal with it, how we nurture and grow with it." Ultimately, this book is fiercely aligned with that distinct hip hop expression "building," which articulates a collaborative and progressive approach to the establishment of communities of cause, to the enhancement of equal rights and social justice for all, and to the hip hop ethos of "peace, love, unity, and havin' fun" that spans the culture's entire existence.

Like Wes's track, the book's tone is equal parts critical engagement and a love letter to a nation that, for all of its imperfections, remains

worthy of such care and attention. Marsh and Campbell plainly value the voices of people in the field, and throughout this book the anecdotes and testimonies of artists and hip hop activists come through loud and clear. Creative practices – the art and innovation of Canadian hip hop – are described in considerable detail, as are the lineages and social streams through which creativity flows. In this sense, the "diasporic reverberations" as discussed throughout and highlighted in the introductory chapter are palpable, and the tome itself serves as an amplifier of Canadian issues as they are felt and experienced in the nation's hip hop scenes, coast to coast and north to south.

With its theoretically rigorous emphasis on diaspora, the book offers a reminder that Canadian hip hop is part and parcel of a global flow of people and influences. Here, we see how hip hop's dispersed communities are forged within worldwide alliances and are shaped by the roots and heritage of homeland nations, by the shared linguistic traits of transnational anglophone or francophone scenes, and/or by the spiritual and political priorities of Indigenous peoples on every continent. In this regard, it is not just hip hop in Canada that is under analysis but Canada in hip hop, as the artists and scholars that advance the culture in these pages reposition their citizen status in recognition that, sometimes, one's love and responsibility to hip hop trumps national identity.

Moreover, Canada's reliance on the United States as its definitional Other (and, at times, as its definitional nemesis) has diminished over the years. For example, describing Canada's position sharing a border with the United States in a speech in 1969 at the Washington Press Club, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau stated, "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant" where we are "affected by every twitch and grunt" (25 March 1969).[2] While such a perspective might have been realistic in Canadian hip hop's early years (as Maestro Fresh Wes himself indicates), this has not been the case for quite some time as artists and entrepreneurs more readily look within Canada itself for dope talent to emulate or for collaborative opportunities. As Canadian TV star cum rapper Drake has enjoyed untrammeled success at the peak of the global hip hop industry, Canadian producers, including Boi-1da, Chin Injeti, Wondagurl, and Tone Mason, are eagerly courted by some of the top hip hop artists from south of the border. *We Still Here: Hip Hop North of the 49th Parallel* offers an unambiguous and articulate denunciation of the notion that

the United States still provides the standard by which quality and innovation are measured. As the book also makes abundantly clear, this also extends to hip hop studies.

A pronounced feature of the chapters included here is the general consensus among the authors that, in order to explore hip hop in Canada, it is essential to engage with plurality; this is to say that neither Canada *nor* hip hop culture is a singular entity but, rather, that each is the manifestation of multiple histories, sites, actions, discourses, languages, ideologies, skills, and techniques. A revelation in these pages is the ways in which many of the authors summon the nation's varied pasts, delving into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, encompassing colonial and postcolonial disputes, Indigenous treaty rights, and, coming into the early twenty-first century, tracing the emergence of a new politics of Indigenous struggle (including conditions associated with the 2008 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada) as well as resistance to official and unofficial expressions of the subordination of and discrimination against Black Canadians and members of the country's LGBTQ+ communities. That the history recorded here substantially exceeds hip hop's nascence and evolution, at times by hundreds of years, is entirely significant and makes this a truly unique contribution to the study of roots and culture in hip hop studies.

Ultimately, it is to Marsh, Campbell, and the authors' credit that readers of this compendium will come away much better informed about Canada and its citizens and about the driving forces that are mobilized in and through Canadian hip hop culture's varied expressive art forms, its elements: Mcing, Djing, B-boying/B-Girling, and aerosol art/graffiti. To state it bluntly, this book is absolutely on hip hop's fifth element tip: *knowledge*.

Peace.
Murray Forman
Boston, MA

NOTES

1 See CBC (1990) for interview.
2 See a clip of this speech on CBC (n.d.).

WE STILL HERE

INDIGENOUS AND DIASPORA REVERBERATIONS

Hip Hop in Canada and Canadian Hip Hop. An Introduction

Charity **Marsh** and Mark V. **Campbell**

Writing about hip hop culture in Canada at the very moment when Canadian hip hop and pop artists dominate the billboards globally may appear as a curious endeavour. Why should we limit our discussion of hip hop to the borders of the Canadian nation-space? In the age of sophisticated algorithms and global discoverability on our hand-held devices that can ensure the latest Drake song can be obtained in places like New Zealand, why focus on hip hop culture in Canada? The global rise of Toronto-based emcee Aubrey Drake Graham, while wonderful news for music industry stakeholders, casts a huge market-oriented shadow on how we might think about hip hop culture as a social phenomenon. Focusing on the music industry is important for, as was clear in the lack of local radio airplay of the 2016 Polaris prize winner, Montreal's Kaytranada, and the 2017 Juno Award winner for hip hop, Toronto's Jazz Cartier, the Canadian music industry is not overly invested in supporting hip hop music in any sustained or significant way. We only have to think back to the majority of hip hop artists signed to record deals in the 1980s to recognize this pattern. Artists such as Rumble, Michie Mee, and Maestro Fresh Wes were all signed by non-Canadian record companies like Island Records in the United Kingdom, First Priority Records in the United States, and Germany's LMR Records, respectively. In various debates in the public sphere, significant and necessary attention is focused on

thinking through the career ambitions of hip hop artists. But what happens when we are forceful in our desire to think about hip hop culture outside of market constraints and values?

Decidedly focusing on hip hop in Canada means we can be attentive to the myriad of beautiful ways in which culture evolves and transforms our society. Canada's ten provinces and three territories provide deeply varied ways in which hip hop culture is made to speak to its locality and to urgent social issues. Again, working within the borders of Canada means we can compare and contrast memories, significations, and creative production from diverse geographic and social regions governed by the same national discourses and cultural policies. Attention to the cultural innovations in hip hop cultures within these national borders means decentring the primacy of market-related analyses and, thus, a direct refusal to fetishize the financial implications of Drake's industry successes.

Since we initially sat down to conceptualize this edited volume, there have emerged three very formidable pop stars from Canada whose presence atop the Billboard Chart has become commonplace. Unlike Drake, Justin Bieber and the Weeknd are not considered hip hop artists, but their dress, dance, and vernacular clearly borrow heavily from hip hop culture. Hip hop culture's influence on pop music and youth cultures (even in the remotest regions) in Canada is undeniable;[1] yet, there exists no unified or concerted effort to articulate what might be unique about hip hop cultures north of the 49th parallel in North America. Shying away from a national hip hop identity, hip hop community members focus on their localities when digging up hip hop histories in cities like Halifax, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Vancouver, as well as smaller centres like Pangnirtung, Nunavut, and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, as a way to articulate a sense of place.

To think about hip hop cultures within Canada is to necessarily struggle with the problem of the "nation" as hip hop's fluid and diasporic nature troubles some of the routine ways in which we understand culture, nation, and art. This collection of chapters was born out of a desire to make sense of the rich and diverse ways in which hip hop is taken up within Canadian national borders. From Angola to New Zealand, from Mexico to France, hip hop's global reach is undeniable, seeping through geographical borders to foster innovative and creative relationships. In Canada, this seepage and, subsequently, these unique kinds of relationships are audible and hyper-relevant within the con-

temporary lives of people living in urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Edmonton as well as in the more rural and isolated communities found on Baffin Island, in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and across the Prairie provinces.

Both the hyperlocal ways in which hip hop affects young people today and the global ways in which this subculture of style travels between national borders creates a productive friction. This friction forces us to continually reassess and re-evaluate some of the easy cognitive frames that suggest hip hop is simply the creative responses of African American youth to postindustrial American society. Drawing on numerous case studies, both Tony Mitchell (2001a) and Murray Forman (2002) have clearly outlined how hip hop, especially hip hop outside of the United States, cannot be understood within the limitations of cultural mimicry. Hip hop across the globe has common signifiers, arts practices, and, at times, political expressions, but it is through a localizing process that hip hop provides a dialogue that is filled with the complexities of place, space, and time. A sustained conversation between the global and the hyperlocal necessarily opens up generative spaces where the sometimes nefarious actions of the state and transnational corporations are illuminated, challenged, and deciphered in analytically astute creative expressions.

As a culture founded upon a mythology of resistance, emancipation, and revolt, hip hop has proven useful as a catalyst for strategic political action and social engagement around the world. As is evident within a number of chapters in this volume, hip hop cultures in Canada have at times enabled youth, especially Indigenous youth, to "mediate representations of themselves and their current lived experiences through mobile technologies and local networks, challenging common stereotypes and reified identities that continue to circulate in political, cultural, and national discourses" (Marsh 2009a, 110). Hip hop cultures in Canada have become ways in which the ongoing coloniality of both settler colonialism and diasporic wandering become central to analyses of our contemporary moment.

This collection of chapters is organized into three parts: Part 1: Remembering, Narrating, and Archiving Hip Hop in Canada; Part 2: Representation and Belonging; and Part 3: Politics, Poetics, and Potentials. Each part clusters important themes that, when read together, provide a way to think about the histories and herstories of hip hop in Canada, present-day concerns, and many possible futures of hip hop in this country. Embedded within each section are chapters, including

interviews with individuals whose existence within hip hop culture is marginal or often overlooked by mainstream media outlets. We amplify marginalized voices to present a more polyvocal notion of hip hop in Canada as these individuals are either positioned or obscured as not your typical imagery associated with hip hop. More important, as scholars in the academy cognizant of our positionality, we want to ensure we make spaces for multiple voices in a lateral way that recognizes the importance of centring the margins of a culture already intimately aware of society's marginal spaces. Our desire is for these voices to interrupt the very structured and rigid way hip hop culture can get absorbed into academic work, reminding scholars and hip hop heads that we can operate on opposite sides of the same coin.

REMEMBERING, NARRATING, AND ARCHIVING HIP HOP IN CANADA

To remember hip hop culture, particularly before it was a polished consumer and global entity, is not merely a nostalgic activity demonstrating a serious generational divide. Rather, thinking about hip hop and its many histories and herstories is a political act, one that is juxtaposed to the conspicuous consumption and limited "shelf life" of music made for mass consumption. The historian of hip hop, if such an antiquated articulation of doing historical work can be applied to hip hop culture, is one whose work is never neutral, always producing ways of knowing and situated knowledges. Historical work in hip hop sits in direct contrast to the desires of the culture industry to enhance profit margins by exploiting the new markets. Hip hop's disposition towards newness and freshness makes the genre an attractive market for this kind of exploitation. Hip hop is still grappling with aging and what to do in a culture where newness, youth, and freshness are so deeply intertwined with representational strategies. While the newness embedded in the excessive styling of the culture continues to impressively innovate, the flip side is the work in double time one must do to capture, document, remember, celebrate, and disseminate. The work of Tania Willard, co-curator of the art exhibition *Beat Nation*, beautifully interrupts the overwhelming market-focused orientation of hip hop culture. Initially, Willard sought to curate an online exhibition of some of her Indigenous friends' engagement with hip hop. Willard, neither scholar nor hip hop head, provides useful ways of thinking about Indigeneity and hip hop, through hybridity, mixture, and fluidity. *Beat*

Nation brought to the fore a plethora of artworld stars like Corey Bulpitt, Kent Monkman, and Skeena Reece to deeply engage with what hip hop might mean from an Indigenous perspective.

Of course, whenever you have youthful creative expressions, struggle over representation and power exist: even if only circulating, hegemony is real. The narration of hip hop's social life and the discursive formations within which hip hop is inserted matter deeply to the sustainability of the culture in Canada. The earliest widely disseminated writing in hip hop in Canada came from the daily newspapers in major urban centres like Ottawa, Edmonton, Montreal, and Toronto. In short and pithy spurts of seven hundred words or less, journalists attempted to describe and make sense of hip hop culture for the wider world as early as 1984 in daily papers such as the *Toronto Star* and the *Montreal Gazette*. With condescending tones and flippant dismissals of the cultural inventiveness of hip hop, readers of daily newspapers were introduced to hip hop culture from journalists outside of that culture. Without taking up an old insider/outsider dichotomous debate, at the earliest stages of hip hop culture's existence in Canada, the writers who held the power to disseminate their views of hip hop to the masses also held the power to insert hip hop into specific discourses and so to shape public perception, reception, and consciousness.

