

Kelly Clingan is a music educator, trombonist, mother, and activist of Indigenous (Lenne Lenape and Cherokee), Swiss, Ukrainian, and Scottish descent. With unique expertise at the intersection of women's studies and music education, Clingan is a highly respected and vocal advocate for equity and access in music education environments, particularly those dedicated to jazz.

Raised in Seattle Public Schools, Clingan has deep roots in Seattle's celebrated music education tradition. An alumni of the award-winning jazz programs at Washington Middle School and Roosevelt High School, Clingan went on to earn a Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Trombone Performance, Bachelor of Women Studies, and teaching certification in 2004. Soon after, Kelly became band director at Washington Middle School and in 2016, assumed the role of Director of Education at Seattle JazzED, where she also founded and directed the all-girl jazz band, Girls Ellington Project.

Kelly has adjudicated at festivals across the country, including the Reno and Lionel Hampton Jazz Festivals, and presented at conferences for Jazz Education Network, American String Teachers Association, and Washington Music Educators Association. While at JazzED, Kelly created the first Girls Jazz Day, a groundbreaking event that inspired future femme-centric jazz events in Seattle and beyond. In 2016, Kelly was University of Washington Gender Women and Sexuality Studies Alumni of the Year for her extensive efforts to promote gender equity in jazz.

After more than twenty years as a musician-educator and unabashed agitator, Clingan continues to discourse with allies and explore strategies for advancing inclusion and social justice in music education through her weekly podcast, "The Beth and Kelly Show: Music Teaching (and Life)," with fellow educator Beth Fortune. When she isn't making good trouble, Kelly performs weekly as 'la Kelly del Norte' with traditional Mexican Banda, Banda Vagos, throughout the Puget Sound. Since joining Banda Vagos in 2000, her participation as a white-presenting musician has continuously refined her understanding of cultural appreciation and allyship in musical settings.