What Sovereignty Sounds Like
April 25th 2017 – The Music Gallery – Toronto, Ontario
Kristine McCorkell

David Dacks: Good evening everybody. Welcome to The Music Gallery. I'm David Dacks, the artistic director here. Thank you for being here tonight. Before every event that we host at The Music Gallery, we acknowledge the land because it's the very least we can do to acknowledge something so central to all of our existence here. But in speaking with Jarrett, from Revolutions Per Minute (RPM), and Jeremy, our host tonight, about how this should be addressed; they both said that land acknowledgment is a given wherever Indigenous People gather. In any case the land acknowledgment should only be the beginning of engagement with Indigeneity for arts institutions. I'd like to thank Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin's recent book "Arts of Engagement" which discusses Indigenous aesthetic action as an interface with the Truth and Reconciliation events from structure to content. It has implications for artistic production in places like The Music Gallery. The book became a major inspiration for this event. Many chapters speak of the land acknowledgment by settlers is a performative gesture that is somewhat meaningless, especially if it is merely a tossed off statement at the beginning of a concert. I hope that this event, which Jeremy, Jarrett, and The Music Gallery staff have worked hard to structure in this format, promotes vibrant conversation and musical uplifting all in one. Greater measures are required to build events that are truly welcoming and inclusive, and prioritize Indigenous voices for their own sake rather than trying to shoe horn Indigeneity into an institutions metrics of diversity. We hope that this event fulfills the purpose for which it's intended. I want to stress that this conversation is intended for Indigenous musicians and artists, like me if you are not and Indigenous artist you are welcome listen and witness this conversation, to absorb and to reflect on the dialogue but respectfully, please let those for whom the event is intended to be the voices carrying the conversation this evening. We'll keep the doors open at the back, please come and go as you wish; bathrooms are down the hall and our fellowship room is open for refreshments, but lease don't carry any beer back in here, leave it out there, you can talk there as well but do come witness the whole thing. Ziibiwan will be performing in the middle of the set as something a little bit different in the structure, but for more introductions I would now like to introduce the host of this event: Jeremy Dutcher.

Jeremy Dutcher: (Personal introduction in Maliseet) Welcome everyone. First, I started in my language by saying how excited I am to be here this evening, afternoon; I guess this is evening now. I don't know. My name is Jeremy Dutcher, I'm a singer and composer, and I'm from the Wolastoq Nation in what is today called Northern New Brunswick. I've been a visitor in this territory for a little over three years now, and in that time I've always made time to thank the land and the water in this territory, because this territory has supported and continues to support and help so many nations that have been through this territory; the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and all the nations that have come after. So I also took a chance to thank Dylan Robinson, as did David thank Dylan, because he has been a crucial voice in this conversation. He's a Sto:lo scholar, I guess, at Queens University who works on Indigenous music, specifically around sovereignty. And so he, in his thinking has started a lot of conversations from coast to coast, that are sort of similar to this. Thank you also to David Dacks and The Music Gallery for understanding the importance of a space like this for Indigenous arts communities to come together and to talk about some of these issues and sort of opening their

doors and allowing us to use the space. Thank you to Jarrett Martineau, and RPM, for helping to facilitate this conversation and all the works that is done for Indigenous music communities both here and across the country. Thank you to the artists that have come here to share. I really really appreciate ya'll showing up. It's fantastic to have you here today, thank you, to share your thoughts. And finally thank you to everyone else for coming and witnessing, as David had said, what I hope will be a really rich dialogue about the sounds of sovereignty. (laughs) What is that? What an ambitious title, an ambitious thing we're going to undertake here is to understand what sovereignty sounds like. I guess maybe we'll get an answer, maybe not, I don't know. But we're going to try; we're going to have a conversation that is really centering on Indigenous arts and perspectives thereof. So I want to do a few things before we actually get into the bones or the meat of the conversation, I think it's important for us to, sort of, know whose in the room. So, we've invited a few different Indigenous artists to come here and speak with us today about their artistic practice as it relates to sovereignty and nationhood. So, I'm wondering if folks might be willing to introduce themselves how they would see fit, and talk a little bit about their artistic practice and where they come from, how they found themselves in this place. And then, after that set of introductions, I'm hoping to introduce a couple ideas that we'd like to bring forward today into this discussion around sovereignty and some thinking around that. Once those ideas are introduced, I'm going to invite my friend Ziibiwan up to share some music as we sort of digest and engage with those topics. And then after Ziibiwan's performance were going to come together and discuss, and if there's time, of course, we'd be interested in engaging with others as well, but, of course as was said earlier, this is primarily to engage Indigenous voices in this conversation. So, without adieu, I'd love to hand the mic over to our, I'm really trying not to say panel, cause that is so not the format we want to go for today, but nonetheless I'll hand the mic.

Ange Loft: Hello. I'm one of the people on the benches on this inner spot (of the room). I suggest if you are a Native music person, I suggest you move up here so you can join the conversation, because I want to hear everybody. I know there are some people in the room who are not sitting up front that are musicians that should be here, or arts folks that should be in the front. I'm looking at you right there c'mon, c'mon we need you in here, and I know that you've been in Toronto for a long time and we need these voices, right. That's the important part because there's people who've laid the groundwork for what can happen here were just benefitting from. My name is Ange Loft, I'm the associate artistic director of Jumblies Theatre and also a vocalist with Yamantaka/Sonic Titan, we're a Juno and Polaris nominated group, and rarely identified as native because mostly we work with mixed Indigenous and mixed Asian People, and I don't get native funding. So we don't fall into the native category very often. But I've been working in this city for quite a while, investing a lot of my time into local history and research, working on these big projects about treaties and what does it mean to be here and work here. So I think with regards to sovereignty and my work, I work independently, I work outside of the Aboriginal community very often. I don't work with Aboriginal organizations by choice and I tend, very often, to make new music with people who don't necessarily have the opportunity to create new music. I work a lot with people with assisted need requirements and also new composers, brand new composers making things based off of community based research, so they turn into things, turns into cantatas and walking musicals in interesting places. Trying to expand also where you experience music into a very personal, a way that you could engage with it outside of having to go to a venue, where, even where there's alcohol. Where you have go to out and party or stay out late at night, so I'm trying to figure out how to get music in

other forms. That's my resistance act, I guess, and also just trying to be frustrating in front of people on purpose, challenge people. (laughter) A bus stop question, these simple questions get me really frustrated so I send, I make things harder for people, I feel like lately.

Ziibiwan Rivers: (Anishnaabemowin introduction) My name is Ziibiwan, I'm an artist here in Toronto. I come from Hamilton, families from Wikwemikong First Nation. I'm an artist with RPM records, with Jarrett here, and yeah I've been living in Toronto for two years and I just like low key music produce here. That's it.

Jeremy: Want to talk about sovereignty?

Ziibiwan: Oooh about sovereignty, I don't know. Yo, I feel like pretty sovereign bro, I mean like, like unapologetically sovereign. That's about it, its like, I'm just like I'm cool.

Ange Loft: Like Malone? (laughter)

Ziibiwan: Yeah, ride or die.

Jarrett Martineau: Tansii! I'm Jarrett Martineau, originally from Frog Lake First Nation in Alberta, (speaking in Cree) from treaty six territory. Been out here in Toronto for almost two years now that have flown by. But I was on the West coast before and I run the Indigenous music project Revolutions Per Minute, evolved into RPM records, a record label, which Ziibiwan mentioned and is a part. And came into doing that work as a Hip Hop artist from beforehand, but I haven't really had much time for that since I've bee doing all this work building and supporting the infrastructure side. I think a lot of the work that I do, I don't know that we've every really talked about it in terms of sovereignty with respect to RPM, but we have thought a lot about it in terms of autonomy. And both for the autonomy of our artists and also the kind of autonomy of the project that were building and I say that knowing that we have a bunch of arts grants that we're now applying for, which we haven't applied for until recently. So, it's bound up in a lot of questions around the way that we engage outside partners, outside funding sources, the things that drive the infrastructure that allows us to make the art that we make. But in the most optimistic sense, I think that what we try to do and personally what I've been trying to do is to have the most open kind of communication and dialogue with everybody that we work with, so all the artists that are with our label, with the work that we do through the website and everything else is about engaging this conversation as often as possible. I'm grateful for the opportunity for us to be able to get together and talk in this way to, because I feel like it builds on a lot of questions that many of us in the community are thinking through and don't necessarily have answers for. Yeah.

Ansley Simpson: Aannii, Boozhoo. Ansley niindiznikaaz. I've been in Toronto for I think the last, I think over 15 years now. It feels like a long time and I might stay a little bit longer or move to the bush or Hamilton. Haven't decided yet. (laughter) It's like one or two options. No, I'm not going anywhere. I'm a Singer/Songwriter. I've been heavily supported by RPM but I'm not on the label. So, I really appreciate Jarrett's help. I write grants to do music. I also have recently become, or started working with an organization called Dark Spark which uses song-writing, production as a teaching tool for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools, Grade 8

usually, and as a way to be able to teach about colonization and the harm that it's brought. Yeah. What else do I do? I have a six year old daughter. So, I balance that all with my family as well. I'm really happy to be a part of this conversation because I feel like it's definitely time. Yeah, Miigwech.