Contentious historical records in the United States are slowly being augmented and rectified with an increasing number of hip hop archives. Institutional interest in archiving hip hop began with Marceylina Morgan's efforts at Harvard (unofficially in her office at UCLA) and continue with the subsequent development of other Ivy League homes for hip hop artefacts, such as Tulane and Cornell.[2] Archiving hip hop signals a dramatic shift in the way academic institutions take up a culture that has for the most part been excluded or, at best, granted sparse attention within cultural histories.

Within Canada, remembering, collecting, and archiving hip hop is being shaped by Mark Campbell's Northside Hip Hop Archive,[3] which focuses on local knowledges, interviews with artists and participants within the culture, as well as various cultural artefacts. Much of the work to be done in Canada concerns historiographic accounts of hip hop cultures in various cities. While somewhat accurately documented in the music, a general understanding of histories of hip hop cultures in Canada is only slowly beginning to emerge among mainstream media outlets.[4] Thus, Campbell's Northside Hip Hop Archive, an online archival project focusing on hip hop histories north of the

49th parallel, fills a major gap in Canadian hip hop. Moreover, the multi-media platform of an online archive presents a more complex system through which the diverse elements of hip hop can be documented. Particularly among the other elements, such as DJing, b-boying/b-girling, and aerosol art, media coverage and accurate historiographic accounts are critical to a better understanding and appreciation of the many diverse hip hop cultures produced and practised in Canada.

Like hip hop's excessive stylings, *We Still Here* is designed to trouble some of the comfortable ways in which we have become accustomed to understanding hip hop in Canada and Canadian hip hop. At play in the subtitle of this introduction and overall conception of the book is a necessary "loosening of knowledge," a poignant reminder of our agency and the utility of a diasporic frame (Gates 1988). Beyond simply being playful and postmodern, the option provided in the introduction subtitle, "Hip Hop in Canada and Canadian Hip Hop," signals our desire to rethink the normative ways in which we are complicit with the hegemony of the nation and of transnational corporations. From the perspectives of Indigenous, francophone, and diasporic Afro-Caribbean hip hoppers in Canada, this book would do a disservice if it did not illuminate and amplify the brilliant and continuous ways in which the nation is remapped, re-authored, and made both inclusive and accountable through hip hop music and cultures from Nova Scotia to Nunavut to British Columbia. Since the late 1990s, the works of Roger Chamberland, Murray Forman, Charity Marsh, Rinaldo Walcott, and others have opened up several ways in which we might understand the different facets of hip hop cultures in Canada. Now, since at least the late 2000s, digital culture has dramatically changed how we engage hip hop, influencing how we learn the art forms and how corporations operate in the era of peer-to-peer sharing, mash ups, and diasporic creative connections. The art of the DJ has been dramatically transformed with digital interfaces expanding the libraries and techniques of hip hop DJs (Campbell 2014). Yet, on the world stage, Canadian Turntablists continue to achieve, with DJ Vekked taking the World DMCs multiple times, following DJ Dopey's 2003 World DMCs win and DJ Atrak's 1997 win. Moreover, Canadian artist DJ SHE was the first female DJ in Canada to compete in the worldwide Red Bull 3 Style competition in 2010 and became a 2012 Pioneer DJ Stylus Award Nominee for Female DJ of the year.[5, 6]

By exploring various hip hop cultures in Canada, we find the physical geography and local influences of each region beautifully mapped onto the creative expressions of DJs, b-girls/b-boys, graph writers, producers, and emcees. Throughout the musical creations of hip hop cultures in Canada, Classified's sampling of a bagpipe from Maritimes folk music neatly contrasts French/English/Kreyol rhymes from Ottawa's D.L. Incognito, which also nicely contrasts with Nelson Tagoona's throat boxing in Nunavut – the heterogeneity found within Canadian borders is both mystifying and evidence of the importance and power of hip hop cultures. Within this heterogeneity is the mobility of young hip hoppers who search the country (and beyond) for fertile hip hop homes. It is not uncommon for aspiring artists to move to Montreal or Toronto or Vancouver early in their career, bringing their localized culture into contact with more diverse metropolitan spaces. It is through a lens of mobility that we begin to see how space and place, concepts integral to global hip hop discourse, are understood within Canada.

REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING

Even before hip hop as a concept and word entered our vocabulary, the politics of space was central to how graph writers made trains their public canvas. The erosion of the South Bronx, the abandoning of burned down apartment buildings, and the prominence of white flight all signify the interconnectedness and highly political concept of space. Robert Moses's "modernist catastrophe" of a freeway could not disentangle the politics of space and the emergence of hip hop culture, as Jeff Chang (2007,10) has documented so well. One cannot forget that in the United States, as well as in Canada, through the ideologies of settler colonialism and multiculturalism, the politics of space has always intersected the politics of race. From the Underground Railroad to present-day Southside Chicago, from the implementation of residential schools to today's Idle No More and Reconciliation movements, the entanglements of race, justice, oppression, negotiations, housing, and drugs force an extended consideration of how we imagine and understand the public interventions of hip hop cultures – interventions such as b-boy ciphers in Union Square to present-day city "beautification" (read: anti-graffiti) projects to hip hop videos of cultural identifications from the isolated communities of the far North posted to YouTube.[7]

Immediately, the politics of representation comes to mind when we think of the ways in which groups like Public Enemy, Warparty, A Tribe Called Red, and the Rascals intervene into dominant discourse, speaking truth to power in creative and thought-provoking ways. To "represent" is a key means by which hip hop cultures ensure creative "authenticity" and reproduce a canon of notions and ideas that remain core to how the culture reimagines itself in spite of place. For example, the centrality or originality (however mythical) and a sustained focus on style have been protective measures, ensuring "wackness and biting" do not become acceptable parts of the culture. Similarly, the canonization of 1520 Sedgwick, and New York City in general, has been a consistent spatial project that continually implicates space with the politics of representation. Urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver tend to dominate discussions on hip hop in Canada, and yet regional hip hop identities and practices are represented throughout the nation, as is evident in a number of the chapters in *We Still Here*.

Prior to cinematic attempts such as *Wild Style* (1983), *Juice* (1992), and *Rhyme & Reason* (1997), representation was a key activity of the emcee. If we return to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message" (1982), particularly the video, we find a thickly ethnographic snapshot of postindustrial life, with "broken glass everywhere" and people "pissing in the hallways." Even with a proliferation of films made within hip hop communities, to represent remains central to forms of empowerment and ethnography in conversation with the too often criminalizing efforts of dominant media outlets such as Fox News Network and, especially, regional and local news.[8]

Thinking back to Nas's seminal 1994 joint, "Represent," the track expresses significant dislike and concern for the formal education system while explaining some of the habits and customs of Nas's crew members as they attempt to survive in the "urban jungle." This speaking truth to neoliberal postindustrial power is the continued promise and potency of hip hop as racialized and marginalized communities work to demystify the systemic structures that nurture racial oppression. In the Canadian context, many of the same tactics are both necessary and frequently employed to ensure hip hop communities are empowered, often resulting in the dissemination of analytically astute observations. For example, tracks like Black-I's "Where I'm From," Warparty's "Feeling Reserved," Black Union's "Africville," Eekwol's "Apprento," and JB the First Lady's "Still Here" all speak to

localized conditions of marginalization, disempowerment, and erasure. In naming this collection, we settled upon the hook from JB the First Lady's song "Still Here." *We Still Here* speaks on many levels to both the shared and diverse identities, experiences, motivations, politics, and activist strategies found within hip hop culture all over Canada. These tracks and others stand in stark contradistinction to dominant media reports, news stories, and articles that attempt to connect hip hop to crime, and racialized bodies to dysfunction. Thus, reading hip hop cultures in Canada and beyond is a useful practice in thinking through and analyzing the forms of life that challenge our dominant regimes of thought and open spaces for agency, analysis, and social consciousness.

POLITICS, POETICS, AND POTENTIALS

In multilingual cities like Montreal, Moncton, and Ottawa, there remain versions of the past and narrations of spatial politics that rely on and extend hip hop's historical embeddedness in the politics of space, particularly when we think of sites of anglophone blackness in Montreal or the historic black communities in North Preston. In Part 3 we include an interview with True Daley, a former Montreal resident whose anglophone heritage led her to Toronto. True was one of the three founders of the *Masters at Work* radio show on CKUT in 1991. Living at the intersection of race, gender, and language, True details her trials and tribulations with episodes of sexism and harassment fit for our current #MeToo movement. Speaking from the position of a racialized woman, anglophone radio host, and aspiring emcee, True's intersectionality adds a layer of complexity to how the politics of hip hop, despite its many liberatory moments, is not unequivocally emancipatory.

In many cities across the Prairies and in the Far North, identifications with mythic hip hop histories are reworked and even Indigenized, as young people participate in complex discussions concerning the ongoing effects of colonialism in the present day. As Marsh (2009a, 126) has argued, "Hip hop has become a place [for young people] to begin to dialogue about current crises within communities including fractures in relationships, social problems including drug addictions, depression, alcoholism, poverty, suicide, crime, cultural trauma, environmental degradation – and the ongoing legacies of colonialism."

Many of the chapters in *We Still Here* work, then, to elaborate ways in which we might come to fully appreciate the intersections of race and the spatial politics of localized hip hop communities. Too often we think of urbanized spaces when we imagine the location and impact of hip hop, but, as many of the authors demonstrate, we must also consider spaces like the university and non-urban spaces that often provide fertile ground for Indigenous hip hop artists. Thinking across space and time, examining hip hop cultures with a consideration of the creative potential and representational possibilities of space, the probability for hip hop to motivate remapping revisions and reconsiderations of the "naturalness" of Western spatial constructs and offer something different is both real and relevant.

By way of documented histories/herstories of Canadian hip hop cultures, there exist very few published writings that explicitly attempt to historicize hip hop in Canada nationally. Several regional writings, both popular and academic, have provided windows onto the earliest days of hip hop in Canada. Street zines in the 1990s and documentaries in the late 1990s and early 2000s have done well to continue to piece together a number of hip hop narratives in Canada. Documentaries such as the 1994 release of *Make Some Noise!*, CBC's *Love Props and the T-Dot* (2011), and *Hip Hop Eh* (2012) by Vancouver DJ Joe Klymkiw are important mechanisms with which to raise awareness about hip hop in Canada. With the desire to continue to add to this archival and historical work, we made the concerted effort to interview several artists so that they could speak directly about their hip hop histories and herstories.[9] The interview material found throughout these chapters explores cultures in Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and the Prairies, adding to some already excellent interview content from the Maritimes and Toronto by writers and scholars such as Michael McGuire (2011) and Remi Warner (2006). In the context of institutional power, academics focusing on first-person oral histories by members of the hip hop community is one crucial way to ensure that academics do not speak for hip hoppers. The archived interviews and oral histories captured on Northside Hip Hop Archive begin to increase the number of voices and perspectives to which the public can gain access in cities like Regina, Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto.

One of the main goals of this collection is to provide a route to explore facets of Canadian identity and culture, such as bilingualism and multiculturalism, in ways that speak to a new generation of young people engaged in hip hop cultures. It has become apparent

that, at an institutional level, hip hop speaks more eloquently to a new generation than did previous attempts on the part of museums, galleries, and school boards. Thus, *We Still Here* highlights some of the innovative ways in which racialized young people signify on existing dominant, and often static, relationships that involve race, gender, and class. For example, at the very moment that major galleries and museums struggle to grow audiences in youth "markets" and among racialized people and newcomers, hip hop festivals amplify visibility for those populations that institutions seek to develop as audiences. Even with hip hop exhibitions like *Beat Nation*,[10] the ongoing performances and festival events create more of a draw for young people than does the actual site. At its core, hip hop refuses the hegemonic invisibility placed upon racialized bodies, and it does so through its excessive stylistic engagements with, and significations on consumer culture. Spatially, as places like Hogan's Alley and Africville are systematically erased from our visual landscape, hip hop finds ways to resurrect the lives of historic black communities, speak truth to power, and make hyper-visible supposedly disposable other/ed non-white bodies. Halifax's Black Union is a great example of hip hop artists refusing the erasure of spaces of black inhabitance.

At one level, hip hop cultures work to decolonize the coloniality of their existence in Canada. Through subversive styling, a geopolitics of visibility, and aggressive attempts at constructing an ethical place to which to belong, hip hop can be, and at times does indeed become, a tool for reimagining our social world. Furthermore, as is illustrated in some of the following chapters, at the very same moment in which productively disruptive innovations in hip hop culture occur, there is a consumptive element – of records, equipment, and clothing – that limits these disruptive innovations. Hip hop cultures in Canada are also full of contradictions, which is yet another reason for us to engage in a deeper dialogue and to further understand the significance of hip hop north of the 49th parallel.

