

ROBBNASH



Evaluation 2014

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PART ONE

The Story of Robb Nash

INTRODUCTIONS: STRIKING A CHORD

"HANGING OUT WITH SOME BUDDIES..."

The gym goes dark; the two screens at the front are the sole source of light. The only noise is the sound of a flat-lined EKG suddenly starting to register a heartbeat, as the narrator begins to tell Robb Nash's story we are jolted by the booming sound of a car crash echoing off the walls. The room is filled with intrigue, curiosity, skepticism, and even hardened dismissal. Robb walks out and immediately a bond is cultivated. In the words of a social worker who first saw Robb at a conference, and who, quite frankly, as she describes it, had no interest in being there, "I was immediately compelled. I *needed* to listen."

The Robb Nash team, as we learn from the opening video, goes into schools, youth detention centers, and community organizations to discuss difficult and emotional issues of addiction, self-harm, suicide, bullying and cultivating strength through a thoughtfully crafted, and yet fluid, method of storytelling. Storytelling is a critical quality of education¹; it allows us to make sense of difficult and emotional topics. Storytelling also makes us comfortable; it allows us to take our guards down. One student in Central Alberta who recently saw Robb wrote:

¹ Clandinin & Connelly (1989) Narrative and Story in Practice and Research

“the way it was set up with music .. different *stories* ... funny jokes...it felt as if I was hanging with some buddies [...] giving the sense of friendship in a relaxed safe environment to listen .. laugh ... and open my heart .. I related to your *story*” (italics added).

Robb tells stories that allow his audience to ‘relate’ to them, to understand who they are, who they have been, and who they are becoming. Through storytelling, Robb invites engagement with these difficult and emotional topics from multiple levels, offering spaces for others to think through and connect with his experiences. The following is a story of the power of story in Robb Nash’s work.

“LIFE AFTER DEATH”

If this is my last day

And I am left for dead

I need to find a way

To say what I’ve left unsaid

Give me One Last Breath to say I’m sorry

One last chance to make it right

One Last Breath, one last day’s all I needed.

What I wouldn’t do with one last breath. (One Last Breath)

As Robb Nash banged out the chords to *One Last Breath*, the silence in the gym deepened itself. Resonating were the phrases, *Left for dead // need to find a way // ... I walked with a veil on my eyes // But those days are over // Dead and gone, is the lie I used to live // And so I wake each day, just praying that you give // give me one last breath*. While Robb shared his story of life and death or more pointedly, life after death, the silence crept in. I say crept in for with sharing, Robb took up a tone of humor. Sitting in his stool with guitar in hand, I watched as Robb’s story of life after death gripped the audience. Unearthing a panorama of emotions, through his story, Robb took us on a lifelong journey, from being filled with anger to being set free;

he leads us through story and reminds us of the important question of, *Why do you do what you do?* Rather than, *What do you do?*

"THE TEENAGERS ARE TAKEN BY THE IMPACT..."

We flew out to the north of Saskatchewan and landed on a barely visible airstrip near a frozen lake. The exhaust coming from two vans that were waiting there, were the only evidence of human presence. After unloading the gear from the back hatch of the turbo prop Perimeter Air plane and getting into the vans, the band and I headed for the school on the reserve. The community that makes a living in mining mainly, does not get much entertainment. They have to fly out to Fort McMurray to shop and go to the movies. The school looks nice and well equipped. The roadies set up the speakers and beamer while Robb talks to the principal and the counsellors. He always checks in to get an understanding of what is happening in the community. We had already learnt from the driver that suicides are frequent, even among youth, that depression and subsequent alcohol abuse is a real problem in the area.

As students come into the gym and find a place on the wrestling mats that cover the floor, Robb walks around with a basketball and shoots some hoops, subtly observing the youth. Then the lights lower and the video starts. A sharp sound and images of a speedometer and a black sky, a pulsing line and a voice over, introducing Robb's life story. The teenagers are taken by the impact and welcome him to the stage.

"THERE IS NOT DOUBT THAT THEY ARE 'ALL IN'..."

I have never experienced anything like this. If hope exists anywhere in this world, it is embodied in this Robb Nash team. There is no doubt that they are *'all in'* and so are the many people who experience the show. You can't leave feeling unaffected, and this applies to youth and adults who attend the performances.

I would later meet up with band again in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In all, I would experience ten shows in three provinces, and I cried at every one. We were at schools in the British Properties in West Vancouver where the students are dropped off each day by parents driving BMW's, to small rural schools in disadvantaged communities in the prairies where assemblies are banned due to student behavior. I saw highly privileged

kids and some who were struggling to survive and everyone in between who were moved by the show.

MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH STORY

“CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE AUDIENCE TO RELATE...”

“It’s the right mixture of goofy and gritty, lightening up the presentation while still discussing things that really need to be said, even if hearing them is a little hard on people.” Educator, Central Alberta Middle School

Through audio/visual techniques and a variety of styles – from ‘goofy’ to ‘gritty’ -- Robb Nash presents his story in multiple forms, once again, creating many opportunities for the audience to relate to the all-too-important message of hope: “to make positive life choices and lead lives of significance and purpose” (RobbNash.com). Something captures the audience’s attention right from the start, as the social worker had articulated. Robb tells us that he is going to sing one of the saddest songs he has written and then laments about the 2012-2013 NHL strike/lockout. Robb mentions to me later that he uses the first song and the impersonations at the beginning to feel out the audience. Each space is different with different needs, and he goes on to tell me that it took time to find a balance between humor and serious, and even though each show may seem similar and simultaneously off-the-cuff, he makes subtle changes as he reads the audience.

“Who here is happy just to get out of class for an hour?” Robb jokes with the audience. Several hands shoot up and Robb chuckles looking at Jonny and shrugged his shoulders to ease the possible tension that people just told him they were not interested in what he had to say. The truth is, there is still quite a bit of suspicion and dismissal circulating through the audience: youth who may be tired of people telling them how to think, feel, and behave; adults who may be wary of his use of Rock N’ Roll to ‘teach’ such sensitive and important issues. Another social worker from central Alberta had this to say after the show:

“The day of the performance, I watched as the youth sauntered into the room. They all had the same look on their face of why do I have to be here. For some it had been a mandatory expectation. To watch them drawn

into every word and to captivate them with every song was remarkable. At the end of the show, the youth ran to meet the group face to face. They wanted autographs, pictures, or for someone on the team to hear their story. Every member of the team gave each youth their undivided attention. So after spending an hour telling them how special they were, they made them feel just that. [...] Although reaching one would have been a success and made it all worthwhile, reaching as many as you did, staff included, made being part of the experience a true gift.”

Robb’s use of storytelling allows for dismantling of our guards and ultimately cultivates compassion and connections. Storytelling invokes affective responses in ways that other methods like providing statistical data and lecturing about the causes and effects of our decisions, for example, cannot. Through these affective responses, storytelling helps us understand our own feelings². The principal of one school noted:

“...PUSHING EACH ONE OF US TO ... MAKE SENSE OF OURSELVES WAS GRIPPING.”

Travelling to my first show, I was ambivalent. I thought about the evaluation process. What would it look like? How might we qualitatively evaluate Robb Nash? I soon realized at the beginning of the show that what Robb was doing could not be easily packaged/commodified/quantified into some readily available chart or program. Much of his work is incommensurable. The way he reached everyone in some way through his life story, pushing each one of us to search within our every lived moment to make sense of ourselves was gripping. Supposedly, I am here to evaluate, to make note of how Robb meets the needs of these youth, youth labeled/classified as problematic. What I found instead is that Robb’s work need not be easily contained by these boundaries. In that moment I was confronted with my history. I felt I was moved from the safe ground of evaluator to be placed within the zone of being troubled, of being traumatized, of being some problematic youth to now have to search through my new-found tapestry of affect to make sense of what it means to be human.

² Hinyard, L. J. & M. W. Kreuter (2007). Using narrative communication as a tool for health behavior change: A conceptual, theoretical and empirical overview. *Health, Education, and Behavior*, 34(5), 777-792

A principal from Manitoba captures Robb's ability to read the audience and provide the space and time needed for each one of us (the youth in particular) to make connections with his story and our lives:

Robb's presentation was fabulous! He had the students' attention from the first second the presentation started. They were so involved and engaged. The kids were just brimming with smiles when they actually got a chance to talk with him at the end and to get their pictures taken. I was so impressed with how patient he was and that he just didn't run off as soon as he was done. He waited for each student to come to him at their own pace. He could tell that some were slowly mustering up the courage to come and speak to him. He is very good at reading the students' body language and has a way of knowing if someone wants to talk with him. The entire crew is a top notch group of individuals who really care for kids. We need more Robb's in our world who understand kids the way he does. Once again I would like to thank Robb and his crew for a fantastic day. He made every one of gr. 6-8 students leave our school with a smile. Thank you again! (Principal, Secondary School, MB)

"KEEPING THE BALANCE IN HIS EMOTIONS IS HIS FORTE..."

The show is cleverly built up and is always adjusted to the audience. At one school where a student had committed suicide recently Robb gathered the teachers before the show and discussed what elements of the show should be skipped in their opinion. He starts out with some gags to feel the sentiment in the students. And plays a first song accompanied by video images. It is a funny tune and the images make the students laugh. His humour is one of the important ingredients in the show. By opening them up to that emotion enables him to also talk about the problematic aspects of his story and his message. Keeping the balance in the emotions is his forte.

Robb started his professional career as an entertainer and radio performer. And that quality supports his message strongly. He knows how to work with an audience and he loves it. Also he is a great pedagogue. He reads and understands children well and that is a rare quality these days. Youth are left to themselves too often in Canada. Not many grownups choose to bond with youth and really connect. Robb understands the boundaries

of his care giving well and he is clear about it: “I am not a counsellor or a therapist,” he notes in every presentation. Yet, he spends as much time as the kids want after the show, providing a space for them to talk without any expectations of counselling or solutions. He always talks about how pain is terrible but that strength is always more.

The impact of the time spent after the show is worded well by this student who wrote a long email to Robb:

“ ... And when you came to my school, you stayed and talked to every single person that wanted to talk to you. I did come up to you and get your autograph and had a picture with a bunch of my friends, and I was there afterschool for a while and I saw you take your time and talk to every kid that wanted to share their story to you. Near when you were going to leave, I saw this girl I that didn’t really know, that was younger than me, want to talk to you and you sat down near the doors and let her talk to you. After seeing that, I realized how many people actually do go through problems on a daily basis and usually you do think of that, and how it happens everywhere, but you never think that its to people you are close to, you know, or even in your own small school.”

The patience of both Robb and the students is worth noting:

“I waited 30 minutes to get your autograph on the card you gave us. I will tell you this, it was worth the wait when that person possibly just saved your life. And I will keep it by my bed, every night. Just to know, that someone cares.”

And as another student writes:

“After the show, I got an autograph from you and I went up to get a picture, and then you asked me to put my arm around your neck and I did, and then you lifted me up! I am a short girl and you are a tall guy so this was an adrenaline filled experience. Now, this “pick-up’ or whatever you want to call it was not only a physical thing, but mostly spiritual. I know it sounds a bit weird, but you lifted me up, internally. [...] This moment changed my life. It made me think, “why

was I so special? Why did I get picked up and not somebody else?" And my answer was that I am special. Not only me, but everyone." (*Student, School in central AB*)

When I saw Robb do this with the kids, it appeared very natural and jokingly. He does not do it all the time and he does not seem to do it for himself, but as the girl in the note clarifies, for the youth. Her feelings about the lift are genuine and life changing. This attention after the show from the students may make us think of groupies wanting to hang out with the band members. In the case of the Robb Nash tour I have not seen any of that. Of course there is the natural thrill of wanting to be close to the stars, asking for autographs and taking pictures with the stars, as we can find all over the social media pages when searching for Robb Nash, but most of the post-show interaction has to do with sharing stories and asking for advice. Some kids have some really deep trouble that they finally feel safe to open up about. Those usually wait until the space has almost emptied for their turn to speak with Robb. And Robb shares his time and attention with each and every one of them. The underarms of Robb get plastered with writings, both promises and nametags. He writes notes on the injured arms of students when they promise to stop cutting themselves. It is a simple ritual, but has a deep impact on the students.

"MUSIC OPENS THE DOOR..."

Jonny explains to me that the band reaches youth through entertainment and fun, combined with a serious message: "It's part entertainment, part an inspiring story." On the bus leaving Winnipeg, Jonny continues, "It's genuine, we let our hearts guide us to this place." Jonny joined the Robb Nash Project four years ago because he wanted to be a positive influence through music and he wasn't finding that in the music industry. Jonny describes Robb as "the first musician who had a similar goal and dream." He tells me, "It's the stories you hear. There are so many things hurting kids out there. It's heartbreaking. I want to use music to have an impact. We'd also like to influence teachers. Inspire them. Talk to them about the 'what' and the 'why' they do what they do, and remind them of the 'why.' It's all about the issue of caring and the influence they can have."

Jonny explains that he and Robb purposely take an encouraging approach with youth, rather than, 'don't do that!' He explains why they were able to have such an impact on youth: "The kids think we are one of them. They look at us and they think we are about the same age. It's the way we dress

and the way we talk. We don't preach. Music opens the door. We tell stories. We are always fine-tuning our songs and our message. We work in waves between funny and serious. Each song is on a specific topic. They capture a story. It's a very personal thing. Based on true stories. Kids tell us that after the show that it doesn't feel like a presentation. It's more like we are all just hanging out. Robb woke up from his accident bitter, not enlightened. He decided to try to turn it all around. He got a taste of doing something for somebody else. He wants others to know what that feels like."

Everything Jonny said rang true to my experiences with the show/presentation. When talking to Tom Hiebert the Chief Executive Officer on this same bus ride leaving Winnipeg, he said, "When you see the responses from the kids, you can't help but be involved." I ask him what he sees happening between Robb and the kids: "You see something that speaks to their heart and soul. You see something that is genuine. Real. And they don't get enough of that." I nod my head in agreement, he continues, "It talks directly to their soul and they recognize it. It gets them right in their core. What they are thinking internally comes out."

These insights were not only expressed by Jonny and Tom, but also Tyler, the tour manager, who had this to say when I asked him, 'You're close to Robb, what do you think his special attributes are that allow him to connect with the kids?': "He's genuine. His story is real and he uses that as a platform to very quickly engage someone. This is Robb's biggest gift. It is a good feeling to be a part of something that actually makes a difference. There are many problems that way they [the youth] do this and that, but it's junk." Tyler amplifies the different approach to the youth that the RNP takes, rather than treating them like problems, they believe in their potential. Tyler adds, "Robb is a magnet that brings certain kinds of people to him."

It is obvious members of the RNP care deeply about youth. One way this is demonstrated is through their attention to detail. Karen does not let an email or comment on a social media go unacknowledged. Taylor and Dale take great pains to set the band up for maximum visual impact. Chairs are rearranged if necessary to create an intimate space for the band and audience to occupy during a performance. Tyler explains they avoid playing on an elevated stage if possible, because they prefer to be physically on the same level as the youth. Robb invites a student to perform on stage with the band at every performance - a crowd favorite. The first thing Robb

does when the band arrives at a venue is talk with school staff to find out if there have been any recent incidents, or if there are particular students of concern (e.g., who may be cutting, suffering from depression, or are at risk of suicide). The band customizes the show to ensure content and tone are appropriate given particular local circumstances.

As an example, the band was requested to come to a school where a student had recently committed suicide. Robb met with councilors and administrators before the show to discuss what content would be suitable. After some initial hesitation on the part of an administrator, it was decided students needed to be exposed to the hard reality of the situation. Robb subsequently handled the show in a way that sensitively took the current situation into account without sacrificing the message. Afterwards, he met with the close friends of the deceased girl.

On another occasion, the band was invited to perform at a struggling rural school (in context of high unemployment, poverty, etc.). The drop out rate was high, and substance abuse and self-harm common. Special events and assemblies had been banned due to poor student behavior in the past. A few minutes before the show was scheduled to begin, students shuffled into the gym and reluctantly slumped into chairs. A heckler soon started yelling out comments. The band knew this was not going to be an easy crowd, but had no doubt in their ability to connect. Within moments after the opening of the show, all eyes were transfixed on the stage and remained there until the end. The young heckler continued to yell out, but his comments became less frequent and quieter as the show progressed. Afterwards, he apologized to Robb, claiming he was only doing it in the spirit of good fun. Robb told him he was fine with that. At another school, in another province, kids are dropped off to school by parents driving Mercedes and BMWs. When asked about how the band's message might be received in this relatively affluent context, Robb is quick to point out that youth are struggling everywhere. Those who are more privileged face different challenges, such as pressure from their parents to succeed. The performance at this particular school was modified slightly to reflect their particular set of circumstances. The band's refusal to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach demonstrates the sensitive, respectful, and caring attitude they embody in their work with youth.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in Canada (CMHA, 2014), yet people are often reluctant to talk about it. It makes people uncomfortable. This is partly due to the stigma associated with

mental health issues and suicide. There is frequently guilt and shame surrounding this subject. Unfortunately, a culture of silence perpetuates harmful myths and attitudes and can prevent people from talking openly about the pain they are feeling or the help that they need. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, communication is the first essential step in assisting youths at risk of suicide. This is where the Robb Nash band excels. Through music, humor, storytelling, and the ability to communicate an authentic sense of trust and caring, the band opens up a critical space for reflection and conversation on issues that tend to be avoided.

Our research team observed ___ performances at ___ schools, in ___ provinces. Everywhere we went there was overwhelming evidence of youths' willingness to share thoughts and stories with Robb they would never tell anyone else. After each performance students line up (sometimes for as long as 3 hours) to have a few minutes one-on-one with Robb. Through the simple act of listening, Robb embodies hope. Trust is established long before the band arrives at a school, through videos posted on the RNP website, pre-show student videos sent to the school, and via social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter where the band's close affiliation with youth is on public display.

REFLECTING ON STORIES, TRAUMA, HEALING AND GROWTH

"THROUGH REFLECTION WE CAN BEGIN TO HEAL ..."

"This talk/concert broke my heart but mended it at the same time. It repaired me and just showed me there is a way out and always to tell your story..." (Student in Central Alberta)

"While he was speaking I felt so overwhelmed with emotions, feeling myself relate to a lot of what he was talking about and what his songs meant" (Student in central Alberta)

The first time I heard Robb tell his story of the harrowing accident and the subsequent miracles and struggles he endured, I could not help but think about my own life and how quickly things can change. Robb tells us this story in a relatively lighthearted manner, and he acknowledges that it is still difficult for him to talk about it, but his own reflection allows the

audience to reflect on their own decisions. Another student from central Alberta wrote:

“I was crying during the presentation because the entire time I was imagining that I had thought of doing something that could hurt my family forever.”

This power of modeling his reflective practices in the months and years after the accident opens a space for the youth (as well as the adults) to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of some decisions they have made or have considered making. Through this reflection, we can begin to heal our hurt and pain; we can begin to face our traumas and harmful desires in ways that allow for growth.

Robb opens up his life for the audience and he shows us the long, arduous, and ongoing journey of healing and growth. He shares a particularly vulnerable process for him when he took time to consider, ‘what if that was my last breath, what were the last things I said to people’. With ease, Robb slides back into another song, “One Last Breath” where he addresses his fear of not having mended relationships before the accident. Robb makes it okay to share your story by sharing his so publically, and yet simultaneously with intimacy. Through “One Last Breath”, Robb puts his vulnerabilities on the table to share with others as a part of reconciliation. He shows us the strength to tell our stories. As a principal in central Alberta wrote after the show:

“You were able to touch each of the kids at a very personal level. I have had many of our students open up and share hurts that they are going through because you made it okay for them to do so...”

As human beings, we have used stories through time to share experiences and teachings about who we are and who we are becoming. This universal method of speaking to the incommensurability of emotions and lived life is tapped into with profound effects through Robb Nash’s story. Stories have a way of touching people’s hearts to impart particular lessons³. As one student wrote:

“U have touched my heart and taught me a great lesson”

³ Huber et al. (2013)

However, we must be careful of the stories we tell, we must take responsibility for the stories and their possible effects⁴. Robb is cognizant of the outpouring of hurt and pain, trauma and isolation, that his presentation can affect, and as he tells the audience, there are supports out there. With Tyler's expert technological knowledge, the homepage of the Robb Nash Project is projected onto the two screens in the front of the gym. Robb makes note of some of the resources on the webpage and makes it clear that his role is not one of counselor, there are other places the youth can turn for that kind of support.

"...TOOK A TOLL ON ME..."

Seeing the tears from students as Robb shared his story, seeing students having to leave the room, seeing students reminiscing, searching through their memory trying to make sense of their struggles, of their pain, working through having to write notes, to cut or not to cut, hearing Colton's parents share about their pain and helplessness concerning their son's suicide took a toll on me. Reading students testimonial caused me to constantly have to return to Robb's story in ways that had me journey through my life stories. A student wrote:

"Yesterday I was fortunate enough to attend Robb Nash's concert at my school. May I start by saying that it was truly the most inspirational presentation that I have ever seen, honestly. It really connected with me and I must admit that not even 15 minutes into the show I already had tears starting. I especially loved how he was discussing such heavy topics that many teenagers aren't comfortable talking about, but Robb had managed to express his concerns in such a way that he, himself, was the comic relief of his own concert and was able to lighten the mood. I also appreciated how it seemed he was capable of connecting with every single individual in the room in some sense, even if the topic he was discussing didn't exactly apply to them. I loved how honest Robb was about his accident and he didn't make the whole thing into a giant pity party. No, he truly motivated and captivated many yesterday. It could have easily been just another boring presentation about drugs, depression, etc., but he took that extra mile to make it interesting and relevant.

⁴ Thomas King; Linda Tuhiwai Smith; Huber et al.

I stayed for a bit after the show to chat with Robb, and I shared a few things with him about myself, as in a bit of my struggles. He was very gentle and considerate, and I love him for that! Thank you Robb.”

SHIFTING STORIES, SHIFTING IDENTITIES

“CHANGE THE STORY, CHANGE THE FUTURE...”