David Deleary: Hi. My name is David DeLeary. I'm an Ojibwe from Walpole Island First Nations down South of here. What am I? Jeez. I have performed with ensembles. I used to lead a drum group at one time to full on civic symphony orchestras, jazz bands, big bands, little bands. Right now, I'm a gigger. I take jobs as a bass player. I play pretty much any kind of style that exists. I'm a Song-writer. People are recording my songs. I'm a producer and engineer. I produced and engineered Cliff Cardinals debut album. I'm in his band, I'm one of the Skylarks. As a composer, I'm trained in the Conservatory at the University of Arizona. I recently completed a choral work using as text the Doctrine of Discovery. It was written in support of an art installation that I did with Bonny Devine. I wrote the music. It ended up being a ten minute choral work using the Latin words of the Doctrine of Discovery. What else do I do? I do sound design for theatre. I can do audio for about any kind of situation. I've done video shoots. I've worked in radio. I've done a little bit of theme scoring and things like that. What else do I do? I was actually taught by an elder how to sing pow-wow songs. I'm one of the bad Indians from the old days who actually partied. And I know those old songs. The bad ones. What else? That's about it. I played with a rock band called seventh fire back in the early nineties; it was kind of seminal, doing alternative stuffs. I guess my views on sovereignty are this: I really don't give a damn about the rules of anybody because I'm the artist. So, if I run across stuff that pisses me off from the strict traditional Ojibwa side, or whatever, I might flaunt it and I might do the opposite. I'm told I'm a contrary so that might be why, but the same thing with the rules that the columnist has imposed on us. I don't care. You know in support of my art, sovereignty, I actually have led, at one time in the distant past, a criminal life style to support my music. So, certainly the rules, anybody's rules, you know my rule is just don't hurt nobody, don't be an idiot. Other than that I respect stuff, what I'm hoping for to see, is a native form of music that would arise from our traditional vocal and rhythmic patterns, that would just kind of naturally, in the same way the reggae arose in the islands in the Caribbean, I would like to see some kind of synthesis that just sort of develops between traditional song and, you know, western diatonic instruments. I mean it's happening already, but it would be neat to see like a native style. I mean I write country and western when I want to, or I write a blues song or I write a reggae song, but it'd be neat if there was something know as, you know I don't know, a modern Rez style or something. I would like to see that and I think it's going to happen; we're doing it now. But anyhow, enough of me.

Jeremy: Thank you.

Mahlikah Awe:ri: She:kon (speaking in Mohawk) Mahlika Awe:ri, the woman who walks in the light, I'm Haudenosaunee Mohawk, Migmaq First Nations. My home territory is Bear River in Nova Scotia. I'm a part of a collective called Redslam, we're a hip hop arts movement and essentially we really try to infuse the principles of hip hop, so the five elements of hip hop, with the various teachings of the medicine wheel. And this comes across through our music and also our urban arts workshops that we do across Turtle Island in different communities and schools. Music wise, you like to infuse like hip hop with reggae, blues, electronic pow wow, house; so we as Indigenous artists, we are musicians, we play live instruments, we also write our own songs

and certainly add different layers of music, as you were talking about red style, I think we have a red style; to different approaches to contemporary music, but building in the lyricism that really talks about different teachings from our different nations that we represent and the different issues that are relevant to our people, our right now. I guess as an arts educator and you know as a hip hop artist and slam poet, sovereignty for me is about that reclamations of space or re-matriation of space as a front woman for a collective where I'm supported by a lot of brothers in the community, it allows for the reconfiguration of understanding that as Indigenous people, you know, women and tow-spirited people should be at the center. We have to re-shift to make those voices really central to what's happening, to drive the change that we need to see and that act gives us a lot of strength and repels a lot of the opposition to infringing on our freedom, which ultimately is sovereignty; our freedom to be able to think and feel and do what is innately Indigenous.

Mike Dufour: Aannii boozhoo (Speaking in Anishnaabemowin) My English name is Mike, my family's from Curve Lake first Nation. I don't know what hat I wear today, although it says canoe museum so I guess I'll go with that. Among other things I'm a birch bark canoe builder, I'm a visual artist/arts teacher, about to engage in the video/film world with a good friend of mine and I've just come back to music; I stopped playing for ten years because of an injury to my left hand, I'm a guitarist. And we're about to do a benefit at the university of Toronto for Water is Life, some of the people in this room will be part of that. It was just going to be a jam session where we pass the hat around and now we have groups like Digging Roots and Ansley, Terra Williamson, David and Cliff; a bunch of us, so we're going to do what we can. Because to me music is a medicine, everything we do is a medicine and the one thing that, I'm the old guy in this crowd I guess, I just turned 62 last week and I've been around the block in this community a little bit. My teacher was Art Solomon and I learned a lot from him and the one thing that I learned was that as Indigenous people, particularly in this day when we talk about things like reconciliation, sovereignty, we have to use our voices. To me reconciliation is just a nice fancy word that says really nice buzzword, because without action there is nothing and that action doesn't have to come from me or any of my brothers and sisters that are in the Indigenous community, it has to come from non-Indigenous people; because I'm not the one that has to say I'm sorry. I'm not the one that has to just sort of give it lip service because lip service is not going to do it. Colonisation is still here, its still with us, you know when you apply for an arts grant and you think you put together something really good and then you find out well you didn't get it because that arts funding had their funding taken away because they needed it for something else that wasn't Indigenous. That's not right because we are as much a part of this country, in fact this was our country and this is our native land. And you know there was a time when I was really angry at my white side, I'm half Ojibwa half Irish so I'm Ojiberish, and I may talk to much here but in all seriousness, you know I used to think I could have one foot in one canoe and one in the other, because I had really good balance, but now I'm getting older and my balance isn't as good, and I'm in the one canoe, I'm Anishnaabe. But I also realise that as a country if we're really truly going to have this thing called reconciliation we need realise we're all in the same canoe and we have to paddle together, but that doesn't mean that I have to be the one paddling and it's the head cheese behind me just sitting there having us do all the work because that's not the way it works. And even though I had great hope for the current government that we have because I thought wow great we got rid of Harper. I'll tell you one thing, at least with Harper I knew where the hell I stood, with Mr. Trudeau I have no idea

because I hear a lot of words but I don't see a lot of action and I'm tired of not having action. Art Solomon used to say that there are two types of people; those that do and those that don't, and those that don't get the hell out of the way of those of us that do and we're all doers. And Indigenous artists as any artists that does anything in the arts and that's Indigenous art, you know my brother David mentioned Rez style and I heard that said that everything we do as Indigenous artists is Indigenous art, we have to remember that. Red Slam collective, you used to have a gentlemen, young man by the name of John Huffield Junior, his father is a boat builder and a good friend of mine and one of the most amazing things, go one YouTube, look up John Huffield, he's just free styling and it's the most amazing most powerful thing I've ever heard. It's amazing because it speaks from the heart and they say the longest journey is from here to our heart, I'm still trying to figure that walk out myself but I think some of the young ones here have already figured that out. And I've talked to long, I'll pass this to Jeremy. Miigwech.

Jeremy: Thanks. Thank you everyone. Is there anyone else who would like to be part of introductions? It's fine, I don't want to put anyone on the spot.

Kerry Potts: I'll put my name in the circle. Aannii (speaking in Anishnaabemowin) [She's from the Bear Clan] and from Ottawa, as well, mixed heritage. I'm here as an arts presenter as well as an educator, so I'm chair of Native Women in the Arts, former assistant to Susan Aglukark, still doing some work with her and I did my masters thesis on how music can be an anti-colonial tool and how Toronto musicians are doing that. What I found during that time is that there isn't an academic language for what people are doing because they're just frigging doing it. So I've been criticized for not being academic enough in my approach, and I said well just go to a concert man, like start a band whatever. But one of the things I've started to do… with Veronica Johnny currently, but we do women's drumming circles on Tuesday nights at Red Pepper Spectacle and we're having a drum awakening, a little shameless promotion, on May 2nd 6pm at the Shaw school, at the C.I.T., we're doing a drum awakening if any of you want to come; its open to women, men, non-binary conforming individuals. And I think like Dave was saying earlier and its an honour to be in the presence of all these gifted people, that I'm looking for that language and the musical language that sort of defines it, sort of what I would consider it to be like a Native new wave. I know that's colonial language, because I think of Duran Duran when I think of that, but I also think of it in terms how I think about the new wave in terms of movies and how Artounjai laid the groundwork for that and the work of many others, Mike MacDonald, Alanis Obomsawin, and many many others. That's being found through film but how are we doing that through music? It's there but it's – if it'll develop into a genre. And also, how do we develop an actual language to talk about that because I also teach a course that I created at Humber College about Indigenous music, film and media. Trying to translate that for college students who want to go into HVAC and going, "This is important (laughs) to reconciliation." So, I'm honoured to be here and I just wanted to put that in there and I'm happy to talk to anybody. Miigwech.

