
“North America has Dead Indians,” writes Thomas King in *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012, 55). Contemporary indigeneity is an oxymoron within settler colonialism, whose strategies of dispossession and cultural genocide reinforce false binaries of past/present, tradition/modernity, and authentic/inauthentic (Francis 1992; King 2012; Vowel 2016). Such binaries do not exist for many Indigenous artists for whom tradition and innovation are compatible (Hoefnagals and Diamond 2012); nonetheless, they must continually negotiate within and against the temporal and spatial boundaries implicit in such binaries (Bruyneel 2007; Vowel 2016) to assert agency as both contemporary and Indigenous.

This essay exemplifies reclaiming, decolonizing, and reconciling of a contemporary indigeneity through the musical practices of three Indigenous artists: Cree-Mennonite cellist Cris Derksen’s *Orchestral Powwow* project highlights privilege and loss for urban-based Indigenous individuals (Lawrence 2004; Peters and Andersen 2013) working within both Indigenous and Western European cultural codes; Maliseet (Wolastoq Nation) composer and vocalist Jeremy Dutcher integrates archival research with composition and performance for cultural and linguistic resurgence; and the improvisational practice of Inuit avant-garde vocalist Tanya Tagaq exposes “contemporary” music as existing in a racialized space of whiteness—specifically white settler colonialism. These three examples emphasize heterogeneous musical practices within contemporary indigeneity while simultaneously exposing the shared temporal and spatial constraints of settler colonialism. This essay addresses the Canadian context in particular but also speaks to contemporary indigeneity more broadly.