

Concert in the Schoolyard—Get Outdoors style!

by Kim Fulton, WildBC Facilitator, Armstrong BC

In our “neck of the woods, and in many schools across Canada, multi faith, December concerts are magical events where parents and other family members come together to enjoy and celebrate the season, their children’s talents, and socialize with other families.

These events take lots of planning, rehearsing, and organization. They are often stressful for the children and for staff to organize, especially when there are several schools in the district trying to find a suitable date (not too early in December). Scheduling the sharing of chairs, stages, risers, lights, and music systems for their concerts all in the last week of classes before winter break is very challenging. Most often the concerts are held in overcrowded, inadequately ventilated, gyms with poor acoustics.

Faced with these challenges, the staff at Armstrong Elementary School, District 83 North Okanagan Shuswap came up with a creative solution to ease some of this stress and to tie in with their yearlong focus of a Get Outdoors theme...have the concert outside!

They used the sliding hill for their risers and stage, the audience stood, they built a huge bonfire, served hot chocolate, and had a trail walk for families lighted by solar lights. It was a huge success! Families and staff enjoyed the evening and being outdoors celebrating with the children. Staff reduced their stress levels substantially compared to having the event indoors as they were able to choose the best date for themselves and tie it in with their year- long Get Outdoors theme.

The theme was supported in part by a HCTF Education GO Grant, to help students get outdoors learning in and about nature. Staff prepared for their Get Outdoors theme by taking Project Wild, Get Outdoors and Below Zero professional development workshops. These workshops provided resources and lessons for teaching outdoors. A GO Grant, helped provide equipment and support for outdoor learning. Teachers and students spent the months leading up to the outdoor concert exploring and learning about their outdoor local environment using Place Based learning strategies.

The outdoor winter concert was a wonderful way build on their outdoor theme and bring everyone in the school community together to celebrate. There are plans underway for the children to plant trees and shrubs in a brand new city park along a local creek.

Maybe schools could consider holding other traditional assemblies such as Remembrance Day, Earth Day, and Graduation Ceremonies in the Great Outdoors!!



Armstrong Elementary School's outdoor winter concert.

