SONG FOR THE PLANET:
EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOOL MUSIC PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study examines educators’ perceptions of the environmental impact of Holly Artzen’s Artist Response musicians’ program for schools. In this case study, Artzen and five educators were interviewed about their perceptions of the program’s impact on students at five B.C. elementary schools. The researcher’s “observational narratives” also convey experiential examples of the program in action. Educators perceive that the program provides students and their families with a memorable, nature-focused musical experience that also enhances their understanding of, and concern for, the environment. Based on the six participants’ interviews, the researcher argues that programs like this offer role models for children, enhance community, provide opportunities for cross-curricular learning, and involve multiple intelligences. The study concludes that, despite obstacles, the program engages emotions, raises awareness that enhances students’ decision-making skills, and influences the adults in their lives. Participants also perceived the need for a formal environmental curriculum to be integrated into elementary schools.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that sheep’s guts should hale souls out of men’s bodies?

Benedick (on hearing an air played and sung)
William Shakespeare (1598) Much Ado About Nothing, Act II, Scene III

The purpose of this study is to investigate educators’ perceptions of whether a school music program can increase environmental concern among students and the adult audiences to whom they perform. It also examines teachers’ perceptions of the pedagogical design principles that intensify students’ feelings for nature. Although music is well known to stir people to action in other contexts (e.g. advertising jingles, national anthems, military music), few papers have appeared on the use of music to intensify environmental education and to increase people's concern for the environment. However, experts have noted that listening to music activates parts of the brain that are involved with emotion and motivation in humans (Levetin, 2006, p. 191). Music also helps us remember things (Sacks, 2007, p. 258); memories accompanied by emotion are ‘tagged’ by our brains as being more important (Levetin, 2006, p. 231). Another quality of music is its ability to promote social coordination and cooperation (Levetin, 2006, p. 258). So music, which approaches us through our emotions, may prove to be a useful tool for rousing a community to environmental action.

For many years, environmental education was based on the premise that when people knew the facts about what was happening to the environment, they would be motivated to take action (Sobel, 2007, p. 16). Eventually, studies showed that this was not the case; knowledge about the environment did not necessarily lead to action (Orr, 1992, p. 3; Sobel, 2007; Lee, 2008). People needed to experience a feeling of
connectedness to nature to be motivated to perform ecological behavior (Mayer and Frantz, 2004, p. 503). The fine arts allow people to further explore and deepen these feelings of connection to nature (Guerevitz, 2000, p. 255).

The capacity for children, when singing, to influence their audience of parents forms part of the design of the Artist Response Team’s program, investigated in this study. Recently, researchers have examined intergenerational learning as a way for children to act as catalysts to promote environmental action among their parents and communities (Duvall and Zint, 2007, p.23). This thesis centers on the work of the environmental musicians known as the “Artist Response Team” (ART), who have taught songs about the natural world as guest artists in schools since 1990, with a focus on hope and action. Holly Arntzen, leader and moving force behind her team, and her colleagues aim to influence adults through their children. “The target audience is working professionals…people who have time only for their families and jobs. They don’t go to environmental meetings, and they don’t read government brochures…but they do pay attention when their children and grandchildren speak!” (Fresh Outlook Foundation website, 2009). In view of climate change and other growing environmental problems, more engagement of the general public in caring for the environment is urgently needed.

In addition to the excitement of performing for, and influencing, their adult audience, students receive educational benefits from the program. Many subjects can be enlivened through their connection to environmental studies and the nature songs. The music helps to put environmental issues in a real world, cross-curricular context. Currently, BC Elementary Schools are required by law to cover the provincial curriculum for a range of subjects. However, there is no specific required environmental studies
curriculum, although the Ministry of Education does provide an extensive and informative website to help teachers include it with other subjects:

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm. Teachers decide independently how much environmental studies, if any, to add to the mix of subjects they teach. But the curriculum for each subject, as well as which books and other resources can be used in schools, are fixed by the Ministry of Education as a result of extensive consultation and review. The curriculum guides specify “learning outcomes” for each subject, and present guidelines to help teachers evaluate students. Some schools in BC appear to emphasize certain intellectual strengths, such as math, language, and intrapersonal skills (personal planning), while minimizing subjects such as fine arts. However, the Ministry of Education Green Schools website

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm states that an “aesthetic appreciation” can help students learn to protect the environment.

**Research Problem**

The purpose of this study is to investigate educators’ perceptions about whether a school music program can increase environmental concern among students and among the adult audiences to whom they perform, as well as providing valuable cross-curricular learning in schools.

**Research Question**

What influences do educators perceive Holly Arntzen’s environmental Artist Response music program to have on students’ environmental concern and desire for action?
Study Limitations and Delimitations

Delimitations: The subjects of this study were all (except Holly Arntzen) teachers or administrators in British Columbia’s public elementary schools. They had all participated in the Artist Response program.

Limitations: No parents or students were interviewed. Other studies may offer perceptions about the program from other perspectives. Larger studies with other educators in different locations may have different perceptions.

Need or Significance

Little has been written on the use of music to intensify environmental education and to increase people's concern for the environment. However, music’s unique properties make it effective for this purpose. These include: the capacity to raise emotion, to increase motivation, to encourage community bonding, and to enhance memory (Levetin, 2006, pp. 191, 231, 258; Sacks, p. 258). Environmental educators have realized that giving people knowledge alone about environmental issues does not necessarily incline them to take any action to improve the situation (Sobel, 2007, p. 16). People need to feel a connection with nature (Mayer and Frantz, 2004, p. 503). These feelings can then be explored and consolidated through the fine arts (Guerevitz, 2000, p. 255). According to the BC Ministry of Education Green Schools 2010 website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm, the use of the fine arts in environmental studies can prepare students to protect nature. It states: “An aesthetic appreciation, along with a scientific understanding of nature, encourages students to learn and act to protect and sustain the environment. This, in turn, can contribute to self-awareness and personal fulfillment.” The Artist Response program provides students
with the opportunity for lively, cross-curricular learning in schools while also
empowering children to impact adults’ environmental concern.

**Researcher’s Perspective**

As an amateur music enthusiast, I was motivated to examine music’s power to
connect, move, and influence people. My musical involvements have included singing in
choirs, playing instruments including flute, mandolin, violin, and cello, and writing
songs. I have also performed with an amateur women’s fiddle group. When I volunteered
at a performance of Holly’s and learned about the Artist Response program, I thought it
was a uniquely creative approach to environmental education that was likely to be
effective, and was worth studying.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Emotions, Motivation, and Action

Knowledge, by itself, does not necessarily lead to action on environmental issues (Orr, 1992; Sobel, 2007; Lee, 2008). It is well known that many people spend more time talking about environmental problems than actually taking action to mitigate them. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) examine the complex reasons behind people's reluctance to act environmentally. They present various models of the factors that contribute to pro-environmental behavior. The authors also construct their own model that includes elements that inhibit people from pro-environmental behavior. Of these, they believe, the biggest barrier is old habits. They also state that if people experience mainly distressing emotions regarding the environment, they often find ways to avoid thinking about the problems (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, pp. 254, 255). The authors conclude that pro-environmental behavior is best achieved when internal factors (such as knowledge, values, locus of control, and emotions) and external factors (such as social, cultural, economic and political) act synergistically. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002, p. 241) also review how ideas about motivations for environmental action have evolved over time. The comprehensive nature of their paper provides good insurance for a reader against the temptation of adopting an over-simplified view of the complex factors involved.

Researchers are investigating what other factors cause people to become environmentally active. One vital element that stands out is a feeling of connectedness with nature (Mayer and Frantz, 2004, p. 503). Environmental thinker David Orr (2008) argues for the importance of feelings in environmental education: “If saving species and environments is our aim, we will need … a more inclusive rationality that joins empirical
knowledge with the emotions that make us love and sometimes fight (p.5)” A recent study of adolescents in Hong Kong also linked emotion with environmental action. “Environmental concern” (i.e. emotions associated with beliefs about environmental problems) was the top predictor of environmental behavior among the adolescents (Lee, 2008, p.28).

Music And the Brain

Music has the power to move people emotionally, and to connect our feelings with other things in our world (including nature). Songs and compositions, and the sounds of nature itself, such as bird song and rainfall, inspire us. Through music, we can gain an aesthetic understanding of the natural world (Turner and Freedman, 2004, p. 50). Unlike most arts, music seldom directly represents the tangible world, but Sacks (2007, p. 329) calls it “profoundly emotional”, and suggests that people’s emotional response to music may arise in a physiologically independent way from other emotional responses (2007, p. 329). A number of authors have explored the power of music to motivate and connect people. According to Shrock (2009, Introductory section, para. 5), through music people can connect with each other emotionally, experience certain physical reactions with others, and increase social ties. Music is closely associated with motivation and with movement (Levetin, 2006, pp. 182,183). In humans, auditory and movement systems are linked, allowing groups of people to coordinate their movements to a beat (Sacks, 2007, p. 260). People who listen to the same music can experience very similar emotions in response (Shrock, 2009, Introductory section, para. 3). At a concert, there can be communal excitement and bonding (Sacks, 2007, p. 267). However, individual tastes play a factor in each person’s response to a music performance.
Scientists remain unsure about why music influences humans so strongly. Some propose that the brain “hijacks” systems used for other functions such as language, emotion, and movement. (Schrock, 2009, Introductory section, para. 3) A proponent of this hijack idea, Harvard University psychologist Steven Pinker, calls music: an ‘auditory cheesecake’, “a confection crafted to tickle the areas of the mind that evolved for more important functions” (as cited in Schrock, 2009, Introductory section, para. 3). But other researchers note that humans are all born with the ability to appreciate music, and that the cohesiveness caused by our response to music is an important evolutionary advantage for communal animals such as humans (Schrock, 2009, Introductory section, para. 3).

Currently, music is being successfully employed in a number of settings to encourage people to learn. Music helps us to remember things that pervade our culture. According to Sacks (2007, p. 258): “Every culture has songs and rhymes to help children learn the alphabet, numbers, and other lists.” Memories associated with emotion remain particularly strong (Sacks, 2007, p. 217). Music can help people to learn and remember new habits. For example, Feliciano dos Santos and his band Massukos, are successfully teaching villagers in Mozambique to use ecological sanitation to avoid water born diseases and improve crops (Goldman Environmental Prize homepage). Another group: “Playing for Change”, records music from the “global village” (around the world) in an attempt to promote world peace (Playing for Change homepage).

Music does not exist by itself as a distinct series of sounds; it is the result of how our brains put together the sound waves our ears pick up. “Music, then, can be thought of as a type of perceptual illusion in which our brain imposes structure and order on a sequence of sounds,” writes Daniel Levetin (2006, p. 109). Music probably predates
spoken language (Levetin, 2006, p. 256). If so, the organization of the brain may reflect that evolutionary story. “Just how this structure leads us to experience emotional reactions is part of the mystery of music” (Levetin, 2006, p. 109). The structure our brains impose on sounds is a kind of musical grammar belonging to the music of the culture in which we are raised (Levetin, 2006, p. 108).

Whatever the biological reasons for music’s influence on humans, its profound effect is evident. As Sacks (2007, p. 385) notes: “Music is part of being human, and there is no human culture in which it is not highly developed and esteemed.” This study will examine a way that music can positively influence people’s environmental attitudes.

**Environmental Philosophies**

In North America, the prevailing Eurocentric attitudes towards the environment originated from two historical streams of thought; early writers and thinkers often based their ideas on romanticism or utilitarianism. As Thomashow (1995, p. 49) says: “One root of ecological thinking lies in the romantic, transcendental, organic, vitalistic, holistic realm. Another root is embedded in the analytic, scientific, mechanical, and utilitarian realm.” As a result, many people assumed that nature was an unlimited source of raw material for people to use and “manage” as they wished. At the same time, most communities sought to preserve parks where people could admire and enjoy nature. An anthropocentric, “us and them” attitude towards nature prevailed.

By the 1970’s, the science of ecology had emerged, and some new ways of thinking about nature appeared. The study of how organisms interact with their environment coincided with an explosion of new environmental ideas. But ecology, by itself, had limitations. According to Arne Naess (1973), ecology mainly dealt with
pollution and resource depletion. He named this kind of thinking “Shallow Ecology” and claimed that its main objective was to improve the health and wealth of people in developed countries. By contrast, he described the new movement of “Deep Ecology” as an acknowledgement of humans’ place in a web of intrinsic relationships in which all organisms are equally important and enhanced by diversity, symbiosis, and complexity. Similarly, Lionel Rubinoff (2004, p.27) stated that it is misleading to think of nature and human manipulations of nature (such as gardening) as separate. He argued that we are a part of nature, yet there are limits to how intensely humans can use nature without damaging it. “Systems thinking” extended the idea of a nature/human connection. It stated that “everything is connected to everything else”, so whatever affects one part of our world affects all the other subsystems in the world (Kauffman, 1980, p. 38). Another of the new movements, Ecofeminism, drew parallels between the domination of females by males and the exploitation of nature (Thomashow, 1995, p. 56). Yet another way of looking at our ecological problems is by examining our “world views”, or frames of reference, that include human life and the role of nature. According to Aerts, Apostel, DeMoor, Helleman, Maex, vanBelle, and Van Der Veken (1994, pp. 4,5) we need to construct new global world views to deal with modern social and environmental problems.

**Environmental Education Philosophies**

Traditionally, environmental education was based on the assumption that when people had received enough knowledge about the environment, they would act to preserve it (Sobel, 2007, p. 16). More recently, researchers have argued that people must
have direct experiences with nature in order to feel the need to protect it. Edith Cobb (Louv, 2005, p. 94) analyzed 300 volumes of childhood memories from creative thinkers from diverse cultures and eras. She believed that their creativity was awakened during direct experiences with nature in middle childhood. Environmental psychologist, Louise Chawla (Louv, 2005, p. 94) later criticized some of Cobb’s methods, but argued that freedom to explore nature (even a small, urban patch) imparted to children a sense of place that was important to their development and future creativity. David Orr also emphasized the importance of place, but he added that the quality of direct experiences and a degree of reflection are also vital in good environmental education (as cited in Thomashow, 1995, p. 175). Richard Louv (2005) maintained that modern life is inducing a “nature deficit disorder” in many children, depriving them of the numerous benefits of unorganized play in nature, and causing them to feel alienated from the natural world. As well as direct experience of nature, we need better ways to incorporate our perceptions of the natural environment with other aspects of our lives, according to Thomas Berry (1988), who wrote that: “Children need a story that will bring personal meaning together with the grandeur and meaning of the universe” (Berry, 1988, p. 131).

In some countries, the arts are being used to increase children’s engagement in environmental education. In the U.K., part of the environmental education involves the deliberate involvement of students in an aesthetic or artistic consideration of nature through a range of expressive media. Environmental education in the U.K. purposely engages emotion, usually in the form of cross-curricular “aesthetics” (art, music, creative writing, and poetry) (Guerevitz, 2000, p. 255). Guerevitz argues that this may be a better route than approaches based on scientific knowledge for encouraging environmental
action. However, she cautions that teachers of these programs should avoid employing "adultist" ideas about children and how they "should" experience and value nature. She points out that if people are motivated to act through emotional connections they have made with nature, it may be counter productive to interfere with connections that children have forged themselves.

**Curriculum Fulfillment**

To find out what students currently learn in B.C. elementary schools, and what books and other materials they must use, an interested person can consult the provincial curriculum. Because teachers are required by law to provide students with the learning prescribed in the curriculum, and because they can readily evaluate students by using items in the curriculum, the provincial curriculum dominates what happens in schools.

In B.C., many diverse sources sculpt the curricula for public schools (K – 12). The Ministry of Education, together with numerous partners, frequently up-date the curriculum. Overarching considerations for curriculum design include the values of protection of diversity and of an individual’s right to fulfill his or her potential through education.

Diversity is one of the most prominent features of British Columbia’s society and our schools. In its design, the provincially prescribed curriculum supports an education system in which all students are fully participating members of a community of learners and can develop their individual potential (B.C. Ministry of Education Policy 2010 website [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/prov_approval_of_lr.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/prov_approval_of_lr.htm)).

After curriculum changes are drafted, they undergo internal review within the Ministry of Education. Later, other ministries conduct an external review, as they
contribute their comments to the process. Members of the public add their comments via the ministry website. The various reviewers must examine whether the draft:

- supports the principles of learning
- is accurate in terms of subject matter and portrayals
- is current and relevant
- provides prescribed learning outcomes, suggested achievement indicators, examples, instruction, and assessment that are accessible for a variety of teaching and learning styles
- provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills
- promotes awareness, understanding, and respect for the diversity of Canadian society;
- reflects and validates the life experience of students of varied backgrounds, interests, abilities, and needs
- provides positive role models and presents different points of view
- reflects accurate representations and avoids stereotype

There is also an extensive series of “specific considerations”, based on whether or not items uphold positive Canadian values.

As the list above indicates, each curriculum item includes “prescribed learning outcomes”, or benchmarks that help teachers evaluate their students’ progress. Provincial
laws require that all schools will provide the prescribed learning outcomes in the curriculum. But individual schools can deliver the prescribed learning outcomes in their own ways. For example, when using curriculum criteria for evaluation purposes, the Ministry offers three suggestions for teachers: weighting criteria, using rating scales, or performance rubrics (reference sets) (B.C. Ministry of Education 2010 website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp_fa.htm). Sometimes, a student’s performance is not a product. The Ministry avoids this potential drawback by suggesting that a description be used for evaluation.

“Learning Resources” (books, films, etc.) used in schools must also go through a formal evaluation process by the Ministry of Education, or alternatively through an extensive evaluation by the local School Board. Ministry evaluators are primarily practicing educators, and they use media-specific evaluation forms. Evaluation criteria are divided into four categories: content, instructional design, technical design and social considerations. Resources that pass this evaluation become part of the “grade collections” for each curriculum for a period of five years, unless they are successfully challenged as unsuitable within that time (B.C. Ministry of Education Policy 2010 website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/prov_approval_of_lr.htm).

In B.C., elementary schools have no specifically prescribed curriculum for environmental studies; it is up to the initiative of individual teachers to determine how much environmental learning students will get. However, the B.C. Ministry of Education has created an extensive 2010 website to provide teachers with suggested ways to incorporate the environment into many existing curricula for other subjects (“curriculum maps”) http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm. The website
encourages teachers to explore experiential learning, including taking students out into nature. Seven modules, located in the “sustainability course content” portion of the website, outline sustainability topics that can be used individually, or grouped to make a course. Another part of the website (“sustainable schools best practices guide”) contains information on making schools more environmentally friendly. (B.C. Ministry of Education Green Schools 2010 website

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm)

The science curriculum for B.C. elementary schools focuses on acquiring scientific knowledge and the skills needed to carry out the scientific method. It states as a goal: “developing attitudes conducive to the responsible acquisition and application of scientific and technological knowledge”. (B.C. Elementary Science Curriculum, Science, April 7, 2010, p. 13) However, it does not suggest involving aesthetic or emotional learning that might place attitudes towards science in any kind of context. Experiential learning, focused on skill development, is encouraged by the curriculum. Other types of experiences are mentioned very briefly, and considered optional. Subjects include physical science (energy and matter), earth and space science, and life science. The curriculum suggests that elementary students spend 25 – 30 hours per grade (at least 30 in grades 4-7, and less than 50% of this for kindergarten) on each of these three types of science. When studying the Life Science portion, students learn some ecological concepts including: habitats and communities, the diversity of life, and ecosystems. (B.C. Ministry of Education Science Curriculum website, April 7, 2010).

Some parts of the music curriculum can apply directly to the experience of performing in a school concert. The “context (self and community)” portion refers to the
skills of taking part as a performer or audience member. The music curriculum also states that students should interpret “thoughts, images, and feelings” from rhythm, melody, and expression in music. Another emphasis of the music curriculum is to provide creative opportunities for students (B.C. Ministry of Education, Fine Arts Curriculum website, April 7, 2010).

Fine Arts, including music, currently comprise a small part of the B.C. Curriculum. According to Howard Gardner (1983, p. 356), modern schools in the West often concentrate on educating only certain aspects of human intelligence (linguistic, logical-mathematical, and intrapersonal), and neglect others (interpersonal, spatial/body, and musical intelligences). Gardner originally outlined seven different types of human “intelligences”, or abilities, and in 1996 added an eighth type, “naturalistic intelligence”, referring to the ability to understand living things (Multiple Intelligences Research and Consulting, Inc. homepage). Neurologist and author, Oliver Sacks (2007), states that music stimulates development of many different parts of the brain, and therefore “for the vast majority of students, music can be every bit as important as reading or writing” (p. 102). Sacks (2007, p.364) supports Gardner’s idea that music is distinct from other kinds of intelligence. He notes that: “One could indeed speak of a specific ‘musical intelligence’ as Howard Gardner had postulated in his theory of multiple intelligences” (Sacks, 2007, p. 364). However, some schools do not have a music program unless individual teachers provide it (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p. 95). Schools in various parts of the world reflect aspects of intelligence that are valued in each culture, and an individual’s learning is partly determined by his or her culture (Gardner, 1983, p. 27).

Modern research has revealed new information about the way people’s brains
work to make decisions. Since the time of Plato, Western society has operated on the conviction that as humans we can subdue our “animal” emotions with our “superior” rational minds (Lehrer, 2009, p. 17). But modern knowledge about how our brains work contradicts that notion. According to author Jonah Lehrer, research shows that people use their emotions when they make decisions (2009, pp. 18, 23). The rational part of our brains depends upon unconscious information obtained by the more primitive emotional parts of our brains, which appear to have evolved earlier (Lehrer, 2009, p. 26). We must know when to trust our emotions and when to override them with reason if we are to make good decisions. (Lehrer, 2009, pp. 56, 107). Thinking is part of the decision-making picture, and so is feeling.

