



# **Representation matters:** Developing a Canadian BIPOC composers dataset for music collection evaluation and development

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*Sponsored by*  
The Music Library Student and Emerging Professionals Interest Group (MLStEP)



# Outline

- Definitions
- Project introduction and goals
- Overview of the project workflow and structure of the dataset
- Ethical considerations and challenges
- How to find the dataset
- Future directions

**BIPOC:** Black Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, People(s) of Colour/Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and People(s) of Colour. Variations of this acronym are also sometimes used. Other variations: IBPOC, BIMPOC.

**People(s) of Colour:** Used to refer to all people who are not white. Often used to signal shared experiences of systemic oppression and racism, however controversial, especially when it is used in ways that erase the specific experiences of Black people and anti-Black racism.

# Project origins

- Initial brainstorming on how to incorporate more diverse voices into the collections
- Collaboration as part of UBC Professional Experience program (LIBR 596), 120 hours
- Plan to create a project that was scaled to our smaller music collections at the University of Saskatchewan.
- Few lists of BIPOC composers, especially those able to narrow to Canadian composers
- Traditional RDA cataloguing and LCSH generally does not help users discover demographics (S. Stone, 318)





Education & Music Library, University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK, Canada, Treaty Six Territory and Homeland of the Métis



# Why diversify the music score collection?

- Growing demand and interest from library users, performers, and audiences for diverse suggestions for repertoire and performance planning
- Changing course offerings, reading and listening lists that seek to expand access to diverse viewpoints in music education
- Seeing works by diverse composers on the shelf provides an opportunity for increased exposure among library users

*“What’s particularly exciting about [these] efforts ... is representation,” Briggs said. “Without an attention towards what’s missing, who’s being left out of the conversation, what are we not including in our library catalog—sometimes you don’t even know it exists.”*

Most, Becca. “University of Minnesota Music Library Seeks to Diversify Its Collection.” The Minnesota Daily.  
<https://mndaily.com/264865/news/university-of-minnesota-music-library-seeks-to-diversify-its-collection/>.



# Conducting a diversity audit

**Diversity audit:** an inventory of a collection to determine the amount of diversity within the collection. It's a way of analyzing collection data to make sure that we include a wide variety of points of view, experiences, and representations within a collection.

Some standard approaches (Ciszek & Young, 2010; Jensen, 2017):

- Comparison to standard lists
- Diversity statements
- Diversity codes in order records
- Random sampling
- Focus on smaller niche collection



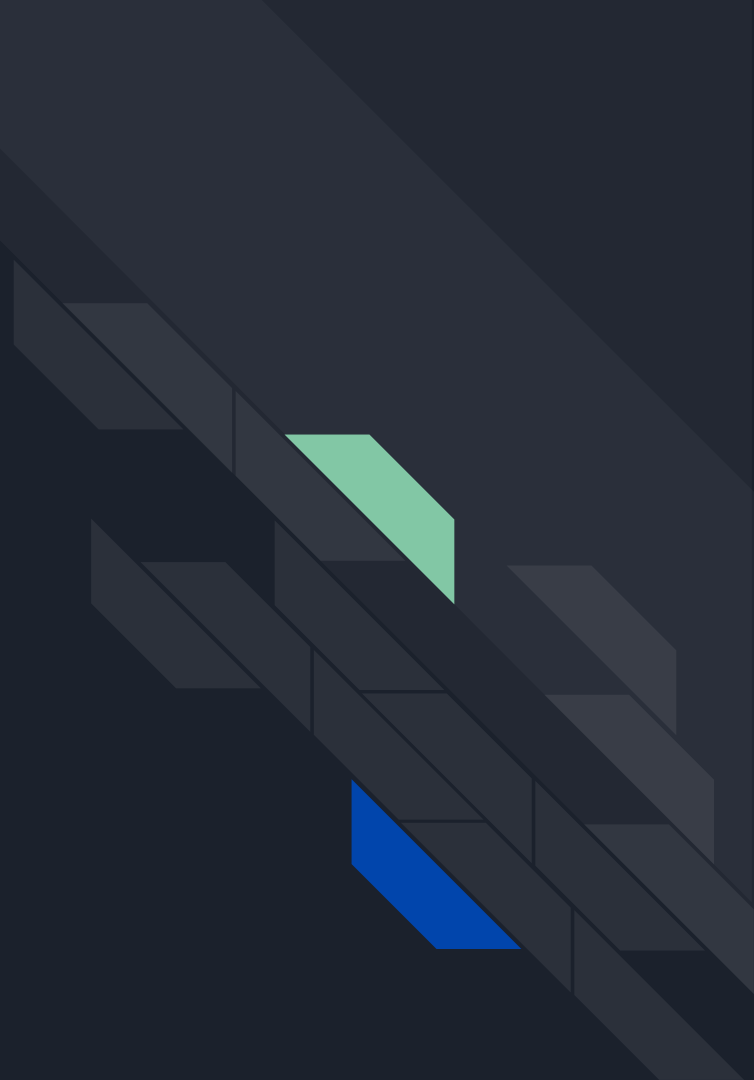
*"It would be good to acknowledge up front that an able bodied, white cis-het neutral is assumed in society and in publishing, and, for that reason, "diversity" is the imperfect umbrella term used to bring perspectives other than that assumed neutral into focus. Our goal is to make our collections as inclusive as possible. Diversity is the common term, but inclusive collections are our goal."*



