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June 8th, 2008

To whom it may concern,

I have recently had the great honour of working with Holly Arntzen, Kevin Wright and the dream band in a Voices of Nature concert in our community. I am a music specialist with School District #23 and have been putting on family concerts and events for 20 years.

A year ago I met with the 'Voices of Nature' Artist's Response Team (Holly and Kevin) about coming to Glenmore Elementary school during the week of May 19th-23rd, 2008. They gave us high quality resources to help us prepare for this event. A few months before they arrived, I started working with our intermediate students to help them learn the 8 songs which would become the core of our concert. They covered themes from sustainability to world hunger to the beauty of the earth. We practiced, loving the rhythms and the melodies and how the lyrics fell into the musical line but not expecting the change that was to come.

As we rehearsed, the words of these songs imbedded themselves deeper and deeper into our hearts and our minds. Being a music specialist, I have always known the power of music and its ability to accelerate the learning process; I just wasn't prepared to feel a change come over me during this unit of environmental study. As we sang about leaving a healthy earth to our next generation, about over consumption and sustainability my students would ask deep questions of me. The content was seeping in, rewiring their thinking towards stewardship of our planet in a more powerful and immediate way than all the literature they have read, programs they have seen and lectures they have heard. In short, the power of both the music and the message was working its magic in our students...and strangely, in me.

I have always considered myself a person conscious of what I can give back to my community and my planet, but I hadn't known that there was more change needed in me. As a result of these songs, this opportunity to rehearse and move to their rhythms and lyrics, I felt myself changing; becoming more conscious of the result of my actions and the things I can do to make a difference. I saw the same in our student body of almost 600 children. They have started taking on causes such as raising money for others in need, challenging our mayor to get more people to turn out the lights during Earth Hour. In short, it is a shift which could result in.... who knows!? Who knows how far reaching this experience will go, but the ripple effect has already taken on an energy of its own.

Holly Arntzen is an inspired environmentalist – able to reach the spirit of a child through music to communicate the message. Her support team is strong, musical and highly gifted with children. I recommend the experience to groups of students, children and families everywhere. The legacy Holly Arntzen, Kevin Wright and the Dream Band leave is powerful and palpable, creating real change right before your very eyes.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Draper, Music Specialist, Glenmore School, Kelowna
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