We Still Here is comprised of scholarly chapters, a number of which draw upon formal and informal discussions with artists, as well as one artist interview. It is our hope that, although this volume is not a complete representation of all hip hop cultures (past and present) that comprise hip hop in Canada, it does provide a solid foundation for, and perspective on, a culture that has been actively embraced and reimagined all over Canada – a culture that offers diverse, rich, and unique stories of hip hoppers and their communities living north of the 49th parallel.

For some, these narratives are demonstrations of the ways in which barriers are overcome. Politically, spatially, physically, and ideologically, the barriers erected around young people engaged in hip hop, sometimes installed by media misrepresentation, speak to ways in which hip hop cultures have demanded a different kind of future. From this perspective, hip hop is a lived strategy/politics/movement that deserves critical engagement and serious contemplation.

NOTES

1 Refer to Marsh (2009a) discussing the engagement of hip hop culture by Inuit youth living in some of the most northern communities in Nunavut.
2 For more discussion, see Jones (2004).
3 For a detailed description of Northside Hip Hop and its impacts on archiving hip hop histories in Canada, see Campbell (chap. 1, this volume).
4 For more specific local histories from all over Canada, visit Northside Hip Hop Archive, nshharchive.ca.
5 For more information, visit the DMC World DJ Championships website (n.d.).
6 For further discussion on DJ She and other female Canadian hip hop artists, see Marsh (chap. 11, this volume).
7 For a discussion of Northerns with Attitude's YouTube launch of "Don't Call Me Eskimo," see Marsh (2009a).
8 For further discussion on how media represents hip hop artists, particularly Indigenous men in Canada, see Marsh (2011).
9 To gain access to these interviews, visit Northside Hip Hop Archive (2018) and search under "oral histories."
10 For example, see Marsh (chap. 3, this volume).

PART ONE

Remembering, Narrating, and Archiving Hip Hop in Canada

3

CELEBRATION, RESISTANCE, AND ACTION

Beat Nation: Hip Hop as Indigenous Culture

Charity **Marsh**

From MCs to graff writers, video makers, painters and poets, Aboriginal rights and rhymes have inspired a new fusion of hip hop and diverse Indigenous cultures. Distilling these influences into contemporary art and experimental music was an extension of using these mediums to engage young people in their culture(s). Aboriginal cultural lyricscapes peppered N8V hip hop tracks and from Cree to Inuit to Haida to Mohawk and more, our realities and our dreams were reflected in the music, the art, and the culture of hip hop.[1]

Tania Willard, *Beat Nation* co-curator

INTRODUCTION

From a simple online search of "hip hop" along with the keywords "community," "youth," and "empowerment," it quickly becomes apparent that hip hop artists, fans, activists, and researchers from across arts disciplines and regions around the world recognize the significance and potential of hip hop as a culture of storytelling, political activism, and resistance. Furthermore, as is evident from a number of chapters in this volume,[2] hip hop and its associated arts practices also offer possible strategies for understanding, withstanding, and reimagining contemporary Indigenous identities. Elsewhere I have made the claim that from such new imaginings Indigenous youth "mediate represen-

tations of themselves and their current lived experiences through mobile technologies and local networks, challenging common stereotypes and reified identities that continue to circulate in political, cultural, and national discourses" (Marsh 2009a, 112).

Turning to *Beat Nation: Hip Hop as Indigenous Culture*, it becomes even more evident that Indigenous youth living in Canada are embodying a global hip hop politics as they connect to other youth cultures around the world who have adapted hip hop culture and its arts practices as a means to organize young people, revolt against (neo)colonialism, and resist assimilation and extinction of "traditional" culture. In the essay "Rhyming Out the Future: Reclaiming Identity through Indigenous Hip Hop," Lindsay Knight (2015, par.1), a Cree hip hop artist and Indigenous studies scholar, makes the argument that "hip hop fills a cultural void within urban [Indigenous] people's identities, and assists in maintaining Indigenous worldview through resistance, revitalization, and connection to the spirit world." Contrary to criticisms that have been voiced by "older community members who see [hip hop's] influence as a break from tradition and the movement of the culture towards a pop-based mainstream assimilation," the curators and contributing artists, Knight being one of the artists, of *Beat Nation* highlight how hip hop is in fact "giving youth new tools to rediscover First Nations culture [and] embrace the traditional within its development" (*Beat Nation* n.d.).

Financed through Heritage Canada's Gateway Fund with support from the now cancelled Canadian Culture Online program, *Beat Nation* was initially developed as one production of Vancouver-based artist-run centre Grunt Gallery. *Beat Nation* began as an online project that "focuse[d] on the development of hip hop culture within Aboriginal youth communities and its influence on cultural production" (*Beat Nation* n.d.). Embracing the many hip hop arts disciplines (as well as other cultural practices that are at times tangentially related to hip hop, such as skateboarding, fashion, and dance), the interactive site and exhibitions of *Beat Nation* celebrate, promote, and help to define what is meant by an Indigenization of hip hop culture.

From its curatorial aesthetic, including the choice of contributing artists and their works, as well as its multiple exhibition styles (the online gallery site, exhibition for the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the touring exhibition), *Beat Nation* exemplifies how hip hop can be adapted to become a means to express, challenge, provoke,

and make sense of Canada's ongoing legacies associated with colonialism. Drawing on an interview conducted with co-curator and artist Tania Willard, along with examples from the site, this chapter further proposes that *Beat Nation* also contributes to a meaningful process of reconciliation or, more usefully, what David Garneau (2016) articulates as "conciliation" through the telling of stories within multiple arts practices,[3] the celebration of diverse hip hop voices, and, as Knight (2015, par. 4) notes, a hip hop resistance "through Indigenous awareness of culture and identity, colonization and revolution."

BEAT NATION: STORYTELLING

> Just as in any massive form of communication, there are going to be sentimental statements made, broad sweeping fears expressed and lots of "documentation" to examine, but we should really consider ourselves lucky. Native youth, Native people, Indigenous people, hip hop people are presenting ideas making connections, drawing conclusions and asking important questions.[4]
>
> Skeena Reece, *Beat Nation* co-curator

On the homepage of the virtual *Beat Nation* exhibition, the viewer is offered multiple entry points into the world of hip hop through an Indigenous lens. Along with a statement from Glen Atleen (the producer of the exhibition) and some images of contributors' artworks, the gallery is divided into various sections through links to separate pages on the site, including: curatorial statements,[5] a music page,[6] an artists' page (visual, performance, and dance artists),[7] and a writer's page,[8] as well as a page highlighting credits, funders, and an online survey and blog. The audience can click on each link and move with ease through each virtual space, enlarging images, reading artist biographies, playing embedded videos, and listening to the *Beat Nation* soundtrack.[9]

For viewers familiar with hip hop history, politics, and aesthetics, the rationale for artists included in *Beat Nation* is clear. Each artist has drawn on hip hop aesthetics, styles, and performance practices, and yet has also included and/or created "elements that are distinctive, and generated from local vernacular, landscape, cultural practices, politics, and place" (Marsh 2012a, 356). In her curatorial statement, Tania Willard writes: "Aboriginal artists have taken hip hop influences and

indigenized them to fit Aboriginal experiences: The roots of hip hop are there but they have been ghost-danced by young Native artists who use hip hop culture's artists' forms and combine them with Aboriginal story, experience, and aesthetics" (*Beat Nation* n.d.).

When I was speaking with co-curator Tania Willard in October 2014, she discussed how she and her co-curators made decisions concerning the various aspects of the gallery. Specifically, I asked how the curators found an overall vision for what culminated in such an amazing, huge, inter- and multidisciplinary project with multiple conversations and layers. Willard talked me through how the project took shape:

> We were co-curating together with Archer Pechawis, who is an Indigenous website designer. Originally we knew other artists in our community who were doing really great work. Corey Bulpitt being one, he was becoming a really great carver and doing totem poles and very traditional, beautiful work but also making some kind of blinged out rings and doing graffiti art. We focused in on that – artists who were both honouring and supporting and advocating and practicing their culture, as well as finding a way to do that through hip hop without it seeming like the two were at polarized ends of the spectrum. They were able to bring [hip hop and identity] together. For me, it was also about creating a picture, a non-stereotypical kind of picture, of Indigenous people as a people of many different diverse interests, cultures, practices and importantly, as contemporary peoples as well. In terms of the actual original site, there weren't a lot of parameters. This is my early work as a curator as well. I never trained as a curator. I came out of Fine Arts school and then came out of an activism culture and then started, working more and more in the Indigenous community and through art ... I wanted to have people who were doing great work and that I thought of as forwarding both political and cultural goals. I also wanted to make sure that people who were making the music themselves had a voice.

Recognizing the need for Indigenous musicians to have a platform from which to tell their stories is critical to understanding how projects like *Beat Nation* become so consequential for marginalized communities. Willard states: "On the original site there are musicians and

writers like Kinnie Starr and Ronald Harris (aka Ostwelve) who talk about their own journey into hip hop. [I chose to have them tell their stories] because I felt like that wasn't my place; I wasn't a hip hop emcee. I was the curator and an artist and coming at it from a different perspective. I wanted to make sure those people's voices were heard – the ones who were really making hip hop their life."[10]

The following passage from Kinnie Starr is an excellent example of what Willard is talking about:

> Hip hop is a place where we share our stories eloquently at times, arrogantly or awkwardly at others. The beats and rhymes I have written showcase my background as a middle-class, white-red girl from Calgary, Alberta, raised on metal and old school rap, as well as an intellect, rocker and a seeker of truth. On top of my thick dub-rock sloppy hip hop beats, I throw words like they are stones in a river and make my way through life. Making hip hop gave (and gives) me a chance to slowly and articulately find my footing in the complicated landscape of Native and white Canadians. And though my feet sometimes stumble, I believe without hip hop I would still be hiding in the closet, afraid to take a step forward as the woman I am becoming. (*Beat Nation* n.d.)

Through such stories, the complex narratives of mixed ancestry, identity formation, and belonging within a settler colonial society are divulged. Genre blending, sampling, and the inclusion of various landscapes assist Starr in feeling at home within a genre like hip hop in spite of its contradictions, which, at times, result in empowerment for some and oppression for others.

As highlighted throughout the chapters of *We Still Here*, hip hop has multiple entry points and encompasses a range of arts disciplines, thus enabling a heterogeneous collection of voices to participate. "Young people from all around the world with diverse cultural, social, economic, and political backgrounds are drawn to hip hop because the culture allows for a confluence of a multitude of national, regional, and cultural sensibilities with its aesthetics, styles, and pleasures" (Marsh 2009a, 119). To tell one's story through hip hop presents the opportunity for both a shared language *and* uniqueness. Willard explains the importance of such stories included in *Beat Nation*:

> In terms of the project getting wider attention, it was when Kathleen Ritter had curated a small portion of the music part of *Beat Nation*, [she included] people like Christie Charles who [does her] rapping in Halkomelem, [and is of] Musqueam. I should also say that it was important for me, within the realm of different urban Indigenous people to also make sure that there was voice to the local Indigenous Nations which are the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam – Nations around Vancouver, BC. And so, Christie is this great, young hip hop artist mother and she does some rapping in her own language, which a number of other artists do as well. This has always been to me really inspiring. [On the site] there is that kind of hip hop, as well as Nicholas Galanin's early work with his videos.

Here Willard is describing the music of Miss Christie Lee Charles (aka Crunch),[11] as well as Nicholas Galanin, whose two works, "Tsu Heidei Shugaztutaan part 1" and "Tsu Heidei Shugaztutaan part 2," capture the combining of contemporary break dance with a traditional sound track and electro-beats with traditional dance.[12] Willard continues: "Those works really kind of framed for me what I was hoping to get at in the conversation around the project. I was really wary that people were going to see it and be like, 'Oh, you know, Native kids doing new things, it's all about new, new, new!' But it's not about that. It's about people seeing this continuum of their culture and incorporating a holistic idea of who they are as an Indigenous person that doesn't have to be divorced from [Indigenous] contemporary realities."[13] Willard's concerns around how *Beat Nation* is understood and read are significant. Too often, we are caught up in what Walter Benjamin (2002) refers to in his critique of culture as the "culture of the new." The shiny, new thing, whatever it is, becomes the object of discussion and promotion, rather than the larger systems and, in this case, the realities from which the new object, practice, art has evolved and/or from that which the stories and activism have manifested.

BEAT NATION: POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Through their raps, beats, graffiti, and dance, the students are telling stories – to each other, to their peers, to their families, and to their communities –

about how they understand their own politics, acts of resistance and compliance, fears, anxieties, dreams, celebrations, identity, and culture.

