



## Scream for Change: The Power of Songs

Kristian Basaraba  
Tenth Grade Social Studies  
Next Step High School

In this project, students wrote, recorded, and performed a protest song for an audience. Students first explored the history of protest music and its power to evoke change. Working alongside local musician Braden Sustrik, the students drafted ideas for their song and chose musical instruments to learn and play. They decided that the Woody Guthrie classic “This Land Is Your Land” would form the backbone of the song. Each student wrote their own verse on a social justice issue identified earlier, and as this process unfolded, the group of students evolved into a band named Morality Control Unit—a name used ironically in order to raise awareness of the Pisces Bathhouse Raid in Edmonton on May 30, 1981. Armed with their newly penned verses, instruments, and song, the band recorded the students’ song, entitled “Scream for Change (This Land Is Your Land).” The band then embarked on a three-school tour to perform the song for a total of 250 elementary students.

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### Teacher Reflection

The ultimate goal of the project was to write, record and perform for an audience a protest song at a May Day assembly; for the most part mission accomplished! The initial plan was for the song to focus on the labour movement and workers’ rights, but it deviated from that to be a song about social justice issues of climate change, mental health, sexual equality rights and Indigenous rights and reconciliation. The students all felt strongly about these issues, and the project focus shifted to accommodate that. If I did this again, I would like to have had a tighter timeline and more frequent jam sessions to carry the momentum.

—Kristian Basaraba

### Student Reflection

I didn’t have much musical experience before joining the band and I thought that would be a problem. I ended up playing the bass for the first time and was happy to find it was not as difficult as I thought it would be. Going on tour to different schools was also a refreshing experience because we got to perform the song we wrote in front of elementary classes. At first I was nervous about performing, but I got over my anxiety once we started playing and ended up having a good time. I was surprised when so many teachers came up to us after the performance to tell us how much they liked the song. I never expected it to have such an enormous impact on people, and I’m glad they enjoyed listening to it as much as I did making it.

—Becca M.

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