Since we now live in an increasingly global culture, it follows that there may be advantages in broadening our education system to include the other aspects of intelligence. They may help us to cope with current and future conditions. Gardner also points out that learning in schools is often abstract, and problems to solve are often out of context (Gardner, 1983, p. 357). This type of education may not adequately prepare students to solve real world problems such as crises in the environment. Students may benefit from a broader approach that includes as much of human intelligence as possible, and exposes learners to a range of experiences. The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) currently promotes dialogue based on the arts as a means of building understanding between cultures (UNESCO homepage, 2010). [http://www.unesco.ca/en/interdisciplinary/artslearning/default.aspx](http://www.unesco.ca/en/interdisciplinary/artslearning/default.aspx)

It supports cross-curricular learning of the arts with other subjects.

The B.C. Ministry of Education Green Schools 2010 website
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm advocates the use of Fine Arts in environmental studies: “An aesthetic appreciation, along with a scientific understanding of nature, encourages students to learn and act to protect and sustain the environment. This, in turn, can contribute to self-awareness and personal fulfillment.”
Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design and Rationale

To investigate participant educators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the Artist Response Team school environmental music program on students and their audiences, I chose a qualitative approach, with a case study framework, interviews, and observational narratives. The emphasis of the study was more on how the program affected people experientially, and less on concerns about replicability of data.

Qualitative methods capably describe concrete aspects of peoples’ lived experience (Kvale, 2009, p. 12), and researchers have used qualitative case studies for many years in a variety of disciplines, particularly social sciences (Yin, 1997, Introduction, para. 1). Case studies possess several important strengths, as well as a few weaknesses. They are well suited to “investigations of contemporary phenomena in their real-life context” (Yin, 1997, Introduction, para. 1). Case studies allow a researcher to probe the subtlety and complexity of the case being studied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 256). They enable readers to see a situation through the eyes of the study’s participants. Case studies produce publicly accessible accounts in a natural form that allow readers to make their own generalizations (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 256), and that can be interpreted directly and translated into action.

Possible weaknesses with case studies include vulnerability to observer bias and difficulty with cross checking results, which may lead to researcher selectivity, subjectivity, and interference (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 256). However, I have declared my biases and checked the results with participants, so I do not think that
these potential weaknesses unduly interfere with the study. Readers wishing to consult the actual interviews from the study can access them in Appendix C.

**Data Collection**

Data for this case study was collected through semi-structured interviews of educators’ perceptions about the effectiveness of music in an environmental education program for students, as well as observational narratives compiled through field notes. Before the interviews, I informed all participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and obtained their signed consent. In order to increase research authenticity, I prepared an interview guide (Appendix A), but allowed some deviation from these questions when alterations seemed fruitful. In an attempt to avoid merely reinforcing common prejudices, I carefully planned the interviews (Kvale, 2009, p. 15). At the beginning of interviews, I began with a briefing to inform the participant, and then starting with descriptive questions to put the interviewee at ease (Kvale, 2009, p. 128). I encouraged participants to give the fullest answers by asking open questions (Kvale, 2009, p. 134). (see Appendix A for an example). By using probing and clarifying questions as the interviews proceeded, I attempted to add value to the data (Kvale, 2009, pp. 131, 137). I asked thoughtful, clear questions, and avoided leading questions, in order to obtain the subject’s perspective. To ensure that I had accurately captured the subjects’ perspectives, I checked the interview transcriptions and results with each of them.

Throughout the interview process, I employed various measures to increase the validity of the data. I triangulated the case study of the six participants’ perceptions with extensive interviews that allowed them the strong expression of their views in their own
words. I returned the transcribed interviews to each participant to be read for completeness and accuracy of their expressed views. From the beginning of the research, I kept field notes to keep my own perceptions fresh, and as I watched the unfolding of the ART program, I enhanced several of these first-hand observations as the study’s “Observational Narratives”.

Working for credible research through careful interviews and attention to authenticity, I attempted to conduct research that broke new ground and looked at things with a fresh perspective. Environmental education has made limited formal use of music in schools to engage people and motivate them to take action. With this study, I hope to convey educators’ perceptions of music’s effectiveness in delivering environmental messages in the schools.

**Participants and Site**

I interviewed three teachers and two principals from British Columbia elementary schools that Holly has visited; the interview subjects have aliases in the report, to protect their privacy. To obtain the names and contact information of the participants, I consulted Holly Arntzen, because I needed to locate teachers who had participated in her program. I also interviewed Holly Arntzen to obtain her point of view about her environmental programs. To obtain first hand descriptions of the program, I followed a Vancouver school through the ART experience, and observed teachers, students, and audiences. To give readers a stronger sense of how the Artist Response program works, I have written three separate vignettes of the process as I observed it. The vignettes are included as observational narratives in the Results section of this thesis.
With Holly Arntzen’s help, I was fortunate to locate and interview six experts for this study, each of whom possessed a unique background that contributed to the variety of viewpoints collected for this research. The curriculum developer had extensive experience as an elementary school principal (now retired) on Vancouver Island, and had completed two secondments to work on provincial curriculum. She made major contributions to the two teacher handbooks produced by the Artist Response Team that, according to Holly Arntzen (personal communication, March 29, 2010), were instrumental in the handbooks’ acceptance as provincially approved educational resources that can be used in schools. She now works as a consultant in curriculum development.

Teacher 1 moved to Kelowna, a smaller city in the interior of British Columbia, a few years ago for her first teaching assignment, after completing her training at the University of Victoria. She said there is income disparity among the families at the school where she teaches. According to Teacher 1, her school has no formal music program other than what is provided by the efforts of individual teachers, and the school “lacks environmental focus” (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p. 95).

Principal 2 has worked as a school administrator at two schools in the same multi-ethnic S.E. Vancouver neighborhood for the past 10 years. He teaches choir to most of the children at his school, and, using his training in Fine Arts, arranges a variety of Fine Arts experiences for his students over the school year.

Teacher 3 also works at a multi-ethnic Vancouver school, where she said over 60 per cent of the students speak English as a Second Language (ESL). The school recently
had a book published showcasing the journeys of the students’ families as they arrived in Canada. They hosted the Artist Response program as a celebration of their book launch.

Teacher 4 works at a Kindergarten-Grade 5 school on Vancouver Island, which she said had already made a name for itself by the school’s involvement in environmental projects.

Singer/songwriter Holly Arntzen and her Artist Response Team perform folk pop music about sustainability and ecology with elementary school students.

Data Analysis

While analyzing the data from this study, I worked through several stages to ensure authenticity. First, I have recorded the results electronically, before transcribing the interviews. Next, I have coded them according to the major themes and points presented by the interview subjects. From the themes I looked for patterns, and then checked all work with interviewees to ensure that I had captured their intentions. Because oral and written styles of language can be very different, Kvale (2009, p. 187) recommends editing the transcripts slightly to make them more fluent. I have followed this advice, while attempting to keep changes to a minimum. I kept a research log to capture specifics, add detail, and record the work as it developed, as a further aid to credibility. Instead of formally analyzing my observations, I wrote observational narratives to capture the flavor of the experience.
Observational Narrative I: Beating Together (Drum Circle Initiation)

March 29, 2010

Eagerly, yet nervously, the neophytes among the 25 participants slip into seats in a circle, each behind a drum. We eye the djembes, congas, and bongos suspiciously. Can we do this? Do we have what it takes?

The lights dim, leaving us in candlelight. The MC explains that the drum circle coordinator, a percussionist in a band, has offered his expertise and his drums free for this community Earth Hour celebration. We clap, and he answers our unspoken question.

“Everyone has rhythm,” the coordinator tells us. “We are communal animals, and it’s a way for us to communicate.”

He shows us how to hit the drums for a bass note, and alternatively, for a high note. We find out how to slap a simple rhythm, alternating between bass and high notes. We start hitting, and start relaxing. We make a group rhythm. Then we learn a “roll”, with quicker notes. Soon, the coordinator is urging us to create our own combinations to the steady beat.

“Are we having fun?” he asks.

“Yes,” we shout enthusiastically, in unison.

The feeling of the drumming is so natural, and it feels good. Maybe it DOES come from within us.
The coordinator “conducts” us from the center of the circle. With gestures, he shows us when to vary the volume and the tempo. He sets up a different rhythm on a hand-held chime. We clap as the other half of the drummers slap out a rhythm.

Our hour disappears in a flash; it could not have contained 60 minutes. Our time in the dark has ended. The coordinator invites us to his regular public drum circle. He leads other circles too, for healing from mental health and addictions issues, and in workshops for groups that want to work better together. Participants wander out, now. I collect my candle, and muse on the surprising pleasures of drumming with strangers.
Chapter 4: Findings

This study examines the teachers’ impressions of the impact of environmental musician Holly Artntzen’s ART music program (also known as the “Artist Response Team”) on students’ environmental concern. The findings of interviews with teachers, administrators, and with Holly, indicate that educators feel that the power of her program is shown by its emotional impact on students, by the role models it offers, by its impact on community building, and by the long term effects participants recall. The program’s intensive nature does, however, create a few concerns.

Outcomes: The Project, the Study

The outcome of the Artist Response project was the concert, and the outcome of this thesis is findings that emerged from that project in response to my research question: *What influences do educators perceive Holly Arntzen’s environmental Artist Response Team program to have on students’ environmental concern and desire for action?*

Below, I describe the process employed by Holly Arntzen and Kevin as they prepare students for their big concert. The principal of the Vancouver school participating in the project aimed for most of the 350 students in Kindergarten through Grade 7 to perform at the concert, and said he hoped the concert would influence an audience of multicultural parents, of whom many did not speak much English. Figure 1 shows a program and a school poster from the performance (p. 27).

Following these observations, I examine the comments made in interviews by the six education professionals who participated both in the Artist Response project and in this research.
Figure 1. Examples of a concert program (above), and a school concert poster in English and Punjabi.
Observational Narrative II: Primary Students’ First Rehearsal with Holly and Kevin

As Holly plays a piano and sings softly, and Kevin, Holly’s colleague and producer, drums quietly on his congas, 180 primary students (Kindergarten to Grade 3) file in and sit in rows on the activity room floor. The children have lots of energy, and Holly, Kevin, and the school principal will have their work cut out to help them focus it. After a few clap-back rhythms, the principal has everyone’s attention.

“We’re going to rock for about an hour on the songs you know,” he announces, explaining that this first rehearsal will include the two songs this group is preparing to sing, and the three songs the entire school will perform.

“Everybody comes back for the concert,” emphasizes the principal, priming the students for maximum attendance at the final event. He creates a presence, standing at the front of the group, helping to conduct the songs, and bringing the kids in on their cues. He frowns dramatically at any child who begins to misbehave. Holly talks to the students about “performance manners”, emphasizing that no one should talk between songs. Exuberance still bubbles over, and the team continue to train the children. They practice standing on a cue from Holly, and she reminds them: “This time, no talking! You should be absolutely silent.” They’re improving, but still some students chatter.

“I hear talking,” says Kevin. “Do you think that when musicians record a CD that they talk between tracks?”

The next time they stand, the students are noticeably quieter. Holly and Kevin lead the students through all their songs, and they practice bowing together.

Repeatedly, the team alerts the students to pay attention with short sung phrases that
the kids sing back, or with rhythms to clap. Occasionally, Holly says: “Boys and girls, we need a little more energy in your voices.” Then the volume of their singing increases. After the hour of rehearsal, the students file out with their teachers.

To an outsider, the children appear to have made modest progress towards performance readiness. But when they return for rehearsal the next day, the general bewilderment of that previous practice has vanished. They are a performing team, already capable of credibly rendering their songs. Two days later, when the school holds a mass practice in the gym, the primary students are ready to play their part.

**Observational Narrative III: Solo Auditions**

When you are in Grade 7, embarrassment comes easily. So it takes courage to audition for a solo singing part in the school concert. With some encouragement from their teachers, 40 students find that courage, and show up for the auditions. Of these, only six will win the chance to solo at the concert. They will each sing in turn: “I, I am, I am the future, I’m the new-oo-oo” at the end of the song “I am the Future”.

For the auditions, each hopeful student gives his or her name to Kevin, and then stands next to Holly at the microphone. She sings the line, and snaps her fingers to show the beat. Then the student sings the line into the microphone. Some stumble or giggle, some lose the tune, but a few carry it off like pros. Holly congratulates them all.

“I think you should all be proud of what you’ve done, because it takes courage to try,” she says. “And it’s by trying that you get what you want in life. Thank you all for coming.”
The winners are notified discretely at some later time. All the soloists except one show up to sing at the final show, and they all shine.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 2:** Holly and producer/drummer Kevin Wright perform. (Holly Arntzen homepage; printed by permission)

**Observational Narrative IV: Poised for Performance (Before the Dress Rehearsal)**

The school gym waits for the first performance of the “Up Your Watershed” concert. Posters in English and Punjabi welcome parents to the performance, and printed programs lie ready (Figure 1). Rows of seats sit expectantly. At the front of the gym, a huge poster of salmon leaping up a wavy river on a blue background dominates beneath another huge black poster covered with stars. In the center sits a paper world with blue waters, green land, and fluffy clouds. More huge posters along the sides of the gym continue the salmon and waters, and add mountains and sky.
In the space in front of the empty risers, the band runs over a few songs together, adjusting equipment, warming up, and building energy. Two electric guitarists, dressed in plain dark clothing, have joined Holly and Kevin. Holly has her slide dulcimer, and a keyboard stands ready. Loud, tuneful, rhythmic sounds emanate from the big speakers.

From a distance, over the public address system, the principal’s voice urges students to: “reflect on what we are about to do.” He asks students to: “move in a mindful way so we can focus.” Then he tells them to “break a leg”, that it’s theater talk, and he’ll explain what it means later.

Audience members begin to drift into the gym, and children’s excited voices seep in from the hallway. The band stops rehearsing. There is a lull. Gesturing to each other, Holly, Kevin, and the principal discuss the logistics of ushering in the students. Suddenly, the two guitarists and Kevin strike up an instrumental tune, and 350 children file in through an outside door. With the help of the principal and their teachers, the children take their places on the risers at the front of the gym. Many students wear solid colored T-shirts, which make a rainbow of color. Most manage not to talk, but there’s an excited twitter from the little ones. By the time all the children are in place, most of the audience seats are full. It has taken about 15 minutes.

“Are we ready for a show?” asks the principal.

“Yes,” shout all the students, together.
The Interviews: Six Education Professionals Discuss the Power of Music

This section explores the results from six interviews of education professionals about their experiences with the Artist Response Program.

Concepts and Emotions

Principal 2’s perception was that Holly and Kevin’s songs educate the singers and the audience about current environmental issues such as: marine conservation, pollution, deforestation, and species extinction. Principal 2 said he thinks the Artist Response Team’s songs make students more aware of the choices we all make that can affect the environment. He referred to the Lyrics of the song: “I Am The Future”, written by the Artist Response Team (Appendix B), as an example:

The song says: ‘I Am The Future’. The kids are aware that they are the future, and it’s the parents that are making the choices now, and they can apply some pressure to the parents to make the right choices for them. And some of these kids are very articulate, and they certainly will. (Appendix C, p. 89)

According to Holly, listening to “leading-edge” speakers while singing at environmental events influenced her writing of the lyrics for the program’s songs (Appendix C, p. 118).

But the songs’ impact may be largely due to the appeal it makes to its listeners. Principal 2’s conjecture is that the songs’ emotions can motivate people to take action. “The emotions are very strong, and it’s emotions that will hopefully lead to change” (Appendix C, p. 90). It is Holly’s hope and expressed intention that when their children sing, many people are moved. “It’s their children, and it’s music,’ she explains. “Music is an emotional medium, and it connects people to these issues in that dimension. And
that’s where people really do start to care, and actually change behaviors” (Appendix C, p.120).

Holly and Kevin claim that the emotional appeal of their performances to audiences, often comprised of adults and parents, helped them attract government sponsorship:

…because we had an audience of adults, that’s why we were attracting funding from government sources, because they’re trying to get people’s attention about issues like marine conservation, and people weren’t interested. Families are too busy raising their kids and doing their work, and they don’t read government brochures and they don’t go to meetings. But when they’re sitting in that theater listening to their children sing and talk about these issues, they’re sensitized (Appendix C, p.120).

Several of the teachers interviewed for this study commented on the appeal of the students’ concerts to their audiences. Teacher 1 commented: “I don’t think the kids had ever been in a concert where they were actually pulling the audience into their performance, which was really neat for them” (Appendix C, p.99).

Teacher 4 thought that the concert’s emotional impact affected parents’ sense of responsibility for their children’s future:

I think it does hit home. The parents go: ‘Yes, this is our future; these are our kids. They’re looking at us and they don’t want us to just leave them with the mess. We all have to be working towards cleaning things up’ (Appendix C, p.116).

**Role Models**

Part of the impact of the program on the students derived from the role models provided by Holly and Kevin. Many of the teachers interviewed mentioned the positive effect the role models had provided for their students. Teacher 4 said the students were more likely to take part in environmental projects because they thought: “It’s not just
those teachers who are trying to influence us to do this; these cool musicians are doing it too – are really into it too” (Appendix C, p.116).

Some teachers commented that their students had benefited from having Holly and Kevin as role models, in addition to their example as environmental ambassadors. They noted that the appeal and encouragement of the two musicians made students receptive to their environmental message. Teacher 3 noted that many boys enjoyed their interactions with Kevin, because he encouraged them to move, and be uninhibited. “They love it; it’s like permission to shine” she said (Appendix C, p.108). And she thought many of the girls looked up to Holly as: “someone [who] could be so strong, but really sweet at the same time” (Appendix C, p.108). She added: “It’s a good combination – the two of them as leaders” (Appendix C, p.108). Some students who were normally quiet and timid “came out of their shells”, she said.

**Choosing the Music**

Music must have broad appeal if it is to reach a diverse audience of adults and children of different ages. According to Holly, it was important that the program did not use “kid’s music”, but instead had a “rocking band” (Appendix C, p.120). “It carved out its niche because it was something adults enjoyed as well,” she explained (Appendix C, p. 120). She describes her musical background as combining jazz, classical, blues, and folk, while Kevin contributes experience as a rock musician. Some of Holly and Kevin’s newest songs, such as “I am the Future” and “Up Your Watershed” have a rock flavor (Holly, Appendix C, p.122).

Most of the teachers interviewed gave the music favorable reviews. Teacher 1 called the music: “catchy”, and said she enjoyed the style (Appendix C, p. 96). Teacher 4
said: “It’s modern, it’s ‘hip’, it’s music that kids love, it’s not just ‘kids’ music”. And she added: “Anybody would like that music, young or old” (Appendix C, p.115). Principal 2 described the music as “just fabulous”. He said: “They are songs that are meaningful to the kids, they carry a very strong message, and they’re fun; they’re upbeat, they [the kids] just love them” (Appendix C, p.87).

**Music and Memory**

People remember many pieces of music, and music can help us remember a message (Sacks, 2007, p.258). Sometimes, years after we first heard a song or melody, we will recall it and the circumstances and emotions that we experienced at the time (Levetin, 2006, p. 192), and we may reflect on the music and find new meaning in it. The curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed for this study, commented that a former colleague of hers had referred to songs as “time bombs” due to this effect. He used the example of how he had perceived a love song in many different ways as he grew older. “Because music stays with us, and we can revisit it later, there’s some really deep learning to be done here,” said the curriculum developer. She added that she expected Holly’s music to have this effect on the children (Appendix C, p.85).

**Gathering Community**

Another of music’s properties is its ability to nurture community feeling (Sacks, 2007, p. 266). Staging a music concert, notes Holly, provides a school community with an opportunity to work together. Teachers, children, and Holly and Kevin and their band work towards an exciting performance, and the parents participate as the audience. “What this project does is it brings the school community together in a really joyful way,” Holly explained (Appendix C, p. 117). Teacher 1 observed that the program
increased the sense of community at her school. “…it brought the community together in a way that I hadn’t seen in that school before,” she said (Appendix C, p. 99), adding that many audience members made enthusiastic comments after the concert. Holly said she is convinced that music is one of the things that aids community building. “…I completely believe that what we’re doing is as needed as the dirt that those daffodils are growing in,” she said. “This has to happen. Communities need culture that nurtures the community” (Appendix C, p. 123).

**Long-term Impact**

Although long-term effects of the program were difficult to measure, most of the teachers interviewed suggested the program worked well as one of a number of environmental initiatives taken at their schools. Teacher 4 pointed out that a program like this needs to be followed up (Appendix C, p.116). Teacher 1 thought it boosted the school’s composting efforts for a time, but that these efforts had lapsed because no one at the school had kept the composting project going (Appendix C, p.98). The curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed said that the program had sparked her school’s participation in a follow-up environmental workshop and an environmental festival at a park near her school (Appendix C, p.79), and she thought that paper copying had decreased, which created less waste (Appendix C, p.78). She also observed that children were spontaneously singing the songs from the program in the school hallway (Appendix C, p.75). Teacher 3 said her students spontaneously sang the songs in the class cloakroom while they were getting ready to go home after school (Appendix C, p.106).

Teacher 4 felt that the program had empowered her students:

It’s a very heavy topic, to talk about what’s going on in the world with climate change and that kind of stuff, and I think the kids feel a sense of empowerment
when they do something that would help the environment. So if they’re singing, that’s doing something, and doing it in a very joyful way. That’s powerful (Appendix C, p. 116).

