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# Hearing Urban Indigeneity in Canada: Self-Determination, Community Formation, and Kinaesthetic Listening with A Tribe Called Red

*Alexa Woloshyn*

## A NIGHT AT THE CLUB

At Babylon on Ottawa's Bank Street, the dark dance floor grows progressively more humid, filled with the sweaty bodies of old and new friends, men and women, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. As their bodies respond to the aggressive beats blaring through the loudspeakers, the group becomes a euphoric mob that to an observer sitting in the booths along the side wall could seem like a coordinated effort, but from the dance floor itself, the group exhibits individual kinaesthetic expression of their shared physical and auditory pleasure. Aboriginal singing with high-register Northern-style vocables emanate from loudspeakers and inspire cheers from the crowd, and the sound of powwow drums intensifies the movements and calls forth more dancers from the sidelines. It's Electric Pow Wow night, and A Tribe Called Red (ATCR) is on stage. At 10 pm on Saturday nights when Babylon's doors open, Bank Street is mostly dead, except for the line of people eager to enter; as the night goes on, the line will grow and the club will be packed.<sup>1</sup> Electric Pow Wow occurs each month on the second Saturday, regardless of ATCR's attendance. A busy touring schedule frequently has the group out of town.

ATCR is an Ottawa-based DJ collective that is most known for developing "powwow step," a genre that blends samples of powwow drumming and singing with dubstep, a genre of electronic dance music featuring syncopated percussion, distorted sounds, and sub bass that resonates in the body due to its very low frequencies. The members of ATCR are talented Aboriginal musicians whose sonic signature attempts

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to synthesize the past and present into a compelling music that sounds and feels both connected to a vibrant cultural heritage and relevant for twenty-first-century urban-based Aboriginal youth. For many Aboriginal youth across Canada, especially those in urban centers, ATCR's sound represents their contemporary experiences and musical tastes. The music inspires these youths to build community through the shared space of the dance floor and the communal experience of kinaesthetic listening—that is, listening *through* the body as the pounding beat resonates, and listening *to* the body as participants celebrate their physicality.

The growth of ATCR's visibility and popularity is timely. It not only parallels an increased interest in other Aboriginal musicians—such as Tanya Tagaq and Buffy Sainte-Marie, who each won the prestigious Polaris Prize in 2014 and 2015, respectively—but also a resurgence in Aboriginal activism in Canada with Idle No More,<sup>2</sup> the call for an inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and a Canadian national focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the legacy of residential schools.<sup>3</sup> Thus, ATCR's musical encoding of a modern indigeneity, which facilitates a shared and embodied cultural self-determination, occurs during a time in which Aboriginal peoples in Canada aim to reconcile the past with the present and demonstrate a vibrant and empowered culture—a twenty-first-century, increasingly urban-based culture that survived the “cultural genocide” enacted by the residential school system for more than a century. Particularly in urban centers, opportunities to connect to tradition in shared communal spaces foster Aboriginal identity: the music and movement of the Electric Pow Wow dance floor allow Aboriginal youth to express pride in their culture, celebrate their contemporary urban-based identities, and reject colonial regulation of the Aboriginal body. Moreover, Electric Pow Wow night juxtaposes historical and contemporary notions of indigeneity that pervade the discursive productions about ATCR and their music.

Accordingly, the first section of this article examines how Electric Pow Wow facilitates community formation and embodied cultural self-determination, specifically for urban-based Aboriginals in Canada and Ottawa, while the second section asks: how do statements from the media and ATCR negotiate tensions between “traditional” powwow music and “modern” electronic dance music? However, this binary is not straightforward in that electronic dance music is not the only modern way to express twenty-first-century Aboriginal culture. Powwow music is also modern: styles change, and new songs are written. The final section asks and responds to the question, how does ATCR encode the notion of modern indigeneity musically? Employing three musical analyses of ATCR's processual productions, I highlight the features that make the music conducive to kinaesthetic listening and community formation on the Electric Pow Wow dance floor. Specifically, I focus on how the group modifies the melody and rhythm of the vocals, including vocal effects, texture, song form, and other expressive elements such as tempo. The pounding electronic beats inspire attendees at Electric Pow Wow to listen kinaesthetically—a vigorous physical response to the sounds resonating through the body and a celebration of the Aboriginal body historically denied visibility and affirmation. The music of ATCR situates the sound of a modern, urban-based indigeneity within the particular space of Electric Pow Wow, as well as Ottawa and Canada more broadly.

## THIS SPACE FOR OURSELVES: COMMUNITY FORMATION AND KINAESTHETIC LISTENING AT ELECTRIC POW WOW

A Tribe Called Red wouldn't exist without Electric Pow Wow, which is a communal, intertribal hub, "a space/place where Native Americans come together . . . [and] groups of people and individuals . . . transform spaces through music."<sup>4</sup> This hub allows Aboriginal peoples to explore, negotiate, and assert their twenty-first-century urban-based identities. The success of Electric Pow Wow points to the sociocultural and political context of Aboriginals in Canada today. According to the 2006 census, more than 50 percent of individuals who identify as Aboriginal in Canada live in urban centers,<sup>5</sup> which is an increasing population trend since the 1970s with the shift away from reserves and rural areas to the cities.<sup>6</sup> Bonita Lawrence's study of Toronto's urban Aboriginal population reveals the broader issues of "invisibility and placelessness, situated at the heart of a colonizing culture still predicated on the 'vanishing Native' [and] being eclipsed by the struggles of dozens of 'multicultural' communities for survival and advancement"<sup>7</sup>—not to mention higher rates of suicide, addictions, poverty, and incarceration for Aboriginal individuals in urban areas, as well as racism.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike many ethnic minorities in urban centers who live in concentrated neighborhoods and can maintain strong ties to language and cultural practices, Canadian cities rarely have concentrated neighborhoods—a ready-made community—for urban-based Aboriginals.<sup>9</sup> However, other community endeavors do intersect, allowing a space for urban-based Aboriginal individuals to construct individual and collective identity, such as intertribal friendship centers.<sup>10</sup> For Aboriginals in Ottawa, Electric Pow Wow night is similar to the Odawa Native Friendship Centre in also meeting the cultural and social needs of Ottawa's urban Aboriginal youth, whose invisibility and placelessness is intensified without access to traditional ceremonies and social events.<sup>11</sup> In her discussion of Australian Aboriginal music, Crystal McKinnon argues that "one of the most important productions of indigenous musical spaces is the continuation and recreation of indigenous identities."<sup>12</sup> For McKinnon these indigenous musical spaces are a form of resistance even when they remain within the community because they serve the community's need to maintain a distinct unassimilated identity and culture.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, then, Electric Pow Wow night is a "social [space] through which an autonomous sense of Indigeneity can be created, continued and expressed,"<sup>14</sup> a form of resistance for Aboriginals in Ottawa and beyond.

