

THE BROKEN RECORD DJ SCHOOL

PROJECT TEAM

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COMMUNITY PARTNER

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COMMUNITY PARTNER CONTACT

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The Broken Record DJ School aims to provide youth with a safe, judgment free environment in which to learn the basics of DJ techniques and hardware. Over the course of three lessons, students will participate in a brief lecture series (using a projector, screen, and presentation slides) that touch on the various job opportunities available with DJ skills, the intersectional roots of DJ culture and the need for diverse representation within it, and the need for harm reduction and bystander intervention strategies within nightlife. The lecture component would also include live demonstrations of mixing techniques using Serato mixing software. Each lesson will run for 3 hours, with one hour dedicated to the lecture component and the rest of the session allowing for hands-on practice time in the form of 20-minute mixing sessions that students will sign up for prior to each class. The practice time will be conducted with three different stations representing the three fundamentals of DJ mixing equipment: Vinyl turntables, DJ controllers, and CDJs. Each station will have their own individual instructors to guide participants through their practice sessions.

This program has three specific goals in mind, one to be completed per class session. The first goal is to introduce participants to the fundamentals of the DJ industry; the career opportunities, the equipment, and the politics. After the first class, participants are expected to understand the various settings that a DJ is found in, the

basics of DJ hardware and software, and the disparity of race and gender representation in DJ culture. This class will also give some rudimentary understanding of the various social media platforms that DJs can use to showcase their mixes and connect with other DJs.

The second goal is to educate potential DJs on the intersectional legacy of DJ culture and the electronic music scene. This will be communicated through a class that teaches the evolution of DJ culture, from its roots in Jamaican Soundsystem culture, to hip-hop breaking and scratching techniques, all the way to LGBTQ+ oriented parties in the 1970's that provided the blueprint for contemporary electronic music and the nightclub experience.

The third goal is to communicate the importance of harm reduction and personal safety in a party environment. As learning the fundamentals of party coordination is an aspect of this course, it is important to inform all potential party organizers of their obligations to ensure that a nightlife experience is safe for everyone. This can be achieved by learning the principles of harm reduction, and methods of implementing those principles such as providing fentanyl drug testing strips and Naloxone at your party. This is also communicated in bystander intervention tips to consider when witnessing a harassment situation in a party experience.

This project was initially conceived with the Nelson District Youth Centre in mind as a community partner, however the NDYC left us hanging on correspondence and

was unable to provide feedback on the proposal. Oxygen Art Centre, a local artist-run centre that platforms inclusive and accessible multi-disciplinary programming, was determined to be a more suitable community partner. Julia Prudhomme, the community partner contact at Oxygen, was instrumental in providing feedback regarding the proposed class size, the pricing of the program, and following the cultural protocol associated with delivering information about LGBTQ+ and BIPOC history. According to Julia, the Oxygen Art Centre would be able to fit approximately 10-12 students in their space, and the pricing of the program would be up to the Oxygen Art Centre to determine. She believed the program would be popular within the community and beneficial due its advocacy for harm reduction and party safety but expressed two main concerns. The first concern was her doubt that DJing falls into the category of a “contemporary art form” that the Oxygen Art Centre promotes. I personally disagree with this, as both hip-hop and house music are a direct result of mixing techniques that were developed by DJs, and I would certainly consider hip-hop and house music to be contemporary art forms. Julia’s second concern was about the cultural propriety of teaching LGBTQ+ and BIPOC history as an outsider to these communities. Her critique encouraged me to consider three critical questions. How might I articulate my positionality as an instructor of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ history? How might equity-deserving communities best access this course? Am I the most appropriate person to be facilitating this course?

As a white-cis-woman, it is challenging to articulate my positionality as an instructor of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ history, as I certainly do not mean to take away an

opportunity to represent these issues from someone who has a more direct connection to this history. All I can refer to is my experiences with listening to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people who express exhaustion at the emotional labour required to educate people outside of these communities about their own lived experiences, and it is my hope that taking it upon myself to educate fellow white-cis people about the privileges and obligations they have within this community will help alleviate some of this exhaustion.

As far as making this course more accessible to equity-deserving communities, I believe an application process would be helpful (especially given space restraints) to find out more information about what applicants are hoping to gain from this course, and encouragement and prioritization of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC applicants would certainly be implemented.

I believe this workshop series will be a continuous work in progress, and I certainly hope to be able to collaborate with local Nelson DJs to better inform the structure and material of this course, especially with DJs who identify as LGBTQ+ or BIPOC. I would like this program to be able to continue without being exclusive to my own knowledge and expertise by creating a curriculum that can be passed down to someone else who wishes to teach the course, particularly if they feel the information can be better communicated by someone with a more direct connection to the origins of DJ culture.

All in all, this project has been extremely valuable in providing me with an educational framework I can use to express my knowledge surrounding this topic. I received some one-on-one teacher training with Colin Mills, which helped me learn how to articulate my ideas in a way that I could communicate them to someone engaging with this topic for the first time. Sourcing reading material about the history and evolution of DJ culture was incredibly fascinating, as well as finding studies and training manuals that articulated the necessity of intersectional representation and party safety within nightlife communities. I also enjoyed the challenge of creating my own structure for this project by having my own goals and deadlines, as opposed to meeting parameters set by an external academic source. I hope to be able to continue to bridge the gap between underground nightlife communities and the professional academic realm, in order to explore educational frameworks that help keep nightlife safe and inclusive.