“You made me change my mind about everything.”
(Student in central Alberta)

“I have a different outlook on life after every word you said today.” (Student in central Alberta)

“Who wants to hear another impersonation?” A few hands tentatively go up. Robb looks to Jonny again, “What’s that, 3?” The heaviness from the previous song, “One Last Breath” begins to dissipate. A few let out a laugh and raise their hands as well. Robb masterfully shifts between the humorous and the serious, providing time for the tough, emotional process of connecting to Robb’s story and reflecting on one’s own. Yet, there is more to the story. Robb had been struggling with ‘why’ the accident happened and ‘why’ he came back to life. Finally, one day, Robb says someone told him “I know why this happened...you were going too fast on an icy road and lost control of the car”. “That sounded so simple” Robb says into the microphone. Again, there is laughter amidst the audience. It was so simple, and this simple statement changed Robb’s life.

At this moment in the presentation, several things are happening at once, most profoundly, Robb is encouraging each and every one of us to consider a different story to live by. We need to change the story, if we want to change the future⁵. Robb, through telling the story of his experience, points to the fact that there are some particularly harmful stories out there that shape who we are and who we are becoming. However, he amplifies how, particularly when these stories don’t seem to make sense to us, to our experiences, we don’t have to subscribe to them. This is part of what makes some of us feel like we are ‘not normal’, because the story we are subscribing to doesn’t make sense of our lived experiences. The principal who talked about how Robb ‘made it okay’ for students to start sharing their stories also wrote:

⁵ Thomas King; Huber et al.

“You were able to speak at their level and make them realize that they are normal. Whatever they are going through is normal and will get better if they choose to let it”

Robb’s story provides hope that we, too, can re-script the stories that we live by for a different future. In other words, Robb’s story offers a different way to think about who we are and who we are becoming.

Again reflecting on his process of healing and growth, Robb shares with us that “things don’t happen for a reason, things happen with potential ... you have to make a reason out of it.” Adding a sense of realistic optimism, Robb shares that “pain doesn’t go away, but neither does your strength.” Robb courageously counters the destructive myth that ‘the pain will go away’, a myth that makes some people feel like there is something wrong with them when/if the pain does not go away. He does this with a sense of hope. Through story Robb is able to tap into the feelings of hopelessness, despair, and alienation that many youth feel when they do not ‘fit’ into the stories that circulate around them. One youth wrote to the Robb Nash team speaking about how the way that Robb made this point was at ‘a whole new level’ for him:

“Other presentations are good and inspirational but yours took it to a whole new level and some of the things you said just hit me cause it’s so true. You didn’t get up there and preach that pain is something that you can get rid of and that all you need to do is this and that. I loved that you said it never goes away but when your pain is ‘here’ your strength is even higher.”

For this youth, Robb’s story struck a chord, it resonated with him and allowed him to re-script and rearticulate his experiences; it gave him another story to live by.

I hear Robb saying, “Everyone of us has a gift and something to offer ... everyone has purpose”. I begin thinking about how many of the youth could benefit from hearing this simple message? Particularly youth who are feeling alienated and without these words turn to drug and alcohol use, bullying, or self-harm. But it is not just Robb saying this that makes it echo in my ears throughout the day, it is the way he frames it by telling a story of a former band member who thought he was cursed because he

gave in so easily to drug and alcohol consumption. Once again, Robb re-scripts this story, telling us that the former band member is not cursed, but he is gifted, “When he does something he is all-in. If he were to point that energy at the right thing he would be successful,” Robb shares. What a powerful way to change the story, what might we be able to imagine if we changed our stories too?

In a tactful and humble manner, Robb eloquently shares other people’s stories as a part of his story, showing the ways in which each of our stories are individual as well as social⁶. “Life is more than learning from your own mistakes” Robb says, “learn from the mistakes of those around you”. Later in the show Robb reiterates this point that the stories he tells are for the purpose of inviting others to rethink their experiences and decisions. Storytelling, in this way, becomes about survival: “The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That’s why we put stories into each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves. One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations” (Lopez, 1990, p. 60, quoted in Hubert et al., 2013, p. 214). Robb Nash cares for our youth by telling his stories and putting them into each other’s memories. Robb urges us to do our part to take responsibility for each other, “We’re not trying to change the world, we’re trying to make world changers,” he proclaims as he eases out of “Come Quickly,” the fourth song of the show.

“ROBB DARED US TO THINK OF POTENTIALITY...”

Faith, religion and ideas of reason were all called into question by Robb, that one is given/presented with a situation as it is your faith, as it is the nature of your reality, that everything happens for a reason. Instead, Robb dared us to think of potentiality, the potential to learn from particular lessons, to think of choice, to make everyday count, in particular today, that we need to work through tough days collectively, that pain does not go away but neither does your strength, gotta look out for each other. Ideas of support and solidarity with each other, of having a team were very much on the lips of Robb as he too shared how support came by way of his hero, the radio owner whose job was to help people. Teamwork and support are central themes to Robb’s story. Speaking to Karen, the manager of events and support, she revealed how everyone of the team had

⁶ Huber et al., 2013; Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; King?

their role to play, that Tyler was responsible for communications as well as organizing the driving routes, rest spots and departure times. Jonny Holliday, the drummer was instrumental with the music production and writing of songs and Dale was responsible for the daily organizing of the band.

Standing in the back of the gymnasium, I listened to, “Thief of Colors”:

I wish I could see the world like it used to be

But you painted it grey

I wish I could take the advice that was given to me

But I threw it away.

Sometimes I don't know why

I just can't say goodbye

There's still a piece that craves you.

The wasted days and nights

All turned to black and white

Cause you're the thief of colors

Just for today, I'll wake without.

Just for today, I'll breathe without you.

Just for today, I'll have to find the strength to stay away.

Just for today.

(Thief of Colors)

From Jonny Holliday's drums to Robb's guitar, I was stirred to think of the many days I had to summon strength to complete my day. More importantly, I was touched by the way Robb moved me to come to think about the experience of having to summon strength. I thought Robb moved his audience in ways that researchers, pedagogues, teachers could not, that

he spoke, reached, communicated, touched students in a manner that just could not be readily textualized in some given curriculum.

Reading students, parents and adults testimonials, particular sentiments were shared, that Robb was:

“...inspirational and delivers a powerful message, that through his unique blend of humour, music and videos he was able to captivate 300 middle-schoolers, through his deep personal story he instantly connects to his audience, Robb has changed the course of some students’ lives at our school from this day forward. -- What these presentations do for the kids is something that they cannot get in a classroom. These are things that the curriculum just cannot teach. Thank you for sharing your gift with us Robb.” Parent & Friend, Middle School, Central, AB

Question and discussion time at the end of Robb’s show was always filled with curiosity. Often enough Robb was asked *Why do you do it?; Where does your strength come from?; How do you recognize the voices in your head?* The questions opened into a discussion about lifelong learning, about all being gifted differently and having to find one’s gift, of being filled inside and of having passion for life. Robb’s honesty is loud. Later in the show, in the song *Choices*, he reminds us of Mya’s story, that, *my decisions have gotten me where I am today // taken me down the road of pain*, inviting us to think about being responsible, about being accountable in the everyday moment.

Perseverance, perseverance, perseverance, I thought as I listened to Robb belching the lyrics to “Trouble Child”:

I never saw myself divided, but here I am,

Standing shattered, all alone.

You left me picking up the pieces,

But I don’t know how to do this on my own.

You never heard me crying so I screamed.

You never wanted me to make it, but here I am.

Further than you thought I'd be.

All my dreams you tried to break it,

but now I know, Where I end up is up to me.

(Trouble Child)

With *Trouble Child*, Robb beckons us to find strength, to find our purpose. Robb was clear about his purpose, that he was *not trying to change the world, trying to create world-changers*. I remember thinking about the idea of creating world changers through story as method as an approach to repurposing the self, to as Robb puts it, to be set free by the truth of stories. Other testimonials from students mentioned:

All my life I've been struggling to figure everything out. And tried to control things I couldn't. It devastated me. Until I talked to Robb Nash one day. He totally changed my perspective. I was so fed up with life I couldn't take the bullying, the self destruction anymore. The voices I heard in my head were telling me to end it. Somebody heard my cry. Some higher power wanted me to keep on going. So it sent Robb to my school to talk to me. I cried. A lot. I wasn't aware there was someone who understood the voices I've heard and told me they were trying to take me out to get me not to fulfill my purpose here in life. But he said to ignore those voices, the voices in my head were shouting. But while talking to Robb I felt something. My heart opened up and listened to the voice in my chest who had been whispering to me the whole time. I can make it through all life's struggles. I just need to take it one step at a time. Making every day count. (Gypsumville)

I first saw Robb's presentation in grade nine when I was going through a really difficult time in my life. When I first heard about the presentation, I wasn't expecting that it would change my negative thoughts as much as it did. I hated myself. I had no ambitions and no motivation to do anything with my life. I had experienced a few years of feeling depressed and suicidal and so I always felt cursed, until Robb convinced me that I was gifted. I no longer felt so

worthless and hopeless. That's when I decided that I could really make every day count. I had a much more positive view on life and restored motivation to do great things. Robb is an important role model to me because of everything he does. He helped me realize that I like everyone else, had the strength to make it through tough times and the potential to be someone who can change the world and do meaningful things.

"WHAT IT MEANS TO FIGHT BACK AND TURN ONE'S LIFE AROUND..."

Because of his own trauma caused by a car accident he knows what it means to fight back and turn one's life around. He has made it his goal in life to show youth that they can always turn their bad experience into potential. He manages to get this message out to them in such a way that youth really pick up on it. After the show almost all of them stay and wait for a little personal interaction with him. Some may just want his autograph or a "selfie", quite a few though want to share their own stories with him. It is amazing to see him spending time on each and every youth who wants it. It is often heartbreaking to hear their stories and how rough their lives are. Whether here in the North or in Victoria, Ottawa or Winnipeg or in any rural community, there turn out to be so many youth with problems in their lives. At the same time they take a pride in letting him know that his show has inspired them to stop cutting themselves or even from taking their own lives. The impact of the show lasts, which can be told from the many responses on Facebook (20,000 followers), Twitter (7600 followers), Youtube (11 videos, with an average of 15,000 hits per video) and Instagram (17,000 followers), the social media networks that kids frequent. Many ask for him to come back to their school or community. Others refer to the conversations they have had and most comments are about how much they have loved the show.

His understanding of youth and the language they speak can be illustrated with an anecdote that happened in one school in Manitoba. A group of well doers had organized for the show to come to that school and set up stands in the hallway and in the gym: balloons, and hot chocolate and more goodies. The enthusiastic people, all volunteers from some organization, were dressed in blue T-shirts. One of them opened the show telling the kids that whenever someone needed to go to the bathroom, somebody in a blue t-shirt would come along to check if the kid was ok. After the show, which is cleverly designed to build up energy and contain it with

the sharing afterwards, someone from the blue t-shirts decided to wrap it up. No greater contrast could be made. The energy dropped in an instant. Luckily students stayed for Robb's free music cards. As a student quips:

"As of today you are my idol. I mean it; I took the afternoon to think about it. You have changed my life and taught me how to help people in need. You have taught me to believe in myself and follow my dreams. I never in my life have wanted to end my life because of the great experiences in this world. But really I am here to help change not just one but many lives. I know I can't always think about other I have to think about myself, but I learn from others to become a better me."

"THIS HAS A PURPOSE WHEN YOU ARE TANGIBLY CHANGING SOMEONE'S LIFE..."

When I ask Dale what he gets from doing this job, he recalls the story of a girl who came up to him after a concert to announce she was going to stop cutting. That meant a lot to him. Dale urges people to come out to a show to see what's happening: "People need to see the kids' reactions. Teachers tell us they can't believe how attentive the kids are to the message" and he adds, "I do this job because I get to see so much good being done when there's so much that is not good out there. It's not a job when there's a *why*."

Tyler picks up on this question of the 'why' for him: "Tangibly, there is something to this project/presentation that has a greater purpose than a pay cheque or an experience. There's lots of experiences all over the place. There are other ways to make money. This has a purpose when you are tangibly changing someone's life and hopefully, eventually, impacting an entire generation and culture. I do this – this may not make any sense at all – but I do this for my kids... So that I know my kids never have to deal with the stuff that some of these kids do. I feel somewhat that I am a ... crusader is not the right term ... some kind of a fighter out there in this zoo that we work in, in hopes of learning something and affecting something so that I can give my own children a place to start."

CREATING WORLD CHANGERS, CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION THROUGH STORYTELLING

"...MADE ME THINK ABOUT HOW I CAN MAKE IT BETTER FOR OTHERS!"

"You didn't save my life today Robb, I don't carry a note in my pocket. Despite this, you have made what I think will become a profound difference in my life! Your message about how my story isn't for me! I have never thought about it like that. But I see it clearly! It seems so simple, how could I miss it. And your message today has made me really think about my story, made me think about how I can make it better, for others! I think that although I didn't give you a letter, maybe your message will do one better, and radiate from me to others, maybe I will make a difference, even save a life! Because of your message today! So thank you Robb, one day I may be able to help you somehow keep spreading your message." Student in central Alberta

"It made me realize that you just have to fight it, because it's not about me making my life easier. It's about making everyone else's lives better. I saw that grade 7 girl talking to you, and I just kept thinking that I could help her. That there's probably tons of people in my school, my community going through struggles. I want to be able to help. Very very much so. I just don't know how. So I want to say thank you." Student in central Alberta

"How many of you are enjoying the show?" Again, a few hesitant hands hesitantly go up. "That's what, about 5 who are enjoying the music?" Robb turns to Jonny who nods his head. They stand up and give each other a high five over the drum set. In many ways this may seem as a trivial moment, but it represents how Robb and Jonny and the team are doing what they love, playing music to get a critical message out to youth, regardless of other people's opinions; in other words, they know both what they do – play music – and why they do it – to inspire youth to live life to the fullest. As youth who may be drawn into bad decision-making, or who might feel ashamed of their passions, the high five is a powerful gesture. Simultaneously, Robb is taking a break from the story to allow

room for breath and contemplation, to lighten up the atmosphere before getting into his two final songs.

At this point in the show, the audience has been taken through stories of Robb's experiences with depression, a former band member's experiences with addiction, a young boy's realization that he didn't need to go through his trials if he had only listened to Robb when he came to his school. Stories drive the show, both in Robb's narratives as well as in the lyrics. Stories, as we have seen in the testimonials of people who have experienced the show created community and made connections, provided a space for reflection of one's decisions, 'made it okay' for youth to share their stories, and inspired others to want see the hurt in their communities and want to do something about it. Stories made room for transformation to be possible, they re-scripted what was imaginable for youth who are in a time in their lives when they are trying to understand who they are becoming. Stories opened spaces to understand how they are feeling. The power of stories, individual and social, is in these moments of vulnerability and growth. The power of Robb's story is to take control over the story of your life and experiences, not to let other people or things dictate what is possible for you, find purpose and pursue it. This section, and the final two songs of the show amplify both the transformative possibilities of stories as well as the possibility of knowledge mobilization, in other words, creating world changers.

The audience feels as though we have gotten to know Robb Nash personally, he has opened up to us and let us in to his vulnerabilities. Now, when he tells us about Mya and her transformation, we witness how genuinely happy this story makes Robb. "Mya, when we visited her lock-down facility, came up and sang with us, just like Melanie did" Robb tells us after a young girl from the audience sang with Robb. We can now imagine how close the reality and possibility of making the kind of transformation Mya made is to our own lives. Wow, she summoned her strength to change her life around after a seemingly minor moment of singing alongside Robb Nash. Mya, who laid down on the C-Train tracks in Calgary, hoping to die, was released from lock-down and requested to stay in order to mentor the younger girls there. Her change was not just about herself; it was about helping others. She found her story and how it could help, much like the two quotes at the beginning of the section, she wanted "to be able to keep spreading [Robb's] message".

“People out there need this story; people out there need your story,” Robb encourages us. “Your story is not for you, it is for other people,” and we believe him because he has shown us how his story is for us. “Is it okay if we play one more song for you?” Robb asks the audience, “Do we have time?” he double checks with the organizers. By this point, the audience, youth and adult alike, would have a hard time saying no. Robb introduces the last song, “Trouble Child”, he tells us how it was written and produced collaboratively with a group of youth in another lock-down facility. Each youth found their passion, their strength and contributed to the production of the song from writing lyrics and playing the music, to taking photos and doing hair and make-up for the cover. The stories are now becoming more intertwined, it is no longer Robb’s story or Robb telling the story of someone else, but now it is a collaborative story of the Robb Nash team working with these youth, as well as a collaborative story that captures the experiences and feelings of the group of youth. Their story becomes ours. “Pay attention to how they changed the lyrics here, how they flipped the script” Robb says into the mic, “Watch the video, not me for this song” he had told us before they started playing. The lyrics say: “So all the words that I was craving, I’ll say to someone else” and with this Robb subtly encourages us to be the world changers, to tell our own story, to say the words that we were craving to someone else. The flow of the overarching story brings us through self-reflection to be able to understand our feelings, what we were craving, through to knowledge mobilization, to be able to change our own lives and those around us. “We [the core team] are only four guys, how much change can we make? But now, we shared our story with you, and if each of us in this room decided we wanted to make a change, imagine what could happen” Robb ends the show and the roar of hands clapping echo off the gym walls.

Moving seamlessly between the individual and the social, between humor and serious, between narrative and song Robb’s story moves the audience on multiple levels, meeting them/us where we are at the moment. Telling us what we need to hear right then. And, after an hour of telling us how special we are, and allowing us to feel like we know him, he spends hours in the gym talking to whoever wants to talk with him. He listens with a caring ear and makes it possible for youth to give up their blades, their suicide notes, their pills, and even their money that they were going to spend on drugs later that day. His story is so powerful that youth are passionately sharing it with their friends to make a difference in their lives, as the youth who missed the presentation at her school notes here:

“I missed the presentation at school today because I was too depressed to get dressed. Lately things have been going down hill. Today was the first time I posted a picture of my cuts on Instagram. People are now trying to help me. My friend talked to you about me and you signed an autograph for me and gave her a bracelet to give me. I want to say thank you because even though I wasn’t there it is helping me and I am going to quit. Thank you so very much”

Stories shape how we live our lives and who we imagine ourselves to be. If we change the story we live by, we might change our futures. This is what Robb Nash does, through story he changes people’s possibilities.

“...NOW SHE TELLS HER STORY TO HELP OTHERS TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES...”

Mya’s song, *Choices*, addressed suicide and changing one’s life:

Pick your life up girl

You will change this world.

You can make it I know.

You just have to be shown.

Pick your life up girl

You will change this world.

You can do your best.

Just don’t follow all the rest.

Follow all the rest.

Please don’t follow all the rest.

My decisions have gotten me where I am today.

They have taken me down this road of pain.

The song addressed how her life changed through Robb's story. Seeing Mya perform the song she wrote, I remember searching through my life stories trying to pull out tragedy and thinking about how I coped with these painful moments in my life. Mya's life changed by Robb telling his story, now she tells her story to help others to change their lives and the lives of those around them. This is how the story of hope is spread. Earlier in the show, Robb shares the Briggs family's story. The Briggs lost their son Colton to suicide a couple of years ago, and knowing of the Robb Nash Project, asked to join the team to be able to tell their story to people across the country to help prevent suicide. Colton's aunt wrote the following email:

"Hello Robb, Karen and the rest of the crew. I am Marci, Steve Briggs's sister, I came to the show at the High school. Your show was amazing on how many kids you reached, as I looked around the audience during and after the video with Colton and my family, I seen kids crying and how the video reached out to them, it was amazing. Robb, your message to these students hit home. But the reason I am writing you guys, is to thank you for helping my family through this. I know the pain will never go away, but talking with Steve and Jenn, this video and what you guys are doing gives them hope that other kids will stop and think about things before acting upon it. You and your band have become very good friends of my brother and his family, so thank you very much for all what you guys have done."

INNER WORKINGS: TEAM, COMMITMENT AND *WHY* TO SUPPORT IT ALL

"...TOUCH YOUR LIFE IN UNIMAGINABLE WAYS"

Make today count, the words inscribed on the bracelets served as a meaningful reminder to students about the importance of their lives. Indeed as we sat listening to Robb's story we were all deeply vested in making sense of our lives. This message powerfully resonates throughout time and pushes us to return and ponder on them well after the presentation. One student shares his story:

You came and performed at my school and on that day my life was changed forever. You made me realize that my life

was more than the scary thoughts in my head. You made me notice that I don't have to cut to release the feelings. That even though the pain doesn't go away, neither does the strength. But even after your show, I did mess up. I had been 2 months clean and I started cutting again. On December 19 I wrote my final suicide letter. I thought "This is the last time. My 5th attempt at suicide will be my last." Then I took a knife and tore up my arm, from my wrist to my elbow. 2 days later was probably the accident that would change my life forever. I slipped on some black ice and smashed my hip in a parking lot. Two security guards showed up and called for an ambulance. While I was in the ambulance, the paramedic rolled up my sleeves and saw my cuts and was shocked. I said "Please don't tell". He attached the leads onto my arms and took off my bracelets and rolled down my sleeves. When he tried to take off my Robb Nash bracelet, I flipped out and told them that that bracelet had to stay on. When I got to the hospital was probably the biggest wake up call of my life. I got admitted and got help from counselors and doctors. I am pleased to say that today, I am 8 weeks clean!!! I gave my teacher my last suicide letter and she read it, took it home and burned it for me. I don't need it anymore. It would never be like this if you hadn't come to my school. I really do think that at the core, you Robb, have saved my life. I wake up every day and look at the bracelet you gave me and I think to myself "Make Today Count. Keep Your Promise. Give the Finger To Your Past. Pain Doesn't Go Away, But Neither Does The Strength." I am able to wake up every morning because I know I will be able to make it through the day. And even in my lowest of times, I know I will be able to survive. I keep the card that you gave me in my binder to remind me every day to just keep on fighting. I took a page on my most important notebook and I wrote a bunch of your most inspiring lyrics on it. I look at it every morning and every night! I keep your songs on repeat so I can keep the motivating words running through my head. I went through hell and survived. I tore up my intake papers to the local rehab hospital because I am getting better. I don't need to be there. I feel so blessed that I get to live. Even 5 months after your show, your words still repeat as

clear as when you first said them. I look at my scars and I am so glad that they are now scars. No new wounds! And that success is all thanks to you! Thank you so much for saving my life! Keep saving others!! You have truly been an inspiration to me. You are a life saver!