According to the 2006 census, there were 12,965 Aboriginal people living in Ottawa.<sup>15</sup> As in cities across Canada, in contrast to the median of 38.2 years of age for the non-Aboriginal population, this is a young population, with a median age of 31.9. Almost forty percent of the Aboriginal population in Ottawa is under the age of twenty-five. As a club night "dedicated to showcasing Aboriginal DJ talent and Native urban culture and . . . aimed at creating a space for Aboriginal people,"<sup>16</sup> Electric Pow Wow has become an important space for this large and growing population of Aboriginal youth to build community, celebrate culture, and reject historical regulation of the Native body.<sup>17</sup> Initially inspired by ethnic-specific music parties in Ottawa, DJ NDN and Bear Witness began their own Aboriginal-focused events.<sup>18</sup> ATCR member

Witness explains that the Aboriginal community immediately supported the events, telling him, “we need you to do this, we need to have this space for ourselves.”<sup>19</sup>

The club night’s “Pow Wow” name refers to the intertribal community events that have become an important cultural practice for expressing Aboriginal identity and creating intertribal bonds.<sup>20</sup> A powwow highlights talents in music, dance, and craftsmanship, but the focus of the powwow is the drum circle, with the drum providing the beat for the singers and dancers. Although Electric Pow Wow is not a traditional powwow, it also is an intertribal gathering that centers on a drum beat, albeit one created by the DJ. Further, Electric Pow Wow night retains other traditional values of powwow music, which “associate[s] singing with service and commitment to the dancers.”<sup>21</sup> Unlike a traditional powwow in which most dances are restricted to particular participants, Electric Pow Wow is open to all attendees, making it similar to social Round Dances and 49 dances that emphasize communal dancing.<sup>22</sup> Such dances “foster pride and a sense of community amongst participants, renewing relationships with one another, while celebrating First Nations’ identity.”<sup>23</sup>

Electric Pow Wow is not nation-specific in the same way as conventional powwow events may be, but it is location-specific. Research from the 2006 Government of Canada census, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study all indicate that the Aboriginal populations differ in each Canadian city studied. Thus, an Ottawa-based Aboriginal-focused cultural space like Electric Pow Wow will be specific to the Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in that city. With its community formed between a specific group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants in Ottawa, the cultural self-determination enacted aurally, visually, and kinaesthetically at Electric Pow Wow occurs on the local level. Importantly, however, its music and musicians demonstrate even wider connections. As Janice Esther Tulk explains, “the power of the localized powwow lies in the ability to both enact and maintain a sense of nation-specific identity while fostering participation in a broader Indigenous community.”<sup>24</sup> The ubiquity of clubs across Canada, an eager audience for A Tribe Called Red (the main musical voice for Electric Pow Wow), and ATCR’s touring schedule allows Aboriginals across Canada (and also the United States) to participate similarly in Electric Pow Wow, fostering community and cultural self-determination across time and space—even extending to virtual space, where social media posts display the sense of ownership Aboriginal individuals feel for the physical and musical space of Electric Pow Wow.<sup>25</sup> For example, Twitter user @RedIndianGirl exclaims: “I love being @atribecalledred show. Those pounding beats are for us & all our relations. Other people are welcome to dance but it’s ours.”<sup>26</sup>

Listening is inherently an embodied activity<sup>27</sup> that intensifies with the group movement on the dance floor to facilitate community formation and to challenge colonialist notions and regulations of the Aboriginal body. The dance moves are both individualized and homogenized as people engage with a set repertoire of moves and become part of the broader group on the dance floor.<sup>28</sup> Because moving together in time and place is a “powerful force in affective bonding of the individual with the group,” this shared space and movement forms a community amongst the participants.<sup>29</sup> Although Electric Pow Wow night doesn’t aim to achieve the ecstasy of raves, comments from

attendees and from the author's personal observations suggest a similar "[merging] into a collective body"<sup>30</sup> as their kinaesthetic listening connects body and mind. And ATCR's music is designed specifically as dance music—music that resonates through the body and whose perception inspires and celebrates movement. As the musical analyses below illustrate, ATCR's music elicits this kinaesthetic response through the beats, textures, and song form.

The elevation, and perhaps domination, of the body as expressed at dance clubs causes authorities anxiety, who may respond with regulation and even termination. In identifying this response in "'Understand Us before You End Us,'" an ethnographic study and discourse analysis of Toronto's rave culture, Charity Marsh points to "a tension with the notion of a free, unregulated body."<sup>31</sup> In the case of Electric Pow Wow, we find not only the bodies of youth—a "marginalized group whose voices are rarely heard or taken seriously"<sup>32</sup>—but also the bodies of Aboriginals, an even more historically fraught "Other" in Canada's sordid colonial legacy.

Canada sought the regulation of the Native "savage" whose red skin, non-European clothing, and dancing (social and ritual) marked the body as a dangerous Other. Rhetorically, and thus politically, the savage Native is linked to the body, as opposed to the mind.<sup>33</sup> Assigning negative values to the Aboriginal body legitimized the process of colonization. Legally mandated prohibition of bodily cultural practices, such as dancing, was a main tool in this process.<sup>34</sup> Calling the dancing at Electric Pow Wow "embodied sovereignty," Karyn Recollet asserts that Aboriginal participants "work with—and through—[the impact of colonialism within our bodies] as part of our process of claiming Indigenous territories in urban spaces."<sup>35</sup> In a musical and physical enactment of cultural self-determination, Aboriginal participants in Electric Pow Wow thus work through their colonized past. The members of ATCR, which also tours with hoop dancer James Jones, are aware of the significant kinaesthetic component to Electric Pow Wow. In a January 11, 2014 tweet, DJ NDN includes a photo from a 1921 Department of Indian Affairs document that characterizes Aboriginals dancing as a "waste of time" and then exclaims: "From this to the #ElectricPowWow in less than 100 years. Can't wait to see you guys #dance tonight @BabylonOttawa."<sup>36</sup>

Pride and self-recognition is central to the shared and embodied cultural self-determination at Electric Pow Wow. The 2009 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study found that while the majority of participants had experienced unfair or negative behavior because of their Aboriginal background,<sup>37</sup> the majority were also proud of their Aboriginal identity, with 82 percent of participants reporting they were *very* proud of their Aboriginal identity, and three-quarters of Aboriginal youth (18–24) experiencing a strong sense of pride.<sup>38</sup> Hosting many musicians in addition to ATCR, such as Wab Kinew, and DJs KineWone, Magnificent, and Lao Capone, and occasionally including visual artists, Electric Pow Wow is an event to express this pride and to counter negative stereotypes of Aboriginality through the exhibition of talent and vibrant embodied culture. Attendees proclaim their Aboriginal identity, such as the young woman who, after she inquired about my own identity, proudly stated that she was Native. As a hub devoted to the talents of Aboriginal artists, Electric Pow Wow not only allows historical colonizers to recognize Aboriginal culture, but more importantly,

supports urban Aboriginals' self-recognition, which, Glen Coulthard insists, "[involves] some form of critical individual and collective self-recognition"<sup>39</sup> as "free, dignified, and distinct contributors to humanity."<sup>40</sup>

As Electric Pow Wow actively rejects colonial regulation of the Aboriginal body through, as Recollet argues, "embodying our own complex Indigenities made real 'in the now'—on the dance floor,"<sup>41</sup> the past and present meet, and not without tensions. This same juxtaposition pervades the discourse surrounding ATCR as "the soundtrack for indigenous youth." In the next section, I interrogate the tension between "traditional" and "modern" in powwow step, which is considered the reason for ATCR's success and the group's relevance to twenty-first-century, urban-based Aboriginals.