Principal 2 related how, more than 8 years after he’d held the program at his previous school, he was still meeting high school students who talk to him about “the Holly concert”, and remember the fun and singing the songs (Appendix C, p. 88). He said he had not asked the students whether the concert had made them more environmentally active, but he said that as a result of having the program at his school, he himself had become more reluctant to use pesticides, and more conscious of how he might affect the quality of rivers.

The education professionals interviewed for this study were unable to provide definitive evidence that the program had increased students’ environmental concern and action. However, they did note that students remembered the program positively, and recalled the songs afterwards, and implied they had benefitted from their involvement.

Concerns

Limited Drawbacks

Despite a few concerns, the program had mainly positive reviews from the teachers interviewed: Teacher 1 said: “I think it was definitely worthwhile” (Appendix C, p. 100). Teacher 2 commented: “I really do think that a program like this makes a difference to how the kids perceive the world, and what they can do” (Appendix C, p.89). According to Teacher 3, the kids “absolutely loved it” (Appendix C, p.105). Teacher 4 said: “I think there was more excitement at that concert than at other concerts that we’ve had at our school” (Appendix C, p.114). Concerns that the five teachers expressed
included the need for teacher involvement, the cost of the program, and the possibility that some people might be offended by some of the edgy rock songs in the program. These expressions of concern were not unanimous.

**Teacher Involvement Needed**

Teachers made direct and specific suggestions about the design of the program as it affected teacher preparation and involvement. In the current version of the program, the artists are only on site at a school for a short time; usually they are “in residence” for four days. As a result, the program depends on the school staff’s involvement and interest. Teachers teach the songs to the children. Several teachers interviewed for this study reported that teacher involvement had been problematic at their schools. This appeared to be partly due to extensive curricular loads in other subject areas. They said that: teachers did not know what to expect (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p.97), many did not feel involved (Teacher 3, Appendix C, p.111) and teachers felt that they were “being told what to do” (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p. 97). However, those who reported these criticisms predicted more satisfactory teacher involvement would result if there were more chances for teachers to meet the artists ahead of time, and to hear some of their music, as is done at some schools. Comments by teachers interviewed for this study indicated that at schools where there was no introductory concert, teachers’ feelings of involvement in the Artist Response program were low (see Table 1, p.39).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Introductory Concert</th>
<th>Teachers Felt Involved?</th>
<th>Curriculum Pressure</th>
<th>Handbook Use</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 (Kelowna)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>not good (p. 2)</td>
<td>yes (p. 9)</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 2 (Vancouver)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“very keen” (p. 5)</td>
<td>not known</td>
<td>good interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3 (Vancouver)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>not good (p. 6)</td>
<td>yes (p. 5,8,9)</td>
<td>no; wanted short summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4 (Vanc. Island)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>good at end (p. 4)</td>
<td>yes (p. 5)</td>
<td>most didn’t use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curric. Dev./Retired Principal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>most, by end (p. 5)</td>
<td>yes (p. 5)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost

Most of the teachers interviewed mentioned the cost of this program, which is significant for schools. Methods for raising money included: budgeting, cost sharing with the Parents Advisory Council, charging for the concert, and charging children a Fine Arts fee. After the concert, most school communities felt that the money had been well spent. However, when asked if the exciting concert caused people at her school to feel that the money had been well spent, Teacher 1 commented: “I think the Parent Advisory Council did, but I don’t know that everybody did. It was about $5000 to $6000 for the four days, and it did include some of the resources, but it’s still a lot of money” (Appendix C, p.100).
Perceptions of Offensiveness

Another of the program’s vulnerabilities is that some of its cutting-edge music, while exciting for children and audiences, can offend some people. Teacher 3 reported that older children at her school (who had not sung in the concert) were using the title of the song “Up Your Watershed” as an excuse to be rude on the playground (Appendix C, p.110). She also expressed concerns that the same song, which has a rock format and rock dance moves including waving fists in the air, could be teaching the children to be politically militant. Although she trusts these performers, she said: “… you could have a group who takes a group of children and gets them inspired for the wrong things” (Appendix C, p.110).

According to the curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed for this study, some teachers at her former school had objected when the word “hell” appeared in one of the songs. She said:

Sometimes teachers are really conservative people and they don’t want to get in trouble for having kids sing the word ‘hell’ or to get involved with the complex issues around [for instance] the money from the tar sands [being] ‘dollars from hell’, you know, the tar sands are not ‘good news’ to everyone (Appendix C, p. 74).

Discussions for teachers about the balance between what children should learn in order to think critically and what might be potentially harmful propaganda at a young age might help to clear up these kinds of controversies.
Pedagogical Considerations

Teachers, principals, and curriculum designers make many decisions about what to include in students’ education, and how the learning can best take place. This study indicated that the combination of pressure to complete required curriculum and the lack of a required environmental studies curriculum for BC elementary schools tends to discourage teachers from including Environmental Studies in their teaching. Although the handbooks developed to go with the Artist Response program are available to help them combine environmental studies with required subjects, many teachers have not used this resource.

To increase the program’s value to students, Holly and Kevin consult with school representatives before the program begins. They tailor the songs to the age of children and the special focus of the school at that time. Students can exhibit new and previously unrecognized strengths as a result of their involvement in this kind of program, using capabilities that are sometimes overlooked in a school setting.

Curriculum Pressure: Curriculum Gap

Several of the teachers interviewed referred to the pressure they and other teachers felt at times to cover the basic curriculum that the law mandates. Teacher 4 commented:

You could put it in, like I did, with Science; it’s part of being socially responsible. You could certainly justify having all kinds of things to do with the environment. But a lot of times it is hard; people are trying to get through the basic curriculum and sometimes they just don’t feel like they have the extra time to do it (Appendix C, p.114).
Teacher 3 said: “You have all these obligations, because it’s a critical time [January]. In March, you have to have your report cards, and you have to have these measurable objectives” (Appendix C, p.106).

In the absence of a specified environmental studies curriculum for BC Elementary Schools, the onus falls on individual teachers to combine environmental studies with other subjects, explained Teacher 3 (Appendix C, p.109). So teachers who take part in a program like the Artist Response Program often look for ways to integrate it into other areas of the elementary curriculum (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p.98; Teacher 3, Appendix C, p. 106). The curriculum developer/retired principal said she got involved in helping to create handbooks when she realized that some teachers at her school could use help integrating material from the program into the curriculum. She said she hoped that suggestions for using program material would reduce resentment from some teachers who saw the program as a burdensome “add-on” (Appendix C, p.74). As she explains:

The Ministry’s Green Schools website (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/) provides links to excellent resources and encourages educators to integrate environmental concepts with instruction in each subject area. As these references are have the status of guides only, and are therefore not mandated, teachers are often inclined to think of environmental education as an “add-on” rather than an integral aspect of their work as educators (curriculum developer, personal communication, July 27, 2010).

The “Voices of Nature” programs and educators’ handbooks developed by Holly Artnzen and the Artist Response Team (ART) are one means of addressing this dilemma; these materials were designed to illustrate how students’ awareness, understanding, and desire to take action can be fostered through music and songs (curriculum developer/retired principal, personal communication, July 27, 2010).
She also wanted to give the teachers a tool to use after the artist had left the school (curriculum developer/retired principal, Appendix C, p.75).

**Teacher Handbooks**

According to Holly, her program is ideal for “project-based, cross-curricular learning and it can “enliven studies” in many different subjects (Appendix C, p.117). She and Kevin, along with the curriculum developer/retired principal and other contributors, spent many hours developing teacher handbooks that spark new ideas and projects, and help teachers integrate program material into the curriculum (curriculum developer/retired principal, Appendix C, p.79). The handbooks were called: “Salish Sea” (108 pages) and “Life Cycle/Recycle” (276 pages, plus a 2 page “bookmark” with suggestions for using the program and the handbook). Both handbooks contain song lyrics, high quality black and white illustrations, information about biology, suggestions for music and movement, and a CD. Later, the handbooks were translated into French, and subsequently the BC Ministry of Education recommended them provincially for use in schools (Holly, Appendix C, p.121). The handbooks were rated as suitable for use for all grades, from Kindergarten to Grade 7; they were the only resources to achieve this wide applicability rating (Holly, Appendix C, p. 121).

Some teachers reported that they use the handbooks (Teacher 4, Appendix C, p. 114; Teacher 1, Appendix C, p.101). Principal 2 said that teachers at his school had expressed interest in finding ideas in the handbooks after the concert was over (Appendix C, p.88). He added that Holly had met with his staff after the introductory concert to explain how the program could be integrated into the curriculum, and that the teachers were “very keen” (Appendix C, p.88). But some stated that while the program was in
progress at their school, they had not received enough short introductory (1 page) information (Teacher 3, Appendix C, pp. 106, 108). Teacher 4 said she thought that established routine played a role in whether teachers used the handbooks at her school:

> I did [use the handbooks], and I know of another teacher that did, but I think most of them did not. There’s just so much going on at schools, and there’s a lot of competition… not competition, but there are so many resources already that it’s sometimes hard for people to get out of what they’re already using and try new things (Appendix C, p.114).

**Selecting Songs**

Before the program begins at a school, Holly works with contact persons (teachers and volunteers) to select the songs that the various groups of children will sing (Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.112). When they have decided on the songs, Holly makes a CD containing only those songs so that classes at the school can practice them (Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.113). According to Teacher 4: “She’s very flexible; they really do what they can to make it work for your school” (Appendix C, p.115). Holly explained that when she works with a school, she asks about their areas of focus. ‘Are you doing composting, are you studying First Nations? What are you up to?’ Then we choose songs to support whatever they’ve got going on”, she said (Appendix C, p.124).

Sometimes they tailor the songs to the community setting or events; sometimes they’ll include different languages, such as French at a French Immersion school or Punjabi at a school with a large Asian population (Appendix C, p.125). When they have just created a new CD, they tend to include some of the new songs if that is agreeable to that particular school (Holly, Appendix C, p.124).

In elementary schools, there is a wide age-related difference in the musical tastes of students. Some of Holly and Kevin’s songs are specifically designed for five and six-
year-old children, and feature repetition, echo singing, and actions. Simplicity characterizes some of the songs, while others are more complicated but with difficult concepts paced at a rate at which small children can digest them. According to Holly: “Young children can sing a very adult song, like say, ‘Saltwater’, but they get it because of how the ideas are strung together. It goes by slow enough, and there are images there that they can latch onto” (Appendix C, p.125). She said the older children are more likely to join in when singing up-to-date, edgy songs. “For the 11, 12, and 13-year-olds, we choose the coolest, rockiest songs we can, because they won’t sing stuff that’s not cool” (Appendix C, p.125). Between those two age groups, children like many kinds of songs, and will “embrace them”, she said (Appendix C, p.125).

**Older Children**

The participation of the older children in this program varied with the school and with the community. One influence appeared to be early training. Principal 2, who is a music specialist experienced in teaching school choirs, related how there had not been much music taught at his school when he first arrived. He said that: “When I would first sing with the older kids, especially the Grade 6 and 7 boys, they kind of looked at me like [they thought] ‘Who are you, and what are you doing?’” (Appendix C, p.87) He subsequently taught choir to all the children at the school for several years. As a result, during practices for this program, he said he was pleased with the universal participation and tuneful singing of his students. “I thought: ‘Wow…we’ve come a long way in four years!’ And they were all singing, right down to the last Grade 7 boy…and they were really enjoying the music”, he said (Appendix C, p.87).
Teacher 1 said that at her school in the BC Interior: “It was a bit tougher for the Grade Sixes and Sevens to buy into it” (Appendix C, p. 97), and that many did not come to the final concert. She reported that: “It wasn’t the best avenue for the older children because, at that point, they’ve already got their ideas pretty solid in their head, and they need something a little bit more…exciting, and engaging at their level” (Appendix C, p.98). She also noticed that the school lacked: ”an environmental focus and a strong music program” (Appendix C, p.95). She also said that, in general, attitudes towards the environment in her new community (she’d lived in Kelowna for 2 years) were very different from those in Victoria, where she’d lived previously (Appendix C, p.100).

Multi-ethnic Schools

At some schools in multi-ethnic Vancouver, an “environmental focus” is beginning to emerge. Principal 2 said that as well as teaching students he was hoping the program would reach multicultural parents, many of whom did not speak much English, through the songs their children were singing:

A lot of our kids are born here in this country, and they’re growing up here. They’re first generation here, whereas their parents don’t understand the education system, because they grew up in countries all over the world. And so, our kids are having to teach their parents frequently, and this is one area where they can really help. They want to make a difference with greening the world, and recycling, and composting (Appendix C, p.88).

Multiple Intelligences and Fine Arts

An activity like the Artist Response Program gives students an opportunity for learning that differs from the usual “reading, writing, and arithmetic” of many school offerings. Teacher 3 said she noticed that with “all that shaking and movement and expression, and so on… it’s like permission to shine” for some students (Appendix C, p.108). She thought the program had brought different kinds of learning into the school
that brought responses from many students. However, a few students “shut down” and appeared to be “confounded by the whole thing” (Appendix C, p.105). Principal 2 commented that a group of students, who were not know as highly academic, had happily spent many out of class hours creating the colorful artworks that decorated the school gym for the concert (Appendix C, p.89). He said that, in general, the Fine Arts make an important contribution to what children remember of their schooling. “The Fine Arts are hugely important,” he said. “It’s stuff like that the kids remember; it’s not the amazing math lesson you did in the morning, or the fabulous project you did on whatever in Social Studies or Science” (Appendix C, p.92). Many students from his school do not get exposed to Fine Arts, so he brings a variety of artists to the school every year (Appendix C, p.92). The curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed for this study said that Fine Arts tend to be minimized in schools. “Music is not viewed – none of the arts have been particularly viewed – by government or by the general populace as being fundamental to learning in schools,” she said. “‘Important’, some will say, but ‘not fundamental’” (Appendix C, p.75).

“It’s often considered a frill when cuts come,” she explained. “It’s one of the first things to be cut” (Appendix C, p.75).

However, the music does enliven the children who participate in the Artist Response program. Holly said she feels inspired when she observes the response to music in the students she teaches. She reported that: “The other thing that really inspires me about it is over the years I’ve learned how much there is in a child’s being and in their eyes when they’re excited and they’re singing and they’re happy to see you” (Appendix C, p.124).
Participants’ Perceptions of “Deep Learning” and the Artist Response Program

What are the most important things for students to learn at elementary school? As a public educator, the curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed for this study said that she had four goals for her students. These goals were:

Students need to learn to think critically, 2) they need to be able to communicate effectively… in many kinds of language, including the languages of math, science, social studies, music, the visual arts, and dance. 3) They need to be able to care really deeply and 4) be able to act wisely. It’s the ‘act wisely’ part that is often missing. It’s that application piece. So you’ve learned it in school; so what? What are you going to do now?” (Appendix C, p.80)

When they learn about the environment, with the handbooks she helped develop, she wants students to examine “big questions” such as: “how many species share a cycle of life with humans?” (Appendix C, p. 83), “[what] processes make the world go round?” (Appendix C, p.83) and “some of the bigger notions related to sense of place” (Appendix C, p.79). She considers environmental issues to be critical. “There’s urgency,” she said. “You can’t just do nothing” (Appendix C, p.80).

The curriculum developer/retired principal said that the Artist Response Program contributes “deep learning” (Appendix C, pp.76, 85) that stays with children. She said that, in her opinion, this program represents a new way to look at all subjects in schools. “It’s a new way of coming at the general curriculum and a new way of thinking about music and what music can do (Appendix C, p.85),” she said. “It’s not music teaching for music’s sake, although music is pretty wonderful, but a new entry point for accessing all other curricular outcomes, and looking at music in a new way” (Appendix C, p.84). She explained that music can deepen learning because it helps people to remember, and they may reflect on a song years later and still learn from it (Appendix C, p.85).
Holly, herself, says that her program “brings dimensions of community, of social context to what you are studying” (Appendix C, p.117). For example, she said,

> It could be Math activities [that a class is studying,] when they learn that recycling an aluminum pop can can save enough energy to run a television for three hours. If you take that as a Math activity and extrapolate how many hours of saved energy your class will achieve if everybody there recycles a pop can a day for the school year, it creates a context for learning Math (Appendix C, p.117).

Holly also points out that her program can fulfill curriculum requirements for Fine Arts (Appendix C, p.118).

The Researcher Reflects

Interviewing the curriculum developer/retired principal has caused me to see the possibilities of elementary school education in a new way. Previously, I had thought its job was to introduce and reinforce basic skills, social competence, and citizenship. But she talked of her concern for what knowledge children would actually construct and use in years to come, and how important it was to enrich their lives in meaningful ways. She thought about the experiences, such as painting fish symbols next to storm drains, which children would always remember. She recalled how students from her former school kept the CD from the Artist Response Program that listed their names, and how they would be able to pull the CD out to show their own children in years to come.

For long-term learning potential, she said she is interested in the power of stories and sees a parallel in songs, as something from which you can obtain repeated learning, and that is individual, yet portable. I told her of how an aboriginal elder had shared an illuminating insight with our cohort during the Royal Roads University residency last summer. He said that when the elders told them stories (for learning about life) they did
not necessarily understand them at the time. But sometimes they would understand them years later. These concepts about the permanency of some kinds of learning are much deeper than my previous understanding of education, and they give me goose bumps.

**Summary of the Findings**

An environmental music program, such as the Artist Response Program, that involves many rehearsals at school followed by a stage performance with professional musicians, has the potential to stimulate environmental concern. This study was not able to quantify the resulting concern because it was based on interviews with education professionals who had not measured those results after experiencing the program. However, some of the professionals interviewed believed that the program resulted in deep learning for students that they would remember for many years. They suggested that the program encouraged students to examine big questions about the environment and that it allowed them, as teachers, to approach curriculum in a new way that included context. The researcher suggests that the program capitalizes on the power of music to express feelings, to promote memories, and to nurture a sense of community. By appealing to multiple intelligences, the program involves kinds of learning that are not always offered in schools, and this experiential variety brings out previously unknown strengths in students.

In the absence of a required Environmental Studies curriculum, and with many other mandatory curricular obligations, teachers spoke of difficulty including environmental topics with what they teach. Although handbooks to help teachers approach environmental topics are available for the Artist Response Program, teachers did not always use them. Teachers from different schools, and from different areas of the
province, discussed the varied “environmental focus” of their communities, and perceived that these differences affected how each school responded to the program.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

Summary of the Study

The study consisted of six, semi-structured interviews. I interviewed environmental musician Holly Arntzen and five teachers and school administrators who had been involved with the Artist Response program. The songs used by the Artist Response Team communicate both concepts and emotions, and the teachers commented that the emotional aspect created an impact on audiences, and therefore might influence the behavior of adults. Educators also perceived Holly and Kevin as positive role models for the students. Teachers said the music they sing is “upbeat”, “catchy”, and would “appeal to young and old”. As referenced in the literature search (Sacks, 2007, pp. 217, 258), music helps memory, and it can be recalled later to deepen learning. It also helps to nurture community feeling. Although long-term effects were difficult to quantify, this program worked well as one of a number of environmental initiatives taken at schools, according to teachers. The Artist Response program gives students a chance to employ multiple intelligences, such as musical, spatial/body, and interpersonal intelligences, and teachers perceived that the Fine Arts provide them with memorable experiences. One participant spoke feelingly of the deep learning that stays with her students (Appendix C, p.85).

Although there were a few concerns, the program had mainly positive reviews from the teachers interviewed. One of the concerns is that, although teacher involvement is necessary for the program, some teachers were not enthusiastic. Also of concern to
some schools is the cost of the program. Occasionally, teachers have been offended by some of the lyrics and actions in certain songs.

Educators in the study perceived that, in the absence of a required BC elementary Environmental Studies curriculum (Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.114), many teachers did not find time to incorporate environmental studies in their classrooms. Another finding was that the two teacher handbooks, created by the Artist Response program, that have been accepted by the Ministry for use as resources in schools, are frequently left unused by teachers who are too rushed to digest them. This finding supports a legitimate need for further research.

This study involves interviews with six education professionals to obtain their insights about the effectiveness of the Artist Response environmental music program for elementary schools in impacting students’ environmental concern. The type of program studied involves extensive rehearsal of students with teachers and then with musicians, culminating in a stage performance with professional musicians. In light of being unable to interview students, this study has focused on the perceptions of the six participant educators, as well as the researcher’s own observations and reflections. The participants’ expressed opinions of the program’s effectiveness is conveyed by its perceived emotional impact on students, by the role models it can provide, and by songs and environmental messages that students seem to remember long after the program ends. As the observational narratives, comments by interviewed teachers, and their own interviews show, Holly and Kevin pay close attention to the quality of students’ educational and emotional experience as the program unfolds. Their rehearsals with the students are tightly organized, well planned, and fun, and they treat the children with firmness and
respect. Holly and Kevin’s songs have the potential to motivate singers and listeners to act to protect the environment. The lyrics plead a strong case for nature, and the emotion in their music engages the listener. In his interview, Principal 2 comments on the emotional content of Holly’s songs and how it may motivate people to take action on environmental issues (Appendix C, p.90). The literature supports his view that music influences emotion and motivation\(^1\)

In the final concert of the program at each school, the students make a persuasive pitch to their adult audience about the need for environmental preservation. Children can be effective catalysts for the environmental education of adults. Several of the education professionals note in their interviews that the children’s singing touched the emotions of their audiences (Teacher 1, Appendix C, p.99; Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.116). Holly says that when children sang her songs, they were able to influence the adults in their audience, who would listen with interest to the environmental messages (Appendix C, p.120). She says that her team attracted government sponsorship on that basis (Appendix C p.120).