Charity Marsh, "Hip Hop as Methodology"

At one point, I asked Willard how she came to be interested in curating *Beat Nation*. In her response, she articulated the influence of grassroots activism and, more specifically, the impact of the zine *Redwire Magazine*, "a national [Indigenous] youth-run publication, that came out of Vancouver and started [in 1997] with two sisters, Nena and Billie Pierre."[14] From Willard's perspective, *Redwire Magazine* was ahead of the game: the zine was "tuned into the power and influence of hip hop in 2003 when they released their first Indigenous artist spoken-word CD, which they followed up in 2005 with another release of Indigenous hip hop" (*Beat Nation* n.d.). Speaking at length about how young Indigenous people living in British Columbia were mobilizing in order to stand up for their rights, Willard made a convincing connection between the utilization or engagement of hip hop as political activism and a youth-initiated strategy for resistance:

> After being abroad for a year I started working for *Redwire*. *Redwire* was an Indigenous youth publication. That project was really important because for the first time, it gave voice to an urban, Indigenous youth population that was at the time really politically active. Things were happening out at UBC, [with the Free Trade Summit] in 2000-ish, and that was overlapping at the same time with the province's push to have this new Treaty process where they wanted to consult bands and basically boil down the remaining Indigenous land claims, territorial claims – which is all of BC because that's still outstanding – over 99 percent claimed and unsettled by treaties – they wanted to settle those down to neat little packaged treaties that would create certainty for investors and municipal style governance for bands. Many Indigenous peoples stood up against that process ... In particular, Indigenous youth had a strong voice in standing against that process ... When I came back to Vancouver, what was really happening was Indigenous youth were using hip hop to talk about the BC treaty process and to talk about ideas of cultural pride and self-determination, as well as deeper political issues around capitalism and economies and how we understand these as Indigenous peoples.[15]

As a project, *Beat Nation* was initially connected to a particular community and regional activism. In British Columbia, there were a number of Indigenous emcees who were performing hip hop while simultaneously engaging in movements for social and political change. Willard explains:

> We all did all this kind of work and community activism for years with little recording studios popping up and women more and more getting into hip hop. It was actually at the tail end of when I'd stopped working with *Redwire* that Grunt Gallery approached [me. We'd] been doing a number of these curated online galleries which were kind of interesting spaces. *Redwire* had already endeavoured into doing online exhibitions. We were thinking ahead about where our magazine would actually make it to – rural communities and connectivity and all those kinds of issues in the early 2000s as well ... It became really important to me with *Beat Nation* that people who defined themselves through hip hop, who were my friends, and people I worked with, and activists I knew, that I had to honour that and that place and the activism that was happening as much as the works that were being created. That's the many threads that came together to form what became *Beat Nation* which originally, of course, was an online gallery site which still exists at beat nation.org.[16]

The necessity of honouring the connection between the artworks and the political activism of the artists, as well as her own activism, is very clear as one moves through the site. This led me to ask Willard a number of questions concerning her relationship to hip hop, as well as the impacts, if any, she has witnessed over the years of *Beat Nation's* existence. Specifically, I asked the following three questions: How were you drawn in to hip hop? What have you seen in the past number of years since *Beat Nation* has existed in terms of its activism through hip hop? What is your thinking on hip hop as a strategy, as an activism these days? Willard's answers take into account the complexities of one's own experience, the emancipatory possibilities associated with conscious hip hop, the realities of collaborating with a lot of artists, and the restrictions of actual physical and virtual spaces. She responds:

> I think [my understanding has] changed a bit. I think a lot of the people who are all working in that genre and that vein are still doing a lot of great work and still have conscious hip hop ideas. But it's also within that process that I've matured, had children, been through many life experiences. So whereas before I might have liked there to be "*the most amazing hip hop show*," every time the tour went to a new place, it wasn't possible for me, alone, to organize all that stuff. I had to coordinate with [institutions.]

After attending the exhibition of *Beat Nation* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan (MacKenzie Art Gallery n.d.), I found myself reflecting on the importance of community involvement with the show, and how challenging it would be to create a particular moment when grassroots activism through hip hop or other community arts programs could match the timing of a showcase like *Beat Nation*. Willard's discussion of how one is dependent upon others speaks volumes to the nature of collaboration. Although it may seem an excellent fit to run events, festivals, programming for youth, performances, and so on around such exhibitions, there is a spontaneity that is lacking. To create or facilitate a particular kind of experience during community arts-based projects or events can at times seem disingenuous, especially considering that continued funding for many projects is tied to achieving specific outcomes (Marsh 2012b).

From her perspective, however, Willard relishes the difference between performances and gallery exhibitions, highlighting the "quieter time for more of a conversation with the artwork … Something quite different than digesting a performer's spoken word or their ideas; you have this different entry point ... in individual art." *Beat Nation* originally started out from and promoted a grassroots kind of activism, but as the gallery evolved, took on different forms, and became embedded within other kinds of institutions, a new political lens was embraced. Willard explains the evolution process:

> I was happy with the way the show toured and everything, but at the same time, slightly mystified at the engines of how that all worked. I didn't have to do the logistics of organizing the tour, all that kind of thing, so in some ways it wasn't a – no, in a lot of ways it wasn't a grassroots project anymore. But I knew that going into the Vancouver Art Gallery that it wouldn't be ... And the

> weighing out of things was, well, as a curator I think it's my job to try and get the widest audience and criticality for artists' work. I couldn't deny an opportunity to do that in a more radical activist frame. That [activism] is happening anyway and you may hold up that work and some of it might get attention for a while, but the people who are committed to that work are doing that work and that activism is going to go on. It wasn't because of me that anyone was making hip hop or not making hip hop. Here was a chance to just talk about it a bit more, and hopefully, some people got, and will get, some more attention for their work and be able to continue it longer.

The creation of a formal exhibition and then a touring show in addition to the online gallery creates a variety of options for access and promotes the show to multiple audiences in Canada. As Willard notes, *Beat Nation* transitioned from a grassroots exhibition to something else. What I find interesting is Willard's take on this shift. Rather than viewing the shift from grassroots to a more mainstream exhibition as something less valuable or provocative, Willard understands this change as a positive one, suggesting the draw of different kinds of audiences and more exposure for the artists. And yet, for me, one of the key aspects of *Beat Nation* in its original, *virtual* form is its ability to reach international populations and for audiences around the world to identify with the artists and the stories featured on the site.

BEAT NATION: RESISTANCE - SHARING EXPERIENCES AND STRATEGIES AROUND THE WORLD

> Hip hop culture *is* a dialogue with the world – a dialogue between youth and the world in which they operate daily.
> Louie Rodriguez, "Dialoguing, Cultural Capital, and Student Engagement"

Education scholar Louie Rodriguez's statement draws particular attention to two key aspects of hip hop culture: (1) hip hop as a means through which young people communicate with more than just their own communities *and* (2) hip hop as a platform through which young people can articulate and share their own lived experiences in a meaningful way. As a virtual exhibition, accessible to anyone who is

able to get online or gain access to shared recorded digital data like music, videos, interviews, poetry, and/or artworks, *Beat Nation* and its contributors enter into this global dialogue with potentially profound effects. For young Indigenous people to work through the complexities of every-day lived experiences, through the cultural practices of hip hop, especially during current social and political manifestations and uprisings, represents a profound form of communication and identification. Both a shared and unique politics of resistance is possible. In our discussion, Willard addresses the impact of *Beat Nation* and its role in global dialogues, stating:

> I think *Beat Nation* has opened up a conversation about many different things and not all of them are centred around hip hop. But definitely it has come to be known as a project that looked at Indigenous hip hop as tied to these many different art forms ... I wasn't coming from a trained curator's background. I was coming from [the place of] somebody who was part of a community who has lots to say, and who wanted to see change in the world. That was the emphasis and the motivation and passion behind what we were doing. But I do think it's had legs … I have no idea what people in the wider hip hop community or international Indigenous community think about the project. It is out there and I think, I mean, there are lots of parallels I think. I've often talked with a Maori curator friend and we talked about different relationships with Aboriginal hip hop and Maori hip hop, that it would be something – and artists who are working in ways like that down there. You know, but the reality is we're often in smaller, less funded, isolated, marginalized communities and so large-scale projects, international Indigenous projects, are not something that happen all the time.

For Willard, the sharing of the artists' works in multiple formats had an impact. To move from only a digital platform to a full gallery exhibition (with co-curator Kathleen Ritter) and a touring exhibition enabled a wide range of audiences to interact and connect with the artworks. It also facilitated a lasting momentum for the project as a whole. But returning to her comments about international Indigenous projects, I asked Willard, as someone who has had some impact, how she views the rise of Indigenous hip hop cul-

tures in Canada, whether it is associated more with community-based arts projects or with artists who are actually trying to make a living. She responded:

> I was thinking about [this. I] mean, before hip hop it was really metal on the reserves, heavy metal. I remember a lot more heavy metal stuff happening and then all of a sudden one summer, I used to work for my Aunty at the powwows, she used to have fruit stands, and we were at the Kamloopa Powwow and this crew came through who were doing break dance and blew everyone away and I was only about seventeen or something. So twenty-plus years on, I guess, I witnessed and had some kind of relationships with the growth of Indigenous hip hop. I mean, I think it's beautiful. It's a beautiful art form. In many ways I think Indigenous Peoples are drawn to it because, one, it has these multiple entry points; two, it has these strong relationships to not only the origin of hip hop coming from, you know, inner city marginalized, black youth communities. Indigenous peoples relate to that sense of poverty and social injustice I think. But there is also something really powerful about it in its storytelling form, and how important oral culture is to many of us, to many Indigenous cultures. And something about how it is more accessible. You didn't have to be … it wasn't defined yet, what you had to "*be*" to be a hip hop emcee or to be into it. It was a subculture that was happening, so it wasn't already defined in some ways, so there were a lot of opportunities there.

I, along with others, have argued that hip hop as a culture of storytelling offers many opportunities, as Willard suggests (Marsh 2012a). Nevertheless, from a critical perspective, as an academic and a producer of community hip hop programming, I am often asked by various stakeholders to make a case for hip hop as an important community strategy. Certainly I can offer many examples from projects all around the world, and even from the projects I have had the privilege of facilitating in Saskatchewan, of how hip hop programming can assist in creating change, fostering productive activism, challenging colonial narratives, as well as promoting "good citizenship." At the same time, this research can also be drawn on for detrimental kinds of policy making and for policing youth. These are the kinds of ethi-

cal considerations I must not only watch out for but also engage head on. Willard and I spoke about how hip hop can also be exclusionary and hyper-masculine and heteronormative. And how in many cities across Canada, those of us involved in community hip hop programming or projects must also continue to be aware of how Indigenous youth, specifically Indigenous men, continue to be brought out on display. In one instance these men are celebrated – "Hey, look at these kids and these youth! They're doing this cool hip hop thing and including Indigenous cultural elements, and look at this neat stuff happening" – and in the next instance, the media and other authorities are reproducing discourse that suggests that these young Indigenous men who are connected with hip hop culture must also be participating in gang violence and drug culture.

Keeping these contradictions in mind as she worked on *Beat Nation*, Willard explains:

> I just basically came about it as I wasn't talking about wider, mainstream hip hop. I was talking about conscious hip hop. I was talking about artists who were using [conscious hip hop] as a way to express culture and not just mimic mainstream hip hop. I mean, you could say that about rock music, about country and western music. You can say that about any genre of music – that it's dominated by men and that representations of women are problematic. It's a wider issue of a patriarchal society. But with the work of *Beat Nation*, I always thought about gender, thought about sexuality, and made an effort to make sure that was part of the picture that I was bringing to people.