## DISCURSIVE TENSIONS: "TRADITIONAL" MEETS "MODERN" IN A TRIBE CALLED RED'S POWWOW STEP

The name A Tribe Called Red refers to both A Tribe Called Quest, which DJ NDN explained in an interview is "an obvious . . . reference for people who aren't in the powwow scene and have grown up in an urban setting,"<sup>42</sup> and to the common phrase "A Tribe Called [blank]" for drum group and Aboriginal nations, such as A Tribe Called Mi'kmaq, a powwow drum group on the Tribal Spirit label. ATCR consists of DJs/producers Ian Campeau (DJ NDN), Thomas Ehren Ramon (Bear Witness), and formerly, Dan General (DJ Shub), who had joined together about 2007.<sup>43</sup> DJ NDN and Witness initially played mashups and remixes at the early Aboriginal-focused events that became Electric Pow Wow. Then DJ Shub made a guest appearance and was inspired to produce "Electric PowWow Drum." He joined the group, and powwow step became a new electronic dance music genre and ATCR's sonic signature. All members have extensive experience as producers, and Shub in particular with turntables. Witness is also a talented video artist who frequently shows his reappropriations of stereotypical Aboriginal depictions alongside ATCR's musical sets.<sup>44</sup> DJ Shub left the group in June 2014 and Tim Hill (Zoolman) joined.<sup>45</sup>

ATCR has released two albums, in addition to numerous tracks posted on the online audio platform Soundcloud and EPs. The music has garnered critical as well as fan acclaim, from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal listeners. Both *A Tribe Called Red* (2012)<sup>46</sup> and *Nation II Nation* (2013)<sup>47</sup> were nominated for the Polaris Music Prize, the former to the long list and the latter to the short list. ATCR won Breakout Group of the Year at the 2014 Juno Awards, in addition to receiving a nomination for Electronic Album of the Year. For *Nation II Nation* the group also won Best Group, Best Producer, Best Album Cover, and Best Pop CD at the 2013 Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards.

These accolades point to the negotiation ATCR must make with its Aboriginal identity. At times the group (and its individual members) is explicitly Aboriginal, given that the genre powwow step samples recognizable powwow chant and drum beats. Furthermore, Adam J. Barker claims that "in some respects [ATCR] provided the soundtrack to Idle No More . . . [and] [s]everal of their songs feature prominently on YouTube videos created around Idle No More,"<sup>48</sup> which is a recent example of

indigenous activism;<sup>49</sup> the song “The Road,” analyzed in the next section, was created specifically for the Idle No More movement. Yet when the time came to submit the second album for nominations in various Juno award categories, they opted not to submit it for “Aboriginal Album of the Year.” Campeau explained in an interview that they wanted their music to be evaluated in terms of its electronic genre, and not race.<sup>50</sup> The group’s live shows also variously highlight and minimize its indigeneity. ATCR, like other Aboriginal musicians, “[does] not always need to ‘wear’ [its] aboriginality, that is to sound identifiably Native American.”<sup>51</sup>

ATCR constantly negotiates the fraught boundaries between its musical and Aboriginal identity. Although ATCR’s music—both on produced tracks and in live shows—is varied, their reputation arose specifically because of the new genre powwow step. The powwow drum and mostly Northern style high-register vocalizations are reinterpreted within the beats and distortions of dubstep. The central role of the drum in powwow music is a natural parallel to the primacy of the beat in dance and electronic music. The beat of the traditional drum is reinforced by synthesized drum beats and is often presented in counterpoint to more intricate (and often syncopated) percussive rhythms. The approach to vocal samples varies from single cries to full phrases that maintain the formal/narrative integrity of the original song (for an example, see the next section’s discussion of “Red Skin Girl”). The vocal samples tend to use vocables or English-language songs.<sup>52</sup> Some groups sampled on *Nation II Nation* sing in their own language (see the next section’s discussion of “Sisters”). Recollet characterizes the repetitive sampling (both aural and visual) as a way to “reverse a history of Indigenous absence.”<sup>53</sup> While the members are all talented musicians, the uniqueness of their sound and the reason for their current fame is due to this specific blend of powwow music and electronic dance music.

Audiences have expectations, as well as event organizers who invite them for special performances. And ATCR sees its music as an opportunity to bring visibility to twenty-first-century Aboriginals in Canada and to resist notions of a frozen culture. When I attended their show at the Art Gallery of Ontario in February 2013, the Aboriginality of ATCR was emphasized through the numerous powwow step tunes and Witness’s videos of reappropriated stereotyped and racist images of Aboriginal peoples from films. This was a performance—musical, social, cultural, and political—of ATCR, as opposed to a club setting in which talented DJs create the music that will inspire participants to dance. As the focus was on the performative art of ATCR, dancing at this event was restrained compared to a typical club scene.

I contrast this with the Electric Pow Wow night I attended on February 8, 2014 with ATCR as the main deejays. Two significant differences were apparent: first, ATCR’s set included only one powwow step track (“Electric PowWow Drum”), which invoked a huge response from the crowd, and some occasional other samples of isolated distinctive Aboriginal cries; second, this event was a dance party, with the dance floor filled with enthusiastic participants, and also a social event, with friends meeting up at Babylon to dance the night away and ATCR’s friends talking to them on the stage all night. This night emphasized ATCR’s wide-ranging musical influences and DJ skills, which are similar to the debut album’s use of dubstep, moombahton,

reggae, and hip-hop,<sup>54</sup> and demonstrated the shared vibrant kinaesthetic listening on the dance floor. In an interview with the *Ottawa Citizen*, Witness explained that their touring shows “follow a more structured set,” while at Electric Pow Wow, “we play the music we want to hear. I think it really shows at our Ottawa shows that we’re having fun.”<sup>55</sup>

The members of ATCR are both talented musicians and *Aboriginal* musicians creating a unique sound and fostering an important space for community formation and cultural self-determination. Media statements and interviews emphasize the latter, referring to the group as “the soundtrack for indigenous youth”<sup>56</sup> that is “taking tradition in different directions.”<sup>57</sup> The members themselves emphasize this merging of the traditional and modern in their music, explaining that “we’re urban Aboriginals” and ATCR is one way that “we’re finally creating a culture for ourselves.”<sup>58</sup>

The blend of the traditional and modern identified in the music of ATCR comes from the vocal and drum samples of powwow drum groups. A respectful and collaborative use of the source material for powwow step is important to ATCR, given the long history of cultural misappropriation. The group has an arrangement with the record label Tribal Spirit for mutual credit and benefit: as long as they give credit, they are welcome to anything in the catalogue, and likewise, Tribal Spirit can remix any ATCR track and include it on artists’ albums. On *Nation II Nation*, ATCR samples several drum groups from the Tribal Spirit label, including Northern Voice, Black Bear, and Sitting Bear; in turn, these groups include the remixes on their own albums.