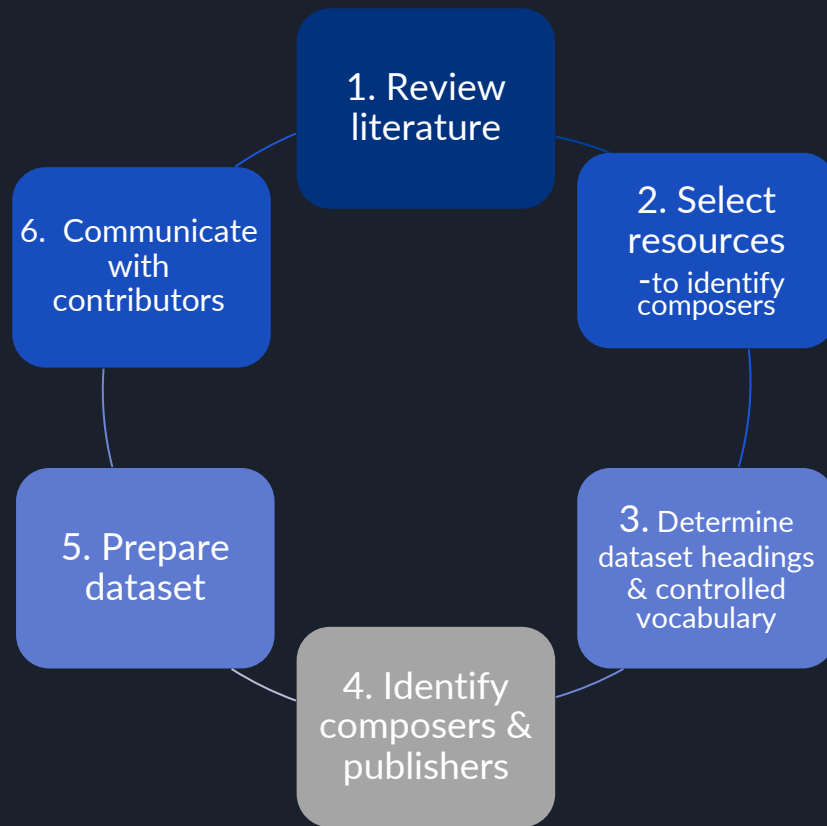
# Project goals

- Identify composers (through existing secondary/tertiary sources) who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour and who have an affiliation with Canada.
- Include: basic information about each composer, including their primary genres of composition, affiliated publisher/vendor, website for self published materials, etc.
- Use this information to conduct an audit of the music scores collection, identifying gaps and areas for future purchases.
- Share the findings of the data collection openly for use by other members of the community

