

St. Bonaventure Legacy Project

By *Joanne Melo*, Principal, St. Bonaventure Catholic Elementary School, Toronto CDSB



What happens when you let an idea swell beyond the let's talk about it stage? At St. Bonaventure, we ended up with a professionally recorded CD as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations!

Last year at St. Bonaventure, our music teacher Peggy Sheehan, our special education teacher Jim Graham as the accompanist, and a Grade 6 class choir recorded *O Canada*. We began to play this each morning over the PA as part of our opening exercises, but the quality of the recording was not good.

Steve Lansky, a parent at St. Bonaventure proposed the idea that the choir record our national anthem in a professional sound studio. Almost immediately, the project grew. Steve Lansky became chair of our St. Bonaventure 50th Anniversary Committee and the *O Canada* CD became our Legacy Project. We wanted this CD to serve as a reminder to future generations of our school's accomplishments. I was so impressed by the choir's talent that I supported moving the idea into reality by providing financial backing. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.

The sixteen choir members had a great experience at Cherry Beach Sound, a recording studio on Toronto's lakefront. The early morning bus ride downtown had everyone abuzz; wondering what would be in store for him or her and speculating about what exactly would take place. The looks on the children's faces, when they put on the headphones and heard the first playback of their recording, were priceless. They also learned first hand how much work is involved in producing a high-end recording. One choir member commented with surprise, "I never thought we'd have to record the same song so many times!"

Overall, it was an incredible learning experience for each of the choir members. Their efforts have resulted in a final product of which we are extremely proud. The CD is entitled *Peace & Harmony* and has received rave reviews. It went from *O Canada* to a six-song collection, including my personal favourite, an amazing rendition of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*.

Our school community has supported this endeavour with fervour. The St. Bonaventure Catholic school advisory council embraced the project, in order to bring it to fruition. Our 50th Anniversary Committee organized two CD release parties. The first included a performance by the choir, for family and friends, with gifts of roses, photos and the very first copies of the disc for each choir member. The release coincided with the feast of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. Our parish community and the Franciscan friars of St. Bonaventure have journeyed with us all the way. Their support included allowing us to host the first release party in the parish centre and inviting us to sell copies after masses. The Catholic Women's League has also been a great fan.

Our second release party was in our school gym for students. The creation of this CD has provided a means through which home, school and parish have joined forces to build what is truly at the centre of Catholic Education – community.

What is everyone talking about now? "If we raise enough money to cover the cost of this CD, can we record a Christmas CD next year?" Another idea waiting to be developed!

Copies of the Peace & Harmony CD are available from the school at 1340 Leslie St. Toronto ON M3C 2K9 for \$10.00. Contact Joanne Melo at 416-393-5263 for further information.