What Robb Nash does for these youth who are hurting is incommensurable, yet so valuable. To be a part of this project in any way will touch your life in unimaginable ways. Another student wrote:

A few months after your song Bullet had come out I had been having really hard times between the verbal and emotional abuse from my father and the bullies and not having any friends. I no longer thought life was worth living, I had been doing several forms of self harm for over a year and that was when I had found the song Bullet scrolling for songs on YouTube. I had listened to it and that brought me to more suggestions on your songs. Listening to more of them I chose to keep living my life hoping for a better day. I am still trying to quit self harm but if it weren't for me discovering your songs and learning your story that night chances are I would not have met you today so I'd love to thank you for doing what you do and for staying as strong as you did. With your inspiration I find a way to keep going when times are rough. You offering me a hug put a smile on my face and made me a lot happier than I've been for a long time. So please keep doing what you do and stay strong. Thank you so much Robb...

"IT IS DIFFICULT TO LEAVE A PERFORMANCE UNAFFECTED..."

When I ask Robb about who is on his team, he is quick to point out membership goes much beyond the core group on the bus today. Behind the scenes, the band receives generous support from an ever-growing number of private citizens, businesses, educators, and other professionals. It is difficult to leave a performance unaffected, and offers of assistance often follow after someone has seen a show. The guitars, drums, and tour bus are gifts from donors; a hotel chain in Alberta has recently offered complimentary rooms when the band is traveling in that province; and Perimeter Air provides free transportation to remote northern areas. The videos that make up the stage show are produced by a professional filmmaker,

Brian; two music producers, Steve and Anthony, also work with the band on a volunteer basis. Robb considers all of these individuals to be part of his extended team and acknowledgement of their generosity is woven into the show. This reinforces his underlying message to youth: “We’re not here for ourselves; we’re here for other people” (Robb Nash, Personal Communication during a performance in British Columbia). The support the band receives is a testament to their ability to inspire people to take positive action in the world. The following is a compilation of vignettes through conversations (on the bus outside Winnipeg) with Tom Hiebert, Chief Executive Officer and Tyler Marshall, Tour Manager.

I asked Tom why someone should support the project. First he quips, “When you see the responses from the kids, you can’t help but be involved” and on a more concrete note he adds, “It’s going to be very hard to find another project to get involved with, where for the amount of money is involved, to get as much result... There is no overhead. Everything is going toward the Mission, and the mission is so great, so big, so needed, and so important, you won’t find anything like it anywhere. If somebody doesn’t care, they wouldn’t be involved. How can you not get involved if you really understand what’s going on? You can see it in the emails and social media response. You can see it in the eyes of the kids. You can see it when they have breakthroughs.” Returning to his thoughts about what happens between Robb and the youth, Tom states, “you see something that speaks to their heart and soul. You see something that is genuine. Real. And they don’t get enough of that.”

I contemplate the point that Tom made about how much you get in return for the support that you give to the project and it makes me ask Tyler, the tour manager, “What do you see happening with this group, say 5 years. What do you imagine might become of this project?” I know that this is something he, and the rest of the team, has been considering, they are not only living in the present, they are imagining a future for the work they are doing. Tyler responds quickly, “There’s lots we can do in terms of dreaming, and programming, and curriculum and leaving behind materials, and videos and tv shows and all that kind of stuff.” He remembers about times before the bus was donated, “We were in new dodge caravans, renting equipment. We knew the car would start in the morning. But when running from show to show and people are uncomfortable, we appreciate having the van. But limited by the space we had. If we wanted to improve on the second delivery we needed a trailer or ...When we found out we got

the bus we were happy. But this vehicle is full. A huge step forward but if we want to expand, we can't because the bus is full."

They have grown so much, and this is reflected in Tyler's description of the bus now being too full to expand as they want. He says they have ideas for adding a trailer to the bus to put the equipment, this way they could include more equipment to be able to reach wider audiences with each show. But Tyler's focus wasn't only on the materials needed to grow the project, he also notes how as the project has grown the members of the team have taken on more and more responsibility: "As much as I think I have a brilliant idea, my role in this has always been the execution of what we are doing.... in the beginning it was Robb's ideas. He gives me what he is thinking and I figure it out. That's one area where we work together perfectly and in sync. ... I'm the one backstage that actually connects the dots and makes the thing go. As tour manager you are basically responsible for the daily operations of the tour – everything from production, to finance, to hospitality, lodging, logistics, transportation, equipment... as tours grow in physical size you have different people to take on these roles ...that gets split up, but at this point between Karen and I we've spent hundreds of hours building our resource planning system that runs in the background that keeps us organized. So Karen sets them up and I knock them down. We joke that she's the air traffic controller and I'm the pilot. I fly the plane. The majority of it is production related, tech related, and a small part is administrative. Receipts, meals, hotels, and all that jazz."

With the generous help from others, the tour has been able to grow, we can only imagine where it might take us in time.

COMMUNITY, TEAMWORK AND COMMITMENT

Commitment is key for the show that Robb gives. Not just his commitment but also of his crew and of his team. Starting out alone he has kept on building and adjusting the show and the support. Most of which has come on his path. As he tells in the show some of his fellow musicians had to leave for different reasons, but Jonny, Tyler, Dale and Karen just crossed his path and stepped on board. They love what they do and they think it is important that this work gets done. And that is gets done well. Karen left a well-paid commercial job to join the show and is the wizard of communications and manages to have every detention centre, reserve and school have a chance to get the show booked.

Given the professional way everything is being set up and how smooth everything runs, it is hard to believe that the show does not ask for money, because Robb knows that the groups that need the show the most, are not able to spend any, although modest donations are often given. He has turned every economic rule upside down and plays without asking for a fee. Yet he is able to drive or fly all over the country and perform to bring the message of hope like he does. Donations are the fuel for this inversion. The CEO of Perimeter Airlines had seen his work and told him, when Robb came to make reservations for a flight to some place up north, that whenever there would be a show that he could not access by driving, there would be a plane ready to get the show up there. The tour bus is a donation too and gives the band a comfortable means of transport through all of Canada. And other donations make it possible for Robb, drummer Jonny and Tyler, Dale and Karen to do the shows and support their families. The equipment is state of the art and lean, and efficiently organized. In one occasion the bus rolled in really late but the smoothly organized team managed to have the show to begin one minute before the scheduled time. The equipment is packed long before Robb is finished talking to the kids that stayed after the show.

Robb's story is the main component of the show but thanks to the many elements in the show, the story has a greater impact and reach. The display is simple: a stool for Robb, the singer, guitarist and narrator, a drum set, speaker sets on each side of the stage and two huge video screens. From the screens the kids can get a better understanding of the lyrics, because they show while Robb sings, but also get a feeling of the impact of the show since a number of shows for a large audience have been filmed and are neatly edited and shown in the gym of many schools all over Canada. The videos are a donation too. A Vancouver based movie producer had asked if anyone had filmed what Robb does, and he offered to do so. The videos are a very strong element in the show, because not only the songs are illustrated this way, but also some of the projects are documented and shown. The deepest impact for most spectators has the interview with the family and friends of Colton, a young lad who shot himself. The parents devoted themselves to the work that Robb does and help out where they can.

On the way back from a show in northern Manitoba, Robb's face was shining and happy, which was much different from before the show being very tired. He told us that the social worker in the school had told him that in her program at the university Robb's approach and work was a big part

of the studies. This made Robb feel really good, gazing into the distance dreaming of a better future.

Maybe this student that wrote a message after a show a few years ago states it well:

“I’m the guy that got you to sign my jordan hat when you said
“ every thing happens for potential” it lifted so much wait off
my chest”

Something that every student and every grown up needs every once in a while. I was happy to learn from Tyler that they are trying out some new equipment to be able to serve more students in bigger venues. The future calls and the Robb Nash Tour will continue. After playing for almost a million young people all across Canada, from the south to the north and from coast to coast, many are waiting for a return visit and even more still haven’t heard from the good work that is being done by this car crash survivor.

PART TWO

“We’re all in”

On the Road with
The Robb Nash Band



When I found out I would be travelling on the bus with the Robb Nash team to a rural community north of Winnipeg, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had never hung with a rock band before, let alone on their bus. When Tyler Marshall, the Tour Manager, offered to pick me up from my airport hotel, I suspected this was no ordinary band and that this would be no ordinary day.

Early morning drive
to a school north of Winnipeg

At 6:50 a.m. I am greeted by Karen Hampton and Tom Hiebert in the lobby of my hotel. We step out into the cold air, the guys load my bag onto the waiting bus, and we are off. No fooling around. Thus begins this icy December day -- the first of several I would spend with the Robb Nash team. On our journey to and from the school where they are scheduled to perform today, we discuss their individual roles and how they work together, how and why they became involved with Robb, and the band's ability to communicate with youth through story and music.

THE TEAM

Robb's personal story, music, and uncommon ability to connect with people are key to the success of the Robb Nash Band, but the project depends on a concerted team effort. Each member has a defined role, but is willing to step in whenever needed. During our conversations on this day, the deep respect they have for Robb and his ability to inspire youth becomes obvious. A sense of caring – or "heart" – permeates all aspects of their work and the project. Members of the core team include:

1. Robb Nash - Musician, Team Leader, and inspiration for the project
2. Jonny Holliday – Drummer and Social Media
3. Tyler Martin – Tour and Production Manager
4. Dale – Driver and Security
5. Karen Hampton – Events and Support Manager
6. Tom Hiebert – Chief Executive Officer

Karen and Tom don't often travel with the band, but they are integral to the overwhelming success of the project. On this day, and later in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, I came to understand the extent to



which they viewed their involvement with the band an opportunity to make a contribution to society through this unique project that inspires youth, and saves lives.

THE UNOFFICIAL TEAM

When I ask Robb to tell me about his team, he is quick to point out membership goes much beyond the core group on the bus today. Behind the scenes, the band receives generous support from an ever-growing number of private citizens, businesses, educators, and other professionals. It is difficult to leave a performance unaffected, and offers of assistance often follow after someone has seen a show. The guitars, drums, and tour bus are gifts from donars; a hotel chain in Alberta has recently offered complimentary rooms when the band is traveling in that province; and Perimeter Air provides free transportation to remote northern areas. The videos that make up the stage show are produced by a professional Media Designer (Brian Moylan). Two music producers (Steve and Anthony) also work with the band on a volunteer basis. Robb considers all of these individuals to be part of his extended team and acknowledgement of their generosity is woven into the show. This reinforces his underlying message to youth: "We're not here for ourselves; we're here for other people" (Robb Nash, Personal Communication during a performance in British Columbia) The support the band receives is a testament to their ability to inspire people to take positive action in the world.



DALE, DRIVER AND SECURITY

"I do this job because I get to see so much good being done when there's so much that is not good out there. It's not a job when there's 'a why'"

(Dale, on the bus to Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Dale drives the bus, assists with setting up the show, and helps out wherever he is needed. He joined the band in September, 2012, but knew Robb before that time. He talks fondly about the anonymous couple who saw the show and were so affected they decided to donate the tour bus.



When I ask him what he gets from doing this job, he recalls the story of a girl who came up to him after a concert to announce she was going to stop cutting. That meant a lot. Dale urges people to come out to a show themselves, to see what is happening: "People need to see the kids'

reactions. Teachers tell us they can't believe how attentive the kids are to the message."

For Dale, the Robb Nash team is like his second family. "As a team, we all get along really well."

JONNY HOLLIDAY, DRUMMER & SOCIAL MEDIA

"It's genuine. We let our hearts guide us to this place"
(Jonny, on the bus outside Winnipeg)

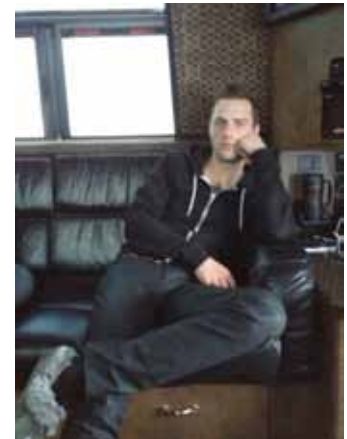
Jonny explains to me the band reaches youth through entertainment and fun, combined with a serious message: "It's part entertainment, part an inspiring story."

He joined the Robb Nash Project four years ago because he wanted to be a positive influence through music and he wasn't finding that in the music industry. Jonny describes Robb as "the first musician who had a similar goal and dream."

"It's the stories you hear. There are so many things hurting kids out there. It's heartbreaking. I want to use music to have an impact. We'd also like to influence teachers. Inspire them. Talk to them about the "what" and the "why" they do what they do, and remind them of the "why." It's all about the issue of caring and the influence they can have."

As musicians and storytellers, Jonny and Robb prefer to take an encouraging approach with youth, rather than, "don't do that!" He explains why they are able to have a positive impact on youth:

"The kids think we are one of them. They look at us and they think we are about the same age. It's the way we dress and the way we talk. We don't preach. Music opens the door. We tell stories. We are always fine-tuning our songs and our message. We work in waves between funny and serious. Each song is on a specific topic. They capture a story. It's a very personal thing. Based on true stories. Kids tell us that after the show that it doesn't feel like a presentation. It's more like we are all just hanging out. Robb woke up from his accident bitter, not enlightened. He decided to try to turn it around. He got a taste of doing something for somebody else. He wants others to know what that feels like."



"There is consistency in the suicide notes we see from kids - I feel insignificant." (Jonny)





Tyler and Dale loading equipment onto the bus after a performance in British Columbia.

KAREN HAMPTON, EVENTS AND SUPPORT MANAGER

"Thank you, you've saved my life. Thank you, you've made my friend's day... To get that from teenagers, to have them react in that way, is just out of this world. And I see it every single day."

(Karen, on the bus north of Winnipeg)

Karen and Tyler work closely together to coordinate the numerous shows the band performs at schools and other venues every year. Karen jokes that she is the air traffic controller and Tyler is the pilot.

When we arrive at the school after a long drive from Winnipeg, the councillor is waiting for the band in the office. When he sees Karen he smiles and walks toward her. They exchange greetings and a big hug. As we walk toward the gym I ask Karen whether she knows this person because they seem to be old friends. She assures me this is the first time they've ever met in person, but they feel like they know one another given the numerous conversations that led to today's performance. I am not surprised. At this point, I've spent a little over 3 hours with the Robb Nash team and I feel like I've known them all my life.

On the way back to Winnipeg, Karen tells me she is "honoured to be part of this." Her dedication to the band is exemplary. I would meet her weeks later in Calgary to discuss her organizational system. Karen could possibly be the most organized and conscientious person I have ever known. She works tirelessly and closely with the band and schools to ensure not only that the show comes off successfully, but that the band has the greatest impact possible (See Appendix __). She responds to every email sent to the band by kids, and gives them encouragement.



*"I would do anything
for this band."
Karen Hampton*

TOM HEIBERT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

"When you see the responses from the kids, you can't help but be involved." (Tom Heibert, on the bus returning to Winnipeg)

On the way back to Winnipeg, I mention to Tom how impressed I am with the team's level of commitment. He responds:

"This is what it means to be all in. It's why you are involved. You're all in."



Each person plays a crucial role and works extremely hard to fulfill it, but what strikes me most are their strong convictions about why they are doing what they do. I query Tom about why people might want to support the Robb Nash Project:

"It's going to be very hard to find another project to get involved with, where for the amount of money is involved, to get as much result... There is no overhead. Everything is going toward the Mission, and the mission is so great, so big, so needed, and so important, you won't find anything like it anywhere. If somebody doesn't care, they wouldn't be involved. How can you not get involved if you really understand what's going on? You can see it in the emails and social media response. You can see it in the eyes of the kids. You can see it when they have breakthroughs. You see something that speaks to their heart and soul. You something that is genuine. Real. And they don't get enough of that. It talks directly to their soul and they recognize it. It gets them right in their core. What they are thinking internally comes out."

At this point in our conversation, Robb gets up, opens a drawer and pulls out a metal container. There are razor blades, pins, and an assortment of other small, sharp objects. Robb throws in 3 more razors just given to him today. One is from a teenager who was planning to commit suicide on the weekend. Our conversations today coalesce in these moments of looking at material evidence of troubled youth struggling to survive. Its clear why the individuals working with Robb Nash do what they do.



Robb shows part of his collection of cutting tools youth have given him as their promise to stop self-harming. He stresses the importance of the symbolism of this act for youth.

TYLER MARSHALL, TOUR AND PRODUCTION MANAGER

"Tangibly there is something to this project, this presentation, that has a greater purpose than a pay cheque or an experience. There's lots of experiences all over the place. There are other ways to make money. This has a purpose when you are tangibly changing someone's life and hopefully, eventually, impacting an entire generation and culture."
(Tyler, on the bus, north of Winnipeg)

Tyler brings a university education and a wealth of experience to his position as Tour and Production Manager. He describes how he became involved with Robb:

"His band was playing in a small club in Winnipeg. I had heard this name, Robb, around town, but had never met the guy. We just started talking and within a few weeks I was their sound guy. I just felt very strongly that there was something more than a rock band here... Something I could sink my teeth into.

That was in February of 2001...getting on 13 years ago. So I have been with Robb through three bands and a couple of iterations of the presentation you just saw [performed at the school]. What you just saw has been evolving for 6 years into what it is today. Along the path there have been people come and go, refined into the team that you met today. There's many more of them behind the scenes."

I am struck by the professional quality of the performance I just witnessed at a small school in rural Manitoba. During the show it becomes obvious how closely Tyler works with Jonny and Robb

to create the show. Tyler's expertise is acknowledged as part of the performance when Robb calls on him to show the audience how he controls the technical aspects of the show from an iPad. Tyler explains:

"I'm the one backstage that actually connects the dots and makes the thing go. My role in this has always been the execution of what we are doing. It starts with Robb's ideas. He gives me what he is thinking and I figure out how to make it work. We work together perfectly and in sync."

Perhaps this is best illustrated when things go wrong. Three months later I would attend a show that had to be shortened by ten minutes due to



unanticipated issues at the school. Quick decisions had to be made about what parts to cut for this particular audience. Although we were at one of the highest ranking high schools in Vancouver, numerous students has been identified as suicidal. During the performance I observed Tyler standing at the back of the theatrem holding up his iPad timer for Robb and Jonny to indicate time remaining in each segment. They pulled off significant modifications without a glitch. Unless you were familiar with the show, you couldn't have known major adjustments were made behind the scenes to pull of a successful performance.

I ask Tyler to describe Robb:

"He's genuine. His story is real and he uses that as a platform to very quickly engage people. He is aware of the way people think about themselves and of the potential that they do have. That's Robb's biggest gift. It is a good feeling to be part of soemthing that actually makes a difference."

ROBB NASH, LEAD MUSICIAN

"Strength is inside us all, but how do you tap into it? We need to listen to the stories kids are telling."

"Songs are like medicine... Our performance is a handshake to make conversations happen after the show. The breakthrough comes during the music"

(Robb, on the bus heading north of Winnipeg)



I ask Robb to talk about how the show works:

"The show will sound very unscripted and it seems organic, but it's very planned out. It used to be more spontaneous, but after feedback from school Principals and others we realized that certain things needed to be said because they had an impact. After every show Jonny and I talk about how things went and about how we can make improvements. Karen talks to each guidance counsellor before we get there. For example, if there has been a recent tragedy at the school, we'll take up how to move on. Otherwise, its preventative material. There is this consistency for all schools. Karen also sends out two videos to the school and there is a follow-up video to use for class discussions. Counsellors watch for troubled kids during and after the concert and do their own follow-up. After shows, kids hand us suicide notes, blades, and sometimes things like pills. During a recent 4 day trip I was handed 17 suicide notes and 7 students handed in their notes to their school councellors. After each show we hand out posters with a link to the music played during the show. The songs remind youth of the stories told during the concert. Personal connections are important. Kids give me bracelets and I give my own bracelets to kids who make statements when I talk with them after the show. This extends the message. Kids contact us years later to tell us what an impact we had on their lives"

"It felt like you were talking to me directly"
(Youth talking to Robb after the show)



... Back on the bus to Winnipeg after the show...

I am amazed at Robb's energy level given what he has just been through. In addition to the travel, pre-show preparations, and the performance, itself, Robb just spent 3 hours talking to students after the show. He assures us he feels good, but an hour into our return journey he starts to look fatigued. I am physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted simply from observing Robb and the band in action. Robb talks more about a girl from



the school who had been talking about suicide. He seems deeply affected by her particular story, and feels a sense of relief that she is now getting help from the school Social Worker. The band opened up a space for this to happen.

This ability to connect is Robb's unique gift. He is, without a doubt, the leader of this team. At the same time, he constantly stresses he is only able to do what he does because of the support he receives from so many others.





5:10 p.m. Dropped off at Winnipeg International Airport.

Dale insists on dropping me off at the airport, and I manage to snap one last photo on this brutally cold day as the bus drives off. I walk through airport check-in, security, and departures trying to collect my thoughts, make sense of my emotions, and come to grips with what I have seen, heard, and felt during the past ten hours with the band. I think to myself that if hope exists anywhere in this world, it is embodied in this Robb Nash team, who showed me what it means to be "*all in*". It is little wonder Robb and his team are able to inspire youth to overcome the difficulties they face in their everyday lives.

POSTSCRIPT

I would later meet up again with the band in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In all, I experienced ten shows in three provinces, and I cried at every one. I saw the band perform at a school in the British Properties in West Vancouver where students get dropped off in BMW's, and I attended performances in isolated, disadvantaged, rural communities. Having the opportunity to watch the band perform in multiple contexts helped me to better understand the work they are doing.

It is obvious members of the RNP care deeply about youth. This is demonstrated through their attention to detail. Karen does not let an email or comment on a social media go unacknowledged. Taylor and Dale take great pains to set the band up for maximum visual impact. Chairs are rearranged if necessary to create an intimate space for the band and audience to occupy during a performance. Taylor explains they avoid playing on an elevated stage if possible, because they prefer to be physically on the same level as the youth. Robb invites a student to perform on stage with the band at every performance - a crowd favourite. The first thing Robb does when the band arrives at a venue is talk with school staff to find out if there have been any recent incidents, or if there are particular students of concern (e.g., who may be cutting, suffering from depression, or are at risk of suicide). The band customizes the show to ensure content and tone are appropriate given particular local circumstances.

