

# Equity and Diversity in Musicplay

Musicplay is a PreK-6 elementary music curriculum that uses many traditional and composed children's songs, singing games, folk songs, rounds, choral music, and listening examples. The development of Musicplay started in 1995, was first published in 2000, and has had many updates since then. When Denise first chose songs for the program, there was no Google to research the history of these songs.

As we have updated Musicplay we have been researching, consulting with culture bearers, and making changes to song content looking for racial bias, gender bias, or any possible inappropriate content. Some songs have had word changes, some are being removed completely, and some songs will be replaced with newly composed or other traditional songs that will teach the same concepts. There may be songs that we leave and flag with a disclaimer leaving the teacher to choose to teach or not to teach.

If there are other songs or rhymes that you feel should be added to this list, please email [denise@musicplay.ca](mailto:denise@musicplay.ca). We welcome your input into the process of making Musicplay equitable to all.

We are also working on re-designing the concept slides and the lyrics videos in Musicplay. We will strive to ensure that the images used reflect the diversity of the Musicplay users. We love it when our teachers send us kids demo videos of their students playing games and singing songs. We give the teacher a month's free subscription for every video we are permitted to use. Some teachers have received more than a year free because they've made us several videos. We encourage teachers to send videos of activities as well. One of our favorite videos was a teacher using the rhythm play-along videos in a drumming class. The demographic that you teach in may be different than what you see in the original kids' demos. We want to add diversity to MusicplayOnline and allow all kids to see themselves in the videos. We've had videos from Ecuador, Vietnam, all over the USA and Canada --- and encourage you to send us more! See the [MusicplayCanada](#) or [MusicplayUSA](#) website for submission guidelines.

At Musicplay, we are responsive to changing cultural norms and to educators needs. We are excited about changing, improving, and updating this program!

- Denise Gagne  
Author & Editor of Musicplay and MusicplayOnline

## Musicplay PreK

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Three Little Monkeys	Rumored to be about using babies as alligator bait.	Replaced with 2. Three Little Fishies
Poppies Red	Lyrics were not gender inclusive.	Writing new lyrics that are gender inclusive.
African Drums	Misinformed about the origins of the music	Removing from song list Summer 2022
Spider on the Floor	Lyrics used the word "dummy"	Replacing "dummy" with "crummy"
On My Toe	Lyrics mention killing bees.	Creating a concept slide to promote a discussion around the declining bee population.

## Musicplay Kindergarten

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
A Boy and a Girl in a Canoe*	"He said you better kiss me or get out and swim" - may be seen as a consent issue. - Or - just a silly song.	Adding a disclaimer
London Bridge*	Lyrics about locking up the fair lady.	Adding a disclaimer

## Musicplay Grade 1

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Lucy Locket*	Is rumored to be about a prostitute.	Offering option of 37. Peter Rabbit
Pussywillow	The word "pussy" is offensive.	removed

## Musicplay Grade 2

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Okkitokiunga	Mimics Inuit language.	Replaced with 7. Paddle in my Kayak
I've Been Working on the Railroad	Derogatory to African American workers.	Removed
Icka Backa*	"Soda cracka" refers to the soda cracker invented in 1876. If teachers find it problematic we have an alternate song.	Offering alternate option: 20a. We Like Playing Games Together
Do Your Ears Hang Low?	Some variants are derogatory and/or sexual.	Removing, replacing with the new song, "Tap it Here."
Boom Boom Ain't it Great to Be Crazy	The term 'crazy' makes light of mental health issues	Changing the word "crazy" to silly
The Cat Came Back	Minstrel show origins.	Removing - Replacing with the new song, "My Cat Boo"
Ain't Gonna Rain no More	One verse contains possible derogatory term	Changing the lyrics.

## Musicplay Grade 3

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Three Blind Mice	Violent	Removed
I'm an Acorn	"Slap my face" verse is inappropriate.	Removed but will rewrite.
In the Land of Oz	Refers to cigars.	Replacing the cigar verse with new lyrics.
Cindy	Had gender bias	Replacing it with 51. Double Double
Austrian Went Yodeling	Had gender bias	Replaced inappropriate verses with new lyrics.
Dinah	Uses a derogatory term.	Replaced with 70. "Playing in the House"
Chicken on the Fencepost	One of the verses is offensive.	Replaced with 95. "Chicken in the Barnyard"
Missus Tong	Verse talked about dieting and body image.	Updated lyrics.
Indian Summer	Song was written by Olivia Tailfeathers from the Treaty 7. It's about the weather term "Indian Summer."	We will create an "About the Song" concept slide to discuss the weather phenomena.