Vaughan et al. (2003) in their study of school students’ learning about conservation of the Scarlet Macaw, showed that, through intergenerational and intercommunity learning, there was an increase in community commitment (of parents and neighbors) to conserve the macaw (p. 18). Duval and Zint (2007), in their review of the effect of students’ environmental education programs on intergenerational learning, say there is a capability and a need for children to influence their parents in this way

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They suggest that for best results adults should be actively involved in the activities and that there should be long-term follow-up to reinforce the changes in attitude. Unfortunately, in their review, they did not include the possible effect of music on intergenerational transfer. Several educational professionals indicated that the children’s singing had an influence on their parents, although this was not substantiated as I was unable to interview students or parents.

Music and the other Fine Arts are currently underutilized as a means to bring public attention to environmental issues. Canadian writer Margaret Attwood (2010) says that when conservationists ask her for a good way to get their message out to a wide audience, she replies that they should use the arts. Communications consultant Joanne DeVries concurs with this viewpoint. “The Fresh Outlook Foundation uses Community Based Social Marketing. To do that effectively, we have to reach people’s emotions. Nothing does that better than the arts.” (Joanne de Vries, personal communication, Fresh Outlook Foundation’s Reel Change Film Festival, Kelowna, Jan. 29-30).

For the students, the benefits of the Artist Response Program, although not quantified, may include: learning environmental concepts, experiencing the emotion of the songs and of performing in a group, and the positive effect of the role models provided by Holly and Kevin. The songs educate students and their audiences about environmental concepts such as: marine conservation, pollution, deforestation, and species extinction. The program teaches more than facts, however. Several of the teachers, in their interviews, report that their students learned important life lessons from the positive role models provided by Holly and Kevin (Teacher 3, Appendix C, p.108; Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.116). Turner and Freedman (2004, p. 50) cite “exposure to
charismatic environmentalists” as one of a number of important factors that influence people to become environmentally active. The program provides “cool” musicians who sing and talk about environmental issues, thereby acting as role models for the students.

After students participated in the Artist Response program, they remembered some of the songs, and recalled aspects of their experience in preparing for and producing the final performance. Teacher 3 notes that students spontaneously sang the songs (Appendix C, p.106), Teacher 1 says that the primary classes are still singing the songs together a year later (Appendix C, p.100), and Principal 2 meets high school students who still talk about how much they enjoyed the program eight years ago (Appendix C, p.88). I was unable to quantify the long-term effects of the environmental messages in the songs, because the education professionals I interviewed had not tried to measure this with their students. However, teachers indicated that the program worked well in combination with other environmental initiatives at their schools.

And whatever students learned in the program, they are more likely to remember because it was accompanied by music. We more readily remember messages and experiences that we associate with emotion (Sacks, p. 217). Similarly, hearing familiar pieces of music reminds us of the emotion we experienced when we first heard that music (Levitin, pp. 165, 166, 192; Sacks, p. 258). The curriculum developer/ retired principal interviewed for this study comments that songs provide “deep learning” because we remember them long after, and can revisit and reexamine those musical experiences at later times, while recalling the emotions and circumstances we experienced when we first heard the music (Appendix C, p.85). She says she expects that Holly’s songs will provide children with that kind of deep learning. And she mentions that, in her former
role as an elementary school principal, she particularly looked for rich experiences for her students that they would long remember (Appendix C, p.85).

An increase in school spirit is another perceived benefit of the Artist Response Program. Music may help people come together to act, and assist in community building. Teacher 1 noted that she had never seen such community spirit at her school as she saw during the time they had the program (Appendix C, p.99). Holly maintains that her program provides cultural nourishment to communities (Appendix C, p.123). She says working on the program brings the school and parents together “in a joyful way” (Appendix C, p.117). Some authors have described music’s unusual ability to bring a group together. Shrock (2009, p.4) says there is growing evidence that: “music may promote a type of nonverbal togetherness”, helping to increase social cohesion. Sacks (2007, p. 266) writes that a music concert creates “a collective excitement and bonding” and synchronizes the minds and hearts of participants, including those of listeners. Presumably, he is talking about those who like the music.

All the education professionals interviewed reported that the program produced mainly positive long-term effects. These effects included students being “empowered” (Teacher 4, Appendix C, p.116), students spontaneously singing the songs (Teacher 3, Appendix C, p.106), and high school students who still spoke fondly of their participation in a concert 8 years ago (Principal 2, Appendix C, p.88). However, the Artist Response program is not immune from criticism. Difficulties sometimes come from the nature of teacher involvement, the cost of the program, and the ability of some songs to offend some people.
One potential difficulty comes from the need for classroom teachers to provide most of the initial teaching of the songs. Holly consults with schools prior to the beginning of the program to determine which songs they would like to learn. Then teachers spend a number of weeks helping children master the songs. Several teachers report problematic teacher involvement at their schools. The reluctance seems to be partly a result of heavy commitments in other curricular areas. Most of the schools that provided opportunities for teachers to meet the artists before the program began and to hear some of the music, reported good teacher involvement and better satisfaction (Table 1, p.39).

The cost of the program caused concern at some schools, but determined schools found a variety of practical solutions. Another concern involved the nature of the music being used in the program. To reach its diverse audience, the program’s music needs wide appeal. Therefore, rather than “kids music”, the program’s song influences come from forms such as rock, jazz, and folk. However, in a few instances, teachers criticize the lyrics of certain songs (curriculum designer/retired principal Appendix C, p.74; Teacher 3, Appendix C, p.109), or the movements used with a song (Teacher 3, Appendix C, p.109). Another concern centers on the possibility of children being mislead with music and emotion by other, less positive, groups in future.

Teacher discussions about what might provide background for critical thinking, and what might constitute potentially harmful propaganda, could be fruitful and allay some teachers’ fears around “political activism”. Such discussions could weigh the possible benefits of children becoming active participants in the social questions of their day, as compared to the chance of their being misled by negative individuals.
A central finding of this study is that Environmental Studies may be “falling through the cracks” in BC elementary schools. Education professionals are continually faced with the task of deciding how to teach what students will learn at school. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 commented that with considerable pressure to complete an extensive required curriculum, and the lack of a required Environmental Studies curriculum for BC elementary schools, there is a disincentive for teachers to include Environmental Studies in their classrooms (Appendix C, pp.109, 114). Environmental Studies may also be a new subject for many teachers, so they may need help to approach it.

However, this study indicates that despite the availability of optional materials for Environmental Studies, teachers may not use them. Those schools which have hosted the Artist Response Program usually have the handbooks that help teachers combine Environmental Studies with other subjects, and provide ideas that can continue the learning the artist has initiated, but often teachers feel too rushed to consult them. The handbooks are provincially recommended for use in schools, which is a substantial feat in itself. One of the handbooks’ professional contributors was the curriculum developer/retired principal interviewed for this study. She states that the handbooks’ writers aimed to help students explore “big questions” such as: “how many species share a cycle of life with humans?” (Appendix C, p.83), “[what] processes make the world go round? (Appendix C, p.83) and “some of the bigger notions related to sense of place” (Appendix C, pp. 79, 80). The handbooks can help teachers incorporate Environmental Studies with curriculum materials, but only if teachers can find the time to consult them. Similarly, the B.C. Ministry of Education online Green Schools homepage http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm.
provides a range of optional information on integrating Environmental Studies with other areas of curriculum.

Comments made by teachers in this study indicate that the participation of the older children depends on song appeal, what kind of music program has been in place at the school, and community attitudes. The program works best if students like the songs, are used to singing, and are nurtured by positive community attitudes. In order to appeal to the children, the program’s songs must be age-appropriate. Choosing the right songs, particularly for the youngest and the oldest students, is crucial to the program. Holly and Kevin first work with a teacher or volunteer from the school to determine what themes they would like. Then they pick from their store of primary songs for the younger students. These songs feature repetition, echo singing, actions, and concepts presented at a slower pace. For the older children, they pick from some “cool”, “rocking” songs. Principal 2 has been teaching choir to all the children at his school for the past four years, and he reported very full participation by the older children (Appendix C, p.87).

Several teachers commented that community attitudes towards the environment may enhance or limit the effectiveness of the program for some students and their families. Teacher 1 said she is teaching at a school in the BC Interior at which there is no music program unless initiated by individual teachers, and in a community that “lacks environmental focus”. The older children at Teacher 1’s school had poor participation in the concert. It is likely, according to Teacher 1, that the older children are already establishing their own ideas, and that these ideas may accord with their community’s environmental outlook.
The Artist Response Program gives students the opportunity to exercise multiple intelligences. Rehearsing the songs requires students to use some capacities that they may have rarely explored. According to Gardner (1983, p. 356), individual cultures concentrate on the intelligences that are most important to them. Western education has traditionally emphasized linguistic, logical-mathematical, and intra-personal intelligences, while minimizing the other intelligences. Teacher 3 comments that the Artist Response program had allowed students to explore some different kinds of learning, and given some the chance to show new strengths. Principal 2 comments that the Fine Arts students encountered in school make some of the most memorable lessons (Appendix C, p.92).

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is currently encouraging Canadian schools to include the arts and creativity in school programs (Canadian Commission for UNESCO homepage, 2010). One of the benefits it expects is that dialogue based on the arts will increase understanding between different cultures. In B.C., the Kindergarten to Grade 7 Fine Arts Curriculum states that: “Fine Arts instruction is crucial for the educational growth of all students.” (p. 1) and is required at every grade level. When education is broadened to include the Fine Arts in an activity such as the Artist Response program, schooling appears to be enriched in many ways. Holly says her songs help provide context to what students are learning in many subjects (Appendix C, p.117).

The Artist Response program contributes a novel approach, which may yield better results, which according to the curriculum developer/retired principal, represents a fresh way to look at all subjects in schools. She says: “It’s a new way of coming at the
general curriculum and a new way of thinking about music and what music can do” (Appendix C, p.85). And she adds: “It’s a new entry point for accessing all other curricular outcomes” (Appendix C, p.84). Participants in the research perceive that the innovative program utilizes the special properties of music to intensify learning in a variety of school subjects, and to expand their awareness of, and their concern for, the environment.

The study has implications for curriculum development in schools, for ways to increase the benefits that schools get from the Artist Response program, and for the use of children’s singing to promote environmental messages.

Implications for Curriculum Development

Rational and Emotional Decision-making

In her interview, the curriculum developer/retired principal listed her goals for education as enabling children to: think critically, express their ideas in a variety of forms, care deeply, and act wisely (Appendix C, p.80). Her goals are supported by recent research on the way people make decisions (Lehrer, 2009, pp. 56, 107). The best decision-makers are able to choose wisely which of their emotional inputs to use and which to discard, and know when using rational thought would be beneficial. This concept contradicts the idea that Western civilization held for centuries, that rational thought was superior to emotional feeling and intuition, and that therefore emotions should be subordinated to reason (Lehrer, 2009, p. 13).

Even now, some members of the public advocate a return to “the basics”, which exclusively deal with rational and quantifiable skills such as those needed for reading,
writing, and arithmetic. They would make the case that educational institutions do not have the time or money to do anything else. But students who are being educated today will need to be prepared to consider and act on serious social dilemmas such as pressing environmental issues, for which strictly rational thought is not an adequate preparation. They will need to weigh emotional responses and act wisely as a community. Activities such as the Artist Response program that engage emotions and raise environmental issues, allow students to practice an emotionally-engaged decision-making process (see Literature Review, p. 17). As the BC Ministry of Education Green Schools website, 2010 http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustcoursecontent.htm states: “An aesthetic appreciation, along with a scientific understanding of nature, encourages students to learn and act to protect and sustain the environment.”

Decision-making and Reflection Over Time

Another factor in decision-making is the ability to reflect on challenging concepts over time. We become experts by learning a skill over time (Lehrer, 2009, p. 249). In their interviews, both the curriculum developer/retired principal and Principal 2 stated that they consider memorable experiences to be an important facet of education at school. Aboriginal elder, Steve Charleson, told Royal Roads University students (personal communication, July 22, 2009) that when his elders told stories and legends, they let the listeners figure out for themselves what the message was. Sometimes, he said, the listeners would finally understand many years later. People remember songs, music, and stories for years, and have the opportunity to keep learning from their messages. More of these forms of learning in the classroom may increase long-term reflection and wisdom.
The Need for an Environmental BC Curriculum

According to Teacher 3 and Teacher 4, there is no required BC elementary school Environmental Studies curriculum (Appendix C, pp.109, 114). Teachers claim that this lack, combined with the pressure of meeting numerous other curricular requirements, acts as a disincentive for teachers to include environmental studies in their classrooms (Appendix C, pp.109, 114). It can be argued that an Environmental Studies curriculum is needed to help students prepare for the environmental challenges of the future. Teachers might also benefit from workshops that help them integrate Environmental Studies with other subjects. The two handbooks already provided by the Artist Response program could provide a model for these workshops. These handbooks could be supplemented by one-page sample lesson plans for each grade level, with appropriate references to the handbooks where more information is available.

Maximizing ART Benefits: Teacher involvement

Schools can maximize the benefits of the Artist Response program by implementing a few simple measures. It is clear from the study that meeting Holly and Kevin before the program began increased teacher involvement (Table 1, p.39), which is a key factor in the success of this program. As this is more difficult to achieve in communities to which the team must travel for some distance, perhaps Holly and Kevin could consider producing a DVD for teachers, explaining the benefits of the program, outlining how it works, and singing some sample songs. Some teachers were unhappy about certain lyrics and movements in the “rocking” songs, even questioning how these songs might encourage “political activism”. Teachers might enjoy debating the topic: “what influences constitute undue or harmful pressure on children” among themselves, as
a useful form of professional development. Schools could capitalize on the community spirit generated by the program by instituting follow-up activities involving the community. A one-page list of suggested activities might nudge schools to make use of the concert momentum.

**Children’s Singing as a Vehicle for Environmental Messages**

The appeal of children who sing about counting on the adults for their environmental futures is an under-used resource for delivering environmental messages. Holly noted that she and Kevin had successfully obtained government funding for her program when government officials realized that its messages were attracting adult audiences (Holly, Appendix C, p.120). Perhaps Holly and Kevin could advertise this success to other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Artist Response team program provides an example of the wider potential of the Fine Arts to engage people of all ages on environmental issues. According to researchers, the rational part of our brains becomes overloaded if we try to consciously analyze complex issues (Lehrer, 2009, p.160). However, the emotional parts of our brains can handle enormous amounts of information very quickly (Lehrer, 2009, p.248). The rational portion of the brain can then analyze the inputs from the emotional portions and decide what is worth attending to (Lehrer, 2009, p.111). My conjecture is that the way our brains operate makes the Fine Arts a particularly effective vehicle for presenting complex information, for example, on environmental issues.

The scope of this study could have been enlarged by more input from parents whose children participated in the program. Originally, I had planned to interview parents, but it proved to be impractical because teachers were not comfortable to give
parents’ names to a researcher. Parents would have added information about their own long-term reactions, and those of their children. Further research on this topic could include interviews or questionnaires a year or more after the program finished to better determine its long-term effects. Interviewing students would also add more depth to the study. In addition it would be useful to study the length of time that people remembered the songs and whether they reexamined them and used the messages later. More research on the effect of children’s singing on adults is also needed. The scope of the study would also have been enlarged if students had been interviewed. The process of getting permission to research children is so complex and time-consuming that student interviews were beyond the scope of this thesis.

This research illuminates an innovative approach for learning across the curriculum in many different subjects (curriculum developer/retired principal, Appendix C, pp. 84, 85). This mode of learning generates excitement, helps students remember, encourages community feeling, empowers children to influence the attitudes of adults, and puts learning into a socially and environmentally valuable context.

While completing this study, I learned much more about curriculum and its place in schools than I had known previously. I realized that it is both a legal guide and an important tool for teachers. I also deepened my understanding about how our brains work in relation to music and to decision-making. And watching Holly and Kevin work with students was inspirational.

*Music is the most direct and mysterious way of conveying and evoking feeling. It is a way of connecting one consciousness to another.*

*Oliver Sacks, Columbia University, “Musicophilia” (Knopf, 2007) (as cited in Schrock, 2009)*
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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for Teachers

Please tell about your experiences as a teacher involved when Holly’s program came to your school.

How did the program fit into the school curriculum?

What kind of work and preparation went on behind the scenes?

Does it Work? (Results)

1. how effective a tool was this kind of music program for environmental education?

2. did the program increase environmental empathy and action among students, teachers, and parents?

3. what was the evidence of lasting effects?

Perspectives (Discussion)

1. what would you say are the pros and cons of this type of program?

2. how important is it for the music being appealing (if it is to be remembered)?

In the End (Conclusion):

1. is the program worth having? Under what circumstances is it worthwhile?

2. what would it take to repeat this program at another school or another place?
Appendix B: Sample Song Lyrics

I AM THE FUTURE  Holly Arntzen/Kevin Wright ©2008

VERSE 1
When you think of the distant future
Do you see anything at all?
Will the planet keep on spinning
Or will it fall?

Looking at the constellations
That come back every night
Fourteen billion years of
Evolution in sight

CHORUS
I… I am
I am the future, I’m the new
We… we are
We are the future and we’re counting on you

VERSE 2
You can hear it in the forest falling
And in the songbirds’ song
And in these voices calling
“Don’t take too long”

Do you think of what I’ll be doing
After you have left this earth?
Picking up the pieces
You got to first

CHORUS

BRIDGE
I am stardust
I’m a living, breathing galaxy
With every second, thought, word and deed
The future comes true in me

CHORUS
Appendix C: Interviews with Six Education Professionals

Interview (1) with Curriculum Developer/Former Principal

*So, I was wondering if you could tell the story of how you got involved with Holly.*

I could. I met Holly at a garden party, just the summer before the year 2000. She was singing, and we got into a game at the party of naming the most important song as we moved into the next century. I said, “The most important song is ‘Imagine’”, and somebody else said, “Oh, how trite!” Holly said, “I don’t think that’s trite.” And she sang, and I thought, “I have a friend.”

The party was hosted by a principal at the school where Holly did the first Artist in Residence session.

*The first one ever?*

“Yes, at School C.”

*What year would that be?*

That would have been 1999, I think. And so, I talked with my friend about how it had gone, how they had paid for it, and what was required of staff. And I talked with Holly about that, and invited her to come to the school to meet with our Parent Advisory Council.

*Could you remind me which school that was that you were at?*

School D.

*In Victoria, right?*

On Vancouver Island, the same as School C.

So she came to the Parent Advisory Council, and we pitched the idea together. But I think what really sold it to them was her singing “Skin Drum”. Have you heard her sing that? It’s a beautiful song, where she sings *a cappella*. Essentially it’s a song that asks people – it’s a call to action. The first words are: “Are you ready to bang the skin drum?” And then she uses her chest as the percussion instrument. It’s very, very moving. And on that basis the parents said: “Yes, go for it.”

We had no idea, really, how we could make this pay because artists have to be paid for their work. We got some money from the Parent Advisory Council, and then
began to think about the concert, and a small charge to families that could afford it. By
donation some people gave much more. In the end, we had money left over after the
artists had been paid and gone their way.

The children had a copy of the “Salish Sea” CD; each one of them had a copy.
And all of them had their names printed in the little booklet along with the lyrics, so it
was a very significant momento for them. As a result of going through that experience -
there were many tense moments because, as you and I were talking earlier, emotion is
involved and as a school principal, working with a staff, and where there are curricular
obligations, there is often resistance to anything that seems like it’s an add-on. We
already have to do this, and this, and this, and NOW, you’re asking us to do this? And so
that was one piece of resistance that needed to be worked with, helping people to see how
what Holly was doing actually fit with prescribed learning outcomes for not only music,
but could be connected with the visual arts, could be connected with their science, could
be connected with social studies, language arts, and even mathematics.

So there was a curriculum element right from the beginning?

Well, it had to be there because the teachers weren’t going to do it if they thought
it was an add-on.

So interesting...

That was a first line of resistance. A second line of resistance came when the
Holly and Kevin worked with the people at School C; resistance came with ‘Pennies from
Heaven’. There’s a line that says “We’ve got pennies from heaven, sometimes dollars
from hell.” You can figure out what that all means, but sometimes teachers are really
conservative people, and they don’t want to get in trouble for having kids sing the word
“hell”, or to get involved with the complex issues around - the money from the tar sands
are “dollars from hell”, you know, they’re not bringing good news to this country. And
so, the choice of songs that kids were going to sing became problematic. I think School
C also had trouble with ‘Away in a River’, which is a beautiful re-write of ‘Away in a
Manger’; it’s about a salmon away in a river. And of course you get resistance again.
Anything that looks like it may bring up religious undertones is problematic for some
teachers.
So for us, there was resistance there. So we had lots and lots of conversation, staff and I, but also Holly, Steven, and I, about how we were going to move this forward. And then, after the success of the concert, the kids had their wonderful CD, and their name in the jacket, I began to worry, the same as I have with other residencies, about what happens when the artist leaves. Because, really, the teachers did not become better music teachers as a result of the experience. They actually depended upon Holly to be the music teacher. And so it didn’t really build their skills as music teachers. It certainly affected how they looked at music made by professional musicians could be used in the classroom and some people were more successful at that than others. But when the artist goes away, there needs to be something for the teachers to use, with the CD. So that’s when we decided to begin writing the manual.

*What would you say the teachers viewed the professional musicians’ role in this; did they see it as a successful thing?*

Oh, absolutely. I think they saw it as a contracting out of services, quite frankly. It got them off the hook. When people train as elementary teachers, they are generalists. Typically, people do a unit and a half of music teaching. Music is not viewed – none of the arts have been particularly viewed by government or by the general populace as being fundamental to learning in schools. “Important”, some will say, but not fundamental. It’s often considered a frill when cuts come. It’s one of the first things to be cut.