For example, the band was requested to come to a school where a student had committed suicide. Robb met with councillors and administrators before the show to discuss what content would be suitable. After some initial hesitation on the part of an administrator, it was decided students needed to be exposed to the hard reality of the situation. Robb subsequently handled the show in a way that sensitively took the current situation into account without sacrificing the message. Afterwards, he met with the close friends of the deceased girl.

On another occasion, the band was invited to perform at a rural school where many were living in poverty. The drop out rate was high, and substance abuse and self-harm common. Special events and assemblies had been banned due to poor student behaviour in the past. A few minutes before the show was scheduled to begin, students shuffled into the gym and reluctantly slumped into chairs. A heckler soon started yelling out comments. The band knew this was not going to be an easy crowd, but had

no doubt in their ability to connect. Within moments after the opening of the show, all eyes were transfixed on the stage and remained there until the end. The young heckler continued to yell out, but his comments became less frequent and quieter as the show progressed. Afterwards, he apologized to Robb, claiming he was only doing it in the spirit of good fun. Robb told him he was fine with that.

At another school, in another province, kids are dropped off to school by parents driving Mercedes and BMWs. When asked about how the band's message might be received in this relatively affluent context, Robb is quick to point out that youth are struggling everywhere. Those who are more privileged face different challenges, such as pressure from their parents to succeed. The performance at this particular school was modified slightly to reflect their particular set of circumstances. The band's refusal to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach demonstrates the sensitive, respectful, and caring attitude they embody in their work with youth.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in Canada (CMHA, 2014), yet people are often reluctant to talk about it. It makes us uncomfortable. This is partly due to the stigma associated with mental health issues and suicide. There is frequently guilt and shame surrounding this subject. Unfortunately, a culture of silence perpetuates harmful myths and attitudes and can prevent people from talking openly about the pain they are feeling or the help that they need. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, communication is the first essential step in assisting youths at risk of suicide. This is where the Robb Nash Project excels. Through music, humour, storytelling, and the ability to communicate an authentic sense of trust and caring, the band opens up a critical space for reflection and conversation on issues that tend to be avoided.

Through their "all in" attitude and incredible team effort the Robb Nash Project is making a difference in the lives of Canadian youth.



Tyler and Robb discuss the set up before a show at a school in Saskatchewan.

PART THREE

The Robb Nash Project's Use of Media

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Robb Nash Project makes strategic use of social media to extend its influence among youth. The band has a strong presence on a number of popular sites, including Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. The Internet is now universal in all regions of the country, and more young Canadians are plugged into networked technologies more than ever before (Steeves, 2014). Through social media, the RNP message is disseminated in the everyday digital spaces youth engage with to reach new audiences and to stay connected with established followers.

The impact of the show lasts which can be told from the many responses on Facebook (20,000 followers), Twitter (7600 followers), Youtube (11 videos, with an average of 15,000 hits per video) and Instagram (17,000 followers), the social media networks that kids frequent. Many ask for him to come back to their school or community. Others refer to the conversations they have had and most comments are about how much they have loved the show. The band's drummer, Jonny Holliday, also helps to manage their use of social media. He explains:

Our goal through social media is to build off of our presentation and continue to inspire kids through telling more stories as well as sharing updates of our travels and experiences that will keep kids engaged and hopefully remind them of the things we said in the presentation. (Personal Communication, April 2014)

Percentage of Canadian students in grades 7-12 reporting they have an account on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

Facebook	82%
Twitter	47%
Instagram	42%

(Source: Steeves, 2014, pg. 25)

INTERTEXTUALITY: THE RNP MESSAGE ACROSS MULTIPLE MATERIAL & VIRTUAL SITES

The Robb Nash Project involves much more than a one-off live performance at schools across the country. The band's message of hope and encouragement is not only clear and consistent before, during, and after each performance (See Appendix __), it continues to circulate in a number of carefully constructed social media sites. Before participating in the live show, youth and school staff potentially have access to the RNP website, various social media sites; and the pre-show videos. They are prepared for the live experience through exposure to the RNP messaging on offer in multiple sites. After the show all songs performed are available as free downloads on the RNP website, so the message is disseminated beyond the live performance. Numerous testimonials provide evidence that the band's central messages are getting through to youth. Some have even tattooed it onto their bodies.

The Robb Nash Project's use of visual messaging across texts is consistent and powerful. The signature red heart monitor line appears on bracelets, on the website, and in the videos used during the stage show. It is painted on the side of the tour bus and repeated on social media sites such as Facebook. This image symbolizes Robb making it through a near-death experience, which is central to his message of hope and inspiration. He survived an extremely difficult time, and they can, too.



These "before and after" selfies were sent to Robb by a female youth who credits the band with saving her life. She stopped cutting after attending a performance. The band's central messages resonate strongly with youth.

THE OFFICIAL ROBB NASH FACEBOOK PAGE

The Official Robb Nash Facebook Page was created in 2005, and as of May 5, 2014 it has 21,660 followers. This site is visually instantly recognizable as belonging to the Robb Nash Project, with its red heart line monitor, bold lettering, and stunning use of red, white and black colour scheme.

It is significant that an icon advertising “FREE MUSIC” is highlighted on the top of the page. The fact that the Robb Nash Project is a commercial-free zone is commendable in a consumer society where everyone is selling something to youth. It also speaks to the authenticity of the mandate of this charity. The Project’s CEO, Tom Hiebert, stands firm on his commitment to youth with his staunch refusal to allow the band to market commercial products. Donations are generously acknowledged in numerous ways, including on social media, during performances, and on a special page on the website. However, commercial logos never appear on any of the Robb Nash Project materials. (Integrate exact Quote from Tom’s interview).

In a shifting digital media landscape, the band makes a concerted effort to go where youth are, which in part explains their ability to connect. This means keeping up with the latest trends in social media, which the RNP takes seriously. Jonny explains:

The demographic of Facebook has changed quite drastically. In the words of the kids, they don’t want to go on Facebook because their parents are on there. By far, we get the most interaction through Instagram and the best quality of traffic as well. We get a ton of quality comments from kids telling us how the show affected them as well as updates on how things are going for them. (Jonny Holliday, Personal Communication, May, 2014)

Although the popularity of the Official RNP Facebook Page has declined, it provides a visual and textual record of the band’s activities and their ongoing efforts to engage with youth. In addition, it remains a site that parents, teachers, and administrators may feel comfortable checking out. Adults may not have an Instagram account, but many are on Facebook. The band recognizes the importance of bringing as many people as possible on board with the project, and works at speaking to these multiple audiences.

Visual Messaging Across Sites

The signature red heart monitor line is a symbol of hope and inspiration.



Videos during a performance (British Columbia)



The tour bus (Saskatchewan)



The official Robb Nash Facebook Page

CONTENT ANALYSIS

An examination of content on the Robb Nash Project's Facebook Page illustrates the messages the band is trying to communicate and reinforce. These messages are also common on other social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter.

1. GROUP SHOTS

At all the schools we visited our research team observed large numbers of youth hanging around to have a photo take with Robb and Jonny. Many of these images will then be circulated on social media sites by students, multiplying their potential reach and impact.



April 23, 2014

In the above photo Robb shows off the many arm bands he wears. He gives a few of these out to kids who share their stories with Robb after each performance. These are mostly reserved for individuals who make a promise to Robb to "take one day at a time." The black arm band is a sign of their commitment to themselves to get help. For many youth, this is what the band refers to as a "breakthrough moment" – the day they decide to stop cutting, get help for an addiction, or reach out to someone else in need.

Robb's arms are also covered in signatures written in black pen. Robb explains that a girl once came up to him after a show and asked if he would be willing to sign her arm. He replied that he would do so as long as she would agree to sign his arm first. The girl was shocked; it made her feel like someone special. This exchange marks the beginning of this practice. Just as the band prefers to set up their stage on the level where the audience is seated, this exchange of autographs demonstrates their view of the adult/youth relationship. To create openings, rather than being talked down to or lectured, youth must be valued and appreciated for who they are and for the strengths and gifts they already possess.

2. EXPRESSIONS OF THANKS

The band receives many expressions of thanks from youth, parents, teachers, and administrators. They also occasionally receive gifts from youth, which may be publically acknowledged on social media sites such as Facebook. Robb's comment reinforces the band's message by making direct reference to the song, "Shadows."



March 17, 2011

At every performance Robb asks school staff to find a student volunteer to sing with the band. This photo and the comments provide a public acknowledgement of one girl's success. She stopped cutting after meeting Robb.



February 4, 2014

4. HANGING OUT

Jonny stresses the important of having the band be seen to be like one of the kids. Their dress reflects this. They post many images such as this one, hanging out with kids after a show.



January 14, 2013

5. SHARING FREE MUSIC

This posting announces a new free music download. CEO Tom Heibert and other members of the Robb Nash team stress that they are not selling anything to youth. Making music free and easily available after a performance provides a means to powerfully reinforce the band's key message through music.

6. BEHIND THE SCENES

Having access to backstage before a show is for fans who want to be part of the culture of a rock band. The authenticity of the group as a band is essential. Youth may not respond as well to other approaches.



December 6, 2013



February 23, 2014

Being on the road is also part of the culture, and Robb and Jonny are often photographed relaxing or playing around on the tour bus.



February 17, 2014

7. A SHOUT OUT TO SPONSORS

This is an important way for the Robb Nash Project to acknowledge its sponsors without undermining the authenticity and integrity of the band.



October 4, 2013



February 3, 2014

SAMPLE COMMENTS POSTED ON FACEBOOK

A Parent, April 24, 2014	Hey Robb! I'm Mattie's mom. The girl who sang with you! Thank you for having her up on the stage and THANK YOU for all you do for our youth!
A Student, March 25, 2014	Come back to my school.
Robb Nash, Dec. 11, 2013 (946 "likes")	Dec 11 always gives me chills. Today is the day my mom got the call that I was dead. Hasn't always been easy, but I'm glad I'm still here! YOLT
A Parent, April 22, 2014	I am told you made a difference in my son's life yesterday at Lacombe Comp. I want to thank you for all that you are doing for our youth Rob... Bless ya!
A Student, April 13, 2014	Robb, I remember our conversation. And I'm happy to have talked to you! love you and happy that your father accepts what your doing!

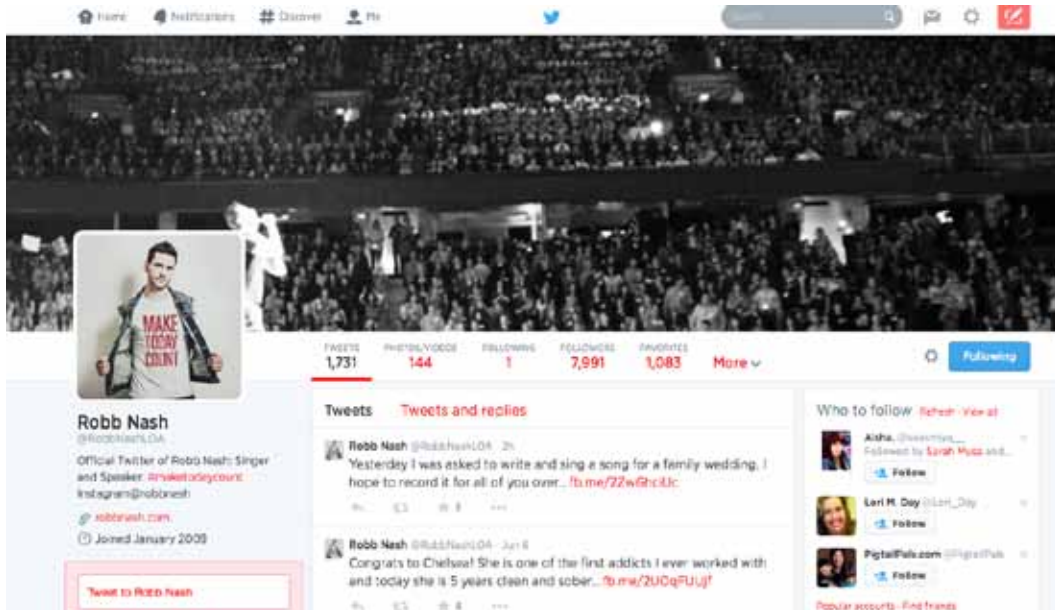
TWITTER @ROBBNASHLOA

Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service. Users can send and read short, 140-character text messages or "tweets" as well as images. Twitter was launched in 2006, and Robb Nash joined in January, 2009.

Although the RNP Twitter site does not experience anything near the traffic Instagram does, there is significant activity with 7,991 followers as of June 5, 2014. There have been 144 photos and videos posted to Robb Nash's Twitter account.

The hashtag, #maketodaycount is prominent on the homepage, and on the t-shirt Robb wears in his profile picture. This is a central messages communicated to youth by the RNP.





The image shows a screenshot of Robb Nash's Twitter profile. At the top, there is a large banner image of a concert crowd. Below it is the profile picture, which is a photo of Robb Nash with the text "MAKE TODAY COUNT" overlaid. The profile information includes the name "Robb Nash", the handle "@RobbNashLOA", and his bio: "Official Twitter of Robb Nash: Singer and Speaker. #makeitcount". It also lists his website "robbnash.com" and the date he joined Twitter, "January 2009". The statistics show 1,731 tweets, 144 replies, 1 following, 7,991 followers, and 1,083 favorites. The "Tweets" section shows two tweets: one from 2h ago about writing a song for a family wedding, and another from Jan 8 about a client's recovery. The "Who to follow" section lists several accounts, including Aisha, Lori M. Day, and PigtailPals.com.

Photos and videos

 **Robb Nash** @RobbNashLOA · Apr 17
Talking with @pamelaroz today on @1031Virgin about our tour and work with Kids Help Phone.



The video still shows Robb Nash and Pamela Roz sitting in a radio studio. Behind them is a large red banner for "Virgin RADIO 103.1 FM" with the text "THE #1 HIT MUSIC STATION". Robb Nash is on the left, wearing a dark jacket, and Pamela Roz is on the right, wearing a dark top. They appear to be in conversation.

4 15

As the chart below demonstrates, themes common on Facebook and Instagram also appear on Twitter.

Theme	Tweets
Knowledge Dissemination/Production	<p>Talking with x today about our tour and work with Kids Help Phone</p> <p>Did an interview this morning on CTV to show our support for the upcoming Kids Help Phone walk and then played at ...</p> <p>Honoured to be a part of a great student conference in Brandon, Manitoba today!</p>
Resiliency	<p>Played in High River and Okotoks today. Met a lot of people that have been through a lot but their resiliency and ...</p> <p>A few bus problems couldn't stop us from rocking at Belmont High and Reynolds Secondary today in Victoria!!</p>
Potentiality	<p>Pretty emotional day today in Gibbons and Bon Accord but met a lot of strong kids with so much potential!</p> <p>Some believe they can and some believe they can't. They are both right ...</p>
Encouraging and Sharing Success	<p>So pumped when we get messages like this! This girl hasn't cut since seeing our show and her scars have almost ...</p> <p>Got to meet a ton of cool people at Tec Voc today. Nichole came to show me her arms that have not felt a blade ...</p> <p>Visited Rimbey and Red Deer today. Got to meet Olivia. She is in the first stages of dealing with a head injury...</p> <p>Met this girl at a teachers convention in Calgary today. She has been cut free since we first met her 9 months ago ...</p> <p>Got to play a show for a bunch of schools in Regina where we saw the students already doing random acts of ...</p> <p>This is Raven. She sang a song with me today and showed me her faded scars from quitting cutting since the last ...</p> <p>Look at this talent from Robert Thirsk School! This girl has been and continues to be an inspiration to us! Also ...</p> <p>It means so much to see fans come to a show to say hi and show us how they have grown since we first ...</p> <p>I just met someone who said one of my songs saved them from a dark time. So I am gonna give it to you guys. It's ...</p>

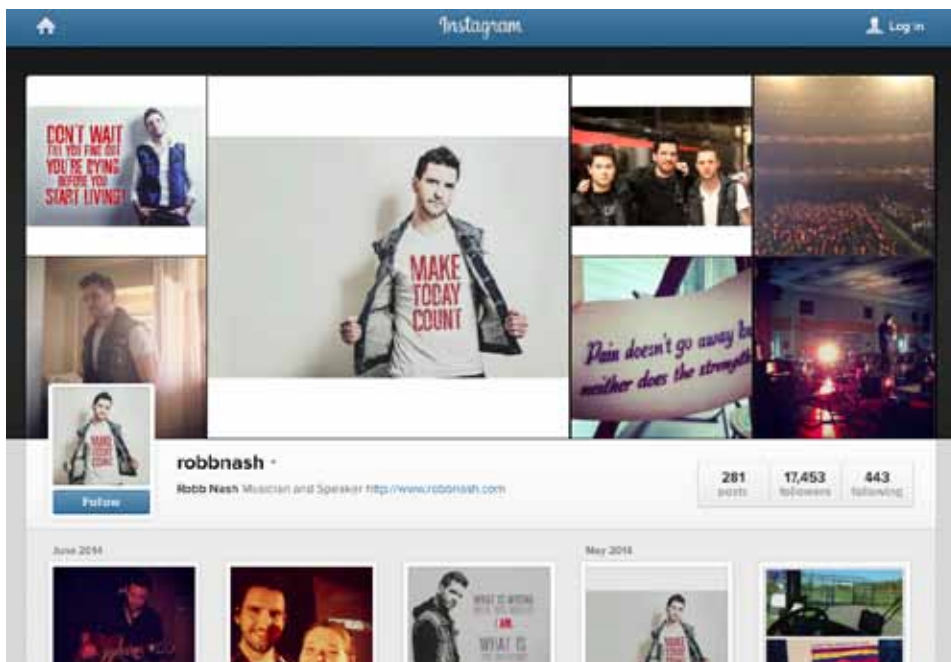
Theme	Tweets
Friendship, Support, Community/Communal Spirit	<p>Really amazing drawing done by Amanda! We love getting things like this from new friends!</p> <p>Visited Rimbey and Red Deer today. Got to meet Olivia. She is in the first stages of dealing with a head injury...</p> <p>Love to see how you guys help us spread our message in creative ways!!</p> <p>Got to play a show for a bunch of schools in Regina where we saw the students already doing random acts of ...</p> <p>Look at this talent from Robert Thirsk School! This girl has been and continues to be an inspiration to us! Also ...</p> <p>It means so much to see fans come to a show to say hi and show us how they have grown since we first ...</p> <p>It means so much to me when we show up to do a show and find out a student arranged it all because of the impact ...</p> <p>I just met someone who said one of my songs saved them from a dark time. So I am gonna give it to you guys. It's ...</p>
Pain in relation to strength	<p>It hurts so much to talk to people who see a friend overdose and die while partying together. Or see a friend ...</p> <p>I just met someone who said one of my songs saved them from a dark time. So I am gonna give it to you guys. It's ...</p>
Question of Futurity, Reflection, Uncertainty of Future	<p>A lot of people say they want to do what I do when they grow up. Why wait? All I do is listen to every prompting...</p> <p>Sitting at Vancouver airport talking with Dale. When we were in high school I didn't plan to be a singer and he ...</p>
Modeling health/recuperation/spirituality	<p>The boys and I are taking a few days off to get healthy, recharge and visit some family!</p>
Inspiration, Talent within Youth	<p>Look at this talent from Robert Thirsk School! This girl has been and continues to be an inspiration to us!</p>

INSTAGRAM

Instagram@robbnash

Not only is the power of social media understood well by the Robb Nash Team, but particularly the Instagram photo bucket is used intensively and cleverly. At times it serves as a means to provide the fans with day-to-day facts that show the life of the band on tour.

Updates on the recent shows with short comments about the school, the audience or particular individuals from the crowd prevail. Some personal information is shared about Robb's whereabouts or thoughts.



Often youth react to the posted photos, either to the facts given in the picture or in a more general, less directed way. That is usually a shout out to the band or a plea to come visit their school (again). In managing the social media there could be a streamlined response to the last category of kids to direct their pleas to the school staff.

From the responses to a note on pain and strength that keep battling, it has to be concluded that for many kids depressive thoughts and struggle are a daily hazard. The work of the Robb Nash band proves to be necessary when we read this kind of responses. Many kids apparently are suffering from depression, pain and abuse.

Or to put it differently: he fills a need. We have to wonder though what the nature of that need is. The impact seems the most intense for white youth in small towns or for youth in poorer city areas. The work being done in first nations dominated communities may have a deep impact, but the youth are fluent in different media than the fancy high-tech internet and smartphone intensive type that prevails in the white kids world.

Usual comments look like this:

[sowhatimafangirl](#)

Thankyou for coming again! You totally changed my life for the second time, which is hard to do since I'm sorta stubborn and I don't like to listen to other peoples ideas sometimes, but your story is amazing and I love how you use it to help people around Canada. Please don't ever change! Thankyou

And after a visit in Sioux Lookout the comments are such:



[val_valeria](#)

100th like

[quinnlamb](#)

Cool

[kelseyycrandall](#)

Solid [@vp_turtle](#)

[canadian_chick_247](#)

Follow?

[stephie101298](#)

Loved it, love you! Follow mee?

[jam_jam0225](#)

Love you! Follow? :3

[the_car_freak](#)

Follow me

[iatemyname](#)

my homies

[martinakaye](#)

I shoulda took a picture with you guys D: jkn

[washedup_stereotype](#)

Hey look, I see me :3 lol.. Loved the show.

[val_valeria](#)

Lol ikr [@kelseyycrandall](#)

[levi_brunner](#)

Robb Nash, I bit your arm

[liberty_dessert](#)

Come to Lindsay Thurber High School in Red Deer! it's a huge school and we really need you! [@robbnash](#) #maketodaycount

[johnmorriswesley99](#)

I was here at this show.. Thank you for coming Robb, you're the best! #Legend #ChuckNorris #isproudfyou

Note that the responses are less open and avoid a deep personal confession.

CUSTOMIZED VIDEO MESSAGING

The band is unable to attend all special events they are invited to, but take requests seriously and look for alternate ways to participate. The band's videographer recently met them at a school before a performance to film Robb delivering four individual messages to be shown at different events across Canada. Digital media are used to extend the band's reach and influence.



Bryan Moylan and the band at a school in British Columbia. Bryan is an award-winning Media Designer who volunteers his time and expertise to make videos for the website and for the show. He met the band at a school in Vancouver where he lives to record video messages of Robb.

