

Tansi, Boozyoo, Hello, and welcome to the National Music Centre's Speak Up Exhibition, celebrating the voices of Indigenous music trailblazers past, present and future. For thousands of years, music has played an integral and sacred role within the lives of First Nation, Metis and Inuit people. Traditional music, languages and cultural practices have withstood and survived an onslaught of colonialism. One example is Indian Residential Schools. They were operated in Canada between the 1870s until the last residential school closed in 1996. Children between the ages of four to sixteen were forcibly taken away from their homes and placed in the schools, with the goal of assimilation. Disallowed to speak their language or sing traditional songs, it is estimated that over 150,000 First Nation, Inuit and Metis children attended Indian Residential Schools. Another example is the Indian Act of 1876, that enforced assimilation under the law. A provision under the Indian Act was in place for close to 75 years that prevented the passing down of oral tradition, cultural teachings, and traditional music. A person found singing with a hand drum, or in ceremony, could be jailed. Despite these and other historic wrongs, traditional music and new forms of contemporary music have thrived. Indigenous music has always been on the land, a part of the scene, always resilient, always creating opportunities and pushing boundaries, be it in the past, the present, or the future. I'm David McLeod - click on my curators comments to learn more about all the artists whose music is a force for change. Miigwetch.