Jeremy: So, yeah. A lot of really interesting points brought up around the circle, even so far. That's just introductions, folks. Only going up from here. (laughs) Yeah, that was it! (laughs) What you had said that Indigenous music and art is is just Indigenous people making music and art. I think sovereignty can be as simple as that. Whereas there's other people that really take up their traditions and infuse it into their artistic practice. That's something that I've focused on in the work that I do: making sure that I am singing in my language. I'm working on a project right

now that is taking archival songs that were collected in 1907. Taking them out of the archive – the goal of the project is to give them back to the people. So, I've been transcribing them and composing them and trying to package them. To make them accessible to our people again because up until now, they've just been sitting in an archive. So, my form of sovereignty is to actually take those songs back and assert our claim to them and give them back to the people. Much (inaudible) (laughs) to the copyright people at the Canadian Museum of History. (laughter) These are battles worth having, I think, in this ground that we now find ourselves in. So, that's I guess how I'm taking up sovereignty. I think, there's also many questions that we can ask ourselves when we gather. I'm really excited to have people to have this conversation. Usually, it's really just me in my head so this is great to actually manifest it. Considerations around protocol and accountability? Considerations around ceremony and performative space? Even considerations about Indigenous people being in space and what space we need to create our music? And also how we transform space even by being in it. For example, The Music Gallery. This is not usually how this venue looks. We have shaped this venue so that we may better know each other and look at each other and respond to each other in a way that is a little more comfortable for Indigenous folks. So, there's many many considerations and I think there's been some interesting ideas around futurisms and about where our movement is going and the styles that can come out of using our traditions and trying to make them into a modern context. Again, I don't want to talk to much, I don't want to stifle what's going on. I also want to make space for our performer. We're going to have Ziibiwan come and share some music. I think that's also really important for us to speak and showcase and lift each other up as well because, often, as musicians, we're off doing our separate things. Sometimes we're the only ones at a festival or the only ones in a room who are actually Indigenous. We're sort of seen to have to speak for our community when really, all I can do is speak for my nation and where I'm from. So, maybe, what could be best now is to actually invite you up. While we're thinking about things like how we're infusing protocol in our work, how we think about space and how we recreate space. How we take up issues – do we have to take up issues in our music? Or can we just make music for music sake? I did a concert last year in Norway. I was interviewing with NRK which is like their CBC. The first question that they asked me was, "Jeremy, why are you so angry?" Quite the ice breaker. Yeah. (laughter) Because I speak a lot about issues when I'm on stage. I feel like that is my role as an artist and that's how I take up that space. But for those who don't do that, maybe there's a pressure to do that. I don't know. I'd love to get the thoughts around the room around those artists that don't take up an issue based political message in their work because I feel like that is equally as interesting and equally as valid, because I think sometimes that can get twisted. Anyway, maybe we can just chew on those ideas and engage with them as we get carried away with some wonderful sound by Ziibiwan. We're good. Are you good to go?

Performance

Jeremy: (clapping) Give it up for Ziibiwan! Thank you so much for sharing that. If it's okay to keep you on the hot seat for a little bit, I've got a few questions.

Ziibiwan: No, that's cool.

Jeremy: Thank you so much for sharing that music tonight. Particularly with the way that you're sampling Indigenous voices within your work, can you talk a little bit about that process? Why

you choose the samples you do? I can think of three sort of very obvious ones that were in that. Leanne Simpson. Christa Couture, her new single Shout Out. And of course the luminary Buffy Ste-Marie. Really awesome to hear that. Can you talk a little bit about why you chose those voices and what that process is like for you?

Ziibiwan: The Leanne and Christa Couture – those are actually remixes that I was asked to do. I love working with female Indigenous voices especially.

Jeremy: Yup.

Ziibiwan: I don't know what it is. I was raised by Haudenosaunee Anishinaabe woman. So, it's just like I love working with it. And Buffy Ste-Marie is a personal hero. I like sampling female perspectives mainly because that's just how I was raised. Living so close to Six Nations with the Clan Mothers and stuff. And of course, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is such an important topic for me as well as the child welfare system of Indigenous kids because I come from that system. It's my way of decolonizing a certain vibration. I have a lot of Hip Hop attributions in my music. I guess it goes back to that's my way of being sovereign. Unapologetically using – not trying to use without permission… I worked with one poet in the States called Whisper Kish about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and she actually messaged me a few days ago and she wants to work with me again. That piece is like two years old. It's kind of cool. Sometimes I just find it online but I do try to reach out to them and I do try to get their permission. Of course, Buffy's so big. I'm definitely big on spoken word poetry and building soundscapes around that. Also, I'm trying to learn how to record and sample Indigenous music like the hand drums or water drums or corn rattles or stuff like that.

Jeremy: Why do you think that's important in your musical practice to incorporate that? Is it a way to find your own identity? Why do you feel it important to include those Indigenous voices in your work?

Ziibiwan: When I was a kid, we would go to Six Nations and we would do Alligator songs and moccasin dances and shit like that. (laughs) So, that's what I was raised with. It's just a matter of what I was raised with. That's who I am. I did enter foster care but I was raised by my mishomis who is my grandpa in Ojibwe. He did teach me a little language and just cultural values. That's what I mean; I don't really have a lot to say about it besides the fact that that's who I am – literally. I'm also learning – everybody's learning. We're all kind of assimilated in a way. We're all trying to decolonize our own minds. For me, that's a part of my process is taking the things I grew up with and trying to expand on it and build on it too.

Jeremy: Yeah, cool. Thank you. Thank you again for sharing your music.

Ziibiwan: Miigwech. That Buffy sample's sick bro, it's gonna come soon. (laughter)

Jeremy: Yeah, what tune is that?

Ziibiwan: That was a CBC interview.

Jeremy: Oh yeah.

Ziibiwan: That's a song of hers called Winter Boy. It's like old, bro. In the interview, it's from The National about MMIW and actually about her album. I find it ironic because that song was about her being in a relationship with a guy – at least that's what I picked up from it. So, it was kind of cool about how she's talking about in the interview – it's not children or other women that's killing Indigenous or people of colour women, you know what I mean? It's men that's doing it because they're raised with this Eurocentric values of masculinity and masculine identities and stuff like that. That's why it's really important to have female and Two Spirited perspectives, you know? That's what's up.

Jeremy: Cool, yeah, thanks. I think what you brought up a little bit is talking about issues in your music, you know, touching on the various issues that we have within our community. Whether it's working around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women or the foster care system or highlighting all sorts of issues. I may throw the mic over to you, if that's alright. If you'd be willing to talk about maybe how you speak to issues or not. I think that's a really interesting conversation because often, it's assumed that we must speak our issues in our music and sometimes it doesn't always have to be that. You've taken that up for sure in your work, I've taken that up for sure. Would you be willing to share a little bit about that? And then I'll maybe pass the mic as well.

Mahlikah: Yeah, I think definitely when creating songs or poems or poems that will be songs, there's always this discussion around, "Are we going to focus on an issue or are we just going to make a really hot track?" (laughs) Sometimes it's difficult to make that decision, especially depending on what's happening in the moment. So, obviously there are certain things that are very pressing because we're out here and people respect what it is that we have to say. We do acknowledge that we have people that actually listen to what we say. There's a part of ourselves that feels a certain responsibility to talk about things that are pressing, whether it's the issues around land and water or the state of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, etc. But it's tough. I know for us, I feel like in many ways, it has put us in a certain stratosphere, particularly on a performance level. In many ways, being labelled a very strong protest performance band. That also, sometimes, limits our commercial ability on a mainstream level if we're just trying to get a Hip Hop track listened on a larger scale because some people don't want to hear all of that 'noise' about certain things. So, it is a hard decision making but, at the end of the day, we make songs that we feel speak to the path that we're on. At the end of the day, I honestly believe that the Creator will ensure that that music gets where it needs to get. We're not going to overthink things. We're just going to make music that we love to make. Talk about things that we need to talk about. So, sometimes we do want to get real grimy and talk about white supremacy and things like that. Other days, we just want to talk about love and relationships. And that's okay too. But we don't want to do it because we feel pressured; we want to do it because it's something that we're being called to do spirit wise and really listen to that piece. It's hard, you know, it's really hard. I think, at the end of the day as I said, I feel we're on the right path. I think for me personally, being a woman in this time, it's very important that I'm not afraid to speak out

because there are those who are. I feel like I have to be an example to represent on that level so I try not to hold back as much as possible.

Jeremy: Thank you, Mahlikah. I appreciate it. Ansley – I would put the same question to you around dealing with issues in our community in your music and how that choice plays into the work that you do.

Ansley: Yeah, thank you. Well, my sister is Leanne Simpson so I can't really shy away from the (laughter from her and Jeremy) politics so much. It is something I consciously think about every single song that I write. As I'm thinking about it now, it kind of irritates me that I have to kind of go over what I've just written and think, "Okay, am I saying enough here? Am I taking up space?" You know? Ultimately, I come back to, "Well, what does this feel from my heart? Is this what I needed to express clearly?" So, for me, I think almost every time I sit down to write a song, I do go over it with that lens and think about it at some point. Sometimes at the beginning. Those ones tend to be a little bit more angry. (laughs) Sometimes it's more at the end. I think one of the things that I like to do with my work is to decolonize certain word choices. I like to throw in different references that speak just to Indigenous people. I don't really care if no one else gets that because I like hearing that in everybody else's music that I hear. So, I'll throw in a Treaty reference or I'll throw in an Anishinaabe word. Or I'll do something that I know I would get. That's sort of my – even if it's a simple love song. I mean, I'm Anishinaabe, it's all about love. (laughs) I'll still kind of come at it and add a little bit of that touch there so that I can hear, it would be something that I would want to hear as an Indigenous person. I think that – you were saying that as well – I'm constantly looking at how I'm going to be perceived because everybody just want to really wants to just pigeon hold you immediately. "Oh, so you're an Indigenous artist. Oh, so you're an Indigenous political artist." Then they don't see your other work for just what it is. It's silly, but every time I hashtag something, I think about it. But this is who I am. So, more and more, what I come back to is that I'm remembering that my audience, first and foremost, is other Indigenous people. That's who I'm going to continue to speak to because that's the only space that as a creator, an artist, I feel safe. I feel loved. I protect myself in that little bubble of love. It's a good shield against anybody who misses the point or misses where I may have been coming from or doesn't see it at all. Just sees me as something else. So, yeah.