RESPONDING TO YOUTH MESSAGES

Jonny and Robb make all the posts on the various social media. Karen helps them to manage the huge volume of responses they receive, whether that means "liking" someone's photo or sending a quick comment back on Instagram. The team replies to very few social media posts unless someone says something particularly meaningful. Jonny Holliday explains:

A big part of what we want to accomplish through our presentations is to get kids to start asking questions about themselves and finding the answers on their own. We know we aren't the answer and we want to remain connected to kids through social media but not allow any direct communications. We don't want kids to be able to message us if they are having a rough night, hoping we will make everything better. We want them to talk to other people whether that is a friend or a professional. This policy with social media is also meant to avoid any potential liability issues in a case where something happened to a kid and they had sent us a private message. (Personal Communication, May, 2014)

Karen stresses that email is different. All the info@robbnash.com emails that she receives come to her directly from the website, and she responds to every one of them. She has a number of templates she uses, depending on the content and depth of the email. Karen explains:

If it's a "chunky" and deep email, I'll send them the link to the song, Starting Over. But if it's just a thank you and encouragement for the team, I'll thank them for the encouragement and encourage them back. (Personal Communication, May, 2014)

Below is Karen's "general response" template for someone who has sent the band a deep and meaningful email that involves sharing a personal story. She will sometimes add in a sentence or two to individualize her response based on the content of the message. This demonstrates the team's caring attitude and commitment to youth.

Hey!

My name is Karen and I work with Robb.... thank you so much for your email.

We are SO thankful when people take the time to send us encouragement because we don't always get that. And it is so important for us to get encouraging things like this to help us keep going. So thank you so much for taking the time to send us this email. It means the world to our whole team.

Robb asked me to send this link to you. It's a link to his new song called Starting Over. He has never performed this song live and

only gives the link out to a small number of people, because it's pretty deep and intense. Your story touched him and he really wanted you to have this song. You can download it from this link:

<http://www.robbnash.com/messages/startingover>

You have SO much strength inside of you to get through anything that comes at you in this life, and your story is going to help other people get through their tough times. You have a HUGE purpose in this world!!

Stay strong and make today count!!

REFERENCES

Steeves, V. (2014). *Life Online: Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III*. Ottawa, ON: Media Smarts. Retrieved Jan. 16, 2014 from: <http://www.mediasmarts.ca/vcww>

APPENDICES



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FIELDNOTES EELCO BUITENHUIS

NOTES ANALYSIS

Build up

Pedagogy

Stories

Connection

Organization

LaLoche SK 3 Feb 2014

Ok, here we go. In a 'private' turbo prop on the way north. Perimeter air services the north and the CEO has made the vow to put part of the profit back into the communities that they service. Hence the sponsoring of Robb's project to give them free transportation whenever they have a gig up north. Because the company likes the work of the band.

The band consists of four and me, two pilots and the gear in the back.

Robb, Dale, Tyler and one other guy, name I'll recall later are all nice thirty something good people.

Robb told me that on the Thursday gig the principal apologized that they had tried so hard to get the band booked and that now it had finally worked there would be no classes. "Thanks for telling but we have played

for audiences of six so we don't mind," was his reply. The same principal stood open mouthed when 750 of 800 students showed up. For the band that is.

I'll be hanging with the guys for three days, which will give me a good chance to really connect. The day started off with a slight challenge. I was supposed to be picked up at 7.30, and decided to go to the airport at 7.45. Only to find that the airline is not leaving from the terminal but from a very different location. Thank you for telephones and email.

The show has a great reputation, at least in the field of youth, youth in trouble and of youth studies.

Another anecdote: Dale said since we may have some time in LaRoche we might go dog sledding, which reminded Robb of the time the kids took them to go ice fishing.

In itself not a strange thing: you are in that area and that is what you do there. It is authentic and there are not many other places where you can go do that kind of thing. It also tells me that the kids want to invite, or include even, the band members into their lives. Which is a way to connect, to relate. Not that there is not anything else to do, but more like there is something they are proud of and find it of importance.

The airstrip we landed on was plowed and there were two vans waiting for us, but other than a few small buildings there was nothing there. Compliment for the pilots!

We were picked up by two people from the Clearwater River Dene school, and our driver told us about life out here. Lots of suicides, unbalanced income, taking care of the community, English is second language for almost everyone here.

He is tutoring in English 30 and math and more. He wants to become a teacher.

The blonde teacher lives herewith her boyfriend for 15 years and still does not speak Dene.

The economy is

Upon the starting time Robb gets a basketball and starts to shoot hoops and circle the group that I gathering on the wrestling mats.

After the intro video he does a humoristic loosening up

His message is one of hope. He gives all those examples where kids come out of their misery and take a chance to be successful.

Pedagogy

Haleluja

When does the work really happen, during or after the show? Does it matter?

Winnipeg 4 Feb 2014

Before the show starts three girls show up who have things to share, it is not the first time that Robb plays at this school. The girls have their own stories and one brought a drawing of it and is going to sing with him in the show. Robb tells me that she has stopped cutting.

The show is in the gym which has a podium, but they set up on the floor, in order to minimize the distance.

He and Dale picked me up at the hotel and we dropped off the rented gear for yesterday's show. He tells about the neighborhood we drive through, which is known for its roughness. Many fugitives from all over the world are attracted by the cheap housing. The radio guy that he talks about in the show at one point bought an old church and had socializing projects for these people in it.

The message of hope is never cheesy or dreary. He means it and understands the voice of youth. Or better put, youth understands his voice.

And he loves what he is doing.

Teacher tells me that the girls in her class dressed up for the show.

I am meeting Tyler's dad and wonder how he reacts to the things Robb says about him in the monologue, but i dare not look next to me.

The crowd is so different from yesterday's crowd. The school is much more diverse, I guess thirty ethnicities at the least.

It is also economy reversed: doing this tour gets people putting their money into it and not the other way around, as we are used to.

Lorette 5 Feb 2014

Today Lorette Collegiate in Lorette, 30 km from Winnipeg. School looks way more sophisticated. Robb tells me that the dynamics will be different, since this is a high school, with kids that are way more evolved(?)

I love that I had the chance to see three shows in a row, each with a slightly different appeal.

Today there is a huge team from an anti suicide program present dressed in blue t,s and with posters and cakes and hot chocolate. The well to do village is rural, probably farmers. There are a lot of signs in French, but I hear no one speak any. Interesting constant with the Dene community, for whom the second language is English. So the stark contrast with make belief here.

I today choose to sit in the back of the room with the audience. Good to see the dynamics of the kids

Out of the blue intro

Someone in a blue shirt will follow you when you need to go out of the room

Very positive istic

Funny voices well received, lots of laughing

Brain narrative kicks in

Now it strikes me how well the monologue is constructed

Three dudes want to leave, but are sent back

Terry Fox narrative one legged guy

Nobody showed up at funeral nightmare

The radio station owner was his hero

Video is at the right time in the show, right when the kids are getting to be distracted

Tyler's dad told me that the show gets better every time he sees it

A running line should be the summing up of everyone that contributes the project, showing how something like this grows, as an example for new sponsors

Gibbons! 26 Feb 2014

Had dinner last night with Tyler, Dale and Jonny at Guru, the best in town.

Gibbons is a rural and agricultural town. The grades 5 - 9 look really young to me for the show.

In the past month a very young kid has committed suicide and the community is still in shock, although the nature of the death is being covered. Hence there is a meeting with the team and Robb before the show starts and he discusses whether the video of the parents telling about the loss of their son should be shown. Inter-

estingly enough the team members speak out and share openly how they see it. They seem responsible and feeling empowered to tell their opinion.

The older kids have seen him last year, the young ones are totally into the voices.

It now appears to me how he jumps emotions from laughter to scare

That makes it bearable

The young ones in the front love his voices and jokes.

He understands entertaining

His stories really relate to the kids, they understand his point, it is their language.

The one legged guys running from coast to coast the criminal one is not remembered because nobody wants to relate to him.

The radio owner is his hero. That is his theme: do good.

More than just giving words to thighs that are not spoken about often, he shows at youth has a voice and he can make them have it. In a world where youth is never treated well.

He is a preacher in the right sense of the word.

And Bon Accord! 26 Feb 2014

After Tyler told me about the set up of the show, how it starts with building trust I understand that the line of the show is the same all the time but the interaction is similar but adjusted to the response from the group.

Angels and demons

It is so interesting how he speaks the right words to get in touch with the kids

Talked with Karen too. How she met Robb and how she works with him. How her work has developed from cold phone calls to warm phone calls and how she now can rely on the reputation of the band for filling gaps in the tour schedule, and that now bookings go 18 months later.

Tyler told me how the show has improved over time to what is now shown. The technical setup is perfect and every detail is taken care of. The setup is built in about half an hour by ree men and breaking up takes about the same amount of time.

So for a venue, like a school, the whole program would take not more than three and a half hours.

The bus makes an impression on kids.

I love how he two times in every show says that the most important question is *Why?*

The way Robb works is better than any of the youthwork I've seen around. Even if the story sounds to good to be true.

Next show I want to record it and take notes of the sequence of the songs.

The videos are so important in the show. What a happy coincidence that the good things have been recorded.

He lays bare how taking your life in your own hands is not the usual thing happening

Tyler takes the projectors back before the show ends, reducing the risk of them getting damaged when everyone gets up, but also

Robb in Gypsumville Manitoba May 5

Gypsumville, middle of nowhere, no more than 280 souls, kids from schools in the surroundings will be bussed in.

On the road here Tyler told me that they tried out a trailer for future plans. Taking more gear to bigger venues.

A teacher shows up before the start of the show, telling Robb that her daughter had told her about the show that she had attended and how it had made a difference to her life. Robb says that the look in the eyes of the mother was special. It means a lot to him.

Somehow the eb seems low today. It may be me, being tired and sleepy, Robb isn't sleeping well lately.

The school counselor shows up, and points at the set and says: look at that, it is beautiful.

Robb briefs her on the expectancies

Robb asks her to open the storage so he can get a basketball.

Then she returns with the girl that will sing. It takes a while to find the song that will work out well enough. After all she appears to not be the right girl. A girl from one of the other schools is helping out.

There are about sixty kids in the room, and considering that half of them were bussed in ...

During the voices he jokes and asks them not to make him laugh. Their response to it is so enthusiastic.

I guess about seventy percent native kids.

Things happen with potential.

What they do is not why they do it.

Steve Fonyo made it, coast to coast on one leg

The kids that were bussed in, took the trouble to take a detour due to flooded roads, because they were sure that they did not want to miss the show.

A very big mom and her sons hugged after they had spoken to Robb after the show. Robb told me that he got invited to speak in a class with younger kids, because the counselor or teacher felt that they are suffering too.

May 14

60% ESL students

Introductory talk with the counselling team, ziggy turns up to sing Adele

The school has an auditorium. Robb says at that is only in the east, in the west it is always in gyms

Introduction from a principal, talking about the guests from Elizabeth high.

Sound seems better today.

Captain of all my sports teams

Fate is no choices

God is mad cause he Spanked you with a semi truck

Set me free: understanding that it happened as it did.

Silence in the crowd when he talks about funerals

Promptings: call the guy in the semitruck.

When you ... With little

No build a well today.

I feel like I need to do this

His voices as an opening to make everyone understand that they have a talent and follow up on that.

There is a thief out there who wants to steal your life

Stittsville May 15

Alternate school

One screen, band setup on stage, in gym.

The school is happy to have kids from other schools and many parents.

Two police officers are in the room, feels like out of interest. The blond female officer says after the show at the coffee, wow, that was heavy! She was deeply affected.

Asked Dale about his absence on the website. He didn't mind it and he sees himself as a different part of the band. He is more private and not a spokesperson.

The voices meet a great response.

He did not make the Africa well thing in the school full with kids from Africa.

The videos with the songs give a feeling of being in that big venue, a sense of belonging to the big crowd.

The show is a good answer to many others with the catch in the end, that are always a turnoff.

Robb In Mississauga May 27

Lisgar school at the NW side of town. Smells like farmland outside. I am there at 7 which appeared a bit early. When the bus turns into the driveway in front of the school. It strikes me that the show is electrifying. There is something about a band rolling in and performing. It is a descending of the gods of these times.

That relates to my thoughts during this week. The work and the band is on my mind a lot and I am still thinking about the reason for it.

Before the show Robb notices the banners in the gym. This is a big volleyball school he retorts. Then to me: you will notice that I adapt my narrative during the show to the school I am at. Because I played all these sports.

Jonny plays a few riffs and rolls. I cheer when he does some amazing bass drum rolls. He is really an amazing drummer.

After the anthem is played over the PA of the school, he plays his version, improvising with the interpretation. When other songs play he plays along quite easily. Later he plays stairway to heaven. He is a really good musician.

The gym fills with kids and teachers are sitting on chairs at the sides. The kids are naturally chatting. Here is excitement. Two boys are in chairs at the front. Apparently to play some kind of role.

The boys walk across and approach the principal calls the class numbers and the kids cheer.

Then the boys introduce Robb.

What you do

Why you do it

the boys that 'hosted' hand me a Lion with the school log and the text "Respect Others And Respect Yourself"

this brings up the understanding that this work is often done at places that may not need it a lot, and the schools that have no vision are missing out on the show.

we talked with Robb over diner in Ottawa Shirley met with Robb and I was there too. 14 May 2014

He talked about the tour, the latest concerts, and plans for the future.

He was well aware of the negative image that is on the net about him with his comment on the GSA's. He understands well what he is talking about and that this was a tragic misunderstanding.

We concluded that he is not in any way planning to include any religious thoughts or actions.

why his success with Canadian youth

Canadian high school kids think Robb is their hero.

That is great and he is for reasons talked about already.

But why is he so popular? He relates to the kids because he is, or used to be one of them. A sportsman, a musician, a good looking guy, a man with a mission and he cares.

He speaks their language and I don't mean English.

So that is who he is, but who are they?

When he visits them in the reserves or in native communities they are basically young native kids. they have their own specific reasons to embrace him. They do so in a restrained manner. They aren't loud or pushy. Their eyes tell a different story though. They really appreciate that he cares about them and shows them a way to deal with the issues in their lives.

When he works with kids in youth prisons or similar, he manages to win their trust and is able to teach them that they can change their lives.

Most kids are living in small towns and live a life of rural folk. White, Christian, Caucasian.

the only thing that one could hold against the message is that it does not address the many abuses and what has to be done to change them

ROBB NASH FIELD NOTES

Fieldnotes: January 15-17

Central Alberta

Mairi McDermott

First show. Google directions took me to some back entrance, luckily the bus was there so I knew I was in the right place. I walked in the entrance by the bus, asked the short, young looking Asian male and another young white female, asked if they worked at the school and if where I was parked was okay. They said it would be fine. I walked through the doors that led into the gym and found myself backstage. Someone was there, looked like he was with the band so I walked up to him and introduced myself. I told him I was with the team with Shirley Steinberg at the University of Calgary. He said he was Dale, the bus driver, I later found out his other role is 'security'. He offered to introduce me to Karen and walked me to the back of the gym, said, 'see the blond over there, that's Karen' and he walked away. Karen was standing with a tall skinny white guy, her back was to me. I walked up to her and introduced myself. We had had several email exchanges prior to meeting

and she said, as she leaned in, 'I feel I should hug you', so we hugged. Just as she was introducing me to Tyler, he had to go take care of something, he apologized and went on his way, he walked towards the stage.

Karen and I began chatting. She said she wanted to 'get her office together' and she packed up her computer. She asked me how I wanted to 'do this'. I said I was thinking that since I would be with the team for a few days, I would spend more time watching the first show to get an overall sense of what's happening. She said that is what she was going to suggest. She also offered if I have any questions she would love to answer them. Tyler came back, apologized for running off and introduced himself. He is the IT guy and the tour manager (both of which I found out later when Robb introduced the team as a part of the show).

The presentation/show began and I was struggling with the way that Robb engaged a pedagogy of humor to tell his story. I had to check myself from imposing my desires and interpretations on his narrative and the pain he works through every time he tells his story. I also started considering the power of story.

During the show, a girl walked out. I was sitting in the back and she walked in front of me to exit. I noticed two female teachers walk out after her, one returned right away. I did not notice if the girl and the teacher returned. After the show, I was able to stay around until the team broke down the stage, but then had to leave cause I was in the way of the bus. John (the drummer, who I met after the show) and Robb went to the two exits at the back of the gym to meet the students and hand out cards for the students to be able to download their music for free. I notice a girl in a bright green jacket give Robb a hug. A few minutes later, when I changed my position to see what else I could see. The girl who had hugged Robb was leaning over and hugging a friend of hers. It was hard to tell if they were both crying, but definitely the girl in the green shirt, was crying.

Since I had to leave the morning show early, I decided to head to the second show early to catch the set up as Shirley had suggested. Dale, Tyler, and Jonny were there and most of the equipment out of the bus by the time I arrived. The gym was empty except for them. I asked one of the staff if she minded if I pulled up a chair in the gym. Her name was Thelma and she was integral in organizing to have Robb Nash come. She told me she was so excited and that a youth who used to participate in the program had told her about Robb Nash, she said she wanted to get Ellen Degeneres then she learned about Robb...I grab a chair and sit in the corner of the room. Tyler is telling some story when I enter as he, Dale and Jonny set up the stage.

Karen came in, they had stayed at the school this morning for Robb to be able to spend time with any students who might stay behind. I'm looking forward to being able to see this happen this afternoon. Karen sat next to me and asked if I had any questions after the first show. I asked her how the team decides what stories to tell, as it seems as though they have many more stories that could be told. She said it really depends on several things, if there is video footage, sometimes Robb hears a story and sees how to incorporate it and/or how to capture it.

Robb came in and it was the first time I was officially introduced to him. It is interesting the first comment he made to me, he said that it took time to find the balance between humor and serious, and even though this show will seem similar and simultaneously off-the-cuff, there will be subtle changes as he reads the space.

Robb asks Tyler if he tuned the guitar for him, Tyler said he hadn't. Robb sits on stage and he and Jonny play a few tunes while Tyler gets the levels all set. While they are doing this I write down that I want to ask Karen how Robb handles the emotionality of going from show to show. How he addresses the affect of sharing his story, listening to the students' stories and then gearing up immediately for another show.

While they are getting set up, Thelma (the contact at this location) asked Robb if he wanted the youth on the floor or on chairs. After Thelma leaves Robb addresses this with Karen and Tyler. He says to change what is written in the rider to say something to the effect of 'regarding the seating for the audience, whatever works for the location'. He says how high school students might be uncomfortable/unhappy sitting on the floor. Karen and Tyler both take notes and assure Robb that it will be taken care of. Karen leans over to me and says two things: when Robb puts on his serious voice and is taking care of business, the team knows to listen and move on it immediately; also, she said this is the first time he mentioned this, she said she thought there might be something going on that triggered it for him in this particular space. The students during the morning presentation sat on the floor; they were younger and that presentation was really more for prevention, whereas this afternoon, the youth have been through some shit and are older and she suspects he wants to respect their experiences.

Karen said this might be a different show because it's more intimate (maybe 50 youth) and they are here 'cause they're going through things'. I ask Karen how Robb handles the emotional aspects of this work. She tells me that when he's performing he's not performing by himself. There's another force that gets him through and when he's on he's on, but then at some point he needs to turn off and sleep. She said that's part of the work of the guys (Tyler, Dale, and Jonny), they are there to support him and make sure he gets the rest he needs (as well as the nutrition). She also shared how the way she schedules tours allows for down time for the whole team, because it is a lot. In the course of a month, one week they are away, one week they are doing things near home, one week they are away, and then one week they are off. I also learned that they have weekends off. Robb, when we were talking later, shared that that is a promise he made to the team, that they would be able to go home and be with their families each weekend. Karen said that they also try to allow for Mondays and Fridays to be travelling days. If they do shows on those days it is usually only one.

Robb begins bringing chairs into the gym. I found out later that he just wasn't comfortable having this population sit on the floor. AS soon as Robb started doing this, staff members and Tyler and Dale started bringing chairs in. A few students who came in early also helped out. He didn't make a big scene about it, he just started getting chairs and people picked up on the cues. It was interesting seeing this aspect of the fluidity of the show/presentation.

The presentation begins with a short intro video then Robb comes out. He says he'd like to sing a pretty emotional song for him and he sings his song about the Hockey lock-out last year. Then he does some impersonations: Adam Sandler, Stewie from Family Guy as well as some other Family guy characters. Then he begins to tell his story of being hit by a semi-truck.

I am sitting in the back with Karen and Tyler taking notes and a male student catches my attention. He is sitting off to the side, slid down in his chair with his lower back where his butt ought to be and his arms crossed over his chest. At one point in the show, after the 3rd Song: Thief of Colors, this student walks out of the gym. A male staff member goes out after him. They eventually return. Didn't catch how he engaged Robb after the show (or if he did at all).

"We're all going to have bad days" I am still struggling with my interpretation of his narrative trivializing the trauma, although having seen the show and coming to recognize how powerful it is, I am less drawn to this interpretation. Robb says, *"Things don't happen for a reason, things happen with potential ... you have to make a reason out of it"*

Here is a brief sketch of the rest of the presentation, I jotted down some of what he says in his presentation that caught my attention:

"people know what they do, but they seldom know why they do it"

2nd Song: One Last Breath

"every one of us has a gift and something to offer ... everyone has purpose"

"Thief who wants to steal life from you"

"Pain doesn't go away. But neither does your strength. Your pain may be here _ but your strength is - The thing is the pain is there, but you have to find the strength"

3rd Song: Thief of Colors

This show he left out the video of the Brigg family, about Colton who committed suicide. Karen said that often-times when he's at a place like this where the youth are already involved in these things, he skips it because it is really more of a preventative thing.

"Life is more than learning from your own mistakes, learn from the mistakes of those around you."

4th Song: Come Quickly

There is some more movement, head bopping mostly, amongst the audience in this song.

5th Song: Shadows (Mya's story)

"We're not trying to change the world, we're trying to make world changers"

6th Song: Trouble Child

(lyrics: 'you never heard me crying, so I screamed')

'people out there need his story, people out there need your story'

Again, this show is different, because it is so much smaller, Robb asks if anyone has any questions.