*Did teachers’ attitudes towards music in the school change at all, after seeing this?*

For some. Some had a very positive attitude to begin, and in terms of curriculum implementation or innovation, change, they’re always called the “early adopters”. So they were already using other people’s music rather successfully in their classes, and it was just reinforced for them that this was a good thing to do. It allowed them new ways to extend it to other curricular areas. A couple of people actually “came over”, so to speak, in that they saw the value (they had fussed a bit at first about why are we having to do this, and what difference will it make?). When they began to see kids singing the songs in the hallway – they weren’t singing the other songs they were learning in the hallway but they were singing Holly’s songs – and when they saw some of the writing that the kids did as a result of learning about the songs – again, you and I talked earlier
about the shift from teaching where it’s talking and telling to actually learning… Once those people were able to focus on what it was the kids were learning, and the depth of their learning, then they jumped on board, so to speak.

*Were there some that never really adopted it?*

Yes, and there will always be those people in schools. It’s sad, but they see their role as defined, in very literal terms, by the government curriculum and don’t see ways of departing from that, yet still meeting the objectives.

**Interview (2) with Curriculum Developer/Former Principal**

*A portion of this interview is missing here, due to technical problems.*

The writing has followed on the heels of the Pope making apology; you know, it’s out there, and the public don’t …

*So The Blue Planet touched it off, did it?*

Yes. It certainly did, and anyhow one of our braver teachers said: “Our class will take that song on, and we’ll study about the way it has to be sung.” That was the one that touched it off for us.

*So how did it go when you had Holly run her program? I was interested in the story of how it went for your school, what the results were…*

Well, it was excellent. What happened was Holly sent lyrics; she sent the music ahead of time. Teachers had a chance to have a look at all of that. Then she came, and essentially did demonstration lessons with the kids. So the teachers were in the classroom with the kids, helping with the management part. And the teachers could use the CD and the lyrics, which they had to practice with until Holly came back next time. In the course of doing that, they were figuring out working with me, and working with each other, figuring out how they could extend the learning of the music, the learning of the lyrics, the meanings of the songs to their other curricular areas. And then when Holly would come back the following week then they would be able to share, and talk and discuss what they had done, and again practice the singing with Holly. So that went on for several weeks before we did the concert at the University of Victoria.

*So you were helping them to find ways to put it in the curriculum?*
Yes.

And it was well received at your school?

Absolutely. Who could not be thrilled by seeing their children on stage at University Center? It’s a beautiful auditorium. And the children with their colored T-shirts. We had to work really hard; we staged a production, really, with a lot of little kids in the evening. We had to have a rehearsal up there the day before.

Was it the whole school?

Yes. Five hundred and twelve kids, and all the teachers, and their family and friends. People from Parks Canada were there as well because part of the initiative related to Salish Sea was to help build public awareness of the need for marine protected areas in the area of the Salish Sea. One of the ways of doing that, Holly and Steven realized, and the people at Parks Canada realized, was by getting people actively involved in singing about the Salish Sea. Have you read the work of David Orr?

Yes, some.

So you understand the notion of “biophilia”? You get to know the place where you are, get to love the place where you live, and then you can care about it, sometimes enough to make sure it’s protected. So the people from Parks Canada had another agenda, a really big and important agenda. I was aware of that; Holly and Steven were aware of that, but the people at school were not. They were in the audience that night too, because when a marine protected area is set up, there are all kinds of people who have vested interest in opposition. Sometimes aboriginal people, sometimes tourist people want to be taking people out to look at the whales. Sometimes commercial fishers, sometimes other people who might otherwise have access if it wasn’t a protected area.

So did these opposition people come to your performance?

No. We were building the positive case, and primarily through awareness, and the need of thinking about our place within the ecosystem. Even though lots of people don’t live right on the sea, sometimes they’ll recognize their connection to the ocean and how important the ocean is.

When they [Parks Canada] were envisioning people singing about the Salish Sea, they probably didn’t just mean children, did they? When they were talking about how
important it was to sing about Salish Sea to get people thing about it, were they only thinking about children?

I think they were thinking about reaching the adults through the children.

OK, did we get the whole story of what happened at your school?

The effect was not a one-year effect; it went on. It went on because people had the CD. It went on because, pretty soon, they had handbooks, and we actually did a workshop at the school after the handbook was produced. Several of the teachers came on a Saturday for the workshop. When you work in a highly unionized environment that isn’t always something people are willing to do, but they did. And I can’t say that it particularly related to this work so much as finding ourselves in a particular time and place, but people began to recycle more consciously. There’s a lot of waste that can come out of a school at the end of a day and a week. And so we started having garbage-free lunch, we started composting in our school garden. We had an interior courtyard garden, which was just a beautiful place. We started composting from that garden. We got bins to separate all of the things that needed to be recycled. Our school did that; some other schools did that too, so I can’t attribute it all to this, but I noticed that paper copying went down, and it can be a significant amount of paper that’s used. People began to become more creative in how they used resources in the school. I always go back to a saying from Joyce Carol Oates, which is: “We cannot NOT know what we know.” What that means is, once I know something, I can’t not know it.

The importance of recycling, for instance?

The importance of recycling, for instance. There was a time, in my lifetime, when everything went in the garbage. I couldn’t possibly put a can in the garbage now. I just couldn’t do it. I couldn’t possibly wash stuff down the storm drain. It just can’t happen anymore. And so, the experience of having Holly work with our students and teachers meant that there were some things they learned that they couldn’t not know anymore, that they couldn’t be ignorant of. Call it “ignorance”, call it “the blind eye”, call it whatever, they couldn’t have that excuse anymore.

How active do you think they were on acting on what they’d learned?

I think some of them became very active. One of the things we did, following that workshop, was that we had what we called the “Salish Sea Festival”. We managed
to get “Salish Sea” [teacher’s guide] published by 2001. We planned the festival in 2000 and 2001, and had the festival at a local park. We had children not only from our school, but from other schools in the area. It was a miserable, rainy day, but a wonderful day because in addition to what was happening on the stage, we had booths set up. The middle school kids who were involved in Stream Keepers projects came with their stream table and their watershed table. We had people creating art, and people from Parks Canada with touch tubs. It was a fabulous experience. I think the whole initiative has been somewhat organic, and somewhat deliberate. Had I ever thought I was going to be involved in a thing called “The Salish Sea Festival”? No. I thought we were going to have an artist-in-residence at the school. Did I think that we were then going to spend a summer, Holly, Steven, and I, in my office at the school with all of the curriculum guides spread out, trying to find the word “ocean” in one of them? The word “ocean” was not there. It was fascinating to all of us.

*Did you mean it was not in the curriculum guides?*

Not in the provincial guides, no. Not for Science.

*Wow!*

Yes, stunning, isn’t it?

*So have they put it in now?*

Oh yes.

*Were you working on the provincial curriculum guides?*

We were using the provincial curriculum to justify teaching these songs, to justify teaching in these ways. So in the “Salish Sea”, for example. there are “selected learning outcomes”. Those come directly from provincial curriculum guides. So they help to make it OK for teachers to do this work. It legitimizes. Think of it this way: this is the destination; this is what kids are supposed to learn. The songs, and the suggested activities are the vehicle for getting to that. So in order to do this work, Holly and Steven and I spent almost every day, that following summer, with the curriculum guides all spread out, trying to make the connections, and then trying to build this document, how it was going to come together. And then we worked with a staff person from the University of Victoria and with an independent person, to add pieces to it, in particular for the staff person to add pieces related to science learning and some of the bigger notions related to
sense of place. And then, with that staff person’s husband, to do all of the illustrations. So it was a fascinating process. And then, working with the people at Parks Canada because they were underwriting the cost of this, to get it through their editors and convince them that they should pay for publication of this, that it would be good for all of us. And then, to get it out there.

*Whose idea was it to make the “Salish Sea” teacher’s guide?*

I think it was a conclusion that Holly and Steven and I came to together. I’ve been through other residencies where we had a painter come. After the painter goes, what do people use? Have a musician come, have somebody else come… I had never been moved before, enough to do something about it.

*What would you say moved you most about Holly and Kevin and what they were doing?*

Well, it’s similar to the conversation you and I had about climate change. There’s urgency. You can’t just do nothing. For a long time I had professed to have four goals as a public educator. I believe that students need to learn to think critically, but if they just think critically, so what? In addition to thinking critically they need to be able to communicate effectively, so that means communicating in many kinds of language, spoken and written English, but also in the language of mathematics, in the language of science and social sciences, in the language of music, in the language of the visual arts and dance. They need to be able to communicate effectively. But just thinking and communicating isn’t enough, either. They need to care really deeply and to be able to act wisely and it’s the “act wisely” part that is often missing. It’s that application piece. So you’ve learned it in school; so what? What are you going to do now? And there were a number of kids and families who stayed connected with this work and with Holly. She would be singing at an event and need some kids to come along and sing with her. She often called upon them and they always responded. That was their opportunity to feel like they were really doing something to make a difference.

**Interview (3) with Curriculum Developer/ Former Principal**

*About action, I think that is so critical. That’s one of the things I’m very interested in with her program. It seems to me that it has a chance of producing change*
because people get involved in lots of ways you might not [normally] get involved, but if you feel something with her music, then you want to do something.

That’s right. That’s right, and if I look at some of the activities, the extension activities at the back, there are all kinds of activities here that can be picked up by anybody, it doesn’t have to be a certified teacher to pick up and promote these kinds of activities. And for that reason, we called it a handbook for educators rather than a handbook for teachers. The parents are kids’ first teachers but grandparents teach kids and Brownie leaders teach kids. So we wanted to write it in such a way that lots of different people can use this material.

Who contributed the ideas for activities?

We all did. It came through hours and hours and hours of conversation. Part of my experience is working two times at the Ministry of Education on curriculum projects.

Was that before this?

Oh yes, once at the beginning of the eighties and again at the end of the eighties and into the nineties. So I have a strong sense of contemporary pedagogy, understanding of pedagogical issues and stumbling blocks, lots of experience of developing provincial curricula, and writing to an audience of people who may be implementing something in my absence, so the book has to stand on its own. I can’t sing, I can’t play an instrument, and I usually have to work with lyrics in print; I don’t have a good auditory memory. Holly has all of those things. Her husband, Stephen, had huge passion and commitment to the idea of action; something had to be done. So [we had] hours of conversation about how something might work. For example, I would say: “Here’s an idea that’s generic enough that it can be used for children of different ages, right up to young people who are working at university. It can be used for little kids, and it can be used by university people.” An example would be something like keeping a nature journal. Everybody can do that, but when keeping a nature journal there are some things that are an important part of that process that need to be described and need to be discussed in terms of why it is important for people of different ages and what will be learned as a result. And so we talked about every single idea, every single word, all of the connections, and how to start and where to stop. Putting together something like that, going through a process like that, is sort of like doing a painting. At some point, you need to stop. We could have gone on
and on and on making connections and connections and generating ideas and ideas and ideas, but at some point you need to say: “It’s done.” And we need to assume intelligence on the part of the users, that they will have ideas of their own, and that we don’t need to say: “Step 1, Step 2, Step 3.” We don’t need to be so prescriptive as to say: “This activity takes an hour and a half and you will need these materials”; you know, that typical kind of lesson planning thing that can happen. So we wanted to spark the ideas, provide some rationale, but stop short of a script, well short of a script, and rely on the intelligence and resources of the users.

So you let them make up their own lessons, using the material?

Yes. There are lots of ways to come at development of curricular materials. I always remember the director of the Curriculum Development Branch once saying to a team of us that he was going to tell us a story about the invention of cake mixes. There was a company that had developed a cake mix where all you did was add water, put it in the [pan], and that was it. It didn’t sell very well. So they had their research and development people come up with a new recipe to which you add water, add an egg, add some oil and other ingredients that you may want to throw in. It sold like mad. Why? Because it left room for the participants; you know, just add water, and that wasn’t going to do it. So he was using that as an analogy to any kind of work that we were doing; there had to be room for the creativity of the user.

Almost like a deadening effect, if you are told exactly what to do all the time?

That’s right. That’s right, it becomes robot-like. Anybody could do it.

I was wondering if you might feel OK about talking about the curriculum and how it fitted in with Holly’s program, especially after you helped her work on it. In what ways does the program fit in with the elementary curriculum?

Well, this one [the “Salish Sea” teacher’s guide], because it was published in 2001 is, in some ways, out of date. What happens is, curriculum is revised all of the time. So the specifics related to the selected learning outcomes may not be exactly worded as they are now in the science curriculum. I think when we did this [teacher’s guide] we just used the science and the music curricula. But at the time it was written, it matched exactly. Of the learning outcomes we selected, and there are thousands of them in these curriculum guides, we didn’t change a word. We used it exactly as it was stated in the
When we got to working on “The Cycle of Life/Recycle”, we used other curricular documents.

_How did you come to work on that one?_

Well, we’d had such success with this one [“Salish Sea”]. It was actually contract work for me. I was not listed as an author, but as a contributor. Much of this one served as a prototype for this. But the work that I did again was in developing activities and doing what’s called “the underwriting”, working on the under structure and checking for pedagogical integrity and identifying specific learning outcomes from existing curriculum documents, and together developing this bookmark which we were very, very happy with because it provided the carry-around piece in terms of how to work with the music and how to understand how we had structured the document.

_Would you say the bookmark was like a summary of “Life Cycle/Recycle”?_

Yes, but it was a summary in relation to process. It’s so easy when people get into these kinds of materials to get lost in the minutia and forget that there’s a big question we’re trying to deal with here. There’s a big issue. Yes, it’s about the learning outcomes, but if we look, for example, at the song “Life Cycle Dance”, the big question in this particular song was “how many species share a cycle of life with humans?” That’s much more than the lyrics or the music; it’s a big question. We worked very hard to develop a synopsis of what the issues are. In this example, celebrating life and its cycles brings to mind our connection to such basic realities as the revolution of the earth around the sun. Celebrations take us into the rhythm of life and help us recognize and remember the significance of life cycles. Having been given the gift of life we are obliged to be respectful of the processes that make the world go round. We all have a responsibility to learn about cycles of life and how they interconnect, how they affect us, and how we affect them.

So, how did I come to be involved in this? I think they needed me, it was contract work, I needed that, and when you get to be involved in work that’s as exciting as this, who could not do it? I wanted to do it. It’s really exciting to have to think like that, and to do so intensely, rubbing brains with each other. That’s exciting, really exciting. Some days were more fun than others. The experience of working through this “Recycle” document was fascinating because we often connected with a biologist from Alberta by
telephone. We would save up our questions and he would help answer in terms of healthy eco-zones, what needed to be included, and how the relationships worked. We were all learning as we were doing this; it was really exciting. And there were more people involved in this.

*And you had some very knowledgeable input.*

We had very knowledgeable input.

*Holly wrote me an email a while ago, and she said that you were the reason that our teacher handbooks both received provincial recommendation from The Ministry.*

It’s true, and I’m not immodest about that. It’s true, because in my career I had two secondments to work on curriculum at the provincial level; the first one for three and a half years, and the second one for four years. And that work has stood some pretty good tests of time and political changes. But the reason that Holly might say that is because there is a process for getting books added to the Ministry of Education recommended list. It’s typically a process that book publishers have to follow. Textbook people want their stuff recommended because then schools can go ahead and buy it.

*And they can’t buy it unless it’s recommended, right?*

Not with public funds. And so I was aware of that process, how it worked, and together with a former superintendent of our school district, and he also used to be an assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Education, I did the work and he did the final check before it went in. There were weeks of work with showing how these materials would enable people working in schools to teach the prescribed curriculum.

*I saw on one of the websites that there are four criteria you have to meet?*

No there are more than four. There are a lot, including social considerations. It’s a really arduous process, and the fact that they [the two teacher guides] are on the recommended list, that’s great! That’s fabulous!

*What new features does Holly’s program bring to the curriculum? Would you say that she had brought something new to what you can do in school?*

I think it’s music as a new entry point. It’s not music teaching for music’s sake, although music is pretty wonderful, but a new entry point for accessing all other curricular outcomes, and looking at music in a new way. She’s not the first person to be singing about social issues, or the first person to be telling a story through music.
Teachers who are astute, and who want to go somewhere with that, can actually do that. They can take their kids in to other people who have done similar things and come up with some pretty good experiences, learning experiences, for their students. I think I’d say that it’s a new way of coming at the general curriculum and a new way of thinking about music and what music can do, and how music can help us remember. One of the teachers on staff at School C said to me one time: “These songs are sort of like a time bomb.” And he said: “I don’t mean to use such an awful metaphor, but the kids learn to sing them and they learn to understand a bit about what they’re singing. But because music stays with us, and we can revisit it later, there’s some really deep learning to be done here.” And he said: ”For example,” and I don’t remember what example he gave, “When I was a little kid I used to sing a song about love. And after the end of my first love, I really began to understand what that song was about. And now that I’m in late middle age, my wife and I have been together for a long time, the song has taken on a whole new meaning.” He said: “That song’s been with me all my life.” I thought that was a really insightful way of thinking about the value of involving children with Holly and these songs.

One of the things that is often difficult, is measuring effects. It’s easy to measure the things that are least important. And that can be done in the short term. But it’s the long-term effect that we believe we were addressing. Some short-term actions, but kids will always remember taking their fish template out and spray-painting on the drains around our school. They’ll always remember that. And likely, they’ll have their CD in their treasure box to pull out when they’re 21, or when they have children of their own, and say: “See, there’s my name there.” Those kinds of things are harder to measure.

Do you have anything you wanted to add?

Only that I’m absolutely delighted that you’re doing this work. I’ve never had to make a living as an artist, but I’ve watched how hard it is, through Holly. There are some pretty dry patches, and there are some unpredictable times. And you have to put yourself out there all the time, looking for work. People are always happy to have a free arts performance, but you know, you have to pay the rent. It’s my hope that your work, your investigation, will help to legitimize the value of what Holly’s doing. Because sometimes, only she, or only she and Stephen, or only she and Stephen and their friends
really believed. Finding sponsors to pay for it, finding people in schools who said: “Yes, we can make this commitment, even though we don’t know what the outcome will be,” has been a huge risk, a huge risk… very, very hard.

**Interview with Principal 2/ Music Specialist (Vancouver)**

*How did you discover the program?*

Well, when I first arrived at School A about eight years ago, there was a fax that had come to my attention. I was vice principal and teaching music at the time, and it was about an invitation to participate in this program. I’d never heard of the program. I was aware of the Arntzen family, and had sung some of their songs – the father’s songs – and it looked interesting. So I picked up the phone, talked to Holly, and I was very excited from what she told me about the program. So then I invited her to come and talk to the staff at school and share the program information with them. And then we rolled it out, eight years ago at School A.

*Could you tell a bit more about what happened at School A … just how you arranged it and how it went?*

School A was a huge school at the time. There were 36 divisions, 850 kids; it was large. So we had to figure out how we would have that many kids involved in the concert. We ended up having to have two concerts with two different choirs because there were so many kids. We ended up with about this many kids [350] in each concert, so about 700 of the 850. We didn’t have any Kindergarteners in the concert, and one or two of the older classes, because I didn’t teach them music, they weren’t part of that concert. I taught all the kids the songs during choir time and they practiced them with their teachers. And then the teachers did an amazing job decorating the gym. Each classroom did an environmental banner; it was quite something.

*Did you teach all the kids choir?*

Almost all, so all the kids I taught choir to were part of that concert.

*Was the choir optional?*

I actually did choir with those kids; I taught them choir for one period a week.

*Did you come to their class?*
No, they came to me, just like I do here. The kids would come to the choir room, so I’d have anywhere from three intermediate classes together, and as many as four or five primary classes together. As I said, there were 36 divisions and I think I had four or five choirs. So not every single class was in choir, but most of the kids in the school were. Whereas, here, every single student is in choir, from Kindergarten to Grade 7.

*Is that something you’ve arranged?*

Yes. When I came to the school I said I’d like to do this; I’ve done it in other schools and it’s been very successful. It’s been very successful here too; the teachers have enjoyed it and the kids are just great, they just love singing.

*Yes, I was curious about how you got those older kids to participate.*

It’s very interesting, because when I first came here, there hadn’t been a lot of music, so they were excited that somebody was coming with a music background. When I would first sing with the older kids, especially the Grade 6 and 7 boys, they kind of looked at me like: “Who are you, and what are you doing?” Last Friday, I finished teaching all the songs for the program, and at that point I was just standing back, listening to them sing the songs; I was no longer singing with them anymore, and I was so impressed with the quality, the tonality of their singing. They knew all the words to the songs, but they were also singing beautifully in tune. I thought “Wow…we’ve come a long way in four years!” And they were all singing, right down to the last Grade 7 boy. They were all standing, and they were all singing, and they were really enjoying the music. The music is just fabulous. They are songs that are meaningful to the kids, they carry a very strong message, and they’re fun; they’re upbeat, they [the kids] just love them.

*What benefits did you see, especially in the long term, with your last school?*

Well, I’ve been in this neighborhood for the last 10 years of my administrative career. I was the vice principal at School A at the time, and then I got a principalship after that, and now I’m back in this school (School B), which used to be the annex to School A. And when I was up at School A as the vice principal, this was an annex to our main school, so I knew the site well. And during my time up there it became a full Kindergarten to Grade 7 school and got renamed “School B” from “School A Annex”. So I’ve been very connected to this community and I bump into these kids when I’m up
at the high school where a lot of kids from School A went, I see them. They’ll come up to me, and the one thing they’ll remember is ‘the Holly Concert’, and singing the songs.

Still? How many years is that?