There are a number of examples of women-identified artists throughout the *Beat Nation* site and various hip hop art forms. Christie Charles, Jerilynn Webster, Kinnie Starr, and Eekwol are four of the women emcees who were included. "There are many different Indigenous women who are doing hip hop, emcee work, and were working in the visual arts in a way that was related to hip hop," Willard said. For me, the inclusion of so many women was synonymous with what I have found when researching hip hop in British Columbia. More specifically, if you look across the country, the number of Indigenous women thinking and talking about hip hop, different kinds of activism, and the kind of conscious hip hop that Willard is discussing, it seems that there is a strong and vital community of women in that province working

on/through hip hop. As we talked this idea through, Willard reflected on why there is such an awesome and inspiring community of women from British Columbia who are involved in hip hop:

> I'm trying to think if I have any indication of why that is, or not why it is, but what it's related to as a picture. I mean, we have a lot of strong, distinct, different Indigenous cultures here in BC, right? We have many different languages throughout this area with many different cultures and, you know, some of the cultures are more matriarchal, matrilineally aligned. And those practices have been carried over in different kinds of ways. That's not to say there hasn't been dramatic impacts in terms of patriarchy and religious, Christianized systems. Even in terms of Secqwpemc culture or ethnographic records, women's and men's roles weren't drastically different or defined, certainly not in any way related to the strict Victorian types of definitions of gender. And then you have these other kinds of concepts of gender and sexuality and stuff which have been repressed through residential school and Christianization and dominance, abuse and colonial narratives. I don't know … maybe it's the wild west. You've got to be tough out here ... And we have a radical history in terms of it not being Treaty, [BC] not being settled, people still stand up for their rights. They recognize their territory. They challenge governments. They challenge ideas that settler colonization should have more rights than original Indigenous governance systems. So, all that dialogue has been around for some time and so I think all that could have the effect of strengthening different communities and maybe those conversations are around more for women to be a part of. I don't know ... And [it's] not just in the Indigenous community. I can think of a number of other female hip hop emcees. I mean, part of it is also mentoring, right? So somebody like Kinnie Starr, who is my ageish, she becomes a model for other Indigenous women who want to get into [hip hop], and they see somebody who's doing it and that gives them permission to explore [hip hop]. I think that certainly has something to do with it too. You have one or two women in hip hop, and then all of a sudden you have four, five, and six because they're watching those other women.

The rise of women-identified role models, networking opportunities, and supportive creative environments, as well as access to technologies and chances to perform, have been cited as key indicators for determin-

ing women's involvement and success within genres like hip hop.[17] *Beat Nation* offers examples of all of these, and it helps to challenge some of the conventional signifiers associated with hip hop culture as a whole.

At the conclusion of our discussion, Willard expressed her gratitude and respect for the artists who participated: "Curating is nothing if you don't have artists doing amazing work ... I'm ultimately very grateful to the artists who, in the end, are the people who have ... the courage to stand up and express themselves in ways that are not prescribed." For a project like *Beat Nation*, there are many players who have to be courageous, including the curators. It is through the curator's design that the exhibition comes to life, provokes dialogues, and, it is hoped, sees things that others have not seen. The role of the curator is indeed that of a storyteller as well.

Although the impacts of *Beat Nation* are not easily quantifiable, I can say with confidence that *Beat Nation* has helped to define what hip hop sounds/looks/feels like through an Indigenous lens. The conversations I had with co-curator Tania Willard offer a critical perspective in the imagining of such an incredibly diverse multi-platformed hip hop arts project. In its various forms, *Beat Nation* has contributed and continues to contribute to global hip hop dialogues – dialogues that offer both unique and shared identities, worldviews, and strategies for resistance to complex forms of colonialism and oppression among its youthful participants.

NOTES

This chapter evolved from hearing Tania Willard, co-curator of Beat Nation: Hip Hop as Indigenous Culture, speak at the MacKenzie Art Gallery as part of the curatorial events for the exhibition, from conversations we had in person and via phone, as well as multiple viewings of the online and gallery exhibitions. Her perspectives and insights are invaluable in understanding the significance of *Beat Nation* in all of its forms: an online gallery, a stand-alone gallery exhibition, and a touring exhibition. Each phase of the multi-year project invited different audiences into a discussion of hip hop as performed and understood through an Indigenous lens. Throughout this chapter, I use the term Indigenous as a political choice to refer to all Indigenous people living in Canada. At times throughout the chapter, the term Aboriginal is also used, in quotations

from the online exhibition and in the conversations with Tania Willard, as this term was officially recognized in Canada to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people when Beat Nation was first created back in 2009. The research for this chapter was generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

1 See Curatorial Statements on the *Beat Nation* website (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
2 See Przybylski (chapter 4, this volume); and Robinson (chapter 9, this volume).
3 In his article, "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation: Art, Curation, and Healing," Garneau (2016) suggests that we look to acts of "conciliation" instead of reconciliation. However he also warns that Indigenous allies "must be cautious not to replace a Truth and Reconciliation model or models of quality framed by standards of colonialism and whiteness."
4 See Curatorial Statements on the *Beat Nation* website (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
5 Both Tania Willard and Skeena Reece have published curatorial statements.
6 The music page on the *Beat Nation* website includes features on Miss Christie Lee Charles (aka Crunch), Rapsure Risin, Kinnie Starr, Manik1derful, Eekwol, JB the First Lady, Daybi, Geoff Pranteau, and Ostwelve Ron Harris (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
7 The artists' page on the *Beat Nation* website includes features on Corey Bulpitt, Andrew Mark Dexel, Bracken Hanuse Corlett, Bunky Echo-Hawk, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Doreen Manuel, Jackson 2bears, Jolene Nenibah Yazzie, Jordan Bennett, Kevin Lee Burton, Leena Minifie, Morgan Green, Nicholar Galanin, Rose Simposon, Sonny Assu, and the Native Youth Artist Collective (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
8 The writers' page on the *Beat Nation* website includes features on Kinnie Starr, Ostwelve Ron Harris, and Peter Morin (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
9 The *Beat Nation Trax* includes eleven songs from nine different hip hop artists, including Eekwol, Miss Christie Lee Charles (aka Crunch), Rapture Risin, Ostwelve, and Kinnie Strarr.
10 Tania Willard Interview.
11 Hear Miss Christie Lee Charles's music on the Music section of the *Beat Nation* website (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
12 View both of these works on Nicholas Galanin's profile on the Artists section of the *Beat Nation* website (*Beat Nation* n.d.).
13 Tania Willard conversation.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 As noted in the introduction, Grunt Gallery received funding for the

creation of *Beat Nation* as an online curated art gallery through a Heritage Canada grant. These grants focused on digital curation like *Beat Nation* and archival sites like Northside Hip Hop (see Campbell, chap. 1, this volume).

17 For more discussions on the impact of these indicators, see Marsh (chap. 11, this volume).

PART TWO

Representation and Belonging

11

"THE HIP HOP WE SEE. THE HIP HOP WE DO."

Powerful and Fierce Women in Hip Hop in Canada

Charity **Marsh**

It's not about being a woman in hip hop, it's about, are you practising your skill? You know, did you develop your craft? And I think that if we can really encourage people to develop their craft, and their awareness, and their intelligence, that might help us to differentiate between the commercial hip hop that we see, and the real hip hop that we do. And that's all I try to do as a woman.

Kia

BLURRED LINES: AN INTRODUCTION

During the past twenty years, as both a popular music scholar and a feminist, I have embraced the often uncomfortable task of publicly refuting overly generalized feminist and anti-feminist critiques of particular genres (pop, electronica, hip hop), women artists, and their fans. Through this work, I have problematized the frequent dismissive analyses that suggest women have sold out, are perpetuating gendered norms, are ensnared within the capitalist desiring machine, or lack any agency or critical voice. These superficial readings fail to take into account the complexities of the material world in which we live; they lack the imagination to ask tough questions about women's subjectivity or to see how communities are always fraught with contradictions. These kinds of surface analyses do not allow for a multidimensional existence. In short, they refuse a fully developed subjecthood. Nevertheless, I am not naively suggesting that popular music should

be consumed in a vacuum without a critical lens. As it has been clearly demonstrated throughout *We Still Here*, hip hop musicians, genres, and fans should not be dismissed based solely on the idea that they embrace or lack an overt feminist perspective. To engage with the nuances within an analysis of hip hop is imperative.

Similar to other popular music genres, hip hop is complex. In 2008, Tricia Rose (2008. ix) claimed: "Hip hop is not dead, but it is gravely ill. The beauty and life force of hip hop have been squeezed out, wrung nearly dry by the compounding factors of commercialism, distorted racial and sexual fantasy, oppression, and alienation." Hip hop is enacted within a patriarchal, colonial, capitalist world, which is in constant need of critique and ongoing dialogue. Indeed, as many of the previous chapters illustrate, hip hop has the ability to give voice to the disenfranchised, disrupt power relations, and cause trouble for hegemonic systems, while simultaneously existing within an industry filled with bias and ever-present sexist and heteronormative narratives. Indeed, if we are to heed Rose's comments, hip hop has fallen from grace. As Rose has so eloquently stated, this fall is due to capitalism and its fetishes and perversion of desire. But even though hip hop is "gravely ill," one could argue, the women who are the subjects of this chapter are breathing new life into the genre.

Shaped by experiential reflection and narratives of feminist activism, I turn to the stories of a multifaceted group of five women who participated in a round-table discussion at the Raincity Rap Festival in Vancouver, British Columbia, during the fall of 2013.[7] Although I draw on a specific conversation, this chapter highlights the experiences and struggles shared by many women artists living and creating hip hop in Canada. Focusing on their strategies of how to move beyond the aforementioned blatant contradictions and sexism existent within hip hop culture, it becomes apparent that JB the First Lady,[8] Kia Kadiri,[9] Kim Sato,[10] DJ She,[11] and Andrea Warner[12] gravitate towards grassroots activism as a means to challenge the unequal power relations of commercial hip hop while producing herstories that place empowered and fierce women at the forefront of local hip hop cultures. These stories provide rich narrations of hip hop, including a fuller subjecthood for women. They bring to the forefront questions of loneliness and the resourcefulness and creative strategies these women come up with to uniquely navigate the gendered politics of hip hop. Elaine Carol, creator and producer of the

Raincity Rap Festival, brought this group of women together. Initially planned as a biennial festival, Raincity Rap was a multidisciplinary conference of hip hop music, dance, art, and culture. This festival, which began in 2011 and was held one more time in 2013, was one of the significant contributions made to Vancouver's arts scene by Elaine Carol, the artistic director of MISCELLANEOUS Productions, an interdisciplinary arts organization located in Vancouver. Working collaboratively with community-engaged professional artists and socially and culturally diverse groups of youth, MISCELLANEOUS Productions creates hip hop-oriented performances in music theatre as well as various arts events. Coming from a community arts-based perspective, this festival challenges conventional ideas about hip hop arts projects and attempts to cultivate important dialogues about hip hop cultures, her/histories, politics, performances, business models, mediations, and issues of identity and representation.

The inaugural festival focused on the history of hip hop culture in Vancouver and included panels on the business of hip hop and the music industry in Canada, along with a panel dedicated to the history of hip hop in Vancouver.[13] A number of important figures in Canadian hip hop culture took part in the discussions, including Sol Guy, Ndidi Cascade, DJ Flipout, Chin Injeti, Red1, Emotionz, and JB the First Lady. The theme of the 2013 Raincity Rap Festival and Conference shifted to "the art of Canadian hip hop" and its distinct place in urban music and culture in Vancouver and across the country. There was also a change in format for the second festival, including the introduction of one-on-one in-depth public interviews with hip hop artists Maestro Fresh Wes, Kinnie Starr, and Chin Injeti, along with a panel focused on the music industry and a roundtable discussion entitled, "Clear Lines: Powerful and Fierce Women in Hip Hop."

Even though a number of years have passed since the last festival in 2013, the stories told by the participants continue to be relevant to understanding what it means to be a woman participating in hip hop culture in Canada today. Their stories connect with the current #MeToo campaign and provide further understanding to the ubiquity of gender inequality and sexual harassment in the music industry, and, more specifically, within the realm of hip hop in local scenes as well as on national and international stages. The themes of this conversation focus on shared experiences as well as multi-pronged strategies for working within (and against) a music culture that still clings

to hegemonic norms bound up within a discourse of patriarchy. Through an articulation of the differences between the "commercial hip hop [they] see and the real hip hop [they] do," these fierce women focus on the impact of role models and mentors; networking opportunities; access to gear, technologies, and knowledge; as well as figuring out how to navigate systemic harassment by people within the industry, audience members, and the hyper-masculinized lens through which hip hop is represented in the media.[14]

EXPOSING TRUTHS

> Twenty-thirteen has not been a terribly kind year for women in music, or for how women have been portrayed … It seems like we should be past the conversation about degrading women, musically and in music.
>
> Andrea Warner

Naming the roundtable "Clear Lines: Powerful and Fierce Women in Hip Hop" provides a feminist context and a particular lens for the discussion. Following an introductory statement on hip hop and feminism, each participant was asked to describe some details and/or experiences explaining what it was like to participate within the culture of hip hop. Their stories are compelling and provide narratives of frustration, indignation, heartbreak, and celebration. Kim, Kia, and Tara spoke about their hip hop origins, reflecting on the lack of hip hop within their local environments and the complexities of relating to a particular hip hop vernacular, style, or discipline (i.e., Dancing, Rapping, DJing). For Kia, hip hop was foreign to her, looking and sounding nothing like her life. She explains:

> I hated hip hop when I was fifteen and sixteen, I absolutely hated it. I thought it made no sense; I didn't understand it at all. I didn't understand why people were talking to me like "Hey! Yo! What's up!" My little brother was trying to get me to listen to Public Enemy and it was the big, you know, black man, black woman, black baby! Well, we grew up in Victoria, and I was one out of fifteen hundred students, and I was the only black person in my whole school. So, I didn't really have a connection to being black, or black culture or black music, any of that. I was a figure skater listening to classical music while my brother was trying to get me to listen to rap. And it wasn't until I was nineteen that I

11.1 Round-table participants. Photo courtesy Miscellaneous Productions/ Chris Randle.

> met my first black friends in Victoria, and they basically explained to me what it was like to grow up in Oakland and to really experience racism. Racism to me in Victoria was, it never really came across, because there is not enough black people to get upset about it, you know. There's a lot more racism against Asian cultures and against First Nations people than there is really against black people. So, I didn't really have a connection to it. I didn't understand it.