Boy in green shirt, sitting off to the side but angled so he could see the performance: "are your songs on itunes or available?" Robb tells them that they are, but that they are going to show them how to download the music for free.

Chavan, the young lady who convinced Theresa to bring Robb Nash in asked 'Can I bite your arm?' The other youth laugh and Robb explains why she asked that. Then, he lets her bite his arm.

A staff member asks, "How long have you been doing this?" 4 ½ years.

Robb talks about how he is still having surgeries because of the accident. That he recently had surgery on his collar-bone, and rather than showing the x-ray image like he did in the morning, he pulls down his collar and shows them.

After the show I wanted to watch how Robb engaged the youth, and how they engaged him. Several staff members came up to where Karen and I were and in near tears were thanking the Robb Nash team for coming in. They asked if he would be able to come back. I am thinking that to be able to speak to the teachers who work with the youth about after the show would be key...and it might be easier than trying to figure out how to speak to the youth themselves, particularly those who are contemplating, or already involved in some trauma, pain, and in some cases self-destructive behaviors.

Many students are taking pictures with Robb, some seem interested in talking with Jonny, but most hover around Robb. I don't find a way to be close enough to hear their conversations (although I speak to Robb later about it...)

Over an hour after the presentation has ended, most of the students have gone. Some, actually were ushered out due to bureaucratic regulations, they had to keep a strict schedule. I couldn't really get the whole picture, something about they are 'secure youth'. By the end, after the students had left, 4 female staff were around Robb thanking him and kind of oogling over him.

Karen and I chatted and I asked if it was possible for us to have the intro videos they send to schools as well as the follow up package. I am still interested in learning more about how the show came together. At what point did they decide to have a follow-up package for schools? I want to name it a responsibility, after they may stir up quite a bit of possible trauma, what do they do to support schools after? How do they interpret the follow-up package?

Back in the Hotel about 4:15

I am exhausted. I didn't realize it until I sat down at the desk to try to write about the day. Karen had mentioned to me that even though I didn't have much time to talk to Robb today, he would want to talk to me and he will want to hear, from my perspective, some concrete feedback about the show. I eat and try to jot down some thoughts, luckily I talk to Marlon and in dialoguing about the day I am able to pull out some specific thoughts.

Here is what I wrote:

There were noted differences in the ways you engaged the two schools. When and how do you make those adjustments? What differences do you not before, during, and after the show with youth who may be more in the contemplative phase and those who have already made particular decisions?

You've been through so much, and you mentioned how in many ways you are still going through it. How do you open yourself to vulnerability and then invite others' hurt and pain in?

How do you decide on the stories to tell? I am thinking also about Thomas King and the power of stories to heal. 'Stories is all we are, it's how we come to understand our world and our places in it. This also means we must be careful about the stories we tell because once they are out there we can't take them back. I am thinking about how he decided to re-script his story, to alter the possibilities and limitations of his trauma.

When I entered the gym, Robb had a basketball in his hands, he was facing the net that faced the door I entered. Rather than waiting, I walked right up to him. Commended him on being a bball fan and took the chance to chat with him. I asked him how he was feeling, he said he was tired, that it's a lot. So I engaged how he deals with working through his trauma and then opening himself to others' pain. He told me that some of his friends go, 'oh, poor Robb, you did two 1 ½ hour shows today? You must be tired.' But, he said, they don't think about the emotions.

He talked about a book 'Success to Significance' in which there are four steps: 1. Survival, 2. Stability, 3. Success (and this is where Hollywood tells us to stop he says), but the 4th step is so important 4. Significance.

I told him about Thomas King and The Truth About Stories. We chatted about that. He shared about Melanie and her mom. He said they were videoing with her mom and she said she had a nasty divorce and her ex called the police and said that she was unfit to be with the kids. She said that because he couldn't be with the kids he wanted to make sure she couldn't either. She talked about the day they took the kids away. Then Robb said he spoke to Melanie and asked her if she remembered the day she was taken away from her mom. She remembered the details of the day just the same as her mother narrated them, but she said it was the best thing. She hadn't been to school since she was 7 and she was 12 at the time. She said her mom would drink with her when she was 11, she said her mom wasn't fit to raise the kids at the time. Robb reflected on how it was hard to hear Melanie's story after hearing her mom's because he had already invested in her mom's. Through his own storytelling he is making connections to our conversation and what I shared about Thomas King.

I asked him when he got involved what were his expectations, and really if he expected *this*. He said not at all. He said at *every* show someone hands him a suicide note. He had no idea the magnitude of issues youth are facing daily and he said you can't measure that. I made connections to how so much of education, or what *counts* in education has become standardized and quantified. All that seems to matter in mainstream education is what can be measured, so what does that mean for youth who are dealing with so much that can't be. He talked about the factory model of education. And questioned what gets focused on is too often the problems, but not in a productive way. He share another story of being interviewed on a radio station and being asked about Amanda Todd. He said that he told them to stop focusing on her, it was a tragedy, but let's look at the strength of the young girl who sent Robb a video of her tearing up her suicide note, *and* she did that before Amanda Todd. How come we don't focus on those who found the strength?

He also talked about how there are similarities in all suicide notes. He didn't really get into it. He said on his days off he is worried because he's not out there doing his thing. What if someone decides that's the day? That's a pretty hefty burden to put on yourself, I think to myself. He has to get going so the show can start. He says one more thing though, he shares that he tries to explicitly reinforce what teachers, councilors and parents might be saying and hopefully after the presentation the youth might consider listening to them more/differently.

Again, I am sitting in the back with Karen and Tyler. There are 3 girls in the back right, in front of me. The girl in the middle is trying to sit on her knees so she can see and they keep leaning into each other and talking.

Robb shares with the students that this week alone he has received four suicide notes after shows. He says that the authorities say people write their suicide notes on average 2-3 months before they commit suicide, just waiting for someone to push them over the edge, or for someone to change their mind.

When talking to Robb this am, he said that it's tough picking the stories to tell. He said he reads the reactions when he tells a story and says, okay that works, or that didn't work. I still want to know more about his storytelling decisions.

After the students went back to class, Robb invited me to come along with him and Mrs. Wagner (the contact at the school). He was sharing with her what happened while students were coming up to him. He told her that he got several bracelets from cutters and some students rolled up their sleeves to show him the scars. He said often they show him for themselves, so he didn't get any names. Then he pulled out a note from a girl who wrote it after the presentation. He read it to us. She wrote that she used to cut, but with help she has stopped, but every night when she goes home she thinks about it still. Robb asked if Mrs. Wagner knew of this girl and what she was going through. She said she didn't but she would find out and try to talk to her. Robb suggested that she find out if any teachers/staff have a relationship with the girl and perhaps they should be the ones to offer her a space to talk. He reminded her that you can't make her talk. I wonder if he always says that or if he got a similar sense that I got with Tom.

Don came up to me after the show, he was in tears. He is a teacher who provides special education services to students in the school. There was apparently a student who he is really concerned about, an eighth grader who has struggled with drugs and alcohol. He lives with his grandmother because his parents are also heavily involved in drugs. The student refused to come to the presentation and Don called him up and basically yelled at him for not being there. I could tell that he had genuine intentions, but I was particularly uncomfortable with his pedagogy in that moment. He got even more upset when he said that the boy's grandmother called him back and reamed him out for the way he spoke to the boy. In the end, he was convinced that the boy would have benefitted from being at the show. When the boy did show up, and Robb was still there, Don came running over to me to see if there was any way for the boy to speak to Robb. I said that as long as Robb is here, he is here to speak with the students, but he can't force him to talk to Robb. In the end, Don tried to get the boy to sit down at a computer and look at the Robb Nash website, but he didn't talk to Robb.

This show is being held at a school, but it was organized more for Social Services, social workers and youth in group homes etc. Karen had told me the night before that there are two people Robb wants me to talk to who have been to Robb's presentation before and were particularly moved, Robb wanted me to get their stories. On the way to the show, the bus, Karen and I caravanned from the am show to a Booster Juice where Tyler bought everyone juices, then we headed off to the afternoon performance.

I ate some lunch in the car while Dale figured out a place to park the bus. A young blond sees Karen, in the car next to me, and starts chatting. They look like they know each other. At one point I see Karen pointing over to me, I figure she must be one of the people Robb wanted me to talk to. We get out of the cars and I am introduced to Kathy, Lauren's aunt, and she is indeed one of the people Robb wanted me to talk to. She walks us in to the gym, catching up with Karen. We meet several other women who work with Kathy at SS. I say to Kathy that perhaps while the guys are setting up the stage, we can have a little chat so I can start to get her story. We sit on a bench along the left wall, close to the stage. Kathy seems eager to tell her story.

Kathy's Story

She saw Robb at a conference just over a year-ago. She said that she was reluctant to be there because she had recently gone through something (she tells me what later), but then as soon as Robb stepped on the stage and began playing she felt compelled, she said how he hooks you so fast, you can't help yourself but listen, she *needed* to listen. She said she knows that sounds corny, but it's how she felt. Before going into social work, she was a teacher. She identifies herself as a passionate person, and loved being a teacher, she knew she wanted to inspire. She knew her reason for doing what she was doing and she was overwhelmed by Robb's message (*people know what they do but they don't always know why they do it*). She said that listening to Robb's presentation (which was a presentation for social workers) took her jumbled thoughts and there it was... she said she was speechless. He organized her thoughts and provided an articulation for what she does and why. She said after the presentation she left, got in her car and started driving away, but then she had to go in and needed to talk to him. She said the show presented to her everything she thought about her life, wrapped in a bow. When she went back to talk to Robb she told him, "I need to do something for you".

When she left she drove immediately to her niece Lauren who was 16 at the time. Kathy said the Lauren was going down an unhealthy path. She was very involved in Lauren's life and tried inspiring her, tutoring her, loving her, but nothing was working. Kathy described Lauren as a popular girl who used her good for evil and that disappointed Kathy. She finally got Lauren, reluctantly, to see Robb's presentation. The very next day Lauren organized a meeting with her administration. She set up presentations around the community to try to get them to bring Robb in. She was not supported by her school or her community. After a few months Lauren called Kathy in tears, discouraged saying 'they're not listening to me'. Kathy would go along with Lauren sometimes, hoping that a qualified adult's presence supporting what Lauren was presenting might help, but to no avail. All Lauren wanted was to share with her peers the message that there is opportunity to make better choices. From February 2013-June 2013, Lauren's marks went from 40s to 80s. Her relationship with family and friends changed.

Karen invited them to a show in Red Deer and Lauren chose a few friends to go to the show. Kathy said if they weren't successful in bringing Robb to Lauren's community, they would just have to bring the youth to him. Lauren apparently hand-picked the friends she thought needed to hear his message. Lauren has rules if she invites you to a presentation: no cell phones, pay attention to the show...

Kathy said that Robb now plays an integral part of her life and her whole family. They had dinner (her husband and son) with Robb and Karen on Tuesday night. It seems as though Robb is reaching out to the family as well.

Kathy said she never understood, although she knew it somewhere, to take experiences and recognize their potential – tap into inner strength. After the first show she saw she could articulate this point that she knew but couldn't name. She said that Robb helped her organize, 'that's what I do in my work'. She felt it and knew it was there, but he organized it for her. She said she 'gets it' now and there's no going back.

Robb comes in and Kathy excuses herself to go and give him a hug. He walks over towards me and shares with us that his head is in real pain – which I realize is what was going on in the last show this morning, he could hardly sing the last song. Lauren comes in at this point. She brought three friends with her. One had never seen Robb before and I overheard her say 'whoa, he's kinda hardcore, wasn't expecting that'. Kathy told Lauren that I was going to want to talk to her about Robb and Lauren said she would love to. She asked if we wanted to talk now, looking at the time I suggested we wait until after the show.

The friends Lauren brought with her wanted to know about Robb in everyday things, one by asked him what kind of car he drives. Robb said Chevy Malibu – although he seemed hesitant to answer. Kathy leans in and says, Robb lets kids see a different kind of 'cool-kid'. TO imagine different possibilities.

People are starting to come into the gym, there is a girl sitting against the wall just down a bit from me. She catches my attention, kind of slumped over, not engaging with anyone else. Black hoody and dark pants. It's amazing, Robb just went over to her. HE sat down next to her and they were chatting. When Robb gets up he heads to the stage to do the sound check. He plays a bit of a nirvana song, I catch myself humming along.

Robb came over to me and sat down. He mentioned that he saw the girl on the side and that she is wearing a Nirvana shirt, so that's why when they did the sound check he played Nirvana. Ah, some insight into his reading of spaces. He said that he is still evolving (I would call it a process) and that's why for this show he stayed out in the crowd and chatted with folks (usually he is off to the back/side/behind the stage). He made sure to sit with the girl. He noticed that I located myself at the side of the stage and asked if I was trying to get a new perspective on the show. I said I wanted to see if I can link how he reads the audience with some of the shifts he makes in the show. Up until this show I spent most of my time in the back of the show, trying to get a sense of the presentation, I would occasionally walk off to the side to watch the students as well, but this time I wanted to focus on the youth.

Lauren and Kathy come and sit on the floor in front of me. Lauren is telling me about some of the issues in her school and community. Kathy explains that it is an affluent suburb of Edmonton and there is a lot of excess and drug use. Lauren says that at her school, a boy came in with a gun, he wanted to shoot those who always picked on him and then himself. The school handled it by expelling the boy and sending him to an out of school module program. Kathy talked about it being negligent. She spoke about responsibility. Lauren then said that another student tried to set the school on fire. Instead of being proactive, Kathy says the school is reactive. Lauren also talked about a girl she knows in Jr High who has attempted several times to commit suicide, and when she went to the school to present what Robb does, they were in denial that there were any problems.

Robb shared how when he first got started, before he built a reputation for himself, people were pretty resistant to his efforts as well. People don't trust musicians, or at least they don't have a great reputation. He said even now he is sometimes called to *prove* his credentials to do what he does.

I ask Robb how aware he is of what it is he is doing. Writing that comes out problematically, but he got what I was saying. He said no, and he thinks it's better that way. Robb shares with me that when at shows like this one, a lot of times head of organizations that help the youth are there. He said that they often times have PhDs etc and they try to tell him that he is using 'x, y, z' method or theory.

During the show, Kathy sits with me. She decides to share with me how she got involved in social work. She has an almost 5 year old son and a few years back she and her husband were trying for a second child. She was diagnosed with something and had to have a hysterectomy. She was destroyed, depressed and generally really struggling. She said she when she decided to apply for and accept the job as a social worker her family was not supportive at all, they thought it was too much for her, especially after all she had been through.

While Kathy is not talking my attention gets drawn to two boys across the gym. They are dressed in big red t-shirts and one has a red ball-cap on. I immediately wonder if they are affiliated with the Bloods. They are sitting somewhat disinterested, but then I would catch them moving to the music or locked on the videos being shown. At one point they get up and walk out and I am disappointed, but they return and sit at the back. At the end of the show Robb asks if anyone has any questions. The boy in the red cap asks if he went to hell when he died. I'm intrigued that he engaged Robb. I was hoping they would stay and talk to Robb, but after waiting a little while they just left. I spoke to some of the SS staff and they confirmed that they are in and out

of group homes and they are repping (representing) for the Bloods. They offer to find their social worker and introduce me, but I didn't think that kind of introduction would encourage them to want to speak to me, I have no relationship with them..

Another question that was asked that struck me was, 'do you believe in God'. Robb told a story about an older lady who was at one of his shows and came up to him afterwards and told him that at some point he'll have to let himself remember what he saw when he died (interestingly, he told me later).

Lauren's Story

As the youth stay and talk with Robb, Lauren and I get a chance to talk. I tell her that I'm going to take notes while she talks if that is okay and I thank her for talking to me. She says any chance she can talk about Robb is welcome.

Lauren tells me how she was failing classes, losing friends and finding all sorts of trouble because of her addiction. She was drinking to the point where 3-4 days a week she would wake up sick and/or hungover. She said that her family does not know the extent of what she was up to. She is still trying to shake the reputation she has for being the party girl. She said after the first show she way with Robb she took a step back and looked at her life, it was not where she wanted it to be. The next day she said she started talking to principals. She lives with her father. She was living with her mom, who got re-married and now has a young family with her new husband. Lauren said she didn't feel like part of the family and was struggling, plus her dad had no family in the area, he stayed around to be near Lauren, so she moved in with him. The thing was he works 60-80 weeks, so she had a lot of unsupervised time. She mentioned that there is a history of alcoholism in her family and with all the free time, she fell into that trap.

During the show she got an email from an organization she is working with that some grant she wants to apply for is a go. She wants to get this grant to be able to bring Robb into her community because she sees all the problems that are being ignored. She said after seeing her first show with Robb she knew what she wanted to do and seeing it in action motivated her.

I told her that Kathy told me she was hesitant to come to the first show and I asked her if she could remember at what point she perked up and started paying attention to the presentation. She said as soon as Robb walked out.

I asked her about the work she has had to do to reconcile with family and friends. She said that it was pretty easy with the family ... they are just happy that she is doing better, but also, they didn't know the extent to which she was involved in the drinking. She said Auntie Kathy was the one who really noticed that she was going down the wrong path. It was harder for her to regain trust with her friends, but she said she was determined, she said to herself 'I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna be like Robb, take it day by day'.

I asked her with all her frustrations and limited success in getting people to listen to her, how does she keep at it? She said that she wants to prove to Robb that this is her life and her passion. She doesn't want to let him down. I ask her how she felt being shouted out as part of the team, she said she was so honored. She knows that all she wants to do is work with Robb or social work, in some capacity she wants to help youth. Presently she is applying to be a teen mentor, and she hopes that if she gets it she can tell people she is a teen mentor rather than a high school student when she is giving presentations, she thinks this might get people to take her more seriously.

We talked about how she chooses friends to come to the shows. She said it is a number of things; they have to seem interested, and she has to think they are willing at some level to listen. After the show she finds ways to debrief with her friends who have never seen Robb before.

The gym is emptying out, there are still a few staff and some youth hanging about. Robb is sitting across the gym talking to a woman and three young-ish girls. I am sitting with some of Kathy's colleagues chatting about their work. One of them says to me that the people who are talking to Robb are part of a band that is very close knit and that one of the band members just killed himself recently.

Tyler comes up to Karen and I to ask what our plans are in terms of dinner and driving to Stettler. I stay quiet and follow Karen's lead. She asks if Robb will drive with her or if he needs to sleep. He said he has to check with him. He walks over to speak to Robb. I mention to Karen that I am here to learn about what the team does, but I don't want to be in the way, so just to let me know what to do. She checks in with me to make sure I am holding up okay. Tyler comes back and says that he wants to do dinner more in the southern part of the city and then head out for the next location. He wants to try to avoid rush hour traffic and Karen tells him that Kathy and Lauren are going to want to spend some time with Robb, so he suggests that they are invited to dinner. He makes a point to say that I am welcome to join them all. Within 10 minutes the whole plans have changed. Robb was invited to come to the community where the boy killed himself to give a presentation. Robb is all in. Now Tyler starts making alternative arrangements.

The team is worried about Robb and if he needs sleep, but he insists on doing this show. Karen tells me this has never happened before. Tyler says that if I'd like, Robb thinks it would be important for me to come to this show as well. I agree. On the way to the next location, we caravan again, and the bus stops for some dinner. I decide to eat the food that I brought rather than Mucho Burrito.

When we get to the setting, I learn that the boy had killed himself on Monday and that the band and community has not come together to address it yet. Karen and I head off to the washroom together. She confides in me that she is concerned that Kathy, Lauren and two of Lauren's friends are here, she is not certain this is appropriate, but she doesn't know how to address it. When we come back to the gym, Karen, Kathy, Lauren, her two friends and myself sit against the wall by the door. Eventually Dale and Tyler come over too. It seems awkward and people are coming in not sure what is going on. After about a half hour or so Robb comes over to us all and says that due to the sensitivity of this particular show, he thinks it best if we all head out with the exception of his core team (Dale, Jonny and Tyler). He tells Karen and I that he will see us in the morning

in the next location. He double checks with me that I will be there and he apologizes for this. I am partially relieved because I am already exhausted and have a 2.5 hour drive ahead of me. I wasn't sure how I would be able to bear witness to the proximity of the pain. As we are walking out Karen says she is relieved, that that needed to be done. We both wonder if it wasn't the whole entourage whether we would have been able to stay. There's no knowing.

After I came in, Robb came up to chat quickly. He was apologizing for asking us to leave. Apparently people were second-guessing and challenging his ability to do this work. Two women from a suicide support organization were there. Robb said they were all doom and gloom when talking with the community. They specifically were really challenging his capacity to do this, which is ironic based on how he told me they went about it. He said that no one was talking, there were parents and youth from the band that the 13 year old boy who killed himself was in. The ban was really close, and they were preparing for an international competition. Robb and Jonny tried to tell them how they use music to work through pain. He also tried to encourage them to talk about it. He said when he introduced the suicide workers they started saying, 'I know you're sad...' and we discussed how they were imposing how the community was feeling onto them.

Robb said he asked the youth to share stories, memories of the boy. One girl told a story about how he broke off a piece of something and made a whistle with it, she said he would blow it all day long and you would always know when he was coming down the hall. Just after her story one of the suicide workers asked her if she was going to his funeral and just drained any energy Robb had encouraged.

Robb had to get up to go talk to the principal. Karen and I chatted briefly about the question of credentials. She mentioned that Robb never graduated high school and just because you have credentials someone has authority. I started thinking about how knowledge is engaged as disembodied, objective, distanced. Then we rely on our training instead of on our intuition, our prescriptive response rather than our human connections.

There were some technical issues at the beginning of the show. The MIC was cutting in and out. While Tyler went to deal with it Robb stood up and told some jokes and asked the students questions. It seems to have created an early bond with the students.

After the Colton story and song I noticed a girl in the back hugging her friend. I changed my position so I could see them better. A white girl, blond hair, glasses, white ed hardy-type hoody was crying. Her friend, black, mixed race, grey shirt was rubbing her back and putting her head on her shoulder. It looks like they are sitting with a few other friends, but I didn't see any of them take note of what was going on. Interestingly, a teacher who was sitting behind them at one point leans over to them a little while later. At first I think he is checking on them and then I notice that he is asking them to put their phone away. I am irked that he is able to say something when the kids need to be reprimanded, but he didn't say anything when the girl was clearly upset. Who knows though, perhaps he will address it later and I'll never know.