Any hesitance critics and listeners may have about a supposed violation of the traditional powwow recordings must consider the problematic notion of “authenticity” in powwow recordings. Nathalie Kermoal argues that often Aboriginal art is criticized when it is not traditional enough—when an Aboriginal artist moves away from the techniques and aesthetics of the previous centuries.<sup>59</sup> However, “tradition” is not a set of frozen cultural practices, with the powwow tradition being no exception: drum groups compose new songs and the preferred singing style evolves,<sup>60</sup> though the songs stick to the standard types (e.g., Crow Hop) and their respective tempo, form, and drumming patterns.<sup>61</sup> “Modern” is an equally tricky concept. Barker asserts that ATCR’s sound is an “undeniably modern musical form.”<sup>62</sup> This is likely due to the group’s genre of electronic dance music, which certainly resonates with a contemporary youth culture, especially in urban centers. However, we run the risk of characterizing certain styles and musicians as *not* modern because of similarly rigid notions of what can be labeled “modern.”

Authenticity remains a complicated issue, therefore, as Aboriginal peoples continue to be defined (and regulated) by colonizing politics and laws that say who is Aboriginal, where they can be Aboriginal, what Aboriginality looks like, and, in the case of ATCR, what Aboriginality *sounds* like.<sup>63</sup> Beverley Diamond and Christopher Scales both point to the varied recording practice of so-called traditional Aboriginal music that challenge any notion of “authentic” traditional music, with close-miking, reverberation, and multitracking, together with many other production and post-production approaches that are anything but unobtrusive, objective documentations of the music.<sup>64</sup> ATCR’s

use of these already constructed recordings is only another part of the varied and intentional approach to recorded Aboriginal music. In this meeting of the so-called traditional and modern, power struggles can emerge as stereotypes come up against “the wide scope of modern Aboriginal occupations, new modes of agency, and community in cities,”<sup>65</sup> about which many non-Aboriginals remain ignorant. Andersen and Denis insist: “Urban Native communities are real, they endure, they are growing. . . . They are the source of new forms of culture, association and self-perception—both individual and collective—about what it means to be Aboriginal.”<sup>66</sup>

For both ATCR’s members and its fans, having control over the expression of Aboriginal identity is important. In interviews, ATCR frequently emphasizes self-representation and the power to control the image of Aboriginality through the music, videos, logo, and merchandise. The logos of ATCR also point to the contemporizing of traditional imagery, with a headdress around headphones appearing on the cover of *A Tribe Called Red* and a dream catcher consisting of a record and hanging microphones on the cover of *Nation II Nation*. Witness insists that this is an important act of agency, reasoning that the group belongs to the culture and thus appropriately reinterprets the traditional symbols.<sup>67</sup> With their bodies and culture still on display, but reconstructed on their own terms, ATCR actively seeks to transcend a debilitating colonial legacy through various levels of agency and expectation. This kind of cultural activism and revitalization parallels protests and projects across Canada, such as Idle No More, or Anishnaabe author Joseph Boyden’s recent collaboration with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and composer Christos Hatzis.

Tensions persist, though, as misunderstandings about cultural appropriateness endure at Electric Pow Wow. Members of ATCR have shared stories about non-Aboriginal participants showing up to events with headdresses and war paint. And in their enthusiasm to participate in Electric Pow Wow and ATCR’s music, non-Aboriginal fans sometimes end up offending. For instance, one Twitter post from Anishnaabe violist and media artist Melody McKiver states: “White people. For fuck’s sakes, don’t try to mock-sing along with @atribecalledred at #ElectricPowWow. Not a good look.”<sup>68</sup> These stories demonstrate continued misunderstandings of what contemporary indigeneity looks like, in urban centers in particular, and what kinds of non-colonizing interactions are possible between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Tensions should be expected as “asymmetrical relations of recognition”<sup>69</sup> persist within Canada’s colonial legacy.

Transitioning to non-colonizing interactions must be negotiated on both sides, as Aboriginal musicians do not, and should not, present a homogenized sound of urban Aboriginality. As the musical analyses in the next section will demonstrate, ATCR’s output alone is varied in its samples and styles. Scales’s analysis of recorded powwow music refers to “processual productions and discursive productions”<sup>70</sup> as the basis of our understanding of musical style. To demonstrate ATCR’s musical encoding of a modern indigeneity in their “actual practice” or “processual productions,” I analyze three songs from their two full albums, and also draw attention to how their varied musical practices avoid a homogenized presentation of urban Aboriginal music.

## ENCODING A MODERN INDIGENEITY WITH A TRIBE CALLED RED: THREE MUSICAL ANALYSES

ATCR's powwow step musically encodes a modern indigeneity that facilitates kinaesthetic listening and community formation, particularly for urban-based Aboriginal audiences. These songs intersect with Aboriginal culture and politics in a number of ways. The songs demonstrate powwow singing, drumming, and songwriting talents coming from a variety of First Nations tribes, including one example in the tribe's own language ("Sisters"). These songs are inherently political in that they encode a contemporary indigenous culture—one that is not frozen, mythical, and tied only to the land. The third example, "The Road," is overtly political, with its tie to Idle No More. These three examples encourage fans to engage kinaesthetically, a physicality that rejects colonial regulation of the Aboriginal body.

The debut, self-titled album *A Tribe Called Red* (2012) garnered critic and fan attention across Canada. As it is a collection of tracks completed during the group's formation, the styles are varied, including hip-hop, dubstep, and moombahton. Some songs include samples from contemporary drum recordings, such as Northern Cree's "Red Skin Gal," and archival recordings, such as "General Generations,"<sup>71</sup> alongside shorter samples of the distinct sonic markers of Aboriginal singing in the high register, more typical of the Northern style of powwow singing.<sup>72</sup> "Red Skin Girl" is one of ATCR's most popular songs, and it demonstrates an active partnership with a preexisting drum recording to create a musical work that expresses indigeneity in a modern club setting and facilitates kinaesthetic listening due in large part to the dubstep characteristics discussed below.

### "Red Skin Girl"

"Red Skin Gal"<sup>73</sup> is a Round Dance by renowned drum group Northern Cree Singers from the Treaty 6 area of Alberta.<sup>74</sup> Founded in 1982, they have since released thirty-seven recordings with an important studio and label for Aboriginal musicians in North America, Canyon Records, won numerous powwow drum group championships and awards, and earned six Grammy nominations. This is one of the most famous drum groups whose sound would be immediately recognizable to anyone who regularly listens to powwow recordings. The original song has a strong fast beat (152–156 beats per minute (bpm), slightly faster than the typical dubstep tempo of approximately 140 bpm), and a catchy melody and lyrics, all of which ATCR maintains in the remix. The fast tempo's strong beat encourages kinaesthetic response to the music, and club goers can easily sing along to the English lyrics.