Jeremy: The bubble of love.

Ansley: The bubble of love. (laughs)

Jeremy: I like that.

Ansley: Thank you.

Jeremy: Wonderful. Yeah. Thank you very much for those insights. Ange, would you care to pick up on this as well?

Ange: I don't make issue oriented work on purpose until I put it all together. I feel like there's often – no. In my regular, outside of music making work, (I'm an interdisciplinary artist,) I put a lot of that content into other places. I tend to write stories about – I realized I'm working on these

real history based work and stuff in my music. It doesn't show up in my music explicitly. I guess I have been investing – the first song I ever wrote, I was twenty six because it took me that long to be able to write something that I could perform out loud. It was a song called 'Feast" about eating the Pickton murderer. So, about eating this guy, trying to eat this man. The other one was about smoking too much weed. These two things are not separated. This kind of understanding about, like it took so long to actually get something written in the first place. I don't realize that I'm doing something that's considered resistance based until I'm on stage and I'm with an entire full band and suddenly you hit that moment where you're like, "Oh, that's what this is about. Oh, I'm performing this in a church in Nova Scotia." If you're performing this in a random place and you're like, "Oh." You're performing this in Vancouver in some place and you're like, "Holy shit, it feels totally different to perform this song here." Because, suddenly, when I'm yelling at a high timbre, all of the sudden, it makes sense. You're like, "Oh, this is not for me, this is for the teenagers that are in the audience because there's only like 7 Native teenagers there who brought their moms and the rest of the audience is all like fifty year old white guys who like Psych music. (Laughter) Mostly my audience is like white guys in plaid shirt, more or less. This thing about who I make my music for and what I hide in there is super funny. Outside of this next record that we did, I hid all of these references to the Iroquois creation story but through this like blasted down vibe of feeling – I don't realize I'm not saying anything explicitly political except for things like 'Put me down some place, some place a live,' right? But it's actually referring to this woman falling down from the Sky. But it makes a lot of sense when you put it into context, right? And then also just this vibe around like the things that died going down to get earth. Not going the literal route. I refuse to go the literal route because I don't want to hit over the head more. I tune out when people say things like sacred and acknowledge I'm trying to invest into those words with a bunch of my other practices and trying to explore them interdisciplinary to see what I like now because those words kill me. I can't do it because they've been made into English language and when you say something in English, it doesn't make sense when you're trying to get across a concept. I've been playing a lot with this idea of how to hide things inside of what I'm up to. Waiting for someone to maybe realize that's what I did years down the road. I don't know. On top of that, I was thinking about new music. I had a talk with Sadie Buck from Six Nations, a women's hand drum singer there. They're a singing society which is what I grew up in, doing Iroquois singing society stuff. Totally different realm than what I learn here. But then when I'm in Toronto, which is just around the corner from Six Nations. Ultimately I remember her telling me, "You can't make old music again and again. This vibe that – don't bother recording old songs in a new style. Don't even deal with that. Don't try to take their old music and put it into something new because what you need to be doing is using the forms that you already understand. You know vocables. We know vocables." I'm not fluent in my language but I'm fluid in vocables and I could conduct something in – I could create something in vocables that's brand new. That's riffing off of something I already know. But she told me explicitly, "Don't get stuck on that because why would you want to reproduce something that's already been done?"

Jeremy: So, what's the solution then?

Ansley: Well, uh, learn your vocables! (laughter) Find some cool tune you want to make and spend a lot of time with your cell phone. (laugher)

Jeremy: Easy as that! Cool. Thank you very much. You talked a little bit about space in what you do and how, as a performer, you inhabit that space and how that space changes, I think, based on who's in the room. I know as somebody working in classical-ish music, often, my audiences are primarily non-Indigenous, I will say. So, that changes the ways in which I'm able to perform and the kinds of conversations I'm able to have on stage. Where if I was back in my territory, performing for people that spoke the language, it would be a totally different conversation that we could have. So, would anybody maybe care to take that up in terms of audience and space? Maybe I'll direct that, I don't want to put you on the spot again… Would you be interested in talking about audience and space?

Ansley: I think when you were talking about it, I was starting to think about the different audiences that I've either been in the audience for or played for. It's so different to play for an almost entirely Indigenous audience.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Ansley: It's like you're just held and the space is held and everybody is just waiting and happy and calm. There's this level of acceptance that is like no other and the performances then I feel are just, they're transformative. I'm thinking of a show that we recently played with Leanne in Alberta at U of A but it was primarily an Indigenous audience, and it was just amazing. It was a very different show than when you're standing on stage and I know what Leanne is gonna say next in her lyrics and I'm scanning to see the faces (laughter) because they're not gonna get it. They're gonna get something entirely differently and it creates a tension as a performer and it creates tension moments in your performances and different spots than you would expect them. It's sometimes kind of shocking when people will walk away when they hear your lyrics. They take it to 'dark places.' I'm just like, No, I'm just talking about the Northern lights being kind of like, you know, cool, they're dancing up there. It's fine. But they're dead.

Jeremy: Ahh.

Ansley: But they're fine; it's their spirit – they're fine. We're good. It's happy. Damn. So, space is vitally important and I also know that, as an Indigenous performer, what I kind of try to do anyway is own the space and own the moment and own as much as I can so that I can just allow myself to do what I need to do well in that space. But yeah, I don't know. That's my two cents.

Jeremy: Cool. Thanks, Ansley. If we could pass it – oh sure. And then over to Jarrett.

Mahlikah: In the world of Hip Hop, it's very different regionally. I think when you're doing a Hip Hop show and it's primarily an Indigenous [audience], I agree. It's like people are so hype and so supportive and really down to like make sure you receive the energy that you need to like do what you need to do on stage. Then, when you're in a non-Indigenous environment, depending on the audience, for me personally, if it's a lot of males in the audience, there's an expectation being the female in the crew that somehow this is going to be hypersexualized. So, you know, there have been times when I've felt very uncomfortable because I want to focus on the lyrics. I don't want to focus on booty shorts and crop tops and leather. I want to focus on my lyrical content. But I don't get that same vibe when I'm performing within an Indigenous crowd.

It's really about – they want to hear the message, they want to hear the music, they want to vibe out or whatever. So, that's kind of interesting where that misogynistic line plays in the Hip Hop culture depending on the audience. I also do feel that sometimes when we're doing a show and there's a lot of non-Indigenous folks, particularly settlers or white folks in the audience, they're really trying. They feel like they have to be extra, you know. You're trying to do some call and response and whatever. Either they don't know how to respond so there's that dead kind of moment of silence and you're like, "C'mon, c'mon." You really want them to participate. Or they're like overly excited and then that also throws you off because they feel that they have to be extra to be a part of the experience. So, it's just an interesting time right now because I think a lot of those folks, they have some good intention but they also, like, we still wanted to be chill yo. It's Hip Hop (laughs) at the end of the day, right? It's interesting the chemistry or whatever and again, depending on where you're at. An audience in Victoria we did like last month was so, it was really hard to get them engaged. I literally had to jump off stage and go into the crowd and I was doing Hip Hop hand drumming. Finally, luckily there was a few Indigenous folks in the audience who were just trying to get the crowd pumped up. But it took a lot of energy versus being in Vancouver or Toronto or Halifax where right away people are into it.

Jeremy: Great, thank you. Jarret, I know we wanted to get to you. Somebody who presents a lot of Indigenous artists. I know you have RPM Live which is a live series for Indigenous artists who come and present their work. Yeah, do you have any thoughts and considerations around Indigenous space and audience?