Field Notes: January 29, 2014

*Central Alberta**Mairi McDermott*

The RNP has been here many times, they have a relationship. The students had made artwork and poems that they put into a book for the whole team as a gift.

Before the show Robb mentioned that it might be better if we didn't overwhelm the PM show with the secure youth if too many people there. We told him that we were just talking about that. Shirley should be there so that we will be able to catch it because that will be a key show.

Students were setting up chairs and a few were chatting with Robb. Darren, a young boy came up to Mya super excited to talk to her. Not sure if they knew each other from her time here. He was telling her that he had watched her youtube videos. Mya then told us that he can solve the Rubix Cube in under 30 seconds. Darren has Marlon mix up the cube then he does it!!

Robb comes over to us and said that this show might have less talking, more music because a lot of the students have seen the show.

Robb just said 'we're all gonna have tough days, some of you may have had tough days. Two boys raise their hands. This crowd seems more interactive.

There's a girl in the front row, her hair is dyed red and the left side is shaved, she is watching the screen during One Last Breath and trying to sing along. Seems like she is not totally familiar with song but still wants to sing.

Girls in back who haven't seen presentation before (Robb had asked) are watching the screen, one with head tilted. After song they both clap, really involved.

"We didn't work with Mya because she was suicidal, we worked with her because she started turning herself around. When you start changing your choices good things start happening"

I think one of the two girls in the back, the one with pink hair and the right side shaved seems like she's crying a bit. Her friend rubbed her back. I saw her wiping her eyes. She is locked on the screen during Trouble Child.

Robb was talking about how hearing a story helps us cause we can relate to it, when he said that - the girls with the pink hair nodded her head emphatically.

Robb does a q&a. The students know a lot about Robb and the questions are quite insightful.

"where does your strength come from?" From within. You gotta be filled, you can't help others if you're empty.

“What do the voices in your head sound like?” He tells about how he asks others and they say demons, but they’re not spiritual.

Field Notes: April 22, 2014

Central Alberta

Mairi McDermott

At the end of yesterday’s show, as I was saying bye to Robb, the woman who had organized it shared a story with me: Last year Robb did a show in the area and the community sent some youth and stuff on a bus to see it. On the way home (on the bus) a young woman ‘who you would never suspect’ shared with the bus that she had been a cutter. She would cut on her inner thigh and wear shorts while swimming so no one knew and again no one suspected.

We talked about how hard that must have been to share that in public after hiding it for so long.

Another thing about the show is that they don’t usually bring the secure kids and the other kids together but they didn’t want to let Robb come and not have everyone there.

The same woman said that typically when there’s a presentation they’re lucky if the kids stay 15 minutes, they don’t force them to stay but they all stayed and were engaged with Robb’s. Mind you some students stepped out because they were emotional.

When I got to the HS, Sarah was there (we had met at another show) and I asked about her oldest son who I spoke with at the last show I saw her at. She said after talking to Robb, he admitted, he needed help – he admitted himself into a hospital for help. He’s still shaky but he’s searching for help.

Sarah also brought her younger son to today’s show. When Robb said ‘I bet some of you have had bad days’ and he shook his head.

What’s interesting too is the blond chick who Karen introduced us to when we got to the community this morning I asked Karen who she was. She said a while back Robb had done a show and she talked with him afterwards. Karen said it was the longest conversation Robb had ever had with someone after a who. Robb then invited her to ‘be on the team’ and Karen has really connected with her. She’s grade 12, today was the first show she could make it to.

When he talks about suicide notes, I sense he is saying it to the students to let them know its okay to hand him a note – also, though, that he wants to let the teachers know that there could be students in their classes with notes in their pockets. Before the show Karen was talking to a security guard and mentioned that they kept this afternoon free so they could go to the middle school. The security guard gave her this look to suggest

'that won't happen'. They talked about how there are some teachers at the middle school who are pushing to have admin admit that there's problems there.

Resiliency: 'if you're going through hell, why stop there. Get through it...'

ROBB NASH - JANUARY 29 VISIT - HULL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES (AM)

Life After Death

If this is my last day

And I am left for dead

I need to find a way

To say what I've left unsaid

Give me One Last Breath to say I'm sorry

One last chance to make it right

One Last Breath, one last day's all I needed.

What I wouldn't do with one last breath. (One Last Breath)

As Robb Nash banged out the chords to *One Last Breath*, the silence in the gym deepened itself. Resonating were the phrases, *Left for dead, need to find a way, -- I walked with a veil on my eyes, But those days are over, Dead and gone, is the lie I used to live, And so I wake each day, just praying that you give*. While Robb shared his story of life and death or more pointedly, life after death, the silence crept in. I say crept in for with sharing, Robb took up a tone of humor. Sitting in his stool with guitar in hand, I watched as Robb's story of life after death gripped the audience. Unearthing a panorama of emotions, through his story, Robb took us on a lifelong journey, with the irreducible moment leading to the question of, *Why*. Faith, religion and ideas of reason were all called into question. Instead, Robb dares one to think of potentiality, to think of choice, to make everyday count, in particular today, that we need to work through tough days collectively. Ideas of support and solidarity with each other were very much on the lips of Robb.

Travelling to Hull, I was ambivalent. I thought about the evaluation process. What would it look like? How might we qualitatively evaluate Robb Nash? I soon realized at the beginning of the show that what Robb was doing could not be easily packaged/commodified/quantified into some readily available chart or program. Much of his work is/was incommensurable. The way he reached everyone in some way, pushing each on each one of us to search within our every lived moment to make sense of the self was gripping. Supposedly, I am here to evaluate, to make note of the how/the ways in which Robb meets the need of these youth, youth labeled/classified as problematic. What I found instead is that Robb's work need not be easily contained by these boundaries. In that moment I was confronted with my history. I felt I was moved from the safe ground of evaluator to be placed within the zone of being troubled, of being traumatized, of being some problematic youth to now have to search through my newfound tapestry of affect to make sense of what it means to be human.

Standing in the back of the gymnasium, I listened to, “Thief of Colors”. *Just for today, I’ll wake without. Just for today, I’ll breathe without you. Just for today, I’ll have to find the strength to stay away. Just for today.* From Jonny Holliday’s drums to Robb’s guitar, I was stirred to think of the many days I had to summon strength to complete my day. More importantly, I was touched by the way Robb moved me to come to think about the experience of having to summon strength. I thought Robb moved his audience in ways that researchers, pedagogues, teachers could not, that he spoke, reached, communicated, touched students in a manner that just could not be readily textualized in some given curriculum. Reading students, parents and adults testimonials, particular sentiments were shared, that Robb was *inspirational and delivers a powerful message, that through his unique blend of humour, music and videos he was able to captivate 300 middle-schoolers, through his deep personal story he instantly connects to his audience, Robb has changed the course of some students’ lives at our school from this day forward.* -- *What these presentations do for the kids is something that they cannot get in a classroom. These are things that the curriculum just cannot teach. Thank you for sharing your gift with us Robb.* Parent & Lea Sorkilmo, Senator Riley Middle School, High River, AB

Question and discussion time at the end of Robb’s show was always filled with curiosity. Often enough Robb was asked “Why do you do it?”; Where does your strength come from?; How do you recognize the voices in your head? which then opened into a discussion about lifelong learning, about all being gifted differently, of being filled inside and of having passion for life. Robb’s honesty is loud. He reminds us that “My decisions have gotten me where I am today, taken me down the road of pain”, inviting us to think about being responsible, about being accountable in the everyday moment.

Robb’s pedagogy of humor These narratives invoke the spirit

Every Canadian junior high and high school student should have the opportunity to see Robb Nash. He is absolutely inspirational and delivers a very powerful message. He was able to thoroughly captivate over 300 middle-schoolers using his unique blend of humour, music and videos. His delivery format is brilliant. Right at the onset he makes an instant connection to his audience by explaining his own deeply personal story. He takes time to introduce the background and lyrics of each song, followed by his band performing with streaming videos behind them. Robb was certainly not in a rush to leave after the live show. He stayed for well over an hour listening to one-on-one stories from kids who were lined up waiting to share their story with him. As a parent, I was awestruck that so many students, boys and girls alike, felt compelled to speak out, especially after only meeting Robb. After school, my 12 year old son and his friends admitted that the presentation was fantastic, and that, without a doubt, Robb has changed the course of some students’ lives at our school from this day forward. Keep up the amazing work!

Parent, Senator Riley Middle School, High River, AB

Thank you so much for yesterday's presentation. I have seen Robb present on three separate occasions. Every time I have seen it, it is different and emotionally affects me. What these presentations do for the kids is something that they cannot get in a classroom. These are things that the curriculum just cannot teach. Thank you for sharing your gift with us Robb.

Lea Sorkilmo, Senator Riley Middle School, High River, AB

...one of the central motifs to the stories of Robb Nash.

Opened with Pedagogy of Humour – Capacity to reach audience (????)

Sharing of Stories, Sharing of Emotions—Anger

Faith in relation to choice

Everything happens for a reason, the idea of working with a reason (don't think things happen for a reason)

Felt useless-not wanting to be alive, working through tough days

Make everyday count-make today count

Why you do it? Commitment to the human condition and lifelong learning

Cursed-gifted

“One last breath” song performed

The idea of different gifts (passion) radio station owner (sponsor)

“The Thief of Colours” song performed

“Come Quickly” for I know not what I am doing or where I am going

“Shadows” song performed

“Choices” by Mia

My decisions have gotten me where I am today, taken me down the road of pain

“Trouble Child” song performed”

Where does your strength come from? From within, gotta be filled inside

How do you come to know voices/recognize voices in your head?

About 80 students-bracelets

Idea of working with a team

March 27-High River

Begins with sad song about hockey strike – (the idea of a *miracle*)

One is given/presented that this is your *faith* - as faith being ontological – that everything happens for a *reason*

Things don’t happen for a *reason*, things happen for a *potential*

Potential to learn from the lesson

Bracelet-*Make today count*

The idea of *why* do you do it not *what* do you do

“One Last Breath Song” one last chance to say am sorry

owner of the radio station as *hero* – owner’s job was to *help* people

pain does not go away but neither does your *strength*

gotta look out for each other

“The Thief of Colors”

“ Come Quickly” – because I don’t know what am doing or where am going

All need to tell our storey

“All I need” – Matt’s song about the New Orlean’s flood

When have you seen your first *tragedy* – *pain* -- *strength*

“Shadows” song about Mia, suicidal -- she wanted to change lives

Torry came up to sing

“Trouble Child”

Finding strength, knowing your purpose, what is your purpose?

OKOTOKS – (Westmount) – March 27

The idea of story as method – (an approach to repurposing the self through story as method)

Set me free – by *truth of story*

Things don’t happen for a *reason*, instead the idea of *potentiality*

Done being *angry*

Narratives embedded within the show

The idea of *why* in relation to *what*

Why – particular existential relationship

What – epistemological concern – underlying assumptions of what informs our decisions/actions.

“One Last Breath”

Narrative of death – things happen for a reason potentiality

Pedagogy of humour – prank call (radio station jokes) what we are good at gifts

How do we recognize *gifts*? Finding your gift, the idea of choice

Relationship with pain and strength

Grade 12 shot himself – *Colton*

“The Thief of Colors”

Telling story – working through *memory*

“Come Quickly” – I don’t know what to do

Jaden singing – speaks to communal spirit, communal voice

“Shadows” – “Trouble Child”

April 22 – Edmonton – Yellowhead Youth Centre

“Saddest song ever” – NHL strike

sharing about the accident – not faith because faith says there is no choice

Everything happens for a reason – problematic, instead potentiality

Done being *angry*, about being set *free*

Important to know *why* you do it

“One Last Breath” listening to the *angels* of my *life* instead of *demons*

prank radio call – my little buttercup

not a curse, *gift*

Suicide notes – pain does not go away neither is your strength.

Colton – Suicide

“The Thief of Colors”

Life is about learning from stories

“Come Quickly” – For I know not what to do

Not trying to change the world, trying to create world-changers

We have different *gifts*

The idea of *why*

“Trouble Child”

Speaker- Higher power looking after you and things come to you

Make today Count - Bracelet

Robb Nash -Twitter

Robb Nash Evaluation

Meeting with Karen

March 2014

Calgary, Alta.

Diane Watt

The purpose of this meeting was to learn more about the administrative side of the Robb Nash Project. Karen shared administrative systems for all stages of the process, from booking a show to post-performance.

~Discussed tracking methods and what they track. Karen would like to track return visits – may be able to start doing this in the summer.

~Karen has set up a redundant system: 3 locations (1 on paper, 2 online)

~Victoria performance was almost cancelled. Karen was on the phone with Dale, a teacher from the school, and Tyler. They were able to make it. This incident demonstrates the excellent system of communication that exists between Karen, the school staff she works with, and the team on the road.

~Karen suggested we create a flow chart of the operation.

~The process begins when someone from a school contacts Karen by email or phone. They often hear about the band through word of mouth and/or the website [Info@robbnash].

~Kids also contact Karen to see if the band will come to their school, and Karen suggests they go to a teacher to get it organized.

~ Karen sends possible dates. Consults with Tyler on scheduling. She sets the tour calendar. This is a very complicated process.

~The cycle consists of: away a week, a week at home in Winnipeg (2 hour radius), away a week, a week off. Plus she needs to juggle holidays.

~The tour calendar is established by working closely with Tyler.

~WeDays - not strong for communicating. Time limitation.

The band feels they can't impact kids in such a short time on stage. This event is more about networking. Last time they had 13 minutes on stage, which was better.

~Tom and Robb make decisions on where the band should go if there is a conflict. It can be a tough choice. They may get called to a school in an emergency, which inevitably means cancelling somewhere else.

~What happens in an emergency?

They try to prioritize emergencies. There might only be 60 kids in small school. Northern Manitoba. With 5 kids in crisis. The school calls and asks, "Can you come?" Karen writes up the details of the circumstances in an email and sends it out to the team. They decide whether to cancel shows or not to go.

~The band is in Kingston May 13 for the "Stop the Stigma Conference." Ten local high schools will attend. Goals: to reduce stigma related to mental illness; learn to recognize signs of mental illness; break down barriers associated with getting help.

~Karen colour codes for different phases. For example, if planning in process she marks with pink.

~July and August the band is off

~After a school puts in a request Karen finds place on the schedule.

~To get information about each school the band is visiting, Karen has created a template (paper-based) with a set of questions she asks the school contact person, preferably on the phone. She tells the school contact there will be a formal confirmation email, and informs that person about the video for staff. She warns that the second song is heavy and stresses the importance of working closely with her. They don't want any surprises.

~Booking procedures are on paper and online. Tyler created a system in Google Docs

~Online booking form - Populates a master document. Tyler then pulls info from there and shares it with the guys.

~Electronic Files

~Organized by province, city, school

~All communication is kept here

~Karen uses checklist system to track each step.

(E.g., booking form complete; confirmation E-mail sent; etc.)

~Adds to stats sheet (Stats tracking master sheet) which is backed up weekly.

Keeps a running total of bookings and related stats:

132 show booked

191 schools impacted

#of students

[*Include stats in the report]

~Sticky note on paper record means it is complete. Then it goes into notion book. Use of paper visuals to show what the week looks like.

~In the book, Karen also keeps track of guests. She texts Robb the night before to let him know if there are any guests at a particular show. Uses a reminder on her phone.

~A few weeks before show, she sends an email confirmation. She must hear back from each school and calls if they don't respond back. "Advancing the show"

Also use of different coloured pens

~Karen has numerous templates for emails message communications with schools and to respond to people who write to the band. (See chart).

~A follow up email is sent after the show.

~Checks off on paper and in book

~How does info sent in via social media or email or to Robb get back to the school?

~Karen keeps testimonials in a master document. It is currently 103 pages long. It includes educator, parent, and student comments. Some are pulled out and highlighted. They are sent to sponsors and families. Karen sends them out every two weeks.

~Robb will tell staff about any issues they should know about after show, in confidence.

~Karen follows up on messages that may be suicidal. If the student can be tracked they will contact the school if possible.

~Karen responds to every email from kids. Has templates designed to provide encouragement.

She believes these messages mean a lot to the kids.

Schools have different spring breaks.

~Tyler is in charge of bookings -- flights, hotels, etc,

Hotels are now starting to donate rooms. Huge partnership. Karen takes care of these. At a show in Alberta in January... Someone saw their website and the show and offered free lodging. The band got free rooms in Stratton Valley and Rimby.

[Brian built the website and he manages it]. The person who arranged free hotel rooms is now on the team. Karen promoted this to management. They are trying to expand this arrangement across the country.

Karen told me she would do anything for this band. She tries to go to all Alberta shows.

Karen also keeps track of social media responses, but Robb and Jonny do the postings.

ROBB NASH FIELD OBSERVATIONS

March 2013

British Columbia (Lower Mainland)

Diane Watt

Schedule

Date	Time	School	Location
Day 1	9:00	Junior High School #1	Fraser Valley
Day 1	1:15	High School #2	Fraser Valley
Day 2	9:40/11:15	High School	Vancouver
Day 3	9:30	College	Vancouver
Day 3	1:55	High School	Vancouver

RNP team members present this trip:

Tyler Marshall – Tour and Production Manager

Dale – Driver and Security

Jonny Holliday – Drummer & Social Media

Robb Nash

Day One: Junior High School #1

~Showtime is 9:00 am

-Junior high today, grades 9 and 10

-In September, the band played at this high school to grades 11 and 12

-Met Tyler and Dale at door. Introduced me to an older man (E.) who was responsible for bringing band here. He met Tyler on a plane. Had them for dinner to his house in September.

-Show starts right on schedule (as usual)

~Crowd is immediately responsive. Very positive energy in the large auditorium.

-First joke is a huge hit -- about being an excuse to get out of school. [Tyler told me this first joke is designed to test out the audience ... to see whether they are engaged or not].

-This is the most responsive audience I have seen so far.

-auditorium full; band set up on stage. Only one big screen above the band due to space constraints.

-Robb tells his accident story. Brain description - audience moans in sympathy.

-Pedro joke draws big laughs. He has this audience!!

~Rob is an amazing storyteller. Although he does this show often – usually twice a day -- he always has high level of energy and enthusiasm.

~Joke about God punishing him with the accident draws big laughs.

~Robb: Everything happens for a reason? That sucks, too.

~R: I didn't want to be alive. The reason it happened is because you were going to fast on an icy road. I'm not a puppet. Now I believe things don't happen for a reason. Things have potential. I could turn this around.

~R: I feel guilty for having a second chance. I did nothing to deserve it.

I thought I had to do something huge. But no need. I decided to call the semi driver who hit me.

~R: I felt in my heart I should call you.

I hung up the phone. This guy was set free. And I thought that was easy. So how can I tell my story to young people to help them?

Everyone knows what they do, but not why they do it.

Terry fox's "why" was real. He was sincere. Steve Fonyo did his run for wrong reasons.

Taylor and Dale are at the back of the auditorium with me.

-Jonny is introduced

-Song: One Last Breath

~Now some humour -want to hear another voice I can do?

~Students: Yeah!

Everyone has different gifts/passions.

Robb's ability to do voices. Tells story about prank calls.

These kids are loving the show.

~Friend from radio station. Bought \$40,000 worth of new winter boots for the needy.

~Robb Introduces Tyler and Dale. Shows off technical work done on iPad.

~The guy Robb started the band with was "from a good school like this one." But liked to drink.

~R now talking about suicide and cutting. Connects to stories of actual kids they have met and know about. People they have met at schools. These examples are very powerful.

~Message: Pain doesn't go away, but neither does your strength.

~R: I want to show you guys a video. A 17 year old shot himself.

(A boy leaves the gym before video starts)

Colton's dad in the video directly talks to Robb. "I want to see you pull those notes out of their pockets"

-174 students have handed suicide notes

-R: If you have voices in your head telling you that you are useless don't accept it . Everyone has a gift.

-Two weeks ago a staff member came up to me and said she was contemplating suicide. The way students were treating her...

~One kid gave Robb \$20.

Robb said, no, you keep it.

Kid said, no. I was going to go out and buy oxy with it. You can do something better with it.

-song: Thief of Colours

-boy who left auditorium has not returned

-song: "Just for today"

(I am crying again! How many times have I seen this show??? Still has same effect)

-R: Some of you might be saying -"That's not going to be me. I don't need that." But it's also about the people around you.

- R: I don't believe everybody has to hit rock bottom.

-R: in Edmonton a couple weeks ago a guy came up to them in the bus and said he had met them at his school two years ago. Didn't think he needed Robb's advice then but after that both his parents died. He thanked the band.

-R interacts with the audience. Did you like that song? Says to Jon: "a quarter of them like it" and they high five. Kids laugh.

-song: Quickly

-girl comes up from audience to sing. Screams and applause. (This breaks the tension).

-audience not very diverse: two Sikh boys and a few other visible minorities.

-Robb talks about all the people who have helped them. Perimeter, etc.

-Maya's story. It is an example of a troubled youth who turns her life around to help others. Strong theme: using your gift to help others.

-song: Shadow

-analysis of song lyrics...

"When my shadow is bigger than me... Where did I go so wrong?"

-Captions point out people who helped her

-R: We don't want to change the world - we want to create world changers

-boy who left earlier returns

-Kids at alternative school

-I shared my stories with them and then they shared their stories with us. The process of exchanging stories is an important part of how Robb reaches youth

-R: reiterates the "why" and being on "the team"

-"Everyone hears me scream, but they don't hear me cry"

-song: Trouble Child

"But here I am standing shattered and all alone. How can I do this on my own?"

~Again, theme of troubled youth that make a decision to do something to help somebody else.

Then I asked the important question which is... (points to audience for a response)... “Why”

~R: By 2015 I plan to be fully bulletproof. Has crowd laughing again.

Teacher in front of me has been very responsive.

We don't charge for these shows. And we aren't trying to sell you anything. Free music on our website.

Shows website and offers ways for kids to connect. Emphasizes getting professional help. You can sit around and talk.

Most common question: Robb can I feel your head? You know how you can't feel with your arm? Can I bite your arm? Finds it on YouTube. Audience loves this.

Jonny is waiting on side of stage with cards.

This screen is yellow. Robb: Someone peed on your screen!

Jonny is at one door. Robb is at the other. It might be hard for kids to stick around given the set up here.

