

## **Evaluative Summary of the Swinomish Music Mentors Program**

The Swinomish Music Mentors Program was co-facilitated by music director Todd Denny and Jose Gutierrez in a week-long residency. They coached tribal youth (from 8 to 18 years of age) and staff to create and present their violence and drug prevention music as mentors to their peers in area schools. The Swinomish Music Mentors Program was subsequently featured on National Native news radio.

The program, with the help of a tribal elder, incorporated Swinomish Lushootseed language within the students' music. It is noteworthy that four youth who had been adjudicated by the tribal drug court successfully completed the program

The Swinomish Music Mentors program can be regarded as an outstanding success. Evidence for this conclusion was found in the students' pre- and post-questionnaires, their written personal assessments of their experiences and the summary judgments of workshop outcomes by participating adults.

Questionnaire findings show strong support for the efficacy of using music to enable youth to express personal concerns about drug use and the presence of violence in their lives. Other findings revealed positive student attitudes toward education, motivation to do well in school, their intention to complete high school and pursue further education.

Verbatim written statements, representative of the 19 Swinomish youth participants follow:

*Music can help us stay away from drugs and alcohol.*

*I hope you can come back, this was a great experience!*

*Music is more fun than alcohol.*

*This was cool and awesome!*

*I would now choose music instead of alcohol.*

*Because of this workshop I am not as shy as I was before.*

*Are we going to do more of this, this year?*

*Now I have a way to express myself.*

*This was the best experience I have ever had.*

*I would definitely like to do it again.*

The students' comments are unusual in that they answered unasked questions: e.g., they revealed an understanding of the relationship of drug use to their personal lives and manifested an acceptance of adult support in staying clean and sober.

Follow-up site visits and correspondence have confirmed the strong, positive attitudes of the Swinomish youth participants toward their workshop experiences as well as their intention to write and perform more personal poetry set to music.

Dr. Frederick A. Rodgers September 25,  
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### **Additional Information**

Co-sponsors of the Swinomish Music Mentors Program were the Washington State Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse and the Northwest Educational Service District #189.

Gear Up With Music is a curriculum developed by Todd Denny that empowers youth to create and perform their original poetry and music as peer educators.

**[www.GearUpWithMusic.com](http://www.GearUpWithMusic.com)**