Her experience of racism was hidden in the lack of diversity among people living in Victoria. Kia's introduction to hip hop culture was set against her own experience of blackness in a location of whiteness. Thus, it was initially challenging for Kia to identify with a culture born out of the social conditions of an American urban black experience. This lack of connection was shared by Tara, whose identity also played a role in how she engaged with hip hop and the music industry early on:

> I'm queer. I'm a female, and I'm a person of colour. So right there that's three checks on the minority card. And I really relate to what Kia said because I grew up in Prince Edward Island and I was the only person of colour in my province for eighteen years. So I mean, I've really had to learn some ninja skills throughout my life to be able to manoeuvre through many spaces and I've somehow managed to wind up in the music industry in Vancouver, and it's been a really interesting experience.

The necessity for Tara to learn "ninja skills" to navigate hegemonic norms associated with sexuality, gender, and race is telling. As Kia describes above, hip hop is a culture bound up in authenticity, which is enacted through race and gender, and particular codes of conduct. Kia is both critical of and drawn in by these kinds of gestures:

> But my friend, who actually ended up teaching me how to rap, got out of the struggle and the streets and the gangs in Oakland by becoming a graffiti artist and then getting his art degree. And, he really explained to me the appreciation of the culture. And, I developed a respect for it because I was like, people are just speaking their voice, and you have no right to tell somebody that they can't tell their story. And if their story involves violence and guns and women being portrayed in a certain way, then that's their story and they have the right to voice that! It's how we internalize it [that matters]. But it really created this division from myself … I absolutely refuse to listen to [commercial hip hop], it sickens me when I hear it … I don't care if the beats are good. I don't care if people are just saying bullshit. I don't want to listen to it and I don't. But, it really creates this divide because I was raised as a strong woman, because I wanted to develop my craft and when I did get into rap, I just loved it. I thought it was fun, it was great! And so I would go to shows, but people still looked at me for the first however many years of my career, and they're like, "Yo! Yo! Kia! Yeah! What's Up!" and I'm like, "Why are you talking to me like that?" I don't use "yo" in everyday language, and I don't get all like, "Yeah, alright homies." And I really didn't connect to hip hop culture. I just liked to rap, and I like poetry, and I really just developed that. (Kia)

How one reads and identifies with hip hop (or, for Kia, rap) highlights the ongoing tension between the perception of what is "real" and

"authentic" as opposed to "commercial" or "apolitical." Understanding hip hop through this sort of false binary is concerning. Critical, thoughtful, and highly political content has certainly been part of commercial rap in some instances, just as some of the most misogynist, homophobic content can be found in the underground or non-commercial hip hop. And yet, for this group, the differences between commercial and more authentic sounding or "conscious" hip hop plays heavily into the question of gender and sexism in hip hop.

For Andrea, a journalist who spends a lot of time thinking and writing about popular music, many people in the music industry are still getting away with too much, especially in commercial hip hop. She explains:

> It really strikes me that in the same year that gave us Angel Haze, who I just think is remarkably cool, we also have Rick Ross rapping a line about raping women and being pleased with himself. We have "Blurred Lines," which, I know that not everyone agrees, but I think is one of the worst atrocities, particularly its music video. And then you couple that with Kanye who, in almost every single music review that I read of the album,[15] praised its daringness, its willingness to look at racism, its sonic challenges. I think that the album does all of those things, but it's also, perhaps one of the most sexist albums he's ever put out in his career. And these are all men who are around my age, thirty-four or so, who have been raised within a sort of "post-feminist" world – who typically have been raised in feminist households by single mothers. And I feel that this is a wilful degradation of women. This is knowing that it's wrong and deciding to make horrific statements about women's worth, body parts, physical violence or the hint of physical violence. These are things that I don't understand why there is a place for them currently.

Unpacking this "wilful degradation of women" and the space it is given within hip hop is at the heart of this conversation. Although this is not unique to hip hop, there is something quite troubling within the history and ongoing discourse surrounding hip hop and its explicit lyrics, its heteronormative hyper-masculinity, and its continual subjugation of women, that demonstrates a need for serious disruption. How does one reconcile the significance of a feminist upbringing and enacting a "wilful degradation of women"? Andrea goes on to suggest, "[we need to realize] that you can enjoy music, you

can even enjoy the beat of a song, but I think we need to have conversations about lyrical content. I think we need to challenge these notions of people saying again and again and again that women don't count as much as men; women don't have the same value as men."

Similar to Kia, and to some extent Andrea, Tara attempts to limit the amount of media and commercial hip hop she takes, stating: "I feel I have to filter what I ingest from the media because it's just absolutely overwhelming and, to a point, disgusting … I work in a nightclub, I see enough sexual exploitation of women in my job. I don't need to ingest that in my recreational time." For Tara, combatting sexism in the music industry needs to be a collaborative approach where everyone steps up. "It's a fiery topic for me. I think it's an important topic to consider and come to some type of solution as to how we, as all people in the Industry, take a stance and share that with our peers, with the people that we teach. And, to just open the dialogue and say, 'this is not OK.'" Calling into question the pervasiveness of sexism and misogyny within hip hop, working collaboratively with peers to critique and offer alternative narratives, is one way forward. Moreover, the value of encouraging women to be at the forefront of navigating sexuality in a way that respects consent, desire, and autonomy is critical.

CREATING AND SUSTAINING FEMINIST SPACES

> Hip hop has been a place of belonging. Hip hop has been a place of giving power to my voice. Hip hop has created spaces I've never imagined; hip hop has created a sisterhood that I dreamed of and became reality, manifested.
>
> JB

Prior to the event I asked the panelists to consider how, from a global hip hop perspective, hip hop continues to be drawn on as a strategy for resistance and understood within a politics of empowerment. Hip hop and its arts practices have the potential to give voice to young people around the world, but the question remains: How can we speak about hip hop as a culture of empowerment while so many women continue to be excluded, marginalized, objectified, and vilified by its participants, whether they are producers, managers, club owners, musicians, or audience members, within hip hop culture itself? How do we come to terms with and move beyond such blatant contradictions bound up within contemporary hip hop culture? His-

torically, hip hop was about reclaiming public space and that public space excluded women and girls. With this context of hip hop in mind, I asked the participants what kind of strategies they have adopted, created, and discovered, whether that is an avoidance of particular aspects of the culture, filtering, dialoguing, and seeking mentorship, or taking on the role of mentors, which is valuable and important.[16]

When discussing strategies for empowerment and full participation within hip hop, many of the panelists spoke to the need for knowledgeable role models. For Kim, the dancer of the group, hip hop dance (including break, locking, etc.) classes or teachers were not easy to come by in her childhood and early teen years. For her, it was initially a purely DIY venture, where she practised and performed at parties. Kim relays her excitement regarding the first time she was introduced to hip hop as a possible practice in her ballet school:

> Finally, a teacher came to my ballet school and she was a hip hop teacher ... And she basically had us do a hip hop class but I was in my ballet clothes doing hip hop. So, I had my pink tights on and I put on biker shorts because that was cool at the time so really not cool at all, but I still had my pink ballet shoes on and she was just looking at us going, "Does anybody have running shoes here?" And for some reason nobody else did but me. ... But once I got the taste of learning it from somebody else I was like, "Ah, I have to be in her class every week." So I sought her out. I went and got a T-shirt and made my mom buy me some sweatpants, and I came to her class and said, "Hey! Do you remember me? I was that girl in the ballet class," and I was like, "In my running shoes? And I loved your class." [From then on] I was in her class every week, and I just fell in love with it. I loved the movement, but it was the commercial side of [hip hop dance]. And what I was doing, what I grew up with was, you know, the real stuff, like the nitty-gritty, like the partying, the community. But I got really into the commercial side of hip hop and I started studying that for years and years and years and I was heading down to L.A. and wanted to be a backup dancer for Janet Jackson, and I thought, "This is the coolest!" And I'm like, "Yeah! Awesome! I'm gonna become this amazing professional dancer!"

Having a role model who was a knowledgeable teacher in one form of hip hop dance changed the path for Kim. She was introduced to a

more "commercial" form of dance, and, thus, her goals shifted, along with her repertoire of dance movements and expectations for a future in dance.

The power of seeing oneself as an artist, or being able to identify with someone who is a rapper, a DJ, a B-girl, a graff writer, cannot be underestimated. As was evident from JB's story, the impact of coming across other Indigenous hip hop artists empowered her in a profound way:

> My mom did her amazing best. And ... she'd always say, "Go to the Friendship Centre, where the Native people are and they'll have resources and they'll help you out no matter what." And at that time I walked into the space and I saw Kinnie Starr, Ostwelve, Manik Iderful, and Skeena Reece … When I saw these performers talk about Native pride and being proud of where they came from, talk about colonization, decolonization, I said, "You know what, one day I wanna do that! I want to inspire someone to be proud of who they are!" And that's what I did.

JB identified with these artists and, moreover, began to cultivate her practice within a supportive environment. For her, many of these artists became both mentors and role models. She explains:

> I became engaged and there was a place called Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association, and they had a recording studio for Aboriginal youth. And one of the youth workers was like, "You got rhymes!" and I'm like "Peshh, no! For real?" and he's like, "Yeah, you got rhymes," and I was like "OK!" ... I'm a very passionate speaker, and have lots to say, and he said, "Put it into hip hop!" That was Curtis Clear Sky and he [participated in the UN Messengers of Truth programming]. He really helped me find that within myself … So I'd always volunteer and help out, and then I got mentored into working for a non-profit all the way up to executive director for Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association. And to see that movement through hip hop and to see these voices where we said the mandate of our organization was to empower youth and give youth a voice, representation, participation. We did that through hip hop; we did that through music, and we had a recording studio.

Giving back to the community is something that all of these women share. In spite of their circumstances or experiences of sexism, these women feel strongly about the need to be empowering role models and to provide alternatives to what is offered up in mainstream hip hop culture. After Kim's experience of gender discrimination and gendered violence within the industry during her time in Japan, she returned to Canada to recover and establish a more productive environment within which to create and mentor. She explains:

> It was a horrible thing, and I had to process what happened to me in that moment, and it was a really big lesson of where the industry can be very malicious and manipulative. And when I came home to Canada I decided that I wanted to start helping other people through this, through my story, and I basically started building myself back up as a woman in hip hop dance and break-dancing. I discovered and re-fell in love with hip hop culture. I realized what I loved about dance was the community, the people, the friendships, the stories, everything that I'm sharing with everybody, and the culture of it. And I went back into break dancing, found myself, back to being a beginner, taking baby steps all the way through. Breaking is hard! So, I went through that whole process of rebuilding myself with people from my community. In the industry, people were curious about what I was doing so they were really following me to break dancing practice. All these girls, but they didn't know that I actually, I was so passionate about this, I honestly loved this stuff and it gave me power. It helped build me back up. I found who I was; I identified myself through being a B-girl, and then I found the other styles. I started popping. I started locking, and now I'm not breaking as much because I'm getting older and it hurts my body. But I've fallen in love with locking, and that is the first street style before breaking came along. Started in the West Coast and started studying this, I seek out my forefathers, and I'm so lucky that they are still around and I can call up the people that created all these party dances or created locking, and I still have a really good connection with that. But on the other side, with the whole taking care of the community, everybody now in this community calls me "Mama Kim" because I'm a nurturer and I love to nurture people.

This push into a role of nurturance is also highly gendered and fraught with complications, and yet, it is a role that many women find themselves in or take on as a way to give back or make change within a culture that they love and want to make better.