A group of about 15 kids stayed behind to get autographs. Looks like mostly autographs. Some kids talk about religion with Robb. E. mentioned it was discussed with many of high school students when Robb was here before. He said Robb's message resonates.

10:58 One quieter girl waited till last to talk to Robb. She is crying. They are at the back of the auditorium. Kids are funneling in for a class.

Robb talks to the principal in the hallway outside the auditorium. He's not happy. He tells me after that he was frustrated because school officials assume they don't have any problems because they consider themselves a “good” school. Robb insists this is a wrong attitude and he was very direct with the administrator about this.

~I drove Robb to the other high school they will perform at today. Robb said two kids who he just met were cutting and two had suicide notes. One was 14 pages long.

~Robb says he is not happy when a school denies it has problems, insisting this school would have as many as any other school. When I spoke to the counselor after the show he basically told me they didn't have these kinds of issues at their school...

~Also, kids talking to Robb after wanted to see if he was “one of them”. He says why does it matter. Truth is the truth. He states in the show that his accident was not God punishing him.

Day One: High School #2

~1:15 start time for the performance

~300 kids in attendance, but it could have been more if they had been given the gym. The school put the band in a smaller auditorium. Robb regrets this. They have come all the way to this school and will only come in contact with a relatively small proportion of the student body.

-The theatre is smallish but full. It is an intimate setting.

-The kids are responding well to Robb. Lots of laughter.

-Kids are getting every joke.

-Robb peppers his difficult accident story with humour: "If I ever go bald I'm going to be a really ugly dude, etc."

-R screeches: "that freaked me right out!" He is expert at using his voice to keep the audience engaged.

Responses to his accident:

1) Was it fate? I disagree cuz u have choice

2) Figure out what u did wrong cuz god spanked you with a semi truck

3) Everything happens for a reason

I started hearing voices: you're useless (mirrors what he hears from kids)

R: None of these! The accident happened because there was an icy road. That set me free.

Things happen for potential. I could have been angry and bitter or turn this tragedy around and do something about it. I am done being angry. I'm gonna do something.

Trucker story: The big dude starts crying. (Message it's okay to cry)

R: "I had never done jack for anyone in my life... How do you Make every day count?"

It's annoying when adults ask - what u gonna be? (kids reply: ya)

People who have impact in this world ... It's not what they do but why they do it. What they did was the same thing; the why is different.

R: My why is I am going to tell my stories. Nobody cares about what I do. It's about the why.

R: Not until my fifth album did I finally write about my accident. Want to listen to the angels rather than the demons.

I had memories about when I died. In my dreams nobody cared if I woke up.

-Song: One last breath

-Kids are still. Full attention on stage

-One last chance to make it right

-Back to comedy. Voices. Cultural referents - kids find hilarious.

-Robb's Dad to Robb: why don't you learn something and do something useful? (Kids relate to this).

-R: "There's so many people on our team."

-Tyler and iPad - another way to connect to the kids

-Video in synch with the sound - very well done

-R: "Everyone's got a gift and everyone's got a purpose."

-Tells story of his close friend who had found his gift. But it was taken away by making the wrong choices.

-Colten's friends and family asked us to show this video. It's tough to watch, but we need to talk about it. His mom. His friend: didn't believe it. What's that bad in your life? Colten's dad, Steve.

-176 students have handed over suicide notes

-R: "voices telling you that you're useless. We are here to tell you that it will be okay."

-R: bottles of pills have been handed to us.

-every bracelet I am wearing has been given to me.

-sharing their tragedy and trying to turn it around.

-just for today.

-Song: Thief of Colours

Photos of Colten's family – powerful visuals to accompany the music

-Just for today

-“I wish I could say it was taken from me but I gave it away

I don't know who I am I have to start again. I have to find the strength to stay away just for today”

-R: talks to audience about some of the tragedy they've seen on the road.

-“That's why we tell the stories. I want to tell my story to help others.”

-When you get to the tough day you know where to find it.

-R: “Are you enjoying they stories?” ... Clapping

-Song: Quickly

All eyes glued on the band

“I know you tried to tell me all your stories. Why did I have to see it for myself”

“I never saw myself having my own story”

-Female student accompanies Robb

-R: “Maya was laying on train track cuz she thought she was useless. Maya mentors other girls now.” The video tells/reinforces the story/message.

R: “If you hear voices maybe its because you've got huge potential, too.”

Lyrics: “When my shadow's all that you see; when the shadow is bigger than me. Where did I go so wrong?”

Focus on potential.

R: We have talked with 900,000 people. Some kids are scared to come to school. You've got to help. You've got to look out for each other.

R: One more song? ... Applause

Kids at alternative school. Don't talk to me, Robb Nash, to tell me I've got a gift. I'm the badest of the bad. This isn't about you. Somebody else needs your story. We all have different gifts. These are stories of success.

~The band provides stories of hope. Actual kids who have turned things around.

-Trouble Child

-Robb tells kids to watch words and faces of youth in the video

-“They realized their stories could help others”

-girl wanted to be a stepmom

-Robb asks audience, what's the question: kids answer “why”

-R: You can learn from the people around you.

-Robb tells audience about the cards. We aren't trying to sell you anything. You can download all our songs for free. (Builds trust). Videos. Links to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. We read them.

R: “If you want to stick around and ask questions we'll be at the door.”

In the hallway, several kids stay behind to talk to Robb.

There is a huge need, and they do it well.

Day 2: Vancouver (High School)

~9:40 & 11:15 concerts

First show: grade 11

Second show: grade 10

Robb has two videos he wants to give me

Karen: meet in Calgary. Get copy of questionnaire they send out to the schools.

Robb - what happens to maya after this? And kids who wrote the song? Robb does what he is good at. Can't do everything.

-Opening film clip- who wrote that? Brian. He does all the narratives. Took out that “Robb inspires”-watch for timing between shows. Will there be an opportunity for kids to stay behind

Robb: Showing vulnerability is important. Adults don't always do this with kids.

~11:14 Robb has finished talking to kids. Less than 15 minutes to interact with principal.

-A more reserved crowd.

~Mostly white kids. Some Asian

~Trouble Child- Did another version with wealthy school in Alberta. Kids there were under pressure to live up to parents' expectations. Robb met with a group of kids in the basement. In three hours they produced another version of Trouble Child.

*Robb: the issues youth are dealing with cut across socioeconomic class.

At high school #2 yesterday there was a lot of support for the kids. Councilors followed Robb's advice; unlike school #1, where there was an assumption they didn't need help because they had no problems.

Mercedes and BMWs dropping kids off. Three people directing traffic through the small parking lot.

Robb told me: Edmonton area school. They were called in. Girl bled out and died. Raw. Met with counselors. Showed them Colten's video. School asked how to do this. Bullet? They are very aggressive if there hasn't been a tragedy. Principal said they were not going to show that video. Staff said, "Are you kidding? We have to show it!" Robb: "But I handled that song so differently. Met with six closest friends of the girl who had committed suicide"

~Principal came in. Robb consults with her. Asks if anything has been going on at the school since their last conversation with Karen. Principal brings a girl in to do the song with Robb on stage. Comes back with a plate of treats for the band.

~Met Brian for first time. He came to film four messages for youth events. It starts off with a booking request. The band couldn't attend, so Robb and Brian are making videos instead. Robb says the video message will still be the most powerful thing at these events. Karen sends info to Robb electronically regarding required content about each of 4 events:

(Brian came to film 4 special messages):

1) First is for a youth rally in Regina. Robb: "We've seen so much tragedy across Canada. It's amazing what happens. People cutting, addictions, and suicides. I think it's so important to know not everyone responds in the same way. We are good about putting on a mask. We need to talk. Others are going through the same

thing. Want to show you a video. We did this project with youth. Everyone's got a different gift...." Video is, Trouble Child.

2) Second video: Robb: "Welcome to everyone in Thunder Bay. Glad you are all getting together to talk. As soon as one person opens up others are willing to share..." (Brian filming).

3) Third message filmed by Brian:

Robb: "Hi everyone at Crescent Heights. (Theme: connection/speaks to youth through video). (Robb consults iPhone to get direction from Karen on what content of message should be)... This clip Robb provides more context on who the band is...

4) Fourth message: Robb: "Hi, this is Robb Nash. I was asked to be there with you, but as you can see we are doing a show: (Filming in front of stage with lights off)... Uses term, "mental health" in this one. Customizing message. Robb: "As soon as someone opens up that's a good thing." Told story about the video trouble child... (Robb is articulate!). Tells kids to watch...

I spoke with Brian about how he met Robb. It was by chance in the studio. When he saw what the band was doing for youth, he immediately wanted to help. He was also obviously touched by the band. Talked about the power of visual communication and how youth connect to it and to the music.

After second girl brought in by the Principal to perform with Robb insisted she couldn't sing, they brought in a boy. Tyler and I discussed the girl who sang yesterday at High School #2. She was very off key. Tyler made adjustments and Robb sang along. Tyler mentioned they don't want to set a kid up for more bullying. Wondering why teachers choose particular kids.

Kids file into the gym. Can't help but think about the students Robb performed for a couple of weeks ago in rural Saskatchewan. Stark contrast in terms of wealth and privilege.

We are in the school's theatre. Intimate group. Around 250 students and a few teachers. Back wall has mirrors and a dance bar.

Show starts with sound of heart monitor. Visual red line. Immediately grabs audience.

(Ask guys about who wrote narrative for that and the thinking behind it... Answer: Brian).

First joke gets hesitant laughs.

Impersonates Stewie. Robb: You guys are quiet. Do you guys know that one?

Can see Robb interacting with audience and making adjustments based on audience response... Louder laughs now

Robb tells story of his accident.

Audience is finally warming up.

R: I know it's not fate cuz fate says you don't have a choice.

Everything happens for a reason. So when we screw up we get smacked with a semi truck.

Voices saying you're useless. I was angry.

I know reason. You were hit by semi truck because it was icy. That set me free. Stuff happens. It's what you do with it. My accident had potential to leave me angry or I could turn it around.

~Robb makes extensive use of eye contact with audience. Lots of hand movements and gestures. Modulates voice.

R: Go to Africa. Build a well. The kids get this one. Pauses well placed. Changes voice tone and volume.

~All eyes fixed on Robb.

~R: Make today count. Refers to bracelet.

What do you want to be when you grow up? Annoying question. Right?

It's not the what. It's the why.

Kids answer Robb's questions about terry fox.

Good applause for intro to Jonny

-Song: One last breath

If that was my last breath what's the last thing I said to my mom?

Terrified to sleep because I had nightmare. I died and nobody showed up to my funeral.

Tyler is back here with his iPad. Dale is across from us on other side of room behind audience

R: I used to walk around house doing voices. My dad thought I should do something useful.

Asks: want to hear about a prank call? (A few answer yes- Robb responds: 10 people? Hahahha)

R: Use of voice. Accents. Engages audience.

I figured out what I was good at but why? He just did it because it was the right thing to do.

R: Anyone pay guitar or drums? See Tyler's iPad. That's his soundboard. Tyler cuts. Some laughter. Subdued. Give a good round of applause.

Robb turns to stories of kids who cut, and suicide.

Do you call each other losers a lot? Kids laugh and say yes. (It works)

Ty- get this video ready. We want to show you something. Parents asked us to do this video. It's a tough one to watch. ... Timing is right on. Immediately to video.

Video- Jordan: didn't think he was going to kill himself. What's that bad in your life?

Colten's dad names Robb in the video.

After doing shows like this - yesterday we were in the Fraser Valley- We have had 176 kids hand their notes to us. Bracelets. A girl handed us a bottle of tequila the other day. She had it in her purse.

Friend (band) was from a good school like this one...

The thief for some people is addiction

Thief of colours

Photos and videos of Colten.

His parents crying. Talking to Robb.

I don't know who I am; I have to start again

-The adults clap. Kids are rather quiet?

-R: Life is also about hearing the stories of others around you.

-Story of kids who ran over kid and mom -hard hitting - (Robb is fearless. He says what needs saying.) Yesterday at high school #1 he "ripped into the principal for not taking it seriously." Assume because of religion they are okay. Did not have counselors present as recommended, and kids were whisked out quickly after the show.

New script today for this audience: "Just because we are better off doesn't mean we don't have our problems, too."

The stories are hard hitting.

Are you enjoying the music? Kids: "Ya... It's awesome. Etc."

Synchronization of live performance with the videos is very effective.

Student comes up on stage to perform with band.

Ty, what key was I going to play this in? Ty: C!

We haven't practiced. Give a big round of applause.

~Big applause. Squeals from audience!! Sang, Hallelujah....Enthusiastic applause.

~Give him another round of applause. Louder. Robb gets right into the next story set. Couple who donated bus... Use of comical accents.

Asks Ty to put clip up showing bus. 12 flat screen TVs inside. Perimeter airlines. We played show in a prison in Calgary. Five kids. Maya's story. {Smooth transition from one story to the next.}

~Song: Shadows

Kids are very attentive. Song has impact, but also the immense power of visual storytelling

Ends with: 10 months after tracks...

-Robb: Change has to start with the school. There are kids afraid to come to school. Again: you don't know what's going on with the people around you?

Alternative school - one kid from a wealthy family but she wasn't living up to parents' expectations.

The kids are paying attention

Brian: Davinci code, Blades of glory

-Song: Trouble child

Role of the visuals in the storytelling.

"I know where I end up is up to me"

(Stories are compelling because they speak with kids not at them. They engage rather than preach).

Donors: important to stress high degree of professionalism.

One girl. She was from a great family, school and all of that. But she lost her parents.

I asked the important questions which is... Kids respond "why"

If I thought everyone had to have a tragedy to learn. We don't charge for our shows. We aren't trying to see you anything.

Robb comes down to floor for final comments. Shows website. What to do if you need help...

Principal takes microphone and asks kids to give another round of applause.

Delayed recess. Be in next class at 11:10. It is now 10:57.

Robb is at exit talking to kids. Very small group waits. Small, limited space to interact with Robb. Not private.

This was my seventh show and it was just as powerful as the first.

11:05 girls having a serious conversation with Robb at the entrance. Not in distress.

~11:15 Second SHOW

~Kids are coming into the gym. Group of girls in front looked at stage and yelled, "whoop"

Must be the younger group. More kids this time. Room is full. Noisier. More energy.

11:20. Kids settling into seats.

Tyler back from short break. Picks up iPad and starts show immediately.

Screams from audience at the intro. Seems like a livelier group. More responsive.

Getting laughs.

Robb telling about his accident: "Anyone want the gross details?" Kids yell, "ya!"

~Adult at back has pro camera. Taking photos. Looks like he knows what he is doing. Wonder if it will be in a school newsletter?

R: We are all gonna have bad days. And you have to decide what you are going to do about it.

[Robb says things that nobody else is saying in ways that nobody else is doing. He opens up a space of engagement by being honest and straight-forward. It feels like a safe space].

The pacing of the show is explicitly designed to hold the audience's attention. R talks quickly, but uses voice and pauses to bring kids in.

Big applause for Jonny.

**R: "In this song, I am going to say all that stuff I just said to you."

~ Multiple pathways to the stories and message. Sound, words, images, gestures

~One last breath- expression of regret

Connects his personal story to the themes he is about to introduce.

To do: Analysis of the multimodal story lines and how those work together to produce particular effects (i.e. connect with kids).

~Performance of pain, conversation, potential.

~Technical interlude with Tyler -brings other kids in. Performs teamwork.

Colten video- you're not alone. You can get help

Stories within the story of the performance:

Colten's story; his family's; Robb's; Maya's; the kids Robb meets and talks to; kids at alternative school; includes kid from school in show; quickly - connection through sharing;

Evokes strong emotion

~Thief of Colours

It's the images of Colten with the music and lyrics that overwhelms me each time I hear this song. Examine my own response to get at how this works.

-every eye in the room is fixed on the stage.

-boy has tears on face; girl wiping eyes

-imagery- memory of three year old girls body flying across the windshield.

~Two people walk out of gym. (kid and adult)

- tech problem. Video gone. Tyler calmly goes up to fix. Words cut off. Tyler back up on stage. Problem solved quickly.

-Song: Quickly

“Never saw myself having my own story” – key message

-Girl comes on stage to sing with Robb. Audience loves this. Audience claps. Huge cheers and clapping.

-show has multiple points of entry to hook kids. Girl singing was huge success.

R: “All you want is someone to tell you it’s okay”.

R: We want you to create the changes in the world.

“You’ve got to watch out for each other”

~Robb tells new story about a ballerina. Haven’t heard this one before

iRobot (Brian)

Robb: Tailors message to this audience: “Alternative school kids were a disappointment to their parents. Maybe some of you can relate to this song. Parents. There’s so much pressure there...”

~Trouble child

R: look at students’ faces in the video... powerful.

Your story is for somewhere else.

Asks audience: what’s the important question?... kids: why?

Robb jumps off stage on to floor.

R: I started to heal when I started helping other people. That’s why we are here - to help other people. We aren’t trying to sell you anything. Shows kids the website. Says they can leave a comment. Directs kids to help phone.

You have people who want to help.

Some mentioned after first show they want to come back and talk to us.

Uses language kids understand. You tube. What a creeper.

~12:34 show over. Principle announces: "you guys are in C block at 12:40" Not much time for contact.

~Robb is at door. Principle is also there. Hovering. No privacy for kids. 12:46 she is still there.

12:50 Robb chatting with principal. Five kids got bracelets here (meaning they were in crisis)..

~After the show, Robb told me about GSA controversy. Wrote op ed with Winnipeg Free Times journalist. Teen tried to commit suicide because GSA brought negative attention to her...

Day 3: Vancouver. High School (1600 students; grades 8 to 12)

~1:55 concert

Met band at the College. Performed for college students and some kids bussed in from alternative and other schools. Was going to give Robb a ride to next school, but everyone left right after the show so Robb could only talk to a few.

~Arrived at school. Finally found parking for bus. Tyler says this should normally be arranged in advance by the host school. We waited in bus with abooster juice. Tyler returned to say they will be playing to about 220 kids in a small drama room rather than to 400+ in the gym. Disappointing. Apparently the gym had been rebooked for another event. This room is on the other side of the school so it is going to be difficult getting the equipment in. Tyler unable to reach Karen for more info.

While I was on the bus Robb asked if I had read profile of the school. Showed me the briefing message from Karen on his phone: "Many kids are suicidal." There is a children's hospital nearby. Kids who have recently been discharged from psych ward need to be near facilities, so come to school here. There are also kids whose families live in the parking lot of the hospital while kids undergo treatment for various things. Other kids have been abused by their caregivers. Serious problems.

**The school profile info could be an important source of data to get some context for the kinds of problems the kids and schools are dealing with. Could be used to argue there is a need out there for what the band is doing.

~Robb just returned after one load of gear delivered to the far-off room. He said you can tell they haven't been to this area much because usually they get a better reception.

It isn't very well organized on this end. Tyler asked for help with lighting and whether they had water (this is one of the few things they ask for from schools). No water.

Robb reminds Tyler that he needs to talk to the counselor about what's been going on at the school.

~We are in the theatre. The guys are setting up. Grades 8 and 9 gifted teacher pokes head into the room. He told me some of his kids are coming and others will stay and work in class. He just got a call from the counselor to say a couple classes can't come. When Robb asks her about this later, she indicates a couple of teachers have changed their minds.

Conversation between Robb and the counselor: ICBC presentation might be the event that took precedence over this - I heard about it on the radio. Counselor said the seniors had to attend that (on Monday). She described it as "a presentation something like this". Counselor tells Robb there will be an announcement at 1:55 to bring classes down. Should take 10 minutes. That is the time the show is supposed to start. They are on a tight schedule as the bus must go into the garage.

Teacher walks in: When the fuck is this over? I have math to teach. Robb responded: you can't fucking teach math to kids who are fucking dead.

~Met the music producers. Steve and Anthony. They write most of the songs and produce the music.

Started show right on time at 1:55.

Counselor had said kids need to be done by 3 to get report cards. PA announcements would be on at that time. It was going to cut into the show. Robb asked if staff had seen the videos he sent. Some had. Were counselors ready?

Robb comes on stage. Kids love his jokes immediately. A lot of laughter. This is the noisiest audience so far. Kids LOVE it. Huge spontaneous applause after the Stewie impersonation. HUGE laughs.

~Robb: Adults screwed up. This response reminds you that it's for the kids.

A girl in front of me is recoding the show on her phone.

In spite of glitches the show goes on.

What do you want to be? What do you want to be? Annoying, right?

This is what I do to tell my story.

Room becomes very still and quiet when Robb introduces song, One last breath.

Four girls to my left are recording this song on their phones.

All eyes are on the stage.

Applause is enthusiastic

Robb explains show has to be cut down. Can't do whole thing due to school constraints.

Introduces Tyler. Asks kids who is interested in tech stuff. Connection.

Robb talks about his friend with drinking problem. Girl runs out of room. Counselor follows her.

Colten's friends and family asked us to so this video and show it to kids across the country.

Colten video

Another girl leaves the theatre

As of this morning we've had 178 students hand in their suicide notes.

Refers to kids who tattoo words to songs on their arms where they used to cut

Gap between kids and adults.

Another girl also left. Counselor followed. Came back right away. She seems to be the only counselor present.

Tyler at back holding up a timer on ipad. Signaling timing to Robb. Precision.

Skipped student singing on stage. No time.

They cut Maya's video. And the song, Shadow.

-Trouble Child

Cheers and hoots.

Spoke with counselor. The video has been shown to some teachers. Felt it has opened up the conversation. They are getting more referrals. One teacher had cut as a youth and he shared that with a student who had been cutting.

One girl left because she had to catch a bus. Another was upset and went to the washroom and came back.

Kids left rather quickly. Report cards had to be picked up at 3

Robb is off to the side talking to a girl.

Teacher: told me he is happy to see one of the troubled kids staying back to talk to Robb. He said the venue is intimate and that helps. Says Robb gets kids into identity construction. Gives the something for them to hold on to.

Counselor came back. Said the kids she just spoke to liked show very much

Show ended at 3:00

3:19 about 6 kids still waiting to talk to Robb

The band was very disappointed. In a school of 1600 only a couple hundred were able to attend. Kids told Robb: too bad my friend isn't here. He cuts... etc. Robb posted his disappointment to Facebook