Powwow and social round dance songs have a similar structure,<sup>75</sup> with the drum groups generally singing four repetitions (called "push-ups") of the song; in the original "Red Skin Gal," there are also four push-ups, each beginning with the A phrase, sung first by the leader (or the "lead"), followed by a repeat of that statement (A') sung by the other singers (or the "seconds").<sup>76</sup> This opening A phrase uses only vocables. The main part of the melody is comprised of two parts (B and C), creating a larger section that is repeated each time (thus creating an incomplete repetition). In "Red Skin Gal,"

push-up two uses only vocables while the other three use vocables during the first “BC” phrases and English lyrics for the second “BC” phrases.

Form: ||: A A' BC BC :|| [repeated 4 times]

The forms of both Northern Cree’s song and dubstep are compatible, and thus ATCR can easily translate the original song’s form into the remix. The additional drum patterns, bass sounds, and vocal modifications create a catchy dance remix. The original song opens with long-short drumbeats played on hand drums,<sup>77</sup> although this section of the remix is extended as an introduction according to dubstep convention. This introduction includes a crescendoing, syncopated rhythm and a glissando over an announcer declaring “A Tribe Called Red”; it samples, manipulates, and repeats the low shouts that open the original song. This “build-up” and then “drop” of the bass are typical of dubstep, resulting in heightened emotional responses that “trigger movement and make people move their bodies to the music in ways they find pleasurable.”<sup>78</sup>

The main section of the remix’s dubstep form begins with the opening A phrase sung by the lead and the repeat sung by the seconds; the choppy, glitch vocals over synthesized beats and the distinctive wobble bass<sup>79</sup> clearly place this remix within the dubstep genre. In the remix, the first two push-ups become the main section before a dubstep midsection, which is a repeat of the introduction. The second main section is a close repetition of the first main section and provides four push-ups of powwow song form. The remix uses the English lyrics exclusively, except when including the A phrase, which is always in vocables in the original.

The most extensive transformation is of the vocal rhythm: it is resituated in the steady rhythmic pulse to add syncopation. ATCR intentionally avoids beat one and separates what were triplet groupings into more sharply syncopated patterns. The remix also removes the metrical asymmetry of the original, which includes a measure of six beats and irregular phrasing, with a six-measure B phrase and a seven-measure C phrase, resulting in a thirteen-measure section. The remix makes the B and C phrases an equal eight measures each, creating a balanced sixteen-measure phrase.<sup>80</sup>

FIGURE I. Transcription of vocal line and drum from “Red Skin Gal” by Northern Cree Singers; from 0:47–1:09.

Take a look just one more time beau-ti-ful smile beau-ti-ful eyes. That's a red skin-girl yah.

That's a red skin-girl yah. She's so pre-ty she's so fine Red skin girl I'll love you all the time.

Hey-ya hey-ya hey-ya hey hey-ya

FIGURE 2. Transcription of vocal line “Red Skin Girl” remix by ATCR; from 1:22–1:47.

Asymmetry and irregular phrasing in Northern Cree’s song should not be taken as a musical weakness; however, the remix’s repositioning of the phrases into conventional four-beat, eight-bar dance music phrasing allows attendees at Electric Pow Wow to easily situate their movements into the rhythmic phrasing. “Red Skin Girl” is a fairly typical dubstep remix, but the original recording’s melody and lyrics are recognizable and allow audiences to perceive and respond to the recontextualization of drum music in the club scene.

ATCR’s second album, *Nation II Nation*, is much more focused stylistically, due in part to its creation over a shorter span in time, and in part to its sampling of recordings on the Tribal Spirit label. The tracks feature several drum groups from various nations, including Black Bear (Atikamekw), Northern Voice (Atikamekw), Chippewa Travellers (Anishnaabe), and Eastern Eagle (Mi’kmaq). The title refers to the discussions that A Tribe Called Red sees as needed not only between settler and Aboriginal nations, but also between Aboriginal nations;<sup>81</sup> in an interview, Witness points to his own group as an example, given the historical animosity between DJ NDN’s Ojibwa tribe and DJ Shub and Witness’s Cayuga tribe.<sup>82</sup> Movements like Idle No More have brought Aboriginal nations together to insist that their voices be heard on issues such as the environment, education, and infrastructure on reservations—issues that emerge from the bigger discussion of sovereignty and self-determination.

Most of the recordings used on *Nation II Nation* reflect the traditional sound of the drum group, created by a group of men encircling the drum. Some women will stand outside the circle to provide background vocals an octave higher. Diamond clarifies that the women’s omission from the drum circle itself is not a minimizing or restricting of their bodies, but that their position points “to the power of their bodies.”<sup>83</sup> She explains that the woman’s body is purified each month during menstruation, while a man’s body must gain spiritual strength through the drum.<sup>84</sup> For this reason, ATCR was struck by an a capella recording of female singers from Northern Voice singing in Atikamekw. “C Kisakitin Mama” (on the album *Dance of the Moon*) thus became “Sisters.”

## “Sisters”

Northern Voice Singers is made up of principally younger singers from the Atikamekw territory of Wemotaci in Quebec; they perform in a contemporary Northern style and sing in Atikamekw. “C Kisakitin Mama” is not a typical powwow song, with its lack of drumming and male vocals. Because of its vocal style, though, and ATCR’s emphasis on the drum beat, “Sisters” resonates with listeners as another example of powwow step—a song that celebrates Aboriginal culture in a twenty-first-century context and encourages kinaesthetic listening in and through the body. This celebratory kinaesthetic aspect is emphasized in its award-winning music video.

Given the a capella origins of the sampled voices, “Sisters” completely transforms the original. However, it maintains the pitch exactly, which helps to identify the voices as female. At 130 beats per minute (an increase from approximately 102 bpm in the original), the tempo inspires the dancing depicted in the video directed by Jon Riera.<sup>85</sup> The video tells the story of three young Aboriginal women (played by Sarain Carson-Fox, Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs, and Aria Evans) getting ready and then attending Electric Pow Wow. The sounds and images in “Sisters” illustrate that Electric Pow Wow is an opportunity for Aboriginals to gather, resulting in shared and embodied cultural self-determination and self-recognition. ATCR’s samples and artistry in electronic dance music bring people to the club, inspire their dancing, and help them celebrate their indigeneity.

“C Kisakitin Mama” opens with a complete statement in vocables before singing with lyrics in Atikamekw. The a capella original, while relatively steady in tempo, takes more space—a liberty permitted by the lack of instruments or strict metrical accompaniment.<sup>86</sup>

The image shows a musical transcription of the vocal line from "C Kisakitin Mama" in Atikamekw. The transcription is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The piece is in 6/4 time and consists of 10 measures. The lyrics are written below the notes. Measure 1 contains the word "vocables ...". Measure 2 contains the lyrics "Ni mi-re-ten e wa-mi - tan a". Measure 3 contains "a - nout e ki - ci - kak - (vocables)". Measure 4 contains "ki-sa-ki(hi)-tin ni ma - ma". Measure 5 contains "ki sa-ki-hi-tin ni ka - wi". Measure 6 contains "vocables ...". Measures 7 through 10 continue the melodic line with various rests and notes.

FIGURE 3. Transcription of vocal line from “C Kisakitin Mama” by Northern Voice; from 0:00–0:42.