# Building the Dataset



# Activity Management



## Select resources

Identify individuals,  
orgs, working groups

Find library guides

Find published materials

Search Internet

Evaluate resources  
for transparency & ethics

Create resources list

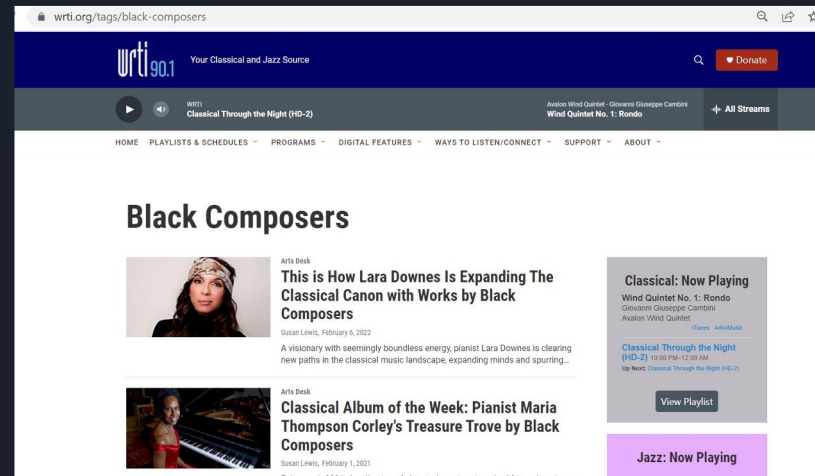
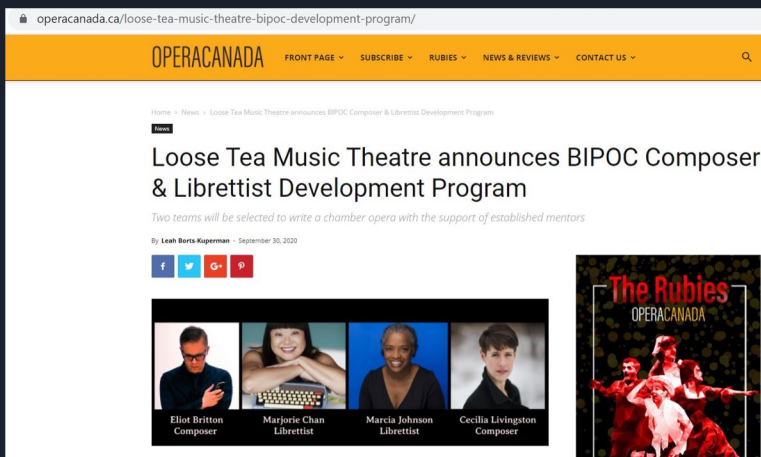
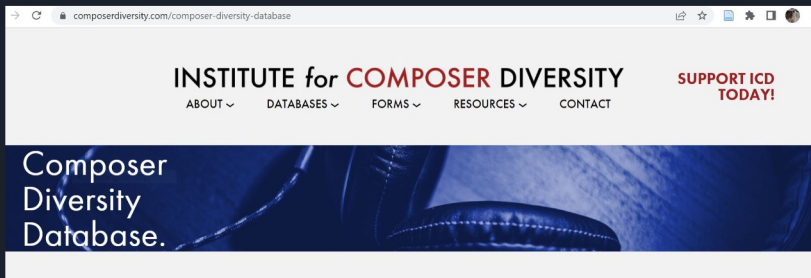
## Developing collections to improve diversity

- identify and use a variety of alternatives to traditional collection dev. tools <sup>1</sup>
  - e.g. Scott Stone → value of following professional theatre companies that promote/commission works by playwrights of ethnicities needed to reflect local diversity.<sup>2</sup>

“Intentionality in collection development requires also being intentional about the tools used to find and acquire diverse materials ...”<sup>1</sup>

1. Lehner-Quam, 'Diversifying and Transforming a Public University's Children's Book Collection'.

2. Stone, 'Whose Play Scripts Are Being Published? A Diversity Audit of One Library's Collection in Conversation with the Broader Play Publishing World'.