Jarrett: Well, I mean, what I first thought of was actually not in the context of RPM at all. I was actually thinking about when A Tribe Called Red started the Electric Powwow series a few years ago. I remember when they started, they started in Ottawa, and it was like a pretty radical proposition that they were like, "We're going to have like a Native night for people to come out and dance at a night club." And people were like, "What a crazy idea." And I remember there was like a political conversation, or a conversation around the politics of what it meant to do that in a night club. They were just DJing Powwow music but people were like, "Is it okay to play Powwow music in a place that serves alcohol, in a night club, in a bar?" And there was this sort of conversation around what it means to even occupy that space as a Native audience and Native artists. I mean, arguably, they've transcended that argument. Not to say that there's not still politics that play out in that but they've transcended it by virtue of gaining much more popularity. And, at the same time, in terms of producing a space like that, creating and cultivating a space like that as a crew, I remember hearing them from social media last year that there's still people showing up to their shows in headdresses. Like even still, like this is years later now and they're like, "How many times do we have to tell you?" But people are so hype about the idea of coming out to an Indigenous event that they're like, "I'm trying to celebrate you, let me celebrate you with my $5 headdress from the dollar store or whatever." So, I feel like these things constantly bring up more questions around what it means to cultivate it, because maybe I'll say this: We can kind of have our own intentions in terms of being Indigenous artists and creators around what we think we're doing and who the audience is that we think we're reaching. And that you actually take it out into the real world. It like, becomes something very different. And then, on the part of the artist, and I'll say this in terms of what looking at that conversation looks like, I see there's a lot of energy that's expended deliberating about how to respond to the demands of the audience. So, maybe not in the immediate sense that you're

performing but at the level of creation. Ansley was talking about like when you're writing a song and you're thinking, "Okay, is a certain audience going to get it this way and is another audience going to get it this way? To what extent do I need to perform my Indigeneity in this setting enough where people are going to recognize the markers of the work to say 'that checks off a box enough that like I went to the Indigenous event or if I went to a different kind of event where those markers are not easily read for me or made available to me, particularly as a non-Indigenous person. Am I still going to get something from that experience or if it's the way Ange is saying do you like code it so 20 years later people are saying, "Oh, you were doing this thing the whole time!" And it was intended to be read as literally out of the gate. That level of deliberation over what you're making and who it's going to be read by and how it's going to be read. I feel like there's something, not to say that Indigenous artists are the only people that are doing that… but it's like a real preoccupation because there are so many expectations on the part of Indigenous artists and musicians around what it means to present Indigenous work. So, for us to kind of go and like create that space or occupy that space can mean many different things but I feel like we're already in a situation going into it where we're running up against a set of expectations. So, it means the work itself sometimes becomes reactive or whatever which I feel like is a trap because if you're only making work in response to the idea of the expectations that you think are being opposed on you as a community or as an artist, you're already confining what the possible avenues for the work are because you're already saying, "Well, okay, if I'm going to go here and I'm going to do this for these kind of people, then it should be this thing." That's already pre-defining in a way what the possibilities are.

Jeremy: Can you speak a little bit to those expectations you're talking about because I know I've felt them for sure. I think that's a common feeling around the room of those expectations. You know, you coming and presenting your work and the gaze sort of being put on to what you're doing and the narrative being placed onto what you're bringing before you're even able to shape it.

Jarrett: Yeah, I mean I think there's, (I don't want to take up too much time,) because there's so many expectations and that depends on what kind of genre you're working within, and it depends on how much you've already coded like if you've already started to present you work, how much you've already bought into the idea of coded it in a certain way or presenting it in a certain way so then people then expect it. Like, if you did come out in full regalia and then next year you come out with your new record and you don't come out in your full regalia and everybody's like, "Oh, I guess you're not doing the Indigenous thing anymore!" Like you're not allowed to even have it evolve to the next iteration of it which might do away with certain easily read markers or whatever. What does that mean? A footnote, and then I'll be quiet, but a footnote about the RPM live thing which was and is an ongoing attempt for us to be able to present Indigenous work just on its own terms. So whatever it is, and for a lot of artists we've presented in this series, people don't know the artists coming in. So, they're not necessarily aware they're coming to an Indigenous music series. We've been pretty upfront about that but it's not trying to say, "It's going to be this kind of a night or this set of things that are going to be easily read as that." So, leave it to the artist to determine what that is and know that there's going to be a strong contingent of Indigenous people present, both at the level of its organization and presentation, and at the level of audience. So, we're not trying to do an exclusive party. We're trying to do something that involves everybody but at the same time, provides a sense of that kind of

autonomy and safety that people have been talking about. Like, if you know you're family is with you in the room, it gives you a certain kind of freedom to stretch out a little bit that maybe you don't have if you're the only Native in the room. What are you going to tell me about your culture?

Ange: It's fun when you're in like Europe though. If you're the only Native in the room and you're in like Leeds or something, it's fun. It's fine. It's necessary. Just thinking about who's reading you. It's different how they read you in a different country because here, they're used to what you're expected of. But if you're doing a European tour, the relationship to what I'm doing is so much different and it's so hilarious what their markers are. Say there's a moment where I raise this one thing and people freak out. And you're like, "Holy, you really wanted to see that marker. You guys really wanted to see that and I did it.

Jeremy: And it killed!

Ange: You know, and there's certain things that I won't do. Yeah, yeah you know those little turns to turn it up a tiny bit.

Jeremy: Do you feel pressure to do [these things]? Because you've talked a little about performing Indigeneity. I think that's a really interesting point.

Ange: I mean, my people are show people. We've always been. Mohawk people are obsessed with being on stage. (laughter) It's true! Show-hawks. Buffy Ste-Marie called me a Show-hawk when I told her I'm Mohawk and she said, "Yes, it's true." But it's one of those things, we've been doing Vaudeville performances and Mohawk people have been doing cultural shows since, my family's been doing it, since the 1800s. I come from that lineage, right? So, that is part of my culture and I know that. And I know that this game of playing these things, right? I can hold a wig and pull a giant garbage bag wig off my head and people read it as something like, "I know that I'm doing," you know? Like it's a joke. It's a big weird joke that, if you want to play that game, the rest of it has to counter that. The last vocalable creation that I made was a riff on a Filipino Indigenous vocal piece that this girl brought from something that she had remembered because we were working with a Kulintang orchestra. So they said okay, give us what you got. And then I translated it into something that sounds Iroquois. It's one of these funny things about what is reality because nobody knows. You hear the beginning of a racoon song that's on the beginning of our first album and people think that it's like a Japanese traditional song. It's the racoon; it's the most local. It's just this funny thing about who reads what… Very culture bound.

Jeremy: Absolutely.

Ange: We're Canadian so we have this – we pretend we know what we're talking about when we talk about Native people. (Laughter) (Someone asking, "Holy, really?") Oh, I think most Canadians do. They pretend to know what they're talking about. It's 150, right?

Jeremy: Oooh, it's been invoked! (laughter) I thought we were going to avoid it! But it's an interesting conversation for sure in this year because I think a lot of us are struggling with those conversations, those opportunities that are coming our way, the struggles between our political

identities and who we are as artists, and you know, having to keep the lights on. Anyway, that's a whole other discussion.

Mike: First, as an Anishinaabe, I should balance the Haudenosaunee. So, we're snags, sensitive, Nish, and gorgeous, okay?

Ange: Got it. (laughter)

Mike: But I think two things came to mind. You were talking about Buffy Ste-Marie. Buffy at one time was blacklisted in the States, right? And she didn't get the play on regular radio. You know, I keep hearing about 'Indigenize' like Indigenize spaces, Indigenize this, Indigenize that. I think everything we do is Indigenous, right? Because we are Indigenous people. I keep trying to stuff that in my head, particularly around the Canada 150. I really struggled with that. I went for funding through various arts councils to do other things through reconciliation or Canada 150. And I saw friends of mine, like Christ Belcourt, Isaac Murdoch, who said, "don't touch it." I heard Jesse Wente talk about it not that long ago and he said, "it is part of the colonial system; we know that." But, if you don't have the Aboriginal voice or Indigenous voice there, then maybe we're missing part of the dialogue. But what I've come to realize is I'm not so sure that dialogue is going to be really heard because, no offense to any non-Indigenous people in this room, but I still don't think that you hear us. And I think what's really sad is when I hear such talented musicians, like Ansley and everyone else, say that they have to perform or they're more comfortable in an Indigenous audience. I think it would be good to just come out as a performer. As an Indigenous person, perform what you do and feel that from everyone in that room. We're not there yet. I hope we get there. That's a dialogue that we started, apparently. But it's one we definitely need to have. You know, I'm reminded of Louis Riel's words: "Our people are going to be asleep for 100 years. It will be the artists that will wake them up." Well, it's one thing to wake us up but it's also up to the rest of Canada, or whatever, Turtle Island, the rest of the world. They need to hear us. We need to keep our voices going. Like this young man here, what RPM's doing, and everyone else in this room. So, I say miigwech to all of you.

Jeremy: Okay. Well put. Yeah. Did you have something to add on that? I know I saw you shaking.

Ansley: Just really quickly. I think, as I'm listening to everybody else talk as well, I think what came to mind was when Jarrett was talking about putting on the RPM shows and it really is different when it's Indigenous run. I think that almost is the bigger different. It's not so much the audience, I feel held when I know that the organizers have gone out of their – they're Indigenous so they get it – and I know there won't be any bizarre questions to throw me off my game and I know that. It's easier to play for anybody. I think that that's what we need more of is more Indigenous framework, organizations, more performance, more labels, more everybody on the platform level so that we can unfold as musicians in a more held way and just do what we do. Yeah.

Mike: Safe spaces. Why don't you just be so damn good that you just knock them out no matter who they are, right? I came up out of the bars. That's harsh. In a bar, you have three and a half minutes, the length of a song, to make them love you, right? You know, you want all these

people. Three and a half minutes on a dance floor. That comes from knowing your stuff so well that, damn, it just comes right out of you. Most of my work doesn't reference Native stuff lyrically. I do have some things that do. I do actually got some Powwow type stuff that I've done. I'm doing electronica tracks lately and I'm throwing a little bit of that in. But I think you just gotta write your stuff and aspire to excellence, right? Aspire to excellence within yourself. Play that thing, whatever it is. It's your voice. It's gotta come out. It's your words. You know, make that happen. Just be fearless. You have to walk out there and just, you know, actually think in your head: domination. These are mine. This is my space. You know, I own it. To that wall. That's what I think you have to do. Get a little tougher because it's not gonna always be what you want. I love playing Indigenous shows. They are cool. But I've had wild things happen too that are just wildly appreciative at bar shows, say with a native band. It feels weird. I was down at South by Southwest with a Native country band about 10 years ago. We'd been rehearsing, we knew our stuff. Derek Miller played the guitar with us on that particular trip. What bugged me was when we got down there to the gig, everybody was flipping out because we were Natives. You know like, 'Wow, there's these - "We're not dressed in regalia or anything. We're in country Western stage clothes. You know, that kinda stuff. Everybody's like, "Agh!" So that was kind of weird that they were making more of it but I don't like to see that happen. You know, just strive for your own internal excellence. Period. Everything else will make itself happen.