ATCR transforms the melody into a syncopated pattern within an active and lightly contrapuntal rhythmic texture. Unlike some other tracks, such as “The Road,” the basic pulse is not emphasized through a low, loud drum, likely because the original recording does not have the strong powwow drum. The remix is catchy and upbeat, but not heavy-handed, which may be one reason why ATCR does not sample the more tense, higher-register portions of the vocables melody, in which we can hear strain in the singers’ voices.

“Sisters” opens directly with the first (though impartial) Atikamekw phrase and it never samples the vocables. The hi-hat provides a constant pulse with a syncopated cowbell with heavy reverberation above and the bass below.<sup>87</sup> This first minute is really an introduction to the main musical section that will dominate the majority of “Sisters”; it establishes the tempo and syncopated groove, and familiarizes listeners with the main vocal sample, which will then be more explicitly manipulated.



FIGURE 4. Transcription of modified vocal line and percussion from “Sisters” by ATCR; from 0:15–0:22.

A suspension of the vocal sample and omission of all supporting rhythms builds anticipation to the second section, similar to the build-up and drop heard in “Red Skin Girl.” As the remix shifts into a more rhythmically intricate section, the vocal sample alternates between an adaptation of the sample from section one and an alternatively chromatic ascending and descending stretched and choppy version of the lyric “mama” (first on the basic pulse and later in triplets). The texture thickens with a faster hi-hat pattern (mostly 16th notes, but also 64th-note fills) and a louder synthesizer bass pattern.

A third section (3:15–3:30) uses the same vocal sample as the second section but it now alternates it with a measure without voices. This decrease in vocal activity is paired with a return to the simple hi-hat pattern on the basic pulse. Throughout the remix, ATCR returns to certain sections and uses the omission of specific layers, extension of the voices, or complete silence (that is, stop-time) to provide drama—drama that elicits an emotional and thus kinaesthetic response in the dancers, which is depicted in the video.

“Sisters,” both the song and the video, focuses on the voices of women and celebrates their bodies. The text expresses a desire to spend time with mom.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for the song "Sisters" by ATCR. Each system includes five staves: Voice (treble clef), Hi-hat (percussion), Wood Blocks (percussion), Hand Clap (percussion), and Electric Bass (bass clef). The music is in 4/4 time and G major. The vocal line in the first system has a sharp sign above the final note. The electric bass line consists of a simple rhythmic pattern. The percussion parts include a dense hi-hat pattern, wood blocks, and hand claps.

**FIGURE 5.** Transcription of modified vocal line, electric bass, and percussion from “Sisters” by ATCR; from 0:59–1:06.

Ni mireten e wamitan a anout e kicikak,	I like to see you today
ki sakihitin ni mama	I love you my mom
ki sakihitin ni nikawai <sup>88</sup>	

Its depiction of contemporary Aboriginal women is timely given the recent attention on the shocking number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Recollet reflects that the video specifically “ignites a shift wherein spaces considered unsafe—as in the forested area beside highways, and small-town gas bars—are seemingly transformed into sites wherein girls and women can feel free to dance and move, as opposed to just spatial geographies where women and girls’ bodies are recovered, or seen last by passersby before going ‘missing.’”<sup>90</sup> While the political possibilities of this song are apparent, “Sisters” does not have the same direct connection to contemporary Aboriginal politics in Canada as “The Road.”

### “The Road”

As ATCR was working on its second album, the Idle No More movement spread across Canada, starting in Saskatchewan and quickly making its way to Canada’s capital city and ATCR’s hometown Ottawa. ATCR’s music was often used as a soundtrack

at events—music that would energize participants as well as reflect the desire to be recognized as Aboriginals in the twenty-first century. Using “Calling the Dancers” on the album *Spring Medicine* by Atikamekw drum group Black Bear, ATCR released “The Road,” in support of Idle No More and Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence.<sup>91</sup> According to John-Carlos Perea, the activism of Idle No More parallels ATCR’s music in that both are social processes that foster self-reflection and knowledge formation.<sup>92</sup> ATCR brings awareness to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences of a modern indigeneity through its music.

Black Bear Singers are from Manawan of the Atikamekw nation in Quebec, and they sing in a contemporary Northern style. Their original recording has a fast, strong drum pulse at approximately 149 bpm. The intensity of the drumming is matched by the forceful singing in a high range, indicative of the Northern style—made even higher with the female background singer an octave higher—and heavy vibrato. “The Road” opens with the strong, resonant drum beat of the original song, but slowed down slightly to 140 bpm, more in line with dubstep tempos. The drum is reinforced by other percussive sounds, some of which are syncopated while others reinforce the basic pulse. The remix focuses solely on the opening phrase, sung first by the lead and then answered by the seconds (the rest of the group). The strength and intensity of the original vocals is maintained in the remix. A simple major second pitch pattern (B-flat to A-flat) accompanies the vocals, drums, and percussion. Other than the process of sampling, the vocals have not been manipulated, as opposed to the glitch vocals in “Sisters.” The remix adds significant reverberation to all of the elements, creating an atmospheric effect. The remix offered to the Idle No More movement is not bombastic or hyper-produced. It highlights the intensity and strength of the Aboriginal voice heard in many other popular Idle No More songs.

ATCR’s musical encoding of a modern indigeneity moves beyond simply sampling traditional powwow drum recordings in an electronic dance context. Their music extends the significance of the powwow, with its emphasis on intertribal community formation and the celebration of Aboriginal culture to an urban-based youth population, a thrice-marginalized group. ATCR doesn’t merely juxtapose aural indicators of “traditional” and “modern” Aboriginal culture but unites them in a musically satisfying, kinaesthetically engaging, culturally validating, and politically significant way.

## HEARING MODERN INDIGENEITY IN CANADA

Beverly Diamond explains: “Native American musicians emphasize that they have always been involved in the production of all genres of North American popular music.”<sup>93</sup> ATCR is not unique in this way, but the group creates a kinaesthetically engaging sound with sonic markers associated with traditional Aboriginal culture and modern musical style, all within a designated social space during a time in which Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada are focused on the issues facing Aboriginals today and reexamining notions of Aboriginality, particularly in the urban context. Aboriginal artistic voices are varied, including genre, style, and political engagement. Equating ATCR’s music with modern indigeneity minimizes the importance of other

musical styles and practices that are created and enjoyed by contemporary Aboriginals, regardless of how “modern” they sound. Instead, I argue that ATCR is *one* example of how, according to Recollet, “Indigenous artistes use cultural raw materials to produce a new Indigeneity that reflects the lives of Indigenous artists now.”<sup>94</sup>

