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Dear Bianca and Kelly,

On behalf of Imagine High Integrated Arts & Technology Secondary, I (we?) would like to thank Tire Stewardship BC and Interchange Recycling for making it possible for our students to collaborate with Good Medicine Songs and the Artist Response Team, and participate in the “Listen to the Stream/Xwelelam te Stótelō” project. It has had many positive impacts for our students, teachers and families. Your support meant that we explored new educational territory in ecology, music, Indigenous world view and reconciliation.

Just prior to the pandemic, I contacted Amber Kostuchenko at the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. We were looking for meaningful Indigenous educational experiences for our students. Early in 2021, Amber introduced us to Dr. Lolehawk Laura Buker, Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright of Good Medicine Songs. This led to a meeting at the school with me and our Vice Principal, Stacey Parsons. Together we conceived a collaborative project.

Imagine High’s calendar is organized in an integrated linear and semester system and have a blend of integrated core and elective offerings. Our science, math and humanities teachers, Kaitlyn Dempsey, Sonja Wykpis and Vivian Zeng headed up the Stream Restoration Learning Community. Our music teacher, Matt Slykhuis, headed up the Rock Band elective. These teachers brought their students into the project, because they could see so many ties between the type of deep relational, experiential learning the project could offer and the competencies outlined within the curriculum.

This was a completely new venture for all of us. We didn’t know how it would turn out. We couldn’t predict how our 15-year-old grade 10 students would respond. The results surprised, amazed and surpassed our expectations on every level. Students and teachers progressed through 10 weeks of sessions. At the first introductory performance by Good Medicine Songs, students were asked: “Why did you sign up for Stream Restoration? What do you think it is important?” Student responses were passionate, thoughtful and visionary.

This project proved to be one of the most beautiful examples of authentic cross-curricular learning at our school. Students embraced the opportunities to learn in an authentic way, and in particular, built deep and sustaining relationships to language, the land and community. It served as an example of what reconciliation could look like from a practical, relational level- they truly internalized the learning and emerged as allies and contributors, with a commitment to be future stewards of nature. They didn’t just

*learn* things, they *felt* things. They also felt empowered to share this work with their school community and beyond; their learning reached far beyond the walls of our school.

Students and staff have also carried this work and learning with them past the school year; this project has received attention both locally, provincially and nationally as a feature story on APTN. Students participated in a series of follow up events, performance and conferences. This meant a lot to students because it connected them into the community, it gave their work in helping to create a bilingual song in Halq'eméylem and English a context; they could see how it was meaningful and meant so much to the Stó:lō language carriers that they were singing in their language. The community of learners has shared their music and reflection at Chilliwack Canada Day ,UFV Chowiyes-Xwithet/Rise Up-Wake Up gathering, BC School Superintendents Conference at the Westin Bayshore and this year's UFV Educational Leadership summit. Students received standing ovations for their performances. They touched the audiences with their passion, presence and performance.

The visit with Rosemary Sutton and Kelly Duran was very meaningful. It helped students to make connections between positive actions such as recycling tires, oil and antifreeze, and mitigating the climate crisis. Make connections to action for reconciliation as restoring watersheds is an act of reconciliation with the Stó:lō First Nations. Students talked about how colonial mechanisms and actions over the past several hundred had degraded the Stó:lō peoples' ability to survive and their culture. They learned to connections with the infrastructure that supports our lives, and how we can reduce our carbon footprint.

Students feel great pride every time they sing in Halq'eméylem. The rockers were taking the lead in singing Chowiyes-Xwithet. The students' arrangement and performance of Listen to the Stream was exceptional, it really showcased their talents. Students who often come to school late excitedly met the bus to leave to perform at the BCSSA conference at 4:30am! These performances have built their confidence to share and perform, and they've witnessed the broader community response and embrace of their actions.

As a school community, we so appreciated the opportunity to work closely with Good Medicine Songs and the Artist Response Team. Your support of this project opened up a world of experiences for our students and our teachers.

Sincerely,



Brooke Haller

Principal, Imagine High Integrated Art & Technology Secondary School