Still. They’re in Grade 12 now, so those kids would have been in about Grade 2 or 3 at the time, and they still talk about the Holly Concert.

What do they say?

They remember what a wonderful experience it was working with Holly, and learning the songs. We just hope that it’s made a difference to what they practice, how they manage their lives, and helping to guide parents, too. Because a lot of our kids are born here in this country, and they’re growing up here. They’re first generation here, whereas their parents don’t understand the education system, because they grew up in countries all over the world**. And so, our kids are having to teach their parents frequently, and this is one area where they can really help. They want to make a difference with greening the world, and recycling, and composting.

Would you say this program brings more variety in learning?

It certainly does. It’s very engaging because it’s very topical. They know the state of the world. The handbooks are great the teachers are able to take the lessons that are very well developed, and to use those in classrooms. In the lunchroom just today, some of the teachers were saying: “I haven’t had as much time to spend, but after the concert, I’m going to go back to the ‘Salish Sea’ handbook, and go back to the ‘Voices of Nature’ handbook because there are some good lessons in there, that I can integrate.

I interviewed one of the authors of the teachers’ handbooks; I think she would be happy to hear that your teachers were keen, because I think she put a lot of work into it, and so did Holly and Kevin.

Yes, the teachers are very keen. That’s one of the reasons Holly wanted to meet with the staff after the introductory concert, was to talk to the teachers about: “Yes, we’re doing a concert, and the songs are about the environment, but it’s what you can do with

** One of the School B intermediate choirs made a list of the countries their parents came from: India, Fiji, Malaysia, Phillipines, Canada, China, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Granada, Vietnam, Pakistan, Afghanistan, England, USA, Libya.
those songs in your classrooms through Language Arts programs, through Science, through Social Studies, that we can make a difference.” This school had a Special Education assistant who ran a program, under the auspices of Jane Goodall, called “Roots and Shoots”. It’s an environmental program as well, and the woman who ran it is no longer here, but she had a huge group of kids who were so keen about protecting the Earth, and supporting environmental causes. The more kids are exposed to clubs like that, to lessons in the classroom, and to concerts like this, they’ll make a difference. They’ll spread out. The song says: “I am the Future”. The kids are aware that they are the future, and it’s the parents that are making the choices now, and they can apply some pressure to the parents to make the right choices for them. And some of these kids are very articulate, and they certainly will.

I really do think that a program like this makes a difference to how the kids perceive the world and what they can do. We try to teach the kids that change happens with an individual. Look at what Terry Fox was able to do.

_For some kids, might they need a variety of learning style too? And it’s sometimes harder to supply, because our society likes to do a lot of reading and writing..._

It’s really interesting that you say that, because the one teacher who did the art work had a group of kids work with her, and they stayed after school when we dismissed early. And they stayed after school for an hour and a half on Monday when we decorated the school gym. It wasn’t the top academic kids; it was some of the kids who had Ministry designations for learning disabilities. These kids could really engage in an activity that was very meaningful – the creation of the art and the decoration of the gym. For them it was just wonderful to work and show their talents as artists and musicians. They loved singing the songs and feeling like they really contributed to the program.

**Interview (2) with Principal 2/Music Specialist (Vancouver)**

_I was wondering if you could tell how you feel about young people’s singing inspiring the adults in their lives._

Well, a lot of the parents tell me that the kids come home singing the songs that they are learning in choir. And these songs are very powerful songs, because they have a message, and I think the kids are very good at conveying what that message is to their
parents, and hopefully having them make the right choices when shopping, and then when disposing – the three R’s: reduce, reuse, recycle.

The City of Vancouver runs a program; they have a couple of actors that come to the school twice a year, and they do shows. One is called: “Clean Up Your Act”, another: “The A-Z of H2O”, “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”, and there’s a fourth program. They do two shows a year, and they alternate them for the Primary kids. They’re a wonderful way of engaging the kids in taking care of the environment. There’s one on pollution, there’s one on graffiti… Those are just great programs for the Primary kids. They’ll see them twice in their Primary years, and the kids love them. They’re wonderful actors, very animated, they’re lots of fun, and they sing songs. I’ve taught the kids a song called: “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”, so we usually sing it for the actors, and they like that. It’s those little connections that you make in the day-to-day lives of the kids that eventually make a difference.

*What effect do Fine Arts have in developing decision-making? Does it make a difference when they’re going to decide something that they have a different kind of background?*

So often, we use the Fine Arts, we use dance, we use drama, we use movement, we use singing to teach in the classrooms, and I think it’s a very powerful medium to use. When we have a concert at the school, it’s very powerful for the kids. We’ve never done a concert this large in my four years here in this school, so this is a real first. The parents will be most impressed, and hopefully, get the message. I think the song introductions [written and read by students] really help with that, and make the audience think about the words of the songs and what they actually mean.

*What part would you say emotions play in the whole thing?*

I think it’s huge; the kids just love singing the songs. They’ve got this connection with Holly. Before they even met Holly they knew her because I’d talked about Holly, and some of the Grade 7’s went on line and found Holly’s website before I even told them about it. This world that they’re growing up in…

Yes, the emotions are very strong, and it’s emotions that will hopefully lead to change.

*Yes, if you just tell people the facts that might not make them want to do anything.*
And it’s the kids’ world, their growing up in this world, and what are we going to leave them? You know, the line from the song: “Saltwater”, “What will I think of me the day that I die?” It’s a very powerful line. What will I think of me? What will they think of me? Have I made a difference?

*Maybe they’re thinking about that already, because of the song.*

Yes, I think so. We did a Professional Development Day with the staff about a month and a half ago, on Social Responsibility, and when I was in one of the sessions, I thought of that song; it came into my mind: “What will they think of me the day that I die?” And I was talking to the kids in choir, the next time we sang “Saltwater”, and I said, “You know, we had a Pro-D session on Social Responsibility, and that line kept on resonating,” and, the kids get it. Kevin, when he introduces the song, he gets it.

*What does it take to have a program like this at your school?*

It takes a lot of trust, because I knew exactly what it was about – It was harder the first time because I had talked to Holly on the phone, but we’d never met, and I was very excited about the program, and I had to trust that it was going to be great. And then when she came and met with the staff, there had to be a lot of trust because it’s quite expensive to run the program; there’s a real cost to that. It’s trying to recover the cost, to pay for the program…

*Do schools usually have the PAC [Parent Advisory Council] involved?*

No, in neither case did we have the PAC involved. Some schools, I’m sure, do where the PAC is great at fund raising and has a lot of money. Schools A and B were not in that boat; the PAC has very limited funds, so we weren’t getting any money from the PAC. At School A, we managed just to make ends meet (barely) by selling tickets to the parents. We recovered a lot of the costs through selling the tickets. I did something different here. I charged each kid $10 to be part of the artist-in-residence program with Holly and Kevin. And with that they got one ticket to either the afternoon or the evening performance, and then I sold additional evening tickets. So we will come close to recovering the costs this time around. I also, at the very beginning of the year, charged a $10 performing arts fee so we can bring in a variety of performing artists into the school: dance, mime, theatre, music, and this year I’ve really held back on the number of
performances that I’ve had, because I realized that I might have to take some of that money to pay the bills at the end of the program.

*It sounds like you have a lot of Fine Arts going on in the school.*

Yes, well, that’s my background and wherever I’ve been as an administrator I’ve always tried to bring all the Fine Arts into the school – a variety so it’s interesting to the kids. There’s a huge world out there that these kids don’t get to see; they don’t get taken to theatres and events, so by bringing the performers into the school the kids get a real sense of what’s out there. It’s very exciting. We do try to take the kids to… the Intermediates go to the Orpheum Theatre every year to see the symphony orchestra play. So that’s a great opportunity for them. And all of our Primaries and all of our Intermediates every year go to see a play in a theatre. We bus them down. I think it’s really important; they get so much out of it.

*Do they get very excited?*

Oh, very excited; it’s great to go into a theatre, especially the Orpheum Theatre. It’s a real tribute to the artists of the day. Yes, the Fine Arts are hugely important. It’s stuff like that the kids remember; it’s not the amazing math lesson you did in the morning, or the fabulous project you did on whatever in Social Studies or Science. So often it’s a concert like this… well, that’s what the kids at the high school are saying: “I still remember doing that huge concert with Holly.” It’s amazing.

*Do they ever talk about any environmental things they did as a result?*

You know, I have not gone into that with the kids. It would be interesting to interview the kids up there, and ask: “Having been that concert with Holly, what kind of a difference has it made to you?” “Have you joined an environmental club at school? What do you do at home?” It would be interesting to talk to the kids…” It’s now eight years later, what kind of an impact did it have? For some kids, it will have had absolutely no impact, for other kids it’ll have had a huge impact, and everything in between.

I know personally that before I did the first concert with Holly, I’d just had a beautiful lawn put down in the back yard and within two years all of a sudden I was getting patches of clover. So I went down to the local garden center and they sold me a product that would take care of the clover. I came back and I read all of the information on the product, and I thought, “Oh, my goodness, I can’t do this. This is just so wrong!
So the product is still sitting in my basement. I never took it back, but I never used it. I was thinking that as soon as the first rain comes, it’s going to be washed into the soil, and it’ll go right into the Fraser River before we know it.

In the past, I used some pretty heavy-duty chemicals to get rid of aphids in our birch tree, and now I’ve stayed away from that. My wife is always saying: “Let’s get somebody to come in and kill all the weeds in the lawn.” But mm, I don’t know.

You see it differently now?

I see it differently now. And if we get somebody in, I want to make sure the products they’re using are earth-friendly. Even with the fertilizer I use now, I buy the green fertilizer. It’s more expensive, and you have to use it more often, but I think it’s worth it. Here at school we’ve started buying recycled paper. You pay a little bit more for it, but hopefully in the long run, the recycled paper will become cheaper.

So, all in all, do you think it’s a program worth having?

Oh, yes. I’m doing it again. It took me eight years for it to happen again. This is the third school I’ve been in since I was with Holly. At the other school, there wasn’t an opportunity. I’d have loved to have done it there; it would have been hugely successful there. But I started thinking about doing it here probably a couple of years ago. I reconnected with Holly and I went to a concert over in North Vancouver a couple of years ago, and one of our teachers heard one of the concerts last year with Holly, and this year I went over to another school and saw the concert there. It’s very special; I would highly recommend it to any school.

About the introductory concert, did you arrange that yourself, or did Holly suggest it?

The program was a little different this year; it was actually quite a lot different. When we did the program at School A, Holly came once a week for about six or eight weeks. She taught the songs once a week, and then I would follow up in between and rehearse the kids, and then we had the big concert at the end. Whereas now they do an introductory concert, and then I basically taught all the kids all the songs in choir. And then they arrived here on Monday, and they just polished until we had the dress rehearsal today [Wednesday]. So at the introductory concert, the kids already knew “Voices of Nature” and “Saltwater”, because I taught them to them last year, so when she sang those
two songs as part of the introductory concert, they all just sang with her and she was blown away that the kids already knew these songs. And then they just really connected; I think that was a great way of connecting with them, putting faces to names: “These are the people that write the songs, who we’re going to do the concert with. They’re not coming to perform for us, they’re going to perform with us.” And that was the hardest thing. It’s hard to believe that I have 350 kids at the school and I haven’t sold 300 tickets yet for the evening, because the parents have got no clue as to what’s coming their way. So we’ve got about one person in each family coming to the show, so I’m really hoping that after today with the kids in the gym, on the risers, with the gym all decorated, they’ve got a sense now, and they’re going to go home and say: “You’ve got to see this show.” It’s going to be very powerful.

*Some parents were sort of drifting into the gym, and they may have seen it. They might spread the word.*

Exactly. Yes, I hope. It was the same thing at School A. The community doesn’t understand what a concert is, or a performance is. They think they can just drop off the kids, they can perform, and then they can pick them up afterwards, not thinking that they should actually stay and watch the concert.

*Did we leave anything out?*

No, it’s a wonderful opportunity for any school. It worked out really well here because I took the responsibility to teach the songs. All the classroom teachers have copies of the songs, both paper copies of the words and a CD of the songs. Some of them use the songs a lot, right from when they got the CD, just after the introductory concert, some not, so you get that real cross-section there too. Some got into it right away, and others as the interest builds. Everybody’s there now, they’re all pumped. They’re very excited about this. Again, the staff didn’t know what they were in for, either.

*Did the introductory concert help?*

It did. It helped them connect with Kevin and Holly. They saw that these were the people that were going to come and work with the kids. And it isn’t every year that we have an artist-in-residence come to work with the school. They know what an artist-in-residence does, but typically it’s an artist-in-residence and one class; it’s not an artist-in-residence and the whole school. Often it’s an artist-in-residence working on some
medium in art, so they’ve got a finished product at the end of it, but they’re not
displaying it in front of the whole school.

Did it affect school spirit?

Oh, huge, yes. There’s great excitement, absolutely. There’s great excitement
about the concert, and we’ve been building that by teaching the songs, and talking about
what the gym will look like. But it’s finally become a reality this week with having them
here, having the gym staging in place, and now it’s ahead of us.

It’s all very exciting.

Very exciting, yes.

Interview with Teacher 1 (Kelowna)

Can you tell me how you came to know Holly?

Sure. I got to know her at the University of Victoria when I went there as a
student teacher. She had come to the Education program to give a presentation for pre-
service teachers. She gave a workshop that showcased her music, but it also talked about
the Voices of Nature program, and what it entailed if it came as a school-wide program. I
used a lot of her songs, and I had purchased some of her CD’s during my student
teaching, so I was familiar with her that way. When I moved to Kelowna, and I had my
first teaching assignment, I noticed a lack in the school in terms of environmental focus
and a strong music program. There was no music program, other than what we did in our
classrooms, so I brought it forth to my principal and to the Parent Advisory Council
(PAC) to get some funding, contacted Holly – we had various emails back and forth
about costs and dates – it probably took us about a month and a half to get it organized at
the very beginning of September, and that was for a May concert. I also had a connection
with Kevin, who is one of her band members, because when I was in my second
practicum in Victoria, his daughter was in my practicum class. So they had actually
come to that school to do a presentation for the whole school. So I had witnessed it in
two different avenues, and I saw the energy and the positivity that it brought.

Were they both Voices of Nature programs?

No, neither of them were, actually. The first time I saw Holly, it was at a workshop
she had put together for pre-service teachers; it was showing her music CD’s, the songs
she had written that were environmentally focused, and showing us the handbook that comes along with it. And the second one was a free concert that they came to do for the school because it was Kevin’s daughter’s school. So he had said to me, as a student teacher, and I was teaching 100% at the time, he said: “Can I come in and do a concert?” and I said: “Oh, sure”. So we invited everybody and it was just an afternoon of fun, so that was in the back of my mind as something that I wanted to look into once I had my own group.

*Would you say that you were influenced by the kind of music they sang?*

Definitely. I really enjoyed the style, and I really enjoyed how they interacted with the kids. They brought everything to life, and they had the kids singing about the environment before they even realized that’s what they were singing about, and by the time they really knew the music, they started to reflect on what it was that they were saying. The music is so catchy that they didn’t need to know what they were singing at first, and then that came after practicing it for so long. Now they still ask to sing it all the time.

*Do you find that they sing it informally too?*

Not so much, because it’s still pretty complicated. They need to hear it, but as soon as they hear the music, they remember all the words, and they remember the actions too. A year later they’re still doing the actions when we sing the songs.

*Tell me about your experience as a teacher, having them at your school.*

Well, it was a very positive experience for me; it was a mixed experience for my school. Some people were not as positive about it, so there was some conflict, the week that it happened.

*What sort of issues came up?*

Some people thought that they were not educationally trained, and yet they were treating the kids… not treating the kids, I’m not saying it correctly. There was a clash in terms of how instruction was given, for certain individuals. And because there was really no time for the teachers to get to know them, it was a hard transition for them to come into the school the way that it happened. For me, it was different because I already knew them, so I knew what to expect. But without having met them before, they were really strangers to the rest of the teachers. And they came in really suddenly, and it was only
four days. They came in, and they kind of expected the kids to be on and jammed and excited right away, which didn’t happen because they didn’t know them. And anyone who works with kids knows that you have to establish a relationship before they’re going to buy into things.

*What was the lead-in like with the program... like did you have practices before hand?*

We had to leave it up to teachers in terms of practices. We had all the music about a month and a half before it started. Everybody was encouraged to know and memorize the songs before they arrived, and we sang them on the intercom, not the whole songs, but every day there was a little bit played to pump it up. But a lot of people still didn’t know what to expect until it happened.

*Did it seem as if the kids would have enjoyed it more if they’d known the songs a bit better?*

No, the kids knew the songs very well, and by the end of it, they loved it. I’m not trying to downplay it, but there were definitely issues with the way they just kind of came in all of a sudden. And I don’t know if that could be changed, given the fact that they were from a different location; they’re not from here.

*Is it your feeling that if they could have met the teachers before hand, it might have helped?*

Definitely. Definitely, because there just wasn’t that established rapport between the two, and I think some teachers felt that they were coming in and being told what to do, and that’s not something most teachers like.

*What was the concert like?*

It was fabulous; it was high energy. The kids who came loved it. I’m in a Kindergarten to Grade 7 school, so it was a bit tougher for the Grade 6’s and 7’s to buy into it. Most of them didn’t come to the concert, but those who did had a great time. We actually had two concerts because of the size of our gym. We couldn’t accommodate the entire school in the concert, so we did two different concerts, and had an A and B group.

*Age-related?*

No, we mixed them up so that there was Kindergarten to Grade 7 in each group. And some kids did both concerts, just because we didn’t have the entire school there.
Unfortunately, it actually conflicted with a night that there was a major dance recital in our community. So there were a good 100 students who were in that competition, that didn’t participate. We organized this Voices of Nature concert back in September for May, and obviously we didn’t know the date of that. So that was unfortunate, because they had practiced all week and then they didn’t actually do the concert because of the conflict.

*Did you find that the program fit in with the school curriculum?*

Definitely the music, and I would say more the Grade 4 curriculum. But the general environmental themes, I thought, could tie in with any year. Those are embedded in the curriculum every single year, in different areas, so I always find a way to make things fit.

*How effective a tool was this kind of music program for environmental education?*

I think it was very effective for primary, and maybe young intermediate groups. I sort of feel that it wasn’t the best avenue for the older children because, at that point, they’ve already got their ideas pretty solid in their head, and they need something a little bit more… exciting, and engaging at their level. For the primary students, it was very effective. We had a composting program that went on before, and then it was really pumped up after they came, because one of the songs we sang was “Big Change Starts Small”, which is all about composting. So every classroom had a compost. It’s sort of died down now, because we haven’t had anyone take on the composting program. It’s one of those things where everybody has to buy into it for it to work.

*There was some interest though, afterwards?*

Oh yes, and the kids are still… the kids, I think, are the ones who got the most out of it.

*Was there any evidence of lasting effects from the concert and the program, on the kids or even on the teachers?*

I would say that there was an overall positive attitude about it. I would say it’s one piece in the puzzle as far as environmental education. I would never say that it was responsible for the kids taking on the composting and recycling, but it definitely had an effect, like everything we do around Earth Day has an effect, and all the daily
reinforcements of separating the recycling and taking the juice boxes back for deposits, and all those little things.

*Did the program increase environmental empathy and action among students, teachers, and parents? Were they more concerned over the environment?*

I don’t know. I don’t know that I could say “yes” or “no”. I think those of us who already care – it was really good for us. I don’t know that it reached the people who don’t necessarily pay attention to it anyway, or already. It’s hard for me to quantify that, because that’s a very personal thing. I know myself, and a few other people who thought it was excellent, we were already pushing for a lot of those initiatives.

*That was last year, wasn’t it?*

Yes, it was almost a year ago now that they came, it was May, last year.

*What would you say the pros and cons were of this program?*

The pros were that it brought the community together in a way that I hadn’t seen in that school before. The concert itself was in a style that kids never been privy to. I work in a community that’s divided by income a lot. There are some upper and middle class families and there are a lot of lower income families. So a lot of these children have never been a part of a musical concert of that scale at all, and in that sense it brought the community together in a big way. It also involved the audience a lot, and I don’t think the kids had ever been in a concert where they were actually pulling the audience into their performance, which was really neat for them. I had quite a few people from the community saying how amazing the concert was, and how excited they were to have had it, so that was definitely a big positive.

*So it had a musical impact?*

Absolutely. It had a really big musical impact. The cons were just kind of what I talked about at the beginning, was that it was really fast, and it would have been nicer if it had even been two weeks, where the first week was just them getting to know the school and the kids. Because the climate at the school is so different from one school to the next, and it really does take time to get to know the students and the teachers and the parents in that community.

*Would you say the climate differs between communities as well, say like between here and Victoria?*
Oh yes. Absolutely.

...people’s attitudes towards the environment, and things like that?

That was a huge culture change for me, yes. It’s ‘way less environmentally focused here.

I was thinking that, too.

That stood out for me right away, because even just student teaching, there were certain things like juice box recycling, I just figured that was a standard thing everybody did now. Well, it wasn’t. When I came here I thought: “Oh…, well, how can this not be yet?” Even such things as having metals and plastics recyclables in the school, wasn’t set up here. Things like that just hadn’t been done, and those were things that I took for granted back there, that people had been doing for so long, even when I was in school, as a student.

And I suppose, down there, schools would consider environmental attitudes as one of the things they wanted to train?

In Victoria, you mean?

Yes.

I guess; it’s one of those things where it seems normal. You don’t think anything of it until you come to another one that’s…it’s not drastically different but there are all these little things that you start noticing that…oh!

Is the program worth having? Under what circumstances is it worthwhile?