By ATCR’s own admission, Aboriginal musicians in the twenty-first century navigate cultural, commercial, and identity concerns. Despite my aim to demonstrate ATCR’s heterogeneous sound within electronic dance music, the intertribal element of the music and performances that helps ATCR gain widespread popularity and commercial success would seem to undermine the anticolonial emphasis on the heterogeneity of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, which resists pan-Indian characterization as a group with the same culture, history, struggles, and political goals. Nevertheless, McKinnon believes that the power of music in Australia emerges when “Indigenous musicians communicate across, between and within their communities.”<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in Canada, when Aboriginal nations came together in Idle No More, they were able to avoid a “pan-indigenous practice assimilable by Settler society”;<sup>96</sup> rather, the movement saw “widespread and diverse challenges to settler colonial space, drawing inspiration and ideas from each other, and encouraging these actions to proliferate.”<sup>97</sup> For Aboriginals in Ottawa, Electric Pow Wow and ATCR’s powwow step create a space to resist the invisibility of twenty-first-century Aboriginal culture and foster pride and self-recognition within its Aboriginal community. But ATCR’s music also communicates “across, between, and within [its] community.”<sup>98</sup> Barker explains: “Woven throughout [ATCR’s] music are messages of Indigenous nationhood and reassertions of Indigenous cultures; this becomes an act of creative contention against settler colonial cultural production, and one that clearly resonates with many Indigenous people (and Settler people as well).”<sup>99</sup> Thus, to the Ottawa community and communities beyond, ATCR’s music and performances facilitate “embodied sovereignty” through kinaesthetic listening on the dance floor, making visible and audible to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals an urban-based indigeneity—in the now.

### *Acknowledgments*

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### NOTES

1. Ethnographic reflections of my experiences as a non-Aboriginal individual at Electric Pow Wow in November 2012 and February 2014, as well as ATCR’s performance at the Art Gallery of Ontario’s (AGO) First Thursdays in Toronto on February 7, 2013, will inform my analysis and discussion throughout the article.

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3. Read the TRC mandate and report on its website, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=26>. For a perspective on reconciliation from educator, writing, and activist Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, Alderville First Nation), see *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011).
4. Melissa Leal, "Chempa, Showinpa, Mefpa, Asumpa, Achepa (To Paint, To Scratch, To Dance, To Flow, To Unite): The Native American Experience in the Hip Hop World" (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 2012), 62, ProQuest 3540612.
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6. Heather A. Howard and Craig Proulx, eds., *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 1.
7. Bonita Lawrence, "Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), xvii.
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9. Evelyn Peters, "Geographies of Urban Aboriginal People in Canada: Implications for Urban Self-Government," in *Canada: The State of the Federation 2003*, ed. Michael Murphy (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 70.
10. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples highlighted the leading role of friendship centers.
11. Brock Pitawanakwat, "Bimaadziwin Oodenaang: A Pathway to Urban Nishnaabe Resurgence," in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008), 169.
12. Crystal McKinnon, "Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance," in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 267. Jenell Navarro similarly examines cultural resistance in Native hip-hop in the United States in "Solarize-ing Native Hip-Hop: Native Feminist Land Ethics and Cultural Resistance," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): 101–18, <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/20812/17321>.
13. McKinnon, 262–63.
14. *Ibid.*, 256.
15. Statistics Canada, "2006 Aboriginal Population Profiles in Ottawa," modified January 29, 2010, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-638-x/2009001/article/10826-eng.htm>.
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17. I use the word “youth” without regard to a specific age range. Electric Pow Wow night at Babylon is an event for those ages 19+, while many additional performances by A Tribe Called Red are held at all-ages venues.

18. Benjamin Boles, “A Tribe Called Red,” *NOW Toronto* 32, no. 23 (February 7–14, 2013), <https://nowtoronto.com/music/cover-story/a-tribe-called-red/>.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Janice Esther Tulk, “Localizing Intertribal Traditions: The Powwow in Mi’kmaq Cultural Expression,” in *Aboriginal Music in Contemporary Canada*, ed. Anna Hoefnagels and Beverley Diamond (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 70–88. For powwow fundamentals, see Beverley Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

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22. Thomas W. Kavanagh, “Powwows,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 2, *Indians in Contemporary Society*, ed. Garrick A. Bailey (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 336; John-Carlos Perea, “Forty-nine Dance,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/art/forty-nine-dance>. For discussion of the flash round dances of Idle No More, see Karyn Recollet, “Glyphing Decolonial Love through Urban Flash Mobbing and *Walking with our Sisters*,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 45, no. 1 (2015), 131, doi:10.1080/03626784.2014.995060.

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28. Helen Thomas, *The Body, Dance, and Cultural Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 181; Ben Malbon, *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 98.

29. Thomas, *The Body*, 182.

30. Tim Jordan, “Collective Bodies: Raving and the Politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari,” *Body and Society* 1, no. 1 (1995), 5, doi:10.1177/1357034X95001001008.

31. Charity Marsh, “‘Understand Us Before You End Us’: Regulation, Governmentality, and the Confessional Practices of Raving Bodies,” *Popular Music* 25, no. 3 (2006), 421, doi:10.1017/S0261143006001000.

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39. Glen Coulthard, "Beyond Recognition: Indigenous Self-Determination as Prefigurative Practice," in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008), 201.

40. *Ibid.*, 198.

41. Recollet, "For Sisters," 102.

42. Nigel Irwin, "Listen to A Tribe Called Red's New Record, 'Nation II Nation,'" *Noisey*, accessed July 10, 2014, [http://noisey.vice.com/en\\_ca/blog/listen-to-a-tribe-called-reds-new-record-nation-ii-nation](http://noisey.vice.com/en_ca/blog/listen-to-a-tribe-called-reds-new-record-nation-ii-nation).

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45. Monika Fabian, "Interview/Review: A Tribe Called Red," *rock papers scissors*, [http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles\\_detail/project\\_id/698/article\\_id/20351.cfm](http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles_detail/project_id/698/article_id/20351.cfm). Limited details on Zoolman exist at the time of this article; his Twitter account identifies Zoolman as a member of the Six Nations in Ontario. For more information on Shub's exit from the group, read this *Bullet News* interview: <http://bulletnewsniagara.ca/index.php?p=Sections&id=2410>.

46. A Tribe Called Red, *A Tribe Called Red*, album, from Soundcloud 2012. <http://atribecalledred.com/download-a-tribe-called-red/>.

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48. Barker, "A Direct Act," 59.

49. Campeau's activism is particularly publicized, with his campaign to change the name of the Nepean Redskins, a minor league football team in Ottawa, now called the Nepean Eagles.

50. Stephen Cooke, "Dawning of a New Aboriginal Day," *The Chronicle Herald*, June 19, 2014, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/artslife/1216164-dawning-of-a-new-aboriginal-day>.

51. Beverley Diamond, "Media as Social Action: Native American Musicians in the Recording Studio," in *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technology in Sonic Cultures*, ed. Paul Greene and Thomas Porcello (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 135.

52. Typical nonsense syllables used in powwow music to facilitate intertribal applicability.

53. Recollet, "For Sisters," 93.

54. A Tribe Called Red also released a free EP in 2012 entitled *Trapline* that is dedicated to trap. Moombahton fuses house music and raggaeton (which blends influences from Latin American dance music, Jamaican dancehall, soca, and hip-hop) and is characterized by a two-step pulse, a full stretched bass, and fast drum fills.