Composer Diversity Database, screenshot image, Institute for Composer Diversity, <https://www.composerdiversity.com/composer-diversity-database>.

Black Composers - Tag, screenshot image, WRTI, <https://www.wrti.org/tags/black-composers>

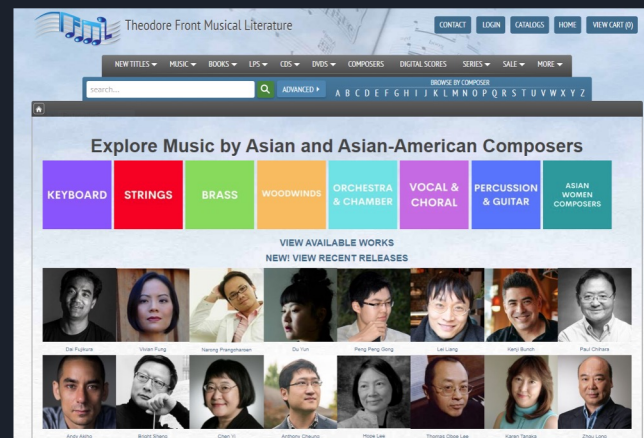
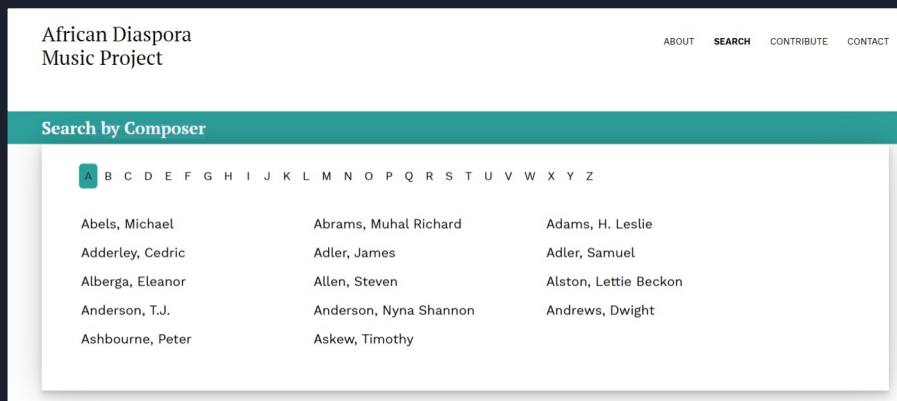
Loose Tea Music Theatre announces BIPOC Composer & Librettist Development Program, screenshot image, Opera Canada, <https://operacanada.ca/loose-tea-music-theatre-bipoc-development-program/>

CFMTA / FCAPM Virtual Conference Musical diversity from coast to coast to coast, screenshot image, CFMTA / FCAPM, [https://www.cfmta.org/docs/resources/conference/Conference\\_Program\\_Final.pdf](https://www.cfmta.org/docs/resources/conference/Conference_Program_Final.pdf)

# Time Management

Estimating time needed to examine online resources

- for composers with connection to Canada



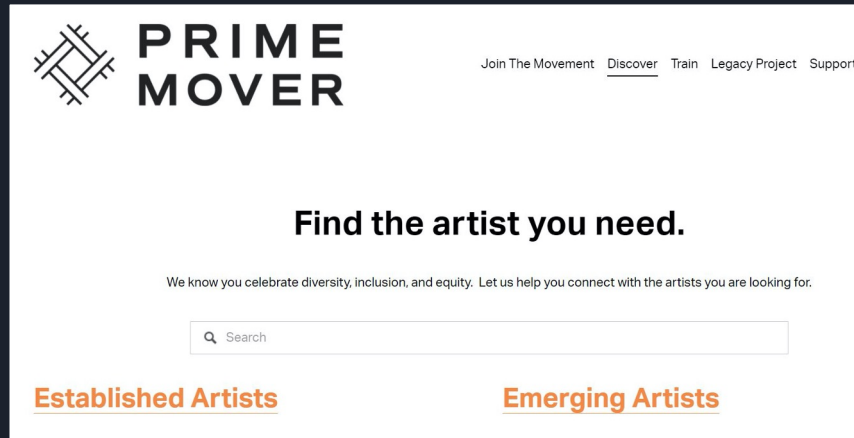
Search by Composer, screenshot image, African Diaspora Music Project, <https://africandiasporamusicproject.org/search-composers>.  
Explore Music by Asian and Asian-American Composers, screenshot image, Theodore Front, <https://www.tfront.com/topic/AsianComposers>.