I think it’s worth having. I think it was definitely worthwhile. It’s very costly, so there was some hesitation over the cost, because a lot of money was put into this four-day program. So it was hard to quantify whether or not the money was well spent.

Did they feel that the exciting concert made up for it?

I think the Parent Advisory Council did, but I don’t know that everybody did. It was about $5000 - $6000 for the four days, and it did include some of the resources, but it’s still a lot of money.

Does your school use the resources now?

I do, and we primary teachers get together once a week to do singing together and we’ll often do songs from the program. And I’m planning to use some over the next few weeks as we gear up for Earth Day, but other than that, I don’t use them as much this
I actually used the handbook that came with it when I was student teaching in Grade 4, but I’m teaching Grade 2/3 now so there’s not as much connection with the animals’ habitats.

*I noticed that some of the teachers’ guides had suggestions for running music programs, and that sort of thing, and activities, and I just wondered if people were using them? ... how to set up rhythm accompaniments and things like that with the kids?*

Oh, that wasn’t really included in our program. Holly did that; she did that with the kids. But we didn’t get materials that showed us...

*Maybe Voices of Nature doesn’t have that kind of teacher’s guide.*

*Did we leave out anything?*

I don’t think so. I hope it sounded positive, because it was certainly positive for me. But there are definitely pros and cons.

*And it’s sort of individual with the teachers, in how they take it?*

I think so, yes. I really think it has to come from within you, to be a goal that you have, and if it’s important to you, you’re going to buy into it.

*Did your principal get involved?*

Yes, she fully supported it. The PAC paid for half the program and the school paid for the other half. She was very supportive of it.

*Great; well, thank you very much.*

You’re welcome.

**Interview with Teacher 3 (Vancouver)**

*How long ago did you have the program at your school, where did you have it, and how many kids were involved?*

We’re at a school in Vancouver. We had Grades 3 and 4 participate. There were three Grade 3 classes, which would make it close to 75 students, and then the Grade 4 students as well, which would bump it up to about 140. It was right at the beginning of the school of the school year in January, just before the Olympics. So it was kind of like a build-up to the Olympics as well, because it was part of the “Cultural Olympiad”. We had a book published at our school, called “Journeys”, and it was the life histories of the
families, and it was put together two years ago. We put together the launch of our book “Journeys” with the “Up Your Watershed” concert.

Which families were you studying?

Two years ago we had a committee that wanted to do a heritage type project. Every student and family in the school who participated wrote a little history of how they came to Canada.

Do you have a lot of people from other countries?

Oh, yes – many, many, many.

What percentage, would you say?

For our school, ESL [English as a Second Language] percentage is probably 60 – 70%. So it was a good book in that way, that you got an idea of some of the struggles that families went through to come to Canada, and it might not be this generation, you know, it might be generations back. It was professionally done; we got support from the Vancouver School Board to put it together and publish it. And any of the students who had their history published in the book, because they’d contributed and gave permission, they got a free copy of the book. So it’s quite fantastic.

So, did you say it was combined with “Up Your Watershed”?

Yes.

How did they do that?

I’m not sure how the two fell into place together. I’m not absolutely sure. But because we had a school where we wanted to do something important and launch it in an important way, so it was a great opportunity to sing at the same time. And the neat thing is that they merged the book “Journeys” with the concert so that we had readings from our book. So we had students from Grades 3 and 4 who were in the choir, singing, and then you had guest students from different grades reading excerpts from the book out loud to the audience. We featured the whole event at a posh environment for our school; it really isn’t that far away but I don’t think many of the families had been there before, which is just up the road; it’s Theatre X. That was pretty special to be in a professional theatre with proper seating, and the families could come at nighttime to see and participate that way. It was special for the families too that they could purchase the DVD afterwards and see it again.
So it was put on DVD?

Yes, it was for sale. I actually haven’t viewed it yet with the kids, but I want to do it soon. And I’m going to feature part of the DVD at next week’s Earth Day assembly, because it has so many environmental songs on it. It’s a real keepsake.

So did they take sort of a heritage approach with the whole concert, or was it environmentally focused?

Both. There were so many words to memorize. But a lot of it was about heritage, because when they had “Up Your Watershed”, it talked about the different watersheds in the communities of British Columbia. That was a big concept, I think, to know that there are different watersheds around the world.

I was wondering if you could tell about your experiences as a teacher with this program. How was it, as a teacher?

Oh, as a teacher? Well, we knew it was coming. I had been part of the “Journeys” committee, so I said I would help launch it, but we really didn’t get enough background information. I found that I was immersed in it right away, and quite amazed at how rich the concert was going to be. But a lot of teaching is – I do – you’re trying to integrate special events into the curriculum. We didn’t really have much lead time for that at all. We came back from holidays, it was January, and it was like: here are five songs to memorize, and there’s going to be a great concert…

We had the background talk about who this artist was, but not really enough. Even just having the words well in advance so we could look at them, like I mean months in advance, would have helped.

Did you have an introductory concert with her?

No.

Oh, because they did at some schools.

Yes, I think that would help too. I think it was the timing of it all, and the intensity, because we were the January school, and we had the “Journeys” launching, so we had a specific time booked for the theatre, and then after that they went on to another school, I believe, because my sister followed it. She actually came to the concert and thought it was phenomenal, and she brought someone, as well, who is from the Vancouver Folk Festival, and they both wrote letters saying it was just fantastic. Then
she said that they [Holly and Kevin] were performing at the Cultural Olympiad at the Vancouver East Cultural Center. So I believe they had our concert, the Vancouver East concert, and then the Olympics, so everything was kind of condensed.

*They were performing at the Olympics?*

No, it was part of the Cultural Olympiad; there were different events that were being promoted as being part of the Olympics, I think.

*What kind of work and preparation went on behind the scenes, to get your kids ready [for the concert]?*

…to get the kids ready? I can’t really remember back to that part. I just remember that it was a specialty coming. We went down to the first time, and the kids had the words. When I looked at them, I thought, well, these are big environmental songs. And so basically what I would do, is I would bring them back afterwards, because they would be taken as a group in the lunch room, learn the songs, and then I would bring them back and we would just have a big reflection period. The words and concepts are quite advanced, sometimes. So as we would go through them, I looked at it more as a reader’s response, a poetry reflection, or some sort of context like that. And then the kids started writing about it in their journals, as well. I tried to integrate it into our communities curriculum for Grade 3.

*Did you find it integrated well with the curriculum?*

It integrates really well, but I didn’t feel I had the opportunity to build it up that way. And then the Olympics hit us after that, and that was “Olympic fever. And then you have so many considerations of curriculum to cover.

*That’s true. How much warning did you have that you were going to be doing this?*

Well, we knew it was coming, Septemberish. But we didn’t get any curriculum material, and no idea of what the content was about.

*So that could have improved it [your experience]?*

Oh, absolutely.

*It’s interesting… So how effective a tool was this kind of music program for environmental education?*
It’s great. I think it’s really great. It not only educated the kids, with the spirit, for example, with “Salmon Circle”, you have an opportunity to talk about it afterwards. Our vice principal has been talking about bringing back some sort of salmon habitat to the school next year. And I thought: “Where did that come from?” I went with him; he drove us on a field trip recently (2 weeks ago), and he started saying: “I’m going to bring the fries back into this schools; I’ve done this at other schools.” I think it’s possibly because of that concert. It just sort of sparks you, in a certain way.

Did it affect the staff, too?

I think, no. I never got an over-enthusiastic response from the other staff members. It was more like: “We did our part; we supported it, and now we go on to other parts of the curriculum.”

What about the kids; were they enthusiastic?

Yes, they loved it, they absolutely loved it. They adored it, some of them. You can tell, because we did some writing in our journals, about: “The concert is coming”. Normally kids, some of the shyer kids, were really glowing, with a lot of complements, and: “I feel like a rock star”, from the quietest, meekest kids. You just could see the rhythm was different. We have a lot of stimulation at this school; we’ve had a drumming workshop that followed up. I think the two of them, this year, have been phenomenal for letting kids show their rhythm. That’s a big part of the “Up Your Watershed” [program]; they let the kids wiggle when they sing. It’s so contrary to how we want kids to be still all the time, in a performing way. They really encourage them to be whacky, and then to calm down. And they have, I thought, really masterful techniques for that. I don’t know if they could keep that energy up as a regular teacher, but it’s really neat to see.

Do you think it brought out other kinds of learning that you don’t normally see so much?

Yes, I think so. I think so. You could see some kids were just confounded by the whole thing. It was like: “This is too much”, or “this is too unusual”. Out of my class of 23, I think two just kind of shut down, and wouldn’t sing. But they were a part of it; they never refused to come. See, the concert we had at nighttime was volunteer; the parents had to drive them. But even the quietest kids, who wouldn’t let on that they were really enjoying it, they showed up. So they had really great attendance for the night concert.
Did you hear any comments afterwards, about the concert, from the parents or the kids?

From the kids, for sure. From the parents, yes. But as a teacher, there was a problem for me in that we didn’t get to see the concert. We were in the back, behind the curtain, supervising, making sure no one fell off the risers. Kids do this, kids do that, so you feel like you are more of a behind the scenes crowd control. So you never really get to enjoy it. The time when I really enjoyed it was the time the Grade 3’s and 4’s were performing at our school, for the rest of the school. You could just sit there and relax and watch it.

What did the other kids think of it?

I think they were amused. They thought it was wild, and they were really surprised. The practice, the concert, and everything happened within three weeks. It kind of, in a way, came out of the blue.

Do you think the type of music had an effect? Were the kids quite excited about that type of music?

Absolutely. Yes, they loved it. They really loved it; they were singing it all the time. We had the tape as well, and so we would practice it. And every day, at the end of the day, we’d be doing our planners, getting ready to go home, and then they’d start singing the songs, just spontaneously, in the cloak room and as they were walking out the door, so that was really neat to see. And it was so short a time; it was a little mystifying that way.

So a bit longer might have been good?

I don’t know. I thought it was great; it was three weeks, and it was intensive, and then it was done. But I don’t think there was enough time to… or material. There wasn’t enough material provided to show you how to integrate it into the Grade 3 & 4 curriculum. I don’t know if people from outside can understand that, like non-teachers, that you have all these obligations, because it’s a critical time. In March, you have to have your report cards, and you have to have these measurable objectives. So basically, the first week they came, there was going to be a meeting in the lunch room with Holly and her team, and sometimes it wouldn’t be Holly, it would be the dancing people. And so I never really thought I could sit off to the side and look and maybe, give them – it’s
terrible to say— but maybe include this as a report card objective, as to their response to music. I never saw it as an opportunity that way. So I would just sit and watch and half attend, half not.

*Have you seen the two curriculum guides they put out for a couple of their other shows?*

Yes… oh, for their shows, no.

*They did one called “Salish Sea” and there was another one called “Life Cycle/Recycle”.*

I’ve got that; we have it in the library, but it’s really dense and it meanders all over the place. Again, it’s the practicality of having to cover curriculum, which is the pressure. And I think it stops teachers from feeling the freedom to explore and enjoy. I could turn it around and, if I’d thought ahead I could say: “I could assess a response to music, and dance for the dance unit, or for gym, there’s a lot of movement going on there”. I didn’t use some of it; I could have taken some of it and said: “OK, here are the lyrics, and I don’t want to look through one of their publications, I can just look at their lyrics, and say maybe we can do a reflection, and it can be part of a poetry appreciation”. But at the time, the first week was just rehearsing movement, singing some of the songs, and the dance choreographer was trying to make up her mind what she wanted the kids to do. So a lot of it is the mechanics of it. Then it all falls into place in the second week, but basically it takes over. It was two hours on a Monday, then she’s coming again for two hours on Tuesday morning…

*Who was the choreographer?*

Her mother is the head of the Spare Time Fun Center over here.

*Is she one of the parents?*

No, she’s a professional singer; she won a radio contest at one point. She’s really dynamic, and her young son was in my class a couple of years ago.

*Did you notice any long-term, lasting effects from the program?*

I think, for certain students, they really came out of their shell. There’s one girl that’s really kind of quiet and timid; she just adored Holly, just adored her. And I didn’t really expect that from her. It was all in her writing. She would never go up and say anything to her. But she’s a really reflective type student, and a higher level thinking
type student. I think that made her see that there were some role models out there that
were different. Because Holly is a certain persona; she’s very confident, but I wouldn’t
describe her as flashy. That was neat for a lot of the girls to see, that someone could be
so strong, but really sweet at the same time.

_How did the boys like Kevin?
_Oh, they loved it. I’ve got a couple of little funny guys in here who were just
cracking up, just cracking up.

_He’s a very friendly person.
_Yes, but he lets them be cuckoo. He lets them be kooky. They love it. They love
it; it’s like permission to shine. And all that shaking, and movement, and expression, and
so on… So it’s a good combination – the two of them as leaders.

_What would you say the pros and cons were of the program?
_The pros? I think there’s so much deep potential for looking at the lyrics, and
looking at environmental messages. And I think the cons would be that I didn’t see that
information in a really simple format ahead of time. It could have been just a key visual
saying: “The Salmon Circle”, and even the words, published ahead of time and how you
could integrate it into your curriculum, like some creative, really quickie ideas to get
ready for it.

...*Just one sheet, or something like that?*
_Yes, absolutely. ...Just one sheet, just one sheet. Teachers don’t need to read
through text books to access concepts. It’s too much. I know they develop so much
material, but you just don’t see anybody stepping up to the plate, saying: “I want to take
that home and read that tonight on my spare time.”

_Do you think the program is worth having?_
_Yes, I do. I really do. I think if you could get more teachers involved, somehow,
because teachers, if they’re creative, like a person who likes to dance, such as I do, you
just think this is great. I don’t teach music but I really love music. For some other
teachers, I think they just see their role as; “I did my part because I led them down and
kept them quiet,” and they aren’t allowed to get into the music; they don’t let themselves.

_Because they’re too busy?_
Yes. Or they’re not involved. The kids are up there dancing, and doing whatever, but even if they were to say: “OK, we want the teachers to get up and sing with us”… something. Something so there’s some connection. Until you feel it yourself… We always ask kids to get up and perform for us, and besides teaching day to day, teachers don’t very often volunteer to do something risky. For example, we have a member on staff who’s a Tyko drummer, and next week (every year now), she brings the drummers to our school. And they get some teachers to volunteer and go up on stage and drum. It’s amazing, when you have the chance to do it yourself, how you start to realize how difficult it is, and you start to relax and forget about supervising. I think that makes a big difference.

*Is there anything else that we didn’t talk about yet about the program?*

Yes, I had mentioned to my principal that you were coming, and we started talking about environmentalism, and it’s a big passion for me. I try to see how I can integrate it into the curriculum, because the BC curriculum does not place environmental… there’s no Environmental Studies curriculum. What happens is, you have to integrate it into your Math, Science, Socials, Music, Poetry, Fine Arts; you have to find the teachable moment, and to put it in that way.

*So it’s [Environmental Studies] sort of optional for teachers, and they have to make an effort to put it in?*

Yes, and what we were saying was that you could have dangers come out of this, too. I suppose a criticism we came up with, with the Holly Arntzen program, was the idea of political activism. I was a little bit uncomfortable sometimes, not with the leaders and the content of what you’re reading. But I don’t know if the kids always understood; I don’t know if the other Grade 3 teachers sat down and said: “What does this song mean?” And the one song: “Up Your Watershed”, well, I mean, everybody knows what goes with it, you know, “Up Yours”, which is derogatory. That was what was shocking to the kids in the audience when they were watching the kids perform, is that they were allowed to punch their fist into the air and so on. And, OK, they all knew that they were safe because the right adults were teaching them, but it’s kind of pushing the limit. I don’t think our ESL [English as a Second Language] population of parents understand what it means, and not a parent complained about it, English or non-English speaking, but at the
same time, you could have a group who takes a group of children and gets them inspired for the wrong things. And so you’re teaching them to be militant, almost. There’s like a little militant aspect to it.

*Did you feel there was?*

Yes. “Up Your Watershed”, yes, because it’s teaching them to protest.

*That’s interesting; I didn’t catch that, but...since I’m not teaching it, I might have missed a few things.*

Well, the kids afterwards, in the Grades 5, 6, 7’s were going: “Up Yours” around the playground afterwards. And my kids don’t understand like: “Why are they laughing at us? Why is that funny?” What do I say? You just say, “I don’t know; it’s a joke. I don’t understand it.” It’s not brainwashing, because the rest of the song is so interesting and they understand it. But in that part there, who are you saying “Up Yours” to? Where’s the protest here? But I guess you come across that when you’re older.

*Do you think there was a chance that it might have been kind of poetic license?*

In an adult way, yes, it could be. But the kids picked up on it; it’s street talk, right? So, I don’t know… Because, there’s a lot of emotion going on, and I think that’s how you get swept up in taking a side in one of these political rallies, or whatever. It’s the emotionalism, the song, and the chanting, and all of that.

*Do you think there’s a potential for the emotion to involve people in doing something about the environment?*

When you calm down, yes. I think in the moment they just see it as excitement. They know these are good words; teachers wouldn’t allow it otherwise. But it’s more afterwards, when they’re talking about and connecting it to other issues. It would be interesting to take a little survey of particular songs afterwards. Next week’s Earth Week and we’re going to show some of the DVD’s, just to ask what they remember about the concert, and ask what it’s got to do with Earth Day.

*Do they talk about it sometimes?*

Not really, I mean there is so much happening. That’s the sad part, I think sometimes we’re over-stimulated. We get too much. It’s an inner city school, but since then we’ve had a fellow come and do drumming with the whole school, we’ve had so many assemblies –there are three assemblies next week- and there’s the Vancouver
Police Department coming to talk about bike safety. Today was Power Smart; you know, there are so many events always going on. Sometimes you want to just calm down and reflect on that special one. It’s almost like too much, that’s what I think.

*Was there anything else you wanted to comment on?*

I think that aspect of what more teachers could get out of it, maybe even just the teachers quietly meeting the artist ahead of time.

*That does seem to be important.*

Yes, because the first time it was like: “Oh, Holly’s coming, Holly’s coming”, and then she came whisking in like a special events person in front of the kids, and she was wanting to connect to the kids, and it was all connection to the kids. I could see that this was a busy person, but I don’t think the teachers felt that they were being understood or appreciated. It was like Holly’s team was working on the performance, and we were doing the stuff behind the scenes, which I’m sure they understand how much is involved.

*I think they do.*

Yes, but we never just sit down and have a coffee or a beer together.

*That would be nice.*

I think so, but not in the staff room. Not like: “Come and meet these people.” More like: “These are the people who are going to be teaching your kids, and let’s give you some release time or noon time with something to eat, like something special that way, because it was a pretty special event”. “Write your questions down, and she can answer them, and [you can] get to know her.” It’s like they’re there for the kids, but I don’t think they’re there for the teachers yet.

*Do you think it affected things that there were only two grades involved?*

No, that was perfect. It’s the perfect age. It could include Grade 5. This is a perfect age, where they memorize the songs so quickly, and they don’t have other things on their minds. Maybe it’s tough for the Grade 4 teachers because they have FSA’s to do and curriculum to cover, but it just seemed like really good lyrics for that age group.

**Interview with Teacher 4 (Vancouver Island)**

*When did you have Holly at the school, and how many children were involved?*
We had her at the school during our 2008/2009 school year, in the fall, and the whole school was involved. We had about 350 students at the school.

*What grades would that be?*

It was Kindergarten to Grade 5.

...*only up to Grade 5?*

Yes.

*I was wondering if you could tell the story of how Holly came to your school, and how it went?*

OK. Our school was already involved in doing environmental projects. For the last two or three years we had done some fairly major projects that actually won us awards. For instance, we won the Eco-Star award one year for our anti-idling campaign – getting our whole district to become an idle-free zone. And the following year we entered another contest; an Internet contest. So we were becoming known for becoming an environment-ally aware school. The PAC [Parent Advisory Council] president was interested in supporting a program like Holly’s, because she thought it would fit very well with what we were already doing at our school. So the idea came from the PAC. They talked to our principal, and our principal thought it was an excellent idea to get Holly to come.

As a result of the things we were doing at our school, we actually started a “Plastics Depot” in our community, and she was singing at the Plastics Depot. She would come and sing while we were working. Have you ever heard of Plastics Depots? People can bring things that you don’t normally put in your Blue Box [recycling box] – things like milk cartons, and soft plastic Styrofoam, electronics – all kinds of things. She came to the depot a couple of times, because she thought it was such a great thing to do. And when she was there, our principal was there, and he heard her, and that made him think: “Yes, we absolutely have to get her to come.”

The way she does it is – she had me, because I was the contact person – listen to a number of her songs first, on her CDs, and select the ones I thought would be most suitable for the kids at our school. And so I spent my summer listening to her songs and trying to select a number of songs that I thought would work.

*Did you work it out with Holly, or did you just do it yourself?*
I listened to the songs, and came up with a short list, and then I did talk to Holly and we made some little changes here and there. Then what they did is that they took those songs and made a new CD for us from that, so that we could practice, using that CD because those would be the songs. Then they came to our school and gave a little mini performance, her and Kevin, to get the kids kind of excited about the idea.

_How far in advance would that be?_  
…of the final concert?  
Yes.  
…a couple of months, maybe? I can’t remember for sure, but maybe two months.

Our job was to get the kids to learn the songs. We just spent the next, whatever it was, let’s say it was six weeks to two months, practicing with the kids so that the kids could learn the songs.