Jeremy: Alright. Ziib? Indigenous excellence. What say you?

Ziibiwan: You know, I was just thinking like, I do agree with that, like I mean if you are truly like great, people will respond, right? But there's a lot of young people out there who, especially like in remote communities, that don't have access. That's something that Jarrett just preaches about and I kind of picked it up because it's true. There's a lot of Indigenous young people out there who don't have the skills - especially because Hip Hop is so big right now – they don't know how to like make beats on FL studios or they don't know how to produce or engineer, or get their track mastered. They don't even have the support for that. So, that's another discussion that will be more towards grant services, continue supporting those programs out there, or if there are programs, I don't even think there are really – I don't know. There are some.

Jeremy: Do you feel a responsibility to Northern youth and youth that don't have access?

Ziibiwan: I would like to one day, you know what I mean? I think you talked about that once, like one day curating workshops. Indigenous run workshops with Indigenous youth just trying to be aware of the circumstances that some of them are born into, intergenerational affects and stuff like that.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Ziibiwan: To help them kind of – music is medicine, right? So, you know? Yeah.

Jeremy: Great. I just wanted to catch you first and then we'll keep going on that.

Ange: I work with kids all the time lately. I travel around. I work on theatre stuff that's all over the place these days, like all over Ontario. I tend to run into Native teenagers that… they need to

make music. They're all over the place. There's a few companies like Wapikoni Mobile and different ones that travel and bring studios to different places like different reserves that get youth to make stuff. But how simple and tangible it is to make your stuff right now with digital software is beyond possible. This idea around being the best is so true. You know, you've gotta work double time. You've gotta work triple time. You've gotta make sure that like I'm so busy every single damn day just to prove myself, like this idea that I gotta prove all of these things. I work way too much all the time. But this idea around who rises to the top – you're surrounded by people who have already risen to the top. Statically, we are anomalies. I heard this one time, a long time ago and I thought that it's true. Statistically, the people around this circle are anomalies. You are a couple people who have managed to make it through the music system and have managed to have educations and make yourselves known in a panel or a roundtable or whatever we have here. But this idea around what else we need to be there, what we had to do to leverage the systems. This idea around milking it, like my mother says, "Milk it," right? She says, "Milk it for as much as you could possibly get because that's the only thing you're going to get. Why would you not, right? We are owed a lot of things so milk that system as much as you possibly can." It's super important to me, actually. Knowing how to leverage your Indigeneity. Knowing where those little loop holes are in the grants to make sure you can get your work done even if you don't have a whole team of Indigenous people making sure that you have – I'm thinking about the additional people in the music world that are missing, I guess. I need more Native producers, engineers, and music law people and people who are booking agents and people who are in promotion and intermedia and people who can make music videos and get them done properly. I think there's this two-tiered system we have sometimes on what we, how we present our work. I feel like those people, the arts administrator people are missing in the steps, especially working with institutions. There's the people that are in, ultimately, the decision making roles. We're not in those roles. There are a bazillion Native artists but we need the people who aren't artists who also want to support artists.

Jeremy: Is that an institutional problem?

Ange: It's from both sides because the glamour is not there in these roles but we need them, right? The glamour of being on stage isn't there and being a Native artist isn't there. But you're absolutely required. It's just this interesting thing of what we need in the music world is not necessarily more Native artists. We need more people around all of those positions. I desperately think so because I would love, I need a Native music lawyer. (laughs)

Jeremy: I know one. Might be able to hook you up. It was interesting, the point you brought up around leverage and leveraging ones identity. My mother, also, has a similar line around 'playing the cards you got.' I think, for their generation, and this was explained to me by her… She came to one of my concerts and I was performing some traditional songs, some contemporary songs, and a primarily non-Indigenous audience but they, you know, rose to their feet at the end. My mother sort of sat there, just sort of sad almost at it. I talked to her afterwards and she said, "you know, it's unfathomable to me that just within one generation, people would actually be excited to hear Indigenous music and be curious to hear Indigenous music. She was raised with such a sense of shame. You know, she was in the day schools. To speak her language, to sing songs, was really dangerous territory, quite physically dangerous territory. So, it's incredible, the movement that has happened where we have a room of non-Indigenous people out there that are

interested in finding out what our community has to say. I think that is something to be celebrated and something that we do need to leverage. Absolutely. Is there anyone – would you like to pick up on that? No? Okay. (laughs) Wonderful. So, I'm trying to think what we've yet to cover. We talked about space. We talked about identity. A little bit, (laughter,) just a little bit. Just checkin' them off, yeah? I'm interested in the idea of performance space as ceremonial space and the intersections of that. Is Indigenous performance space always sacred space and ceremonial space? Or do we imbue that with how we enter it? Do you want to talk to that?

Ange: Yeah, sure. I was thinking about this because I'm still familiar with churches because my community was Christian, right? My community started as a Christian community and we've slowly come away from that. But up until the forties, maybe the fifties, we had these killer, killer community choirs. These amazing multiple soprano vocalists and super stacked multi-vocal pieces. We've only recently come across these recordings and it's surprising because that's my lineage, right? My grandmother and her family were Christian Mohawk people who definitely sung in those damn choirs and you could hear their voices on those recordings. That was the first comment that I ever had saying, "Oh, you sound like your grandmother, your grandmother who used to sing in the choir!" Okay, so that was this funny thing in this relationship as not distanced about ceremony and stuff is kind of funny because I come from a totally different place. I'm not Christian but I identify so strongly with those women in that choir more than any other people, really, ultimately. And then I finally hear these recordings and it's like mind-blowing. Like, this music is amazing, amazing. But my relationship to ceremony is not the way that you would anticipate. I think it's like these funny things, like in the women's dance in the Iroquois. There's a tiny section in the verse where you turn this way and then you turn that way and then you keep going. But that gives you a chance to survey who's around you and to also stand yourself up and present yourself a little bit because that's part of it – that's part of the dance. There's little tricky tricky keys in there, I think, like planting seeds and funny little moves that are built into those dances that are also secret inside those dances. So, you could see someone doing a gesture and it's a code inside another piece. So, this relationship to ceremony is not like I'm – and I'm using fricken sometimes a hand with a jingle bell on it or something. I'm doing this thing that I know reads as something ceremonial but it's a private practice. It has no cultural basis really. Some of the things I do on stage have no explicit cultural basis. If anything, it's related to priests and incense.

Mahlikah: It's interesting because there have been times when folks from the Indigenous community have been concerned about artists using the term 'ceremony' in relation to their performance work. So, there's been a lot of dialogue, especially over the last couple of years, around even just the word 'ceremony' and attaching it to the work. Then, what are you actually doing? Explicit? Implicit? You know, what is the context? So, I think contextualizing it really important in having conversations with elders in particular, for me, personally. That's usually my process around protocol. So, if there's something that I want to integrate into something, my instinct is always to talk to family or close elders to say, "Do you feel like this would be appropriate in the context of this particular performance?" I also do just gesturing that I'm not purposefully in ceremony but I guess I'm channeling aspects of ceremony. It just kind of happens. Then, especially non-Indigenous folks, go after, "Yo, when you did that with your hand, what did that mean?" I'll say, "Well, you know…" Whatever the context is. So, sometimes

I think it happens naturally. It's not something I'm thinking about. But if I am thinking about it, I will consult first. As a hand drummer, there's always issues, right?

Jeremy: Oh yeah.

Mahlikah: Always. You know, in terms of where you're doing it, what songs are you singing, and how it's integrated into what you're doing. So, there's a lot of protocol around drumming and a lot of times when you're working with non-Indigenous presenters, this becomes a problem because they want you to do certain things but you can't do certain things. When you try to explain to them why you can't, they just don't get it. They're just like, "We just really want you to play your drum." And you're just like, "No, I can't and these are the reasons." This is frustrating for me right now because I'm also finding myself in the world of curation. So, I'm curating in festivals with other folks who are non-Indigenous but want Indigenous participation and I'm trying to explain to them that certain artists, just based in what they do, can't perform in these spaces. It's not that we don't want to perform. There's protocol issues. Are you willing to make the accommodations? So, I find that's a real challenge with this notion of ceremony and protocol.

Jeremy: Yeah. Is anybody else willing, maybe on the other side of the room, to take up issues – yeah?