# Time Management

Estimating time needed to examine online resources

- for composers with connection to Canada
- to determine which individuals had scores



*Search by Composer*, screenshot image, African Diaspora Music Project, <https://africandiasporamusicproject.org/search-composers>.  
*Explore Music by Asian and Asian-American Composers*, screenshot image, Theodore Front, <https://www.tfront.com/topic/AsianComposers>.  
*Find the Artist You Need*, screenshot image, Prime Mover, <https://www.primemovertheatre.com/artist-database>.

# Populating the dataset



Melody McKiver,  
*composer*

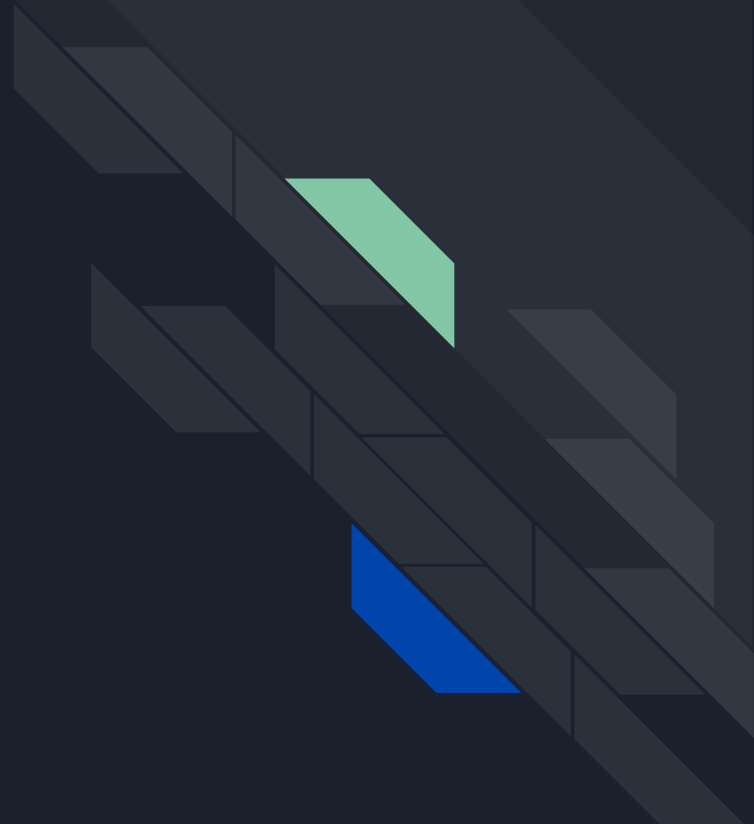
Name	Publisher	Publisher 2	Publisher 3	Vendor / Repository	Black	Indigenous	Indigenous Nation
McKiver, Melody	self	NA	NA	NA	no	yes	Anishinaabe

Music genre	Music genre 2	Music genre 3	Resource found at	Composer's website
Art music	Dramatic music	NA	Canadian Art Song Project; Hungry Listening	<a href="https://www.melodymckiver.com/">https://www.melodymckiver.com/</a>

132 composers are included



# Challenges



# Challenges

- related to ethics of inclusive collecting
  - ethical considerations when attempting to identify and classify composers using markers such as ethnicity, race, or nationality



*“identifying people according to their wishes is good journalism — it’s in keeping with our goals of accuracy, respect for the people we cover.”*



## Priorities when selecting resources to consult

- transparency re. methods for respectful labelling of individuals
- created and maintained by BIPOC-led initiatives