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56. Cole Carruthers, "A Tribe Called Red: Soundtrack for Indigenous Youth," *Rocky Mountain Outlook*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.rmoutlook.com/article/20140626/RMO0302/306269984/a-tribe-called-red-soundtrack-for-indigenous-youth>.
57. Cooke, "Dawning of a New Aboriginal Day."
58. "Electric Pow Wow and Remixed History: Canadian DJ Collective A Tribe Called Red Brings Unflinching EDM and Images to the U.S. for First Major U.S. Tour," *rock paper scissors*, [http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.press\\_release/project\\_id/698.cfm](http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.press_release/project_id/698.cfm).
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60. Tara Browner, "An Acoustic Geography of Intertribal Pow-wow Songs," in *Music of the First Nations: Tradition and Innovation in Native North America*, ed. Tara Browner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 131–40.
61. Christopher Scales provides detailed distinctions between types of songs in Northern powwow traditions in Chapter 2 of *Recording Culture*.
62. Barker, "A Direct Act," 59.
63. For example, David W. Samuels discusses a discomfort and confusion over Aboriginal musicians' appropriation of country music, which only highlights the "dominant historical ideologies about what a proper expression of Native identity should be" in "Singing Indian Country," in *Music of the First Nations: Tradition and Innovation in Native North America*, 143.
64. Diamond, "Media as Social Action"; Scales, *Recording Culture*.
65. Howard and Proulx, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities*, 12.
66. Chris Andersen and Claude Denis, "Urban Native Communities and the Nation: Before and After the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 40, no. 4 (2003), 385, doi:10.1111/j.1755-618X.2003.tb00253.x.
67. Boles, "A Tribe Called Red."
68. Melody McKiver, Twitter post, March 14, 2015, 10:17pm, [https://twitter.com/m\\_melody](https://twitter.com/m_melody).
69. Coulthard, "Beyond Recognition," 193.
70. Scales, *Recording Culture*, 196.
71. For information on this track, see Nolan Warden, "Notes on the Collaboration with A Tribe Called Red," *Ethnomusicology Review Blog*, November 16, 2011, <http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/notes-collaboration-tribe-called-red>.
72. While powwow singing is generally divided into Southern and Northern styles, in "An Acoustic Geography of Intertribal Pow-wow Songs," Tara Browner emphasizes the important localized approaches to powwow songs and their performances as well as the breakdown of this main binary due to the diffusion of powwow recordings across regional boundaries.
73. Northern Cree Singers, *Calling All Dancers—Round Dance Songs Recorded Live*, Vol. 6, Canyon Records, 2007, compact disc. The original title by Northern Cree Singers is "Red Skin Gal," while the title on ATCR's album is "Red Skin Girl." The album is available either from Canyon Records or iTunes.
74. Treaty 6 was signed in 1876 between Queen Victoria and Plains Cree and Stoney First Nations, with many additional bands signing on for years after. The Treaty 6 area covers parts of what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan.

75. See Browner, Diamond, and Scales for more details on powwow song form. Powwow songs tend to include either only vocables (Straight, Traditional, or Original songs) or vocables and Native (Contemporary songs) lyrics. Round Dance songs typically use vocables and English lyrics.

76. To differentiate between the two songs, I will refer to Northern Cree's "Red Skin Gal" as the original song, or simply "song," and A Tribe Called Red's "Red Skin Girl" as the remix. "Original" denotes only "first" and does not suggest that ATCR's remix is unoriginal (i.e., uncreative).

77. A Round Dance as an independent social dancing event and as an intertribal social dance at a powwow is identified mainly for this long-short drumming pattern on hand drums; see Anna Hoefnagals, "Northern Style Powwow Music: Musical Features and Meanings," *MUSICultures* 31 (2004), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MC/article/viewFile/21605/25094>; John-Carlos Perea, "Forty-nine Dance."

78. Ragnhild Torvanger Solberg, "'Waiting for the Bass to Drop': Correlations between Intense Emotional Experiences and Production Techniques to Build-Up and Drop Sections of Electronic Dance Music," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 6, no. 1 (2014), 65.

79. Also called "the wub," a sustained bass note is varied in volume, distortion, filter cutoff, and so on, within various metrical subdivisions of the song.

80. Neither version exists in written form, so a discussion of measure numbers is somewhat misleading. However, I have based my transcription on the clear metrical emphasis and phrasing one can perceive aurally. Without accompaniment from pitched instruments, the vocalists don't remain precisely in the keys of my transcriptions. Moreover, the use of transcriptions for the melodic and rhythmic aspects is included only to clarify the provided descriptions, particularly the rhythmic modifications that deeply impact the music's ability to inspire movement. This music is designed to be heard and felt, not read: let the music speak to you primarily through its intended medium. The transcriptions also do not capture the timbral and textural components that are crucial to satisfying electronic dance music.

81. "Bear Witness on the Juno Win and A Tribe Called Red," *Muskrat Magazine*, April 2, 2014, <http://muskratmagazine.com/bear-witness-on-the-juno-win-and-a-tribe-called-red/>.

82. Jesse Kinos-Goodin, "A Tribe Called Red's Urban Powwow," *The National Post*, August 23, 2011, <http://arts.nationalpost.com/2011/08/23/a-tribe-called-reds-urban-powwow/>.

83. Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America*, 132.

84. *Ibid.*, 132–33.

85. The video is a truncated version (3:31) of the song as found on the album *Nation II Nation* (4:30). ATCR won Best Music Video at the 15th annual Native American Music Awards for "Sisters."

86. Northern Voice, "C Kisakitin Mama," *Dance of the Moon*, Tribal Spirit Music, 2013, compact disc. The album is available as a CD or digital download from Tribal Spirit (<http://www.tribal-spiritmusic.com/powwow-music/113-northern-voice-singers-page.html>) or as a digital download from iTunes.

87. A typical part of a drum kit, a hi-hat consists of a pair of cymbals mounted on a stand with a pedal used to clash them together.

88. Northern Voice provided me the Atikamekw text and translation in a Facebook Messenger correspondence on July 22, 2014.

89. Amnesty International-Canada's web page on the mission called "No More Stolen Women," <http://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/indigenous-peoples/no-more-stolen-sisters>. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report from May 2014 states that more than 1,000 Aboriginal women were murdered between 1980–2012. RCMP statistics and government surveys indicate that Aboriginal women are not only more likely to experience violence, but also this violence is more severe when compared to non-Aboriginal women.

90. Recollet, "For Sisters," 98.

91. Black Bear, *Spring Medicine*, Tribal Spirit Music, 2012, compact disc. *Spring Medicine* can be purchased as a CD or digital download from Tribal Spirit at <http://www.tribalspiritmusic.com/black-bear.html>, or the album or individual track "Calling the Dancers" can be purchased as a digital download from iTunes.

92. John-Carlos Perea, *Intertribal Native American Music in the United States: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

93. Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America*, 135.

94. Recollet, "For Sisters," 92.

95. McKinnon, "Indigenous Music," 268.

96. Barker, "A Direct Act," 58.

97. Ibid.

98. McKinnon, 268.

99. Barker, 59. Barker calls Idle No More a "movement moment," one part of the larger story of indigenous nationhood movements.