Ange: Protocol's a Western concept. We know that there are ways to be with other people here. And we know that there's ways to come into discussion with other people but this concept and breakdown of 'you have to do it this way' is sometimes, I feel like, is imported from the West Coast to Ontario. I don't know, I don't know. But lately, because I've been hearing this word 'protocol' lately talking about how we impose culture – how we go about doing things in a right way, in a good way. From my perspective, if you're doing it in a way that you truly understand to be a good way and it's respectful, then you're good. But I'm hesitant to impose any sense of an implied, explicit protocol to anything we're talking about here because in the West Coast, that makes a lot more sense because they've got a lot more structure. But right now, you're in a place where there's more at hand. More at play here. We can't say those words as cut and dry. (laughs)

Mike: Just really quickly, when you're talking about ceremony, I'm thinking, when you talk about structure, some of us belong to – some of us go to lodges where they are very strict. The guidelines are very, you know, it's like this is not to be shared. Midewiwin, for example, we have songs that we do not share. But then, on the other hand, as an artist I think of someone like Norval Morrisseau who took images from the scrolls and from the pictographs and shared them. So, where do you cross that line – not cross that line… You know, talking about a space that's ceremony. Some of us have talked about, you know, performing in bars. How does that feel? I know when we were talking about doing this benefit, we have an elder opening it and closing it. We were looking at a couple places that were licensed. We now have a place where we don't have to worry about that. But it was a real concern because some people were saying, "Well, you know, I won't perform if it's this." I found that kind of odd. But anyway.

Kerry: I just want to add a little something.

Jeremy: Please do.

Kerry: Again, I'm not a – I'm a wannabe artist. (laughs) I'm a wannabe artist but I'm that person in the background. I'm thinking about this in relation to, just listening to you guys talk and thinking about that idea of a new wave of Native music and seeing that in film already. Ange, what you were saying about knowing those vocables. Ziibiwan, you were saying about, you know, that's just who you are because it's the songs you knew. It's the songs that you grew up in. I just feel like… I'm someone who grew up in a city in a white community with a white mother and a dad who was moved out of his community very young who always had a tie to it but like… So, how do I know those – I don't know those vocables. I don't know those things. But that's part of the decolonization process for me. It's going to those people who speak to my heart who are Midewiwin lodge, some of them, and others who are not traditional in any way, shape, or form. But who speak to that place where I know they're grounded in a reality that I want to get to know. You're lucky because you grew up with that already and you have that in you and that's a step that you have to tap into in order to make the right moves. You're going to offend people regardless like because of differences. That's just how it goes. But coming from that place of really knowing; that's an act of sovereignty. And that's something that I am looking for myself.

Jeremy: Thank you. Yeah, and I think that's a common struggle, especially for people who didn't grow up with that direct connection to community. So, thank you for bringing that into the room. That's really, really important.

Ange: From even growing up within a reserve, I only accessed it when I was 14 out of hunting for it, right? Finding the group to learn from and then learning from them actively on purpose for as long as I could until I kicked myself back out of the Longhouse. Moved to the city, right?

Jeremy: I'll hand it over to Jarret? Yep.

Jarret: When I think about the question around protocol, as it's taught to this idea of ceremonial space, I think about it within a really specific context which is like the way that I know it from my home territory, from my own community. So, I think a lot about accountability with that. I think about like protocol without thinking about accountability. Even if I'm going to go do something, like an invitation to go do something, particularly when it's travelling, when it's going somewhere else or when I came out here to Toronto. There's elders back home that I would consult with about something – just in a casual way, not some big formal thing. But just to be like, "You know, I'm thinking about doing this, I got invited to do this. Is there anything that I should think about when going into it or what would you kind of advise?" Having that kind of – I feel very fortunate to have that. I know that not everybody does have that but I feel like that really helps with this kind of question. And one of the biggest things, it was something that Ange was saying too or maybe had just come up in the last people that were talking, but I feel like it's partly about respecting the differences. And I feel like, kind of, we're running up against this thing which does come up a lot in these conversations which is even maybe our own tendencies to kind of re-homogenize or make back into a monolith. Like the way Indigenous things are done, the way that protocol is done. Like you're saying it's coming from the West Coast. I think of protocol as really specific localized contexts that applies in really certain settings. I would not

dare to think that that could be imposed in an event like this, for example. Which doesn't mean this can't be ceremonial in a way that we might come up with together but at least for my context when I think about it, it doesn't make sense to impose that into this reality because it's not from this, from this specific setting. And I feel like, maybe for me, that's a part of the challenge, is we're all trying to learn, we're all trying to reclaim certain things and there isn't one way to do it. It would be easier if we were like, "It's all – I was gonna pick one nation-"

Jeremy: Woo, don't do it (laughter)

Jarrett: A footnote, but it's a funny footnote. One of my friends who's a Cree guy was saying, "You know, there's so many Indigenous languages in this country. Even in BC alone, there's like so many Indigenous languages. You go one hundred miles and there's another dialect or there's another version of, anyway. So many Indigenous languages are threatened. We should just pick three or four and make everybody learn those ones. (laughter) He's like, "We'll take Inuktitut - from up North, we'll take Cree of course,"

Jeremy: Of course.

Jarrett: Of course. Anyways, obviously, that's not gonna fly. (laughter) What was I just talking about, homogenizing things again? (laughter) Yeah. There were other ones in his proposal. But I think actually that ability to be respectful of differences, that's why I raise that point too, and recognizing that what somebody's way of doing the thing is isn't going to necessarily be… If you look at the nations that make up a small circle, let alone everybody that's here in this room and then outside the walls of this building, everybody's been taught differently. We all come from different experiences and backgrounds. In a very real way, I feel challenged by trying to do this work in the Indigenous community at large because there are so many expectations that even we have of one another. Yes, we're going to offend people by trying to do everything but there's so many fingers being like, "That's not how you do it." And I know for myself when I'm back home and I'm in ceremonial settings where it's way more localized and specific, if it's Elder X, Y and Z running the ceremony vs. A, B and C that came from Saskatchewan, they're going to be like, "Hmm, I don't know, that's not how WE would do it." And that's not a problem but it's a respectful recognition of difference with some like back talk on the side.

Jeremy: Right.

Jarrett: Like, "They're still not doing it right." But it allows for that. You know what I mean? And I feel like we would be doing ourselves like a big favour if we took that attitude a little more, you know what I mean? Everybody's going to make comments. We're going to offend people, whatever. But if we felt a little more open to the fact that there isn't one way. Particularly in this conversation, we're not going to come up with, we've figured it out! Here's the protocol for every Indigenous music event from here forward. We've gotta do this, this and this.

Jeremy: So, that IS what sovereignty sounds like. (laughter)

Jarrett: Think about the territorial acknowledgement thing.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Jarret: In a way, I feel like that's a question that's trying to be resolved as though we're gonna figure out the, "and here's how you do land acknowledgement. We've figured it out. We've put it in two paragraphs and forever shall be thus." Maybe not kind of the way to come at the problem.

Jeremy: Yeah. Ziibs.

Ziibiwan: There's like 9 different language groups in BC alone. There's like 12 across Canada. (laughs) So, you gotta pick three languages in a language group. No dialects… I was in high school and we were taught how to play the Anishinaabe big drum. I remember there was some, we had two different teachers. One was very inclusive to females playing on that drum. That's a very tricky one depending on where you go. The way he viewed it, it was like, these girls don't know their language. They just learned how to smudge last week. They learned what a strawberry ceremony was a few months ago. I think just being as inclusive as possible but advising them of what other people will think of it is very important. I think we have to be patient of one another. (laughter from audience) You know what I mean? A lot of young kids, man, they don't know what they're doing. You know what I mean? Even when it comes to the shows and stuff like that, you go see Native performers and you're a non-Indigenous person – just be nice. I wish it could be that simple. Sometimes I find myself getting tired of the conversations because I feel like nothing changes. It's hard. The whole thing about like… Yo, I'm the only one in my family that can speak some Ojibwe. I'm the only one in my family that knows some medicine words, animal words. They're kind of assimilated like the sixties scoop and residential schools. Rebuilding all that knowledge took a long time and a process. Learning about flag songs, about honour songs, and learning that AIM song is okay to play at a protest and not like you can't film it, or something like that. Different elders will say different things but there's just a lot of young people don't know, you know what I mean? I hear a lot of salty Native people all the time. (laughter from everyone) Maybe it's just me. I'm like, "Yo, sit down. Be humble."

Jeremy: You gotta humble yourself. It's true though.

Ziibiwan: Yo, actually no, that's gonna be off topic. I was just gonna say that's like Solonge released an album where she talks about 'this is for us', like this song is for us and stuff like that. I was thinking it's okay to turn up with like 808 beats and stuff like that but when you want to incorporate a Buffy sample – it's okay if ya'll don't get it, you know what I mean? You can get it but it's not ultimately for you. But you can learn. You know? Maybe I simplified things, I don't know.

Jeremy: It's not for you.

Ziibiwan: It's for us!

Jeremy: I think that's a really intimate – I think that's something that you also echoed – that sort of idea of irreconcilable space of Indigenous only space within our music.

Ziibiwan: I'm down, bro, to like play it in front of non-Canadians but like I am ultimately happy when I see people of colour and Indigenous people there because I know that they're like people who have been placed in these… on the low end of society, you know what I mean? They deserve to celebrate and have a good time too, you know? Some of them don't have the money to take a day off. That's a bigger thing though.

Jeremy: Thank you for sharing that. Really. Okay, I know we're fast running out of time. But this has been such a wonderful way to start this dialogue. I know that's something that has been echoed by the Music Gallery is that this is simply the start of a conversation. I really do hope to see these faces around the table again to continue this dialogue because as you can hear and as you've witnessed tonight, Indigenous people making music is rarely as simple as Indigenous people making music. (Laughter) There's a lot that goes into it. A lot of consideration, I think. And maybe it doesn't have to be. But no doubt, it is at this current moment in our political system that we're in right now. So, yeah, I think this has been a great way to start this conversation and to build community within the Toronto area and among people creating in this place. Before we go, I'd love to just send it around one more time with maybe some considerations around futurism. I know that's also a contested word and something rather difficult but in terms of where you see where you see our community's music going. I know you sort of brought that into the conversation very early, but I wanted to wrap up with that, actually, and to finish with where we're actually going with all this conversation.