## Compromised and consulted resources that weren't ideal

- Solutions
  - cross-reference composers with other sources
  - consider authority & positionality of who recommends a list
  - consider steps taken by list creator re anti-racist education

# Pretendians:

*“People who fake an Indigenous identity or dig up an old ancestor from hundreds of years ago to proclaim themselves as Indigenous today.”*

*Fraudsters who “take up a lot of space and income from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.”*

- Melissa Ridgen (Red River Métis)



# Prioritise Indigenous-created resources when looking for Indigenous composers

- respect for Indigenous knowledge and expertise

Title of dissertation: NATIVE CLASSICAL: MUSICAL MODERNITIES, INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES, AND A *KANIENTKÉHA* (MOHAWK) CONCEPT OF *NON:WA* (NOW)

Dawn Avery, Doctor of Philosophy, 2014

Dissertation directed by: Professor J. Lawrence Witzleben, School of Music, Division of Musicology and Ethnomusicology

In this dissertation I explore how Indigenous methodologies that foreground cultural advocacy, revitalization, and education can be articulated using Indigenous language and cultural metaphor in research on North American Indian composers.

Toward this end, I apply the Kanienkéha (Mohawk) concept of “non:wa” or “now” that



# Level of precision when labeling composers with race or ethnicity markers

- Identify if composers are Black or Indigenous
- Identify Indigenous Nation

*“Precision is important. It shows respect by acknowledging the diversity and distinctness of Indigenous Peoples.”*

*“Names are part of the way we render identity. Use the words that individual people use for themselves.”*

- Scholar Gregory Younging (Opaskwayak Cree Nation member)

Mainstream, colonialist controlled-vocabularies used in LIS have been widely critiqued by Indigenous information professionals for omission, lack of recognition of sovereign nations, and more.

Doyle, Ann M., Kimberley Lawson, and Sarah Dupont. "Indigenization of Knowledge Organization at the Xwi7xwa Library." *Journal of Library and Information Studies* 13, no. 2 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.6182/jlis.2015>.

Duarte, Marisa Elena, and Miranda Belarde-Lewis. "Imagining: Creating Spaces for Indigenous Ontologies." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5–6 (4 July 2015): 677–702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1018396>.

Littletree, Sandra, and Cheryl A. Metoyer. "Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5–6 (2015): 640–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1010113>.

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Scholars Portal Dataverse &gt; University of Alberta Dataverse &gt; Carolyn Doi &gt;

## BIPOC Canadian Composers

Version 2.2



Doi, Carolyn; Hiltz, Janet, 2021, "BIPOC Canadian Composers", <https://doi.org/10.7939/DVN/OINUZU>, Scholars Portal Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:Yz8XNDF/tlnxEtIWA3+jw== [fileUNF]

Cite Dataset ▾

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Dataset Metrics ⓘ

269 Downloads ⓘ

### Description ⓘ

This dataset comprises a list of composers who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC) with a connection to Canada (e.g. are Canadian, working in Canada, or from an Indigenous nation situated in what is now known as Canada). (2021-10-29)

### Subject ⓘ

Arts and Humanities

### Keyword ⓘ

Composers--Canada, Indigenous peoples -- Canada -- Music

### Notes ⓘ

Send a message to the lead author of this dataset if you would like to request to have a composer's name removed, edited, or added.

Files Metadata Terms Versions

Search this dataset...



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1 to 4 of 4 Files

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**BIPOCComposersCDNPublishers\_List.csv**

Tabular Data - 3.6 KB  
Published Oct 29, 2021  
81 Downloads  
5 Variables, 28 Observations UNF:6:nH9O...l5W== ⓘ

**BIPOCComposersCDN\_List.csv**

Tabular Data - 21.2 KB

# BIPOC Composers Dataset

<https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7939/DVN/OINUZU>



## Next Steps

- Collection assessment
- Identifying areas for purchasing
- Identifying other areas of the collection for further assessment (i.e. sound recordings, broader diversity collecting?)
- Inclusion and anti-racism beyond the music collection

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# Questions?

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