_Was it enough time?_  
Yes. I was surprised; I didn’t think it would be. Some of those songs were pretty complex, too. But most of them were pretty catchy, or repetitive, or simple, or whatever, for the kids. But there were a couple of them [the songs] that had a lot of words in them, but the kids still learned them. They came one more time, every day for one week before the concert, and they practiced with the different groupings of kids. And then we finally had a final practice with all of the kids. And it just came together; it was quite remarkable. The final performance was done, not at our school, but at a local theatre. So it was nice because it was a nice venue – nice and big, with comfortable seats, good acoustics, and quite special.

_Did you practice in it too?_  
We practiced one time there, and then- I think it was that same evening- we went back and performed. It went super well.

*I was wondering what people said afterwards – the staff and students, particularly.*

The students just adored them, just loved Kevin and Holly. For them it was quite a thrill, I think, to be in this concert. And Holly, because she lived in the neighborhood, they were able to come to our school again, which is something that most people don’t get that opportunity of. When we did other things at our school that they wanted to help
celebrate, they came again, and sang another couple of songs with the kids in the assembly.

*What was the reaction of staff?*

At first they didn’t say much to me, but I had a feeling they were a little dubious about how this was going to go. What we are used to is having the artist be an artist-in-residence, and be there up until performance time. But in this case we did the practicing with the kids and then once the kids knew the songs, they just had to come and work with them with their music and get them to be more dynamic with singing, and really fine-tune it. It was a good way – it certainly worked very well. I think there was more excitement at that concert than at other concerts that we’ve had at our school. I think that Holly and Kevin have a way of motivating the kids and getting them really “pumped”.

*Was the staff enthusiastic in the end?*

Yes. Yes. In the end we had a donation thing at the door so that people could contribute, so we ended up making a little money for our Green Team projects at the school. A lot of parents were interested in buying the CDs at the end. There was quite a line-up of people wanting to buy her CDs.

*Did the teachers end up making use of Holly’s teacher guides?*

I did, and I know of another teacher that did, but I think most of them did not. There’s just so much going on at schools, and there’s a lot of competition… not competition, but there are so many resources already that it’s sometimes hard for people to get out of what they’re already using and try new things.

*There’s not really a curriculum for Environmental Studies, is there?*

No, you could put it in, like I did, with Science; it’s part of being socially responsible, and you could certainly justify having all kinds of things to do with the environment. But a lot of times it is hard; people are trying to get through the basic curriculum and sometimes they just don’t feel like they have the extra time to do it.

*I got that impression.*

*What are your comments about the program; what worked and what didn’t?*

I think that so many things worked really well. Holly and Kevin have so much experience doing this kind of thing that they’ve got it down to a fine art. They really know what they’re doing. The music helps so much too, in getting the attention of the
kids. Let’s say we’re all practicing in the gym and kids can get excited, and they get noisy, and they’re talking to each other. She would just do some little ditty, like a little jingle or something, and she always used the same kind of jingle every time, and that would get the kids’ attention right away. She has a great voice, they have their instruments, and that really worked in getting the kids to focus and quiet down. Her enthusiasm and her energy certainly is infectious; everybody gets into the song. And it’s modern, it’s “hip”, it’s music that kids love, it’s not just “kids’ music”. Anybody would like that music, young or old. So I think the kids appreciated that, and the fact that all of the songs – every single song – had a strong environmental message, that was so important. The songs are meaningful; they’re not just silly songs, they’re really meaningful songs with beautiful tunes and with great instruments, and very “hip” and “cool” people delivering it, so that all worked really well. And she’s very flexible; they really do what they can to make it work for your school.

If there were things that didn’t work, I didn’t notice them as much. What wouldn’t work is if teachers simply didn’t find the time to practice with the kids, then you would have a problem.

*The school’s organization is fairly important, isn’t it?*

Yes, you do have to have everybody on board, and saying “OK, we’re doing this,” and you have to have faith that it’s going to work. I think she must have a pretty good reputation now, being able to pull this off. Hopefully people would know that going in that it’s going to work out. For us, we could see her; we could contact her. She lived in this neighborhood, but when she goes to Calgary [for example] I don’t know how they can manage, but apparently they do.

*What long-term effects did you see afterwards?*

Well, there are so many things that we do at our school all the time. I think that if that would have been the only thing, and then if we just went back to doing our regular curriculum and didn’t include anything environmental, I think the kids would have forgotten it – eventually.

It’s a great show, either if you want to get going on environmental projects at your school and you haven’t done that much, it’s a great way to get kids excited and staff excited, and say: “Here are some great ideas, and here’s some beautiful music, and let’s
“Go.” It’s a good way to launch it. Or, if you’re already doing it, it’s a great way to reinforce what you’re doing, because the kids are realizing: “Oh, it’s not just those teachers who are trying to influence us to do this; these cool musicians are doing it too – are really into it too. So that certainly helps to reinforce it. But if they went away, and then we just didn’t do anything at our school, I think that after awhile kids move on. They get excited about whatever the flavor of the week is at school.

_Do they still sing the songs?

_ I haven’t heard them at school but I think some of them do have the music at home. So likely some of them are still playing the songs, or they would be familiar with the songs if, all of a sudden, they heard them again. They definitely would recognize it, and it would be good memories, I think, for them.

_Were there any other comments that you would like to make?

Well, I found that it was a really enjoyable experience, and I certainly would highly recommend it. I know that this is not supposed to be a commercial for Holly, but I would recommend anybody to include them in their curriculum if they could, because it’s a lot of fun; they make it fun. It’s a very heavy topic, to talk about what’s going on in the world with climate change and that kind of stuff, and I think the kids feel a sense of empowerment when they do something that would help the environment. So if they’re singing, that’s doing something, and doing it in a very joyful way. That’s powerful.

_Did it seem that it influenced the parents?

I think so. I think every bit helps. I think that when you’re watching your kids sing – like I said, those topics can be kind of heavy, in a way – and you see these children, and it’s almost like they’re appealing to the adults: “We’re doing our thing, but you’ve got to do it too; we’re all in this together.” And I think it does hit home. The parents go: “Yes, this is our future; these are our kids. They’re looking at us and they don’t want us to just leave them with the mess. We all have to be working towards cleaning things up.”

...especially with that song that she sings: “I am the Future”?

Yes. That’s a powerful song. I think if we started singing that song at school all of a sudden, the kids would join in, and they would love to hear that song again.

_There are a few like that._
Yes.

OK. Do you think we’re done?

Yes.

Interview with Holly Arntzen (musician)

How does this kind of program contribute to elementary education? How does it fit into what kids are learning in school... not so much academically, but as citizens?

Well, what this program does is it provides a vehicle for project-based learning, cross-curricular learning. And because it’s focused on ecology and sustainability, it has a citizenship element to it that is just built-in because of the subject matter. Bringing music into the school that has this environmental focus enlivens studies; it can enliven studies in many subjects: Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. And we see that happen time and again when we’re in a school. So having the music in the school is a point of stimulation. What it also does is it gives students and teachers a different perspective on what they’re learning. You can have your text material and your coarse material laid out - maybe you’re studying First Nations in British Columbia - and when you come to sing a song, for example “Skin Drum”, which is a song we wrote about First Nations, it provides another context that isn’t there in that curriculum material, but is connected to it. So it brings another dimension. It brings these dimensions of community, of social context for what you are studying. It provides context for what kids are studying – it could be Math activities. They learn that recycling an aluminum pop can can save enough energy to run a television for three hours, [for example]. If you take that as a Math activity and extrapolate how many hours of saved energy your class will achieve if everybody there recycles a pop can a day for the school year, it creates a context for learning Math. It brings that into learning.

What the concerts and the music program do is provide an opportunity for the whole school to work together; it brings the parents and the children and the teachers together and that’s so important. Sometimes school life can get kind of ghettoized for everybody; parents drop their kids off at school, teachers [may be preoccupied with their own concerns], and the kids are somewhere in the middle. What this project does is it brings the school community together in a really joyful way.
Ironically with all the [government] cutbacks to music and education, “Voices of Nature” flourished, starting back in 1999, because all these schools were losing their music specialists, and yet they still have to fulfill those Fine Arts curriculum requirements. So, along we come with this kind of turnkey project, we produce the concert, and children learn music and rhythm and lyrics – all kinds of things. It fulfills those outcomes.

*That is really ironic.*

It’s very ironic, and the other thing this program does, is that it takes everybody [who’s] participating, teachers and students, into the emerging biological sciences. Science is a constantly changing thing, and these songs are about environmental issues that are current now. So it naturally brings that focus, and it does to the audiences as well, because they’re learning things when they hear these songs and hear their children talking about them.

*Do you see it as a jumping-off point, in a way, for many different possible activities and things to study?*

That’s what I mean by project-based learning. The handbooks, the “Cycle of Life” and “Salish Sea” handbooks - that’s what they are. Here’s a song - let’s take a song like “Salmon Circle” which we’re doing in this program here. You can use those song lyrics to study any number of things. So yes, it’s a jumping-off point. You can study First Nations, and the cultural significance of salmon; you can study ecology, and the food web, and the significance of salmon to West Coast ecosystems. You can study the scientific aspects of salmon; you can study the cultural aspects of salmon – the history of our communities.

*In what ways has your program evolved?*

When we did the first program, back in the spring of 1999… My late husband and I (Stephen), we started writing these songs about ecology back in the late ‘80’s. And at that time I was performing at every environmental benefit known to human kind: at the Stein Festival, and events with Green Peace, [with] all these leading-edge speakers of the day talking about the environment. So that fed into the song writing. That was the genesis of how these songs started to be written. And then in 1998, we thought: “You know, I could go sing these…” I’d done school concerts before, but this was different,
because by 10 years later, we’d written a lot of songs about a lot of different ecological issues. And I realized: “Yes, I could go into schools, and teachers could use this as an educational tool, in addition to it being a concert.” So the very first program was at a country school on Vancouver Island. I was just by myself, and I went up to the school once a week for six weeks, and worked with the kids, rehearsing these songs. And then there was a concert in June. It was a total surprise to everyone, including us, because the children embraced the songs. We went into the gym, we did our concert – it was a June night – I remember the teacher saying that so many parents showed up, which is unusual for late spring because everybody gets so busy with baseball and stuff. They don’t tend to schedule a whole lot of evening events at that time of year. And they said all these parents came because over the course of those weeks there was so much buzz happening with the kids [who were] excited about the songs and what was going on; all the parents came. It was just me, and this bunch of [regular] kids; we sang, and at the end of it, everybody jumped to their feet. Stephen Foster, my late husband, [and I] we looked at each other, and the parents and the teachers, and we all went: “What happened?” It was like a fuse got lit, and we knew it. That was a complete surprise, and that’s when we realized: “We have something here.” That’s how it began, with that one concert.

And then what happened was that we got some funding from “Wild BC”, and we produced the first CD in this series. Back then it was called “Running From the Mountains” and it was about watershed stewardship. And we worked with an environmental educator in Victoria and developed these songs, and he also developed the first kind of template for a handbook. That concept of having the songs with a teaching resource right connected to it, that’s how that began. Following that, in 2000, we worked with a principal at another school in the area, and then we did a great big giant concert in the University of Victoria auditorium with the entire school of 400 children all going to the theater. That’s the first time we got a taste of what that was like. So it started out as a little project in a 90-student country school, we then went to developing a handbook, we then went to a major theater, and it became an entertainment cultural event beyond a typical school concert. It was the relevance of the songs and the issues, plus how impassioned the children were, singing these songs; that’s what started to drive it. And then Stephen lined up sponsorship funding from some very unlikely sources: Parks
Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada funded our next couple of…From there we produced “Salish Sea”, which is about marine conservation, and they funded a handbook and the principal/curriculum developer colleague helped develop that, and then it kicked up to a whole other level of sophistication, and development, and refinement, and funding too. Unlike typical arts groups we were getting funding from a totally different source, and that was a huge advantage, of course.

Along the way, we were producing these albums; over the course of ten years we’ve produced 14 albums in English and French, and all of them have children’s choirs singing on them, hundreds of thousands of children, actually. It was part of the package. It was very exciting; we’d go into a school program, and the kids would get to sing on a CD, which then, parents would buy. But it was a professionally produced CD with a rocking band and the music was not “kids’ music”, so that was part of its evolution too. It carved out its niche because it was something adults enjoyed as well. So [due to] creating those CDs, and because we had an audience of adults, that’s why we attracting funding from the government sources, because they were trying to get people’s attention about issues like marine conservation, and people weren’t interested. Families are too busy raising their kids and doing their work, and they don’t read government brochures and they don’t go to meetings. But when they’re sitting in that theater listening to their children sing and talk about these issues they’re sensitized, they’re going: “Oh, marine conservation… right!” It’s more than two words.

*Does emotion play a part in it?*

Very much. That’s the driver, in a way, because it does engage people’s emotions. It’s their children, and it’s music. Music is an emotional medium, and it connects people to these issues in that dimension. And that’s where people really do start to care, and actually start to change behaviors.

And from there, we struck up a partnership with two recycling companies, and they provided core funding, and funding for the “Cycle of Life” handbook; that was a big project.

*It’s a fat one.*

It’s a fat one, and [we had] a big team of writers, educators, scientists, and artists. And those projects all got translated into French, so that was part of its evolution, putting
it into the other language. And the fact that those handbooks were provincially recommended by the BC Ministry of Education; that was a huge leap forward, too.

*When did they become recommended?*

That would have been in about 2005. The Ministry put out a call for new Science resources for the new science curriculum. When you looked at the evaluation sheets, (this is just trivia, but I’m proud of it), they had about three dozen resources that they evaluated. This was Kindergarten to Grade 7. Most of them would be good for, say Grade 2 and Grade 5, or they’d fulfill outcomes in Kindergarten, and Grades 1 and 4. Ours fulfilled outcomes in Kindergarten to Grade 7 – both “Salish Sea” and “Cycle of Life” – right across the board. They were the only resources to do that. So that was part of its evolution, was that credibility, that pedagogical sign-off.

Another part of its evolution was that Stephen lined up an opportunity at Village 900 in Camosun College Radio Station in Victoria. We produced a radio show called “The Voices of Nature”. We produced three seasons of 16 episodes of half hour shows. He raised the sponsorship. They had music, with children singing, science information, and humor, and we scripted them. In the first season, we wrote scripts and we recorded the shows live, in concert, with the whole theater filled with all the adults and the kids doing their scripted parts and the songs, and we did three seasons of those. It was all moving in the direction of creating more media products. It was a way to feature the music we were creating and the work we were doing.

And then we succeeded in raising core funding in 2005. Stephen put that together, three years of core funding, which we had never had. That’s funding that is not project-specific, so we could do other things. We could build what we were doing. And that was consummated on July 11, 2005. It is written in the annals of history at the Artist Response Team. Stephen and I founded the company, and we wrote together, and he was the producer. We were soul mates and partners, and we did everything together, all of this work. So we put that core funding together, which was a huge leap forward, huge.

Part of the evolution of what’s happened is Artist Response Team is a for-profit company. Now, we haven’t made a lot of profit yet, but that was always the intention. We’ve never had charitable funding, to speak of. Anyway, we put that core funding together, and a month later, Stephen died. He was like the driving force. I was the
singing part of it; he was the vision and business mind behind it. So part of its evolution was, that it really changed at that point, just because he was the soul – it wasn’t there.

We’d started working with Kevin in 2003, on that radio show. He was a student at Camosun College, and part of the deal was that they wanted us to hire a student from their communications course. Kevin was in that course and he became the radio show editor and host. So we started working with him in that capacity. He’s a life-long musician, songwriter, and performer in his own right. He started working in more and more areas, doing work on the handbook and graphics, and then he started to perform, as well, as a musician. After Stephen died, he was the person that knew the most about running the business and all these other aspects, so he came into that role. There was all that work there to be done, and he was the obvious person to do it. So that developed. The last album that Stephen wrote and created was: “Shade of Our Trees”. That came out in the spring of 2006, after his death. And then what started to happen was that Kevin and I started to write songs together. His background is in rock music; that’s where he’s been all his life. Mine has always been more in jazz, classical, blues, and folk – that’s my background. The songs we’ve started writing are the ones you’ve heard here, like: “I am the Future” and “Up Your Watershed”. Naturally, there’s a different quality to them.

And he started to come and do the school programs with me. Before that, Stephen would be with me and he would be doing all the production around it, but I was the sole performer. Then Kevin and I started doing them together, and so part of the evolution has been having this male/female duo presenting to the students. That’s changed the dynamic in a wonderful way, partly because of who he is. Kids just look at him and they know who he is – he’s a rocker; he looks like one. He has a wonderful heart; he loves kids. But to have a man there, and a woman, just has to increase the uptake, especially amongst the 11, 12, and 13-year-old boys. So that’s been part of its evolution too, and its energy.

*What inspires you about the program?*

Well, number one is that I’m a life-long addicted performer and singer, and all the music that we’re doing – I really love the music. We always have been trying to write the very best songs that we could – make them good songs.
What inspires me is that [when] we go from one community to another, to have all these teachers saying: “Yes, we’re going to put a focus into this; we’re going to take our educational time and we’re going to have our kids learn these songs.” That’s pretty inspiring, because the music has a life; it’s being used, and music is meant to be used. And for me to come in and have that kind of usage going on makes me feel awfully worthwhile. And of course, it’s being used because the kids love the songs and the parents love them too. For any performer, that inspires you. You think: “Oh, you like that. OK, I’ll do it some more.” So that inspires me about it.

And, back about thirty years ago, Stephen and I committed our lives to this work, and committed our family’s wellbeing to this work; we invested anything we might have to leave to our children into it. And now Kevin is in the same place; he is completely dedicated to this work and there’s been such an investment in it.

And partly what inspires me is that I completely believe that what we’re doing is as needed as that dirt out there that those daffodils are growing in. This has to happen. Communities need culture that nurtures the community. That’s what music was always intended to be – not intended, it always has been that. It’s been totally corrupted by what the mass media, global corporate monoculture crap mass music stuff is – this manufacture thing. It’s white sugar being spoon fed to people that just don’t know any better. Sorry, I don’t mean to insult anybody but that’s not good for you; it’s not.

So, here we are, producing these really great concerts, creating music that’s finding a home because it’s useful to people – that inspires me. It’s not an easy job. I’ve been working at it going on three decades now, and we’re just getting to that threshold where we’re starting to generate revenues that sustain it so that we’re not having to go out and fund raise. In other words, sales, and it’s getting to the stage of being commercialized in a good way, generating money from selling stuff as opposed to having to go out and ask people to give you money to do the work. That inspires me. I really, really want that to happen, partly because I want it to make more money for us and for the work. But also, again, I believe it needs to happen. We need to develop an enlightened capitalism. We need to have work that is generated by sustaining and nurturing communities and nature, as opposed to the kind of capitalism we’ve let run rampant around the planet that’s destroying nature. And that inspires me about it too. I
just think this is really worth doing, even though I do feel tired sometimes. Somebody’s got to do it.

The other thing that really inspires me about it is over the years I’ve learned how much there is in a child’s being and in their eyes when they’re excited and they’re singing and they’re happy to see you. That’s an energy source, and that inspires me.

*Cool.*

And here’s the other thing that inspires me. It creates a lot of work. Tomorrow we’re going to have our whole band here. Our guitar players are the best musicians on the planet - they’re as good as it gets. We get to do these shows, and we get paid to do it, and pay others. That really inspires me.

*How do you select the music that’s going to be used for a school?*

There are a number of things that come into that. As I mentioned before, we produced a whole series of albums on different topics. I mentioned “Salish Sea”, 2000, that was on marine conservation. In 2001 we produced “Winds of Change”, that was about climate change. In 2002 we produced “Voices of Nature”; the theme was sustainability. In 2003, “The Cycle of Life” – the theme was endangered species. 2005 was “Shade of our Trees”, sustainable forestry and trees. And now “I am the Future”, and along the way we’ve created handbooks. What’s happened over the years is the new project is what you do a lot of the songs from, because it’s new.

*Do they all have handbooks?*

No. No, we’ve just done the two.

To some extent we communicate with the schools, and we ask what areas of focus [they need]. “Are you doing composting, are you studying First Nations? What are you up to?” Then we choose songs to support whatever they’ve got going on, so that plays a major role too. [For example], we just did a tour this last year that was funded by the Fraser Salmon and Watershed Program, and we called it: “Up Your Watershed”. [Also] we [recently] did a project up in Fort Saint John, where the city brought us in to help publicize their new community energy plan. So we chose songs that were connected to energy conservation and ecological footprint, and that sort of thing. If we’re working in a French Immersion school, we choose a bunch of French songs. Here, at this school,
which has a really high percentage of Asian students, we’ve chosen to do a song that
we’ve had translated into Punjabi.

Did you write it in English?

It’s “Voices of Nature”; it’s the English song, and then we worked with a highly
respected elder Indian musician and a translator, and it became a completely different
song, but it is “Voices of Nature” in Punjabi. We choose the songs that are connected.
For example, when we’re up in the Peace River country we have a song that mentions the
Peace River.

I got curious about how the age of the children affects what you pick.

With the little kids, the five and six-year-olds that can’t read, we have a certain
part of our repertoire that’s geared towards really young children. They are echo-singing
songs, they’re more repetitive…

...lots of actions?

...lots of actions. And the ways the ideas are strung together are simpler. Young
children can sing a very adult song, like say, “Saltwater”, but they get it because of how
the ideas are strung together. It goes by slow enough, and there are images there that they
can latch onto. So, a five-year-old can sing “Saltwater”. They may not understand
everything they’re singing, and obviously they don’t, but they still remember it and it
makes sense to them. So those are criteria for younger children. For the 11, 12, and 13-
year-olds, we choose the coolest, rockiest songs we can, because they won’t sing stuff
that’s not cool. And the seven to ten-year-olds, you can throw anything at them and they
will embrace it.

Thank you so much.