During our conversation, the participants offered up a variety of other strategies used to confront sexism within the industry. From her position as journalist, Andrea offered up a particularly profound example, one that leads us back to how one reconciles one's own sexist attitudes, performances, and presentation within hip hop culture with the rest of one's life, which includes families, culture, and upbringing:

> I was asked to do an electronic piece on a dude that was coming through town [who has] horrific content in his music. Like, the videos, everything, like everything about it is really, cartoonishly oppressive. And so, I decided that if I was going to do this piece I was going to ask him about women, and I wanted to know, "Who are the women he respects? What did your mom ever do for you?" I asked him exclusively about women. … "Which women do you like in music? What do women mean to you?" And this was the entire interview and he was very confused at the end of it. I didn't feel personally the need to confront him and say, "OK, I think your music is mostly quite disgusting." I just thought, let's only talk about women, and he was so thoughtful about women. He loves, allegedly, women. His mom took him to music school, he did all these things, he listens to all of these different women. It was completely contradictory to the music he makes and I personally wanted to showcase that contradiction. So, this has been my strategy now, if I come up against someone whose musical content I find deplorable, I specifically ask them only about women throughout the whole interview.

This strategy is one way to jolt someone out of the comfort of presenting a typical hip hop story. As a tactic, it makes things unpredictable and asks for something more, challenging an artist to connect one's celebrity persona with a more personal narrative, and perhaps even calling up a sense of responsibility for one's actions.

Tara's tactic is to enact confidence and stand your ground:

> It's kind of like. "OK, so I want this gig, what do I need to do, ABC, to get it?" And I generally know I'm gonna come up across some

> kind of bullshit along the lines of dealing with men in the industry. And, whether it's the simplest thing of somebody's management, promoters, sound tech, what have you, I think it's just been a matter of being confident and putting your foot down and being like, "No, I'm sorry but this doesn't work for me," and having an intellectual adult conversation and saying, you know, as an artist this is what I'm here to do, could you please also do your job, and we can move this along quickly?

These kinds of sexist attitudes are not only found within hip hop, and yet there is still a need for knowledge sharing and strategizing in order to address and begin to dismantle them. One way to challenge this kind of sexism is through information gathering. For example, Kia discusses the importance of being educated and knowing your rights:

> And there was a cool article about how there are the big electronic DJs that tour all around and make so much money on each gig. You know, like thousands of dollars, and they're going around, and 90 percent of the music that they play has women singing the hooks in their songs. And they make a lot of money off these songs and most of the women that are in that position are getting paid a couple hundred dollars to go in the studio and sing and they kill it. So, it's about educating women as well. It's like, "Hey, you know what, you have to know your rights too." You go into that session, and you ask what you are paid, and you get paid what you're worth. Don't just sign away and say, "Oh, sure, yeah I'll do it because you're my friend." Well then, you're not being smart, that's not good business, right? But there's also still this mountain, and it's not just women in music, it's women in many powerful positions. It's women in business, it's women in banks, how many people sitting in that top 1 percent are women? It's not a lot, it's still a large battle that we're waging against men. Not that it's a fight, "I want to have that power," but just an awareness that we're still not on the same level, and I think that carries across whatever art form we are doing, whatever we are talking about. It's something that needs to be taught to the women but also taught to the men too. It's just like, you can't just put us in these positions of sexualized roles and take the good out of it, right? And make all the money yourself. I don't know, it's a strange dynamic that I think we've created for ourselves, but again, I think it all comes

back to letting your skills speak for what you do, and that will come through, at least it has in my experience.

RESPONSIBILITY, RESISTANCE, RECLAMATION ... NOURISHING THE ROOTS

Hip hop has been a place where I could express my cultural views but in an urban setting. Looking at hip hop and seeing all of the different elements from dancing to arts to DJing to storytelling, has been a direct parallel to my Indigenous cultural ways and elements that I'm supposed to engage with as each and every one of us has a gift. And for me, my gift was storytelling and bringing that power to my voice through hip hop and spoken word.

JB

Mainstream, commercial hip hop is often slick and seductive. And yet so many representations that are so prevalent in commercial hip hop play into stereotypes and normative codes of gender, race, and sex. In spite of this, hip hop as a politics has been taken up by many disparate groups of youth worldwide as a critical strategy of resistance.[17] As has been discussed in a number of the previous chapters,[18] hip hop is a cultural form through which many Indigenous youth are articulating contemporary lived experience and making sense of current colonial-settler relations that exist within Canada.[19] Certainly, JB tells an incredible story of empowerment and strategy. Hers is a story that demonstrates the amazing capacity of hip hop to allow for the incorporation of both local and cultural politics. And yet, there is this ongoing blatant contradiction of oppression and empowerment within hip hop, and, rather than pretend it does not exist, this contradiction is something we have to acknowledge and theorize. Hip hop can be both a productive and a disruptive space, as is evident in Kia's story:

Over the years, as an artist, I found that I didn't really like the direction of the music industry, and I didn't want to be involved with it. It was very manipulative, it was very abusive, it really tore me apart. After I finished my first record, it was almost to the point that I didn't want to listen to it anymore because of all the negative things that came from that experience. People wanting to just use you as a catalyst to get their message out. And I see that in

> the same commercialization of hip hop music and culture, and it saddens me.

As a way to resist this kind of "commercialization," Kia changed directions and began to focus on working with youth:

> And so I really went the route of working with kids, because it's OK, if you start with them young and you just teach them about the real roots of hip hop and the real roots of expression and creativity and give them that power, and that tool. Then that's going to be something that's more fulfilling for me. So now I like to work with youth, and I like to share that experience with people. And I don't even touch on the other aspects of it, the commercialized hip hop. I don't go to the clubs, I don't, and it makes me sad when I see kids dancing like, we were talking about this backstage, in a sexual manner, and they have no idea what they are doing, they're just mimicking. And so it's like, well, that's pretty sad that they can't mimic those nineties dancers that were all about dancing and fun or [when I see people] putting dances together, and it really brings it back to that community level, that gives me a bit of hope that hip hop can be, can rise above the contradictions that we are seeing in the industry.

The complexities of women's participation in the music industries and what it takes to gain status were also discussed as some of these very contradictions. As she describes in the quotation I used to begin this chapter, Kia believes in focusing on the development of one's craft first. She offers:

> You know, there are a lot of women that strive to be stars. And they want to be seen and they want to be heard, but they do it in these ways that go against really the empowering part of being a woman, which is just to get your expression out and your voice, not necessarily do it with your body, you know? And I think a lot of the men in the industry look down on some of the other women because they're not excelling at the skill. It's not about being a woman in hip hop, it's about are you practising your skill ... And that's all I try to do as a woman ... And I think we really have to look at the whole picture of being a musician as not just being good at your craft. It's the balance that we create in our

> lives, right? So you have to be good at music, you have to be good at business, you have to be professional, you have to show up on time, you gotta know your equipment, you gotta build and be a real person.

The multifaceted aspects of paying attention to balancing responsibilities and to the social codes of being a professional musician or artist within the culture were also emphasized by the other participants. It is this kind of ethical engagement and musical citizenship that is also pitted against the process of commercialization. Tara adds:

> As for hip hop right now, I kind of dipped out of being interested in hip hop I'd say in like 2002, because I really feel, I'd say like '99 moving forward is when consumerism started to kick in, and commercialization of hip hop was really starting to become prominent. I relate to Kim, coming up in the nineties and everything was about good vibes and parties and like "this is our culture and our music," and, at a certain point, I really feel like somebody in an office, sitting at a desk on a phone said, "OK, this is going to make us a lot of money! This is how we exploit this, and flip it and make a profit from it," you know? And, here we are, these kids coming up in the nineties thinking, "This is us, this is our culture, this belongs to us." So, I maybe even unconsciously kind of dipped out of hip hop because I just wasn't able to relate to girls in heels and booty shorts pushing up on the man and in the back of the video. I'm like, "No, I want to be the centre stage." For the boys, "cool if you want to be in my music video, that's OK," but like no, I won't be second to centre, this is my show.

For Tara, there is an immediate sense of place-making and indignation around the gendering of roles that contributes to Othering women and removing them from a central role as creator, producer, and artist. The push towards women only engaging in supportive and highly sexualized performance deters Tara from an entire genre. This also speaks to the impact of role modelling and the power of being able to identify with those on stage discussed earlier in the chapter. Tara continues:

> I didn't really relate to the sexualization of hip hop and I mean, I did look up to Lauryn Hill, Missy Elliot, Foxy Brown, Lil' Kim, and I really do respect Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim as lyricists, but could you just put some clothes on when you do that. I feel like if that's what we're feeding to the younger generation, like look where we are now with music, like do these girls even know where twerking came from? Do you know about Miami Booty Bass? In 1992? It really hurts my head to see where things are at with music right now. And I do feel like it's our job, as women who have worked very hard to get where we are, to kind of break down those ideas of what hip hop is, or should be, or what it takes to be a dancer, or what it takes to be an MC, or even a writer. Because I feel like we're just fed so much media, and we don't really know how to kind of grasp reality with all the commercial bullshit that we're being fed. I think that kind of holds true to females not being able to garner that confidence, and "this is what you have to do, this is how you dress, this is how you have to look, and this is how you dance," and it is hypersexual.

This hypersexualization of women, although controversial even within feminist discourse, provides a particular kind of "looked-at-ness" that draws us back to Laura Mulvey's (1975) work, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she theorizes power through looking, and being looked at, within a media frame. From Kim's perspective as a dancer there is a lack of young women participating in forms of more "athletic" styles of dance that are still dominated by men. Similar to the gendering of genres, technologies, and industry roles, for example, women continue to be socialized towards particular forms and styles of dance. Kim makes the argument, "what I see going on in the schools and in the studios are females not confident in what they're doing, and I look into the class, and I'm like, 'Ooh Pussycat Dolls class, what's that one about?' and I'm like, 'Not for me! I'm going to be in my locking class over here.'" There is a disconnect for Kim as she tries to make sense of "what it means to be a strong female through movement and still being sexy but doing a craft." Moreover, she tries to find a way to mentor other girls/women "to figure that out for themselves so they don't have to just do something that they don't feel. I feel like I want to help people find their root to what they need to do to feel empowered."

JB's perspective and evolution within the hip hop industry does not fall outside of such trappings:

> There were times where I was just like, "I'm just a girl, like I'm a chubby Indian girl, no one wants to hear me." And it was my friend, he's from The Main Offenders, Cole B, Cole Brownstone, he's like, "You know what JB, you have a strong voice, people wanna hear your voice." … Then he's like, "Actually, look at this music video," and it was Shad K, Shad KeepShining, and I was like, "Wohoo! This is blowing my mind, he's a Vancouver artist and he's a Toronto artist and he has a whole song about women." He's like, "We're only getting half of the story, we need more women in rap so that they they can do that," and I was like, "OK, I'm ready to go here!" And it pushed my whole entire album … And it was all these men that came around me and encouraged me and said "We need your voice."

This desire to include JB's voice is not only linked to adding more members. JB views her role as providing an important contribution to conversations on colonization and decolonization, on what meaningful practices of reconciliation could look/sound like, and to voice the concerns of Indigenous women:

> So I look at our times, in the sense of the times that we live in and the times I live in as an Indigenous person from Canada, where I'm decolonizing and unlearning colonization and assimilation tactics. I understand that these assimilation tactics against our people, they're only gonna let those messages through that are gonna keep the people down. So, I flipped that and said, "I'm gonna be a person that pushes through all of that assimilation and flip it." So, my hip hop, my stories, they need to be heard, and I'm really excited that hip hop has really given me a space, because looking at First Nations women in Canada, a lot of the statistics are the negative statistics. And for me to be a representation of women and bring voice to First Nations women is so powerful and empowering because our voices are still being taken away through murder, through poverty, through addictions, … and [we need to be] breaking through residential school [legacies] and overcoming genocide. Hip hop has made me, has brought out that part of my voice – to overcome those things and to bring awareness.

Within the roundtable discussion, it was important for the participants and myself to avoid falling into the easy trap that gender discrimination and sexism are issues of "men against women" rather than presenting them as part of a more complex system. For the roundtable participants, there was an emphasis on being able to voice women's experiences within male-dominated fields, cultures, and practices. Moreover, all of the artists sought to challenge these hegemonic norms while holding both themselves and men acting within and supporting the culture accountable for the ways in which they participate and engage. Kia continues:

> Over the years I found that people would ask me, "Well, what's it like being a women in hip hop?" and I'm like, "Well, I don't know, I just do hip hop." And I developed the respect of the men in the community so I wasn't ever separated as a man or a woman. You just have the respect of the guys because you are good at what you do. And then I really realized, "OK, hang on a second, there are not a lot of women that are in this position of power, where we can see something, but we are also respected by people because we do it well." And, so, I realized that's something important to share.