## Musicplay Grade 4

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Okkitokiunga	Mimics Inuit language.	Replacing with 7. Paddle in my Kayak
Land of the Silver Birch	Some of the words romanticize Indigenous culture.	Replaced with "This is my Home".
Two Canadian Folk Songs	Some of the words romanticize Indigenous culture.	Rewriting with "This is my Home" instead of "Land of the Silver Birch"
Huron Carol*	Potentially problematic history with the composer.	Adding a disclaimer*
My Gal's a Corker*	Could be considered to have gender bias.	Adding a disclaimer.*
Yankee Doodle Stick Game*	Mocking text.	Adding a disclaimer.*
Nobody Likes Me	Not inclusive	Removed
Old Dan Tucker	Some variants are derogatory and/or sexual. (not on Musicplay)	Removed. Replacing with "Pay me my Money Down"
Pack the Sleigh	Outdated lyrics including "ghetto blaster, walkman, etc."	Updating lyrics.
Camping Song	The girl and boy verses are gender biased	Song will be re-written
Forty Below	Recommended we change the word "natives" (referring to residents of Manitoba) to "people all shivering and blue."	Updating lyrics.
African Drumming	Misinformed about the origins of the music	Removing from song list Summer 2022

## Musicplay Grade 5

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Whistle Daughter	Had gender bias.	Removed the last 2 verses.
Lady in the Graveyard*	Morbid.	Adding a disclaimer.*
Ho Ho Watanay	Concerns regarding authenticity.	Removed from the song list
Banks of the Don*	Adult themes. (jail)	Adding a disclaimer.*
Five Foot Two	Has gender bias.	Replaced with 51. Weevily Wheat
Tom Dooley	Inappropriate topic.	Removed.
I Am Slowly Going Crazy	Stigmatizes mental health.	Replaced with 72. I Am Getting Such a Headache
John Kanaka*	Includes a possibly derogatory term(s) for Pacific Islanders.	will add a disclaimer*
Drunken Sailor	Refers to alcohol.	Replaced with 83. Silly Sailor
5/4 Groove	Chinga is an offensive term in Spanish.	Replaced offensive word with "tinga."
'Neath the Lilacs	Chinga is an offensive term in Spanish.	Replaced offensive word with "tinga."
Green Sally Up	Questionable song origins	Create a concept slide about the song origins.
African Drumming	Misinformed about the origins of the music	Removing from song list Summer 2022

## Musicplay Grade 6

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Hagdalen	Making fun of appearances.	Removed
Mary Mac	Had gender bias	Removed
Missus Murphy's Chowder	Outdated	Removed
Gypsy Rover	Derogatory term(s) for nomadic peoples.	Removed
Tell My Ma	Had gender bias	Removed

## Recorder Resource

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
Lucy Locket	Is rumored to be about a prostitute.	Replacing it with 37. Peter Rabbit
Ho Ho Watanay	Concerns regarding authenticity.	Adding a disclaimer.
"C" you in Dixie	Potentially problematic history.	Replaced it with 23. "C" you in Canada
Camptown Races	Minstrel song.	Replaced it with 38. Funga Alafia

## Guitar Resource

Song title	Reason	Musicplay's Action
In the Land of Oz	Refers to cigars.	Replacing the cigar verse with new lyrics.
Land of the Silver Birch	Some of the words romanticize Indigenous culture.	Replace with "This is my Home"
Three Blind Mice	Morbid.	Removing.
Cotton Eyed Joe	Written for a minstrel show.	Removing.
Whistle Daughter	Gender bias	Removing the last 2 verses.
Drunken Sailor	Refers to alcohol.	Replacing with 83. Silly Sailor
Tom Dooley	Inappropriate topic.	Removed.

## Musicplay General Song List

Sometimes when we remove a song from the graded song list, we have teachers who still want to use it. We will consider the request, and may add the song into the General Song, with a Disclaimer concept slide explaining why the song may be problematic, giving teachers the information needed to make an informed decision about whether or not to use it. (Ho Ho Watanay, Lucy Locket)

## Possible Triggers - Adding a Disclaimer

We will be adding concept slides with additional information about the songs that we have added disclaimers to. We will also include slides that warn against possible triggers. Please be sensitive to your community in deciding whether or not to teach it.