Ange: You get to end. You get to end. I was just thinking about the last thing with regards to ceremony is also regarded to futurism, in a sense, because I don't make music for, necessarily, anybody except for myself when I was around 14 or 15. I swear because there's more relationship to WWF wrestling and extreme thrash girls with big dreadlocks that I was more into at that time which were represented. I would see more women in a wresting ring than I would in the regular pop music time at the time. It's a kind of interesting place about what I valued at the time and where that carries into my representation that I'm doing currently on stage and music is just this need for extreme, extreme expression. The need for feeling like my drive for intense music is my drive for intense sensation, intense feelings; like something I can't access otherwise. So, I feel like, I don't know, more noise. Harder, louder, ridiculously more complicated, more layers. (Chuckle from someone else) No like for real – when I can't understand what's happening that made that song – I want that. When I can't figure out what that instrument is because it's put through so much drama – I need that and I feel like that's probably how we're gonna have to pack it on. Pack it on. I want like orchestral compositions with tons of people involved and I want every damn person involved to be Native but I want the music to sound like something I've never possibly experienced before. I heard of a piece. Right now, it's got like a… There's a lot of cool stuff happening in the contemporary art world that's bringing in more challenges than we have here. This idea around 'where do Indigenous practices take the lead?' Community arts and some contemporary arts experiences, I would say, are doing that but the way of going about things hasn't exactly carried over into the music world yet. But I feel like there's other elements, other areas of art that are actually steps ahead with regards to putting Indigenous practice and concept first in creation.

Mike: I'm an old guy, so I can remember where in Toronto there was only very very few venues for Indigenous artists. We had a coffee house now and then and sometimes we did some stuff up at the Native centre. Now, you know, you've got all these different events. Tomorrow night, you know? The Drake. Wow. That's incredible, you know? That's the future, you know? I think we just keep growing. Some of you may remember a band from back in the 90s, (I'm dating myself,) called No Reservations. And they called themselves that because they didn't hold any reservation; they said what they needed to say. We tried to do that, you know? Now, I see a Tribe Called Red is playing it mainstream. This young man is playing with stuff that I'm like, "I'm blown away with what I see." You know? We have all these different voices but we still have those old songs. Having said all that, just to share something really quick. I spent some time five years ago in a place called Fort Severn and it's a very non-traditional community. Very Christian. You turn on the TV and you hear in Cree – hymns, like *Amazing Grace.* It's in the language but there are no traditions. Yet, they're not dead; they're just sleeping. Those things are hibernating and we need to kick them a little bit to pick them up a little bit more. That's what we need to do. Seven generations into the future. Miigwech.

Mahlikah: Wow. (Laughs) I definitely think that the term futurism is not so much about trying to make something futuristic but just being present today, honouring the past, and thinking about the legacy that you want to leave for the next generation. That's kind of the path that I see. In terms of my own ideas, I just think that yeah, I'm heavily influenced by the 90s. 90s hip hop, 90s r&b, house, all of those things. But I also love the idea, as Ange said, around the layers. I think we have to continue to explore, see no limits to what we can do. I mean, we are Indigenous so we're highly creative. Anything that we can conceive as rhythm, as voice, we can make into music. I think that that means that there's just no limits to what we can do and how we can bring our voices. I think the last thing is looking at the global essence of Indigeneity. For Red Slam, we're always looking at collaborating and including the voices of Indigenous people. Not just from Turtle Island, but all around the world. Seeing how those stories, how those teachings and those rhythms are the same teachings of the Earth. I think that's where futurism lays. Yeah.

Jeremy: Thank you.

David: Alright. Futurism. To be my contrary artist, I'll go to the distant past. I guess what I've always stood for excellence in music, just in of my own. That's part of it. So, I would certainly like to see a dedication to being as good as you can, or better. Try to hit that thing that takes you over the edge to that sublime realm when you really kick it. We should be going for that I look into the past and what I would like to see, I look at these old stories that my grandmother, my mom, my parents would tell me about my rez Walpole Island down in Southern Ontario. Down over at Oneida, I'm related to folks in Oneida as wel, they would tell me about the Fall fairs that they used to have way back when, 100 years ago now probably. In those days, musical instruments were actually a common thing. People were learning marching band instruments: trumpets, trombones, saxophones, whatever. I would like to see us broaden our musical palette. Get these instruments happening in combination with our traditional voices, traditional rhythms, traditional ways of doing things to combine all this stuff into this new music. You know, I like synthesizers, I love synthesizers. Samples and loops, you know, I'm down with that. Let's get all of it in there. I would like to see, I'm sad to see, this loosening of devotion to the instrument, to

the musical instrument. You know, make frets work for you. Make blow holes work for you. I want to see just a further incorporation of all of it. We need more electronics, more digital, more hip hop lyrics. But also, we need more Cris Derksens playing those things. I think that's really awesome that we've got a classical voice happening here. There's not very much around. There's a handful of us who actually have ever done this. Maybe five or six of us in the entire North America. It's probably about that. Anyhow, more and better. That's what I say!

Ansley: Yeah, I think I agree with a lot of what everyone has said. I was in Banff a little while back. That's where I first saw Jeremy play. What he was doing with Algonquin, is that what you guys? Yeah, Algonquin. It blew my mind. What it was was instead of having an Indigenous musician and mashup with, you know, other nations that are settler in their origins. This was nation-to-nation mashing up and bringing in the very very old and combining it with the very very new. Crossing genres. He was on a grand piano and then singing in Mi'qmaw and it was amazing. So, I want to see more of that. (Laughs) Like soon. Yeah, I just think I'm excited to see what happens because we have, sitting in this circle, a number of generations and I'm very aware that my generation is able to do what I'm able to do *because* of previous generations paving the way in a really real way. So, I'm very aware of that and thankful for that too. I want to be able to do that for the next generation as well so that they can just seamlessly create music. That would be awesome and throw it out there. Miigwech.

Jarrett: Ansley wants you to talk about the show when we finish it.

Jeremy: Yeah, I got it. Don't worry.

Jarrett: I agree with what everyone's been saying. More and better. I really like what Ange was saying around work that is hard to interpret. Work that isn't easily understood. I feel like we challenge ourselves that way, we challenge our audiences a lot that way. I mean, it's still amazing to me, actually to be honest, it's amazing to me that if you pick this handful of Indigenous artists that have been able to break through – one of them is an artist like Tanya Tagaq, who is not a pop artist.

Jeremy: (Laughs) No.

Jarrett: People putting on 'Retribution' and just like, you know, dancing around their kitchen. Maybe they are, I don't know. That's quite a kitchen dance though. Meaning work like that doesn't have to fall with something that is easily rendered understandable or intelligible to any particular audience that's actually provoking and challenging a listener on the merit of its own artistry. I feel like one of the things that, to hold Tanya up to say this — and there's many other artists who can be held up in this way but just because I'm talking about her already — who have given themselves permission to do whatever the hell they want to do with their artwork. I feel like, I don't assume that's available to everyone in our community but I would like for that to be available to everyone in our community. So, if that's maybe more of a desired future than necessarily a given future. But if that's a possibility where people can feel, not just on some corny workshop empowered version of that, but like in a real way. Where you feel like you have the ability to make whatever the hell it is that's in your mind as that Indigenous person on this

planet, as an artist. If we can make that happen more, then I feel like we're doing something right as a community. I hope that that's the future.

Jeremy: Ahooooo.

Ziibiwan: Not too long for me. There's Indigenous artists out here who are just artists. Indigenous isn't the first thing they think about when they start music. That doesn't mean we're not here. Indigenous music isn't around us. I mean, we're the fastest growing population in Canada. We're moving into cities rapidly. I do like the idea of Indigenous curated space, like shows and stuff like that, RPM live. That's really dope. That's really dope because it's a really open crowd, diverse, cool young crowd. That's about it for me. Everyone else, they point out some good points.

Jeremy: Yeah. Speaking of those Indigenous curated shows, there's one tomorrow night at the Drake Underground! If you'd like to come check it out, you'll be able to hear Ansley's music along with Leanne Simpson as well. Are you both releasing?

Ansley: I'm releasing my album.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Ansley: She is releasing her book.

Jeremy: Oh.

Ansley: We're both playing sets with our bands and it's going to be good.

Jeremy: Not to be missed. Yeah.

Ansley: Please come.

Jeremy: Well, thank you again. I actually want to wrap up with something Mahlikah had said because it really, really struck me in a profound way. We need to live in the moment. We need to think about the past. We need to think, also, about our legacy that we're leaving for the next generations. I feel like that is a really good thought to leave us with this evening, so thank you. Thank you to everyone in this circle today. Thank you to The Music Gallery, David Dacks, RPM, to Ziibiwan, and to everyone who was a part of this discussion today. Thank you all for coming. Again, to The Music Gallery. I think we'll be around for a little while if you have any questions.

Someone: Give it up for Jeremy.

Crowd: *cheering*

Jeremy: Thank you. If you want to continue the conversation, I'll see you on Twitter! Great. Until then.