The realization that it is important to continually be sharing and promoting something alternative is key for Tara as well: "At the same time, here we are – we are a panel of very strong women, we're dressed appropriately, no one is twerking and … we could twerk it out if you want to, but at the same time, we will continue to work in our fields, and we do what we do well." Tara continues to speak of what she feels is her and others' responsibilities to future generations of hip hop women: "I don't think that giving in to the industry is the way to go. I think it's our job to really vocalize that to the younger generation, our peers, or even peers in the industry."

CONCLUSION

And I think most of us want to represent the world of the conscious community, empowering hip hop that gives people something other than television, and money, and image, and all the other things that go along with the sexualization of women in hip hop.

Kia

In the first Raincity Rap Festival, the focus was on histories, and on thinking, writing, understanding, and knowing hip hop histories. And one of the things that I spoke about during my presentation at that first festival was the intersections of histories. Within a broader hip hop context, certain narratives, certain perspectives, are told repeatedly. Many of the people who are actually on the ground and doing grassroots organizing – the kinds of labour that we hear about in panels such as the one that is the subject of this chapter – are often excluded from those histories. To engage in open dialogue about lived experience and the many layers of these women's hip hop lives furthers knowledge about the impact of marginalized voices within a complex culture and its practices. With this chapter, and indeed this entire collection on hip hop in Canada, we strive to add to a reimagining of hip hop. Talking about the layers found in these women's hip hop lives enriches the picture of what hip hop is in Canada. Bringing us back full circle to Rose, if hip hop is indeed sick, I want to suggest that these women's stories are part of the antidote.

In sharing their experiences, these women ensured that a number of significant and common issues were exposed. However, within this discussion and their lives, they offer creative strategies that enable them to continue to move forward and to produce critically engaged work. Seeking out knowledgeable role models, as well as supportive peers, opened up various paths within hip hop for these women. In return, they have become the role models, sharing their knowledge with others and mentoring, often through youth-based programs. They assist communities with ongoing concerns about program sustainability, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. Participating in events like Raincity Rap encourages networking opportunities, ongoing forms of community building, and the fostering of ethical friendships based on shared experiences of oppression, celebration, and support. Indeed, an exciting by-product of this panel discussion was the networking that happened between the women before, during, and after the roundtable discussion. Events like these make room for women to voice their experiences publicly, and they allow for an engagement with thought-provoking, difficult questions – questions that will, I hope, connect to the activist in all of us so that we can better inform the work and arts practices we love. From this conversation we also derive a commitment to an integrated feminist and decolonizing hip hop framework.

These women are strong mentors in their communities; the narratives and stories they shared demonstrate their thoughtful and complex navigations of hip hop culture. But these stories do not come ready made: they require authorship and an ability to give meaning to events, thoughts, and feelings. Within the context of this roundtable discussion, these women have contributed to, and illuminated, the multifaceted, ever so complicated world of hip hop. The stories these women share demonstrate that there needs to be room for contradiction and, more important, that hip hop holds possibilities for women.

NOTES

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1 The bios for these five participants have changed since the roundtable in 2013, and the most updated bios are presented here to acknowledge the evolution of the artists and what they have accomplished since then.

2 See JB the First Lady (n.d.).

3 "Kia Kadiri is one of Vancouver's most respected female vocalists in the Western Canadian hip hop community for almost 20 years! Her energetic performances and unique style, keep her in demand with the best musicians in Vancouver, and in festivals across British Columbia. Kia's passion for music, rap and poetry makes her extremely productive as a workshop leader. She works for a variety of non-profit organizations as an instructor and facilitator, working with and mentoring at risk youth. Her debut record "Feel This" received acclaim across the country for thought-provoking lyrics, excellent production, and blend of genres. From hip hop to soul, jazz to drum and bass, Kia's lightning speed raps, and articulate delivery when improvising lyrics, leave her in a class of her own!" (Streetrich Society n.d.).

4 See CoreDance (n.d.).

5 See Jane Blaze (2019).

6 See Warner (n.d.).

7 The panel participants for the 2011 inaugural event included: DJ Flipout, Rob the Viking, Moka Only, Red1, Ndidi Cascade, Jeet K, Sol Guy, Jonathan Simkin, Mill Miller, Martha Rans, Glen Lougheed, Ari Wise, Sarah Webster,

Chin Injeti, Discreet Da Chosen 1, JB the First Lady, and Emotionz (Eventbrite 2011).

8 In 1999, I wrote an entry on Club DJs for the *Encyclopedia of Women and Music in America since 1900* (Marsh 2002). The themes/issues that were addressed during Raincity Rap all these years later bore considerable resemblance to the three major issues I described for women Club DJs then: accessibility, promotion, and professional connections within the community.

9 *Yeezus* (2013).

10 Following this roundtable, I conducted public interviews with both Kinnie Starr and Chin Injeti. During these interviews I also asked this question of them, particularly trying to work through the issue that such questions are often asked of women but not of men. I think we need to be asking these questions more and more, to the people who are participating and are generally holding those powerful positions.

11 For example, see the 2008 documentary *Slingshot Hip Hop*, directed by Jackie Reem Salloum.

12 See Marsh (chapter 3), Przybylski (chapter 4), and Robinson (chapter 9) in this collection.

13 For more specific examples, see Marsh (2012a, 2012b, 2011, and 2009).

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ALEXANDRINE BOUDREAULT-FOURNIER is an associate professor at the University of Victoria. She is a visual anthropologist interested in sound and creative practices. She conducts research on media infrastructure and digital media consumption and circulation in Cuba and in Canada. She co-edited (with Martha Radice) the volume *Urban Encounters: Art and the Public* (2017, McGill-Queen's University Press) and the volume *Audible Infrastructures: Music, Sound, Media* (co-edited with Kyle Devine) is under contract with Oxford University Press. Her manuscript *Aerial Imagination in Cuba: Above the Rooftops* was published in 2019 (Routledge). She directed the film *Golden Scars* (2010), in part funded by the National Film Board of Canada, about the life and fears of two rappers from Santiago de Cuba, and co-directed Fabrik Funk (2015), an ethno-fiction about funk musick in the periphery of São Paulo. Two of her films, entirely shot in Cuba, *La Tumba Mambi* and *Guardians of the Night*, are currently in post-production.

MARK V. CAMPBELL is a DJ, scholar, and curator. His research explores the relationships between Afrosonic innovations and notions of the human. Mark is co-founder of the *Bigger Than Hip Hop* radio show (1997–2015) and is a founder of the Northside Hip Hop Archive. Since 2010 the archive has partnered with major cultural institutions such as the Royal Ontario Museum, the McMichael Art Collection, the Toronto Public Library, and the Ryerson University Archives to celebrate and preserve hip hop in Canada. From 2010 to 2013, Mark curat-

ed the *T-Dot Pioneers* Trilogy of exhibitions, *Mixtapes: Hip Hop's Lost Archive* in 2016, *I Was There! Steel City Edition* in 2017, and *...Everything Remains Raw: Photographing Toronto Hip Hop Culture from Analogue to Digital* in 2018 as part of the Contact Festival. In 2019, Mark co-curated *For the Record – An Idea of the North* exploring and documenting Toronto's history of Soundsystems, DJ crews, and Turntablists. Mark has published widely, with articles appearing in the *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies*; *Critical Studies in Improvisation*; *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics*; *Culture and Society*; and the *CLR Journal of Caribbean Ideas*. Dr Campbell is assistant professor of music and culture in the Department of Arts, Culture and Media at the University of Toronto Scarborough.

CHARLOTTE FILLMORE-HANDLON is a 2019 graduate of the Humanities Doctoral Program housed in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture at Concordia University. Her dissertation focuses on the phenomenon of Leonard Cohen as an entry point to explore the dynamism of celebrity discourse in Canada over the past sixty years.

MARY FOGARTY is associate professor of dance at York University, Toronto. She is co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Hip Hop Dance Studies* with Imani Kai Johnson (forthcoming) and *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films* (2016) with Mark Evans. She has chapters in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music* (2015), *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* (2015), and *Ageing and Youth Cultures* (2012) among other publications. Fogarty has collaborated with neuroscientists to scan expert b-boy brains (*Neurocase* 2014), written about the struggles of independent dance artists featured in *EQ Magazine* (danceequity.com), and addressed the experiences of b-girls for Canada's national *Dance Current Magazine* (2015). Her arts collective, KeepRockinYou, founded by Toronto's own Judi Lopez, has hosted multiple seasons of the Toronto B-Girl Movement, a program to empower women through hip hop dance.

CHARITY MARSH, PhD, is associate professor in interdisciplinary studies and creative technologies, and held the Canada Research Chair in Interactive Media and Popular Music from 2007 to 2019 in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance at the University of Regina in

Saskatchewan, Canada. Dr Marsh is founder and director of the Interactive Media and Performance (IMP) Labs, which include the Centre for Indigenous Hip Hop Cultures and Community Research, the Popular Music and Mobile Media Labs, an electronic beat-making lab, and an interactive DJ lab. She has published extensively in the areas of hip hop cultures in Canada, women in popular music, gender and technology, queering music, interactive media and performance, and community arts-based education and programs. She is also the producer and director of the documentary *I'm Gonna Play Loud: Girls Rock Regina and the Ripple Effect* (2020).

LIZ PRZYBYLSKI is assistant professor of ethnomusicology at the University of California, Riverside. Her recent publications include "Customs and Duty: Indigenous Hip Hop and the US-Canada Border" in the *Journal of Borderlands Studies*; "Popular Music and (R)evolution of the Classroom Space: Occupy Wall Street in the Music School" in *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education* (co-authored with Nasim Niknafs); "Horizontal Networking and the Music of Idle No More" in the *Civic Media Project*; and "Indigenous Survivance and Urban Musical Practice" in *Revue de recherche en civilisation américaine*.

SALMAN A. RANA (YLOOK) is a member of Toronto's hip hop community and is a founding member of the artist collective, the Circle, along with artists Kardinal Offishall, Saukrates, and Choclair et al. The Circle is largely credited with having globalized Toronto's hip hop sound throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. Salman is a doctoral candidate at McGill University's Faculty of Law, where his work explores the intersection of youth subcultures, law, and normativity in both state and non-state/unofficial contexts. He is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School, McGill University, and the University of Oxford. As a lawyer, Salman works in the cultural industries representing artists, musicians, and writers. He has lectured on youth cultures, the sociology of law, law and social change, legal research methodology, and cultural studies of law. His broader legal research interests intersect with his interests in civil society and legal education, critical legal pluralism, subcultures, childhood studies, Islam, and international human rights law. Before graduate work, Salman articled with the Ministry of The Attorney General's Office of The Children's Lawyer (Ontario) and was a field researcher in Kam-

pala with the Ugandan Law Society. He has also worked with children and educators in Istanbul, Turkey.

MARGARET ROBINSON is a two-spirit L'nu scholar from Eskikewa'kik, Nova Scotia, and a member of the Lennox Island First Nation. Dr Robinson holds a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Reconciliation, Gender, and Identity, and is currently leading research on the Indigenous New Wave, on off-reserve and non-status Indigenous identities in the Wabanaki region, and on Mi'kmaw language resurgence. She is an assistant professor cross-appointed in the Department of English and the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University, and is an affiliate scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. Her work has explored how two-spirit people understand and maintain mental health, how bisexual women in Canada and the US experience aggression and acceptance, and how work by Mi'kmaw filmmakers supports cultural continuity.

JESSE STEWART is a composer, percussionist, visual artist, researcher, and educator. His music has been documented on over twenty recordings including Stretch Orchestra's self-titled debut album, which was honoured with the 2012 Instrumental Album of the Year Juno award. He has performed and/or recorded with musical luminaries, including Pauline Oliveros, Hamid Drake, William Parker, Joe Mcphee, David Mott, Dong-Won Kim, and many others. His music has been performed at festivals throughout Canada, Europe, and the United States, and he has been widely commissioned as a composer and artist. His writings on music and art have appeared in such journals as *American Music*, *Black Music Research Journal*, *Contemporary Music Review*, *Intermedialities*, and in numerous edited anthologies. He is a professor of music in Carleton University's School for Studies in Art and Culture and an adjunct professor in the Visual Arts Program at the University of Ottawa. In 2013, he received Carleton University's Marston LaFrance Research Fellowship, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences senior research award. In 2014, he was named to the Order of Ottawa. He has also received numerous teaching awards, including a Carleton University Teaching Achievement Award, the university's highest honour in recognition of teaching excellence. In 2017, he was one of five educators in the world honoured with the D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning.

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