

THE SQUAMISH CHIEF

Striking the right chords

Musicians start program to put instruments in teenagers' hands

[Rebecca Aldous](#) / Squamish Chief

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PHOTO BY Rebecca Aldous/the squamish chief SacredFire musicians Marie Josée Vermette, left, and Dean Richards hand over a guitar to Anna Lippman. The Squamish Youth Resource Centre is setting up a music room.

It's just a small garage – concrete floor, plain walls and an old, worn couch sitting in one corner. But it doubles as one of the best jam zones in town, Anna Lippman says.

The Squamish Youth Resource Centre manager opens up the garage door of the building behind the youth centre, spilling light onto a drum set. Amid the air-hockey and foosball table, the centre has slowly been building up a music room.

"There's a couple of things wrong with the drum set that we are fixing up," she says, noting the centre also has a bass guitar.

This month, the organization received word they're going to get a little help with their goal. Squamish-based international world-beat music healing duo SacredFire are kick starting a program to provide Squamish teenagers with free access to musical instruments. Beside contributing some of their own instruments – today it's a sleek electric guitar – Marie Josée Vermette and Dean Richards are donating a dollar from each sale of their new digital album, Journey to Infinity, to buying instruments for the teen centre.

It's pretty cool, Lippman acknowledges. The instruments are popular, as is a place for teens to hang out and bang on drums without parents telling them to be quiet, she notes.

"It gives kids a chance to try instruments and decide what they like," Lippman adds, noting down the road she hopes to organize a battle of the bands. "Tons of kids are coming in and playing the guitars."

The initial instrument Vermette bought was a keyboard. It was her first big purchase as a young adult and one that helped shape her life.

"It was like finding the key to a dream," she recalls.

The keyboard led to an electric drum kit, which led to a bass guitar and eventually djembe drums. Expression through music is extremely empowering, Vermette says. It's a healthy way to vent and explore emotions while weaving connections with others.

"For many kids, playing an instrument can help them deal with crisis and stay out of trouble," Vermette says.

Through the musicians' and youth centre's partnership, Vermette and Richards want to give teenagers a chance to delve into their creativity. Squamish residents can donate used instruments to SacredFire's Instruments for Kids Program by visiting www.sacredfiremusic.com or by calling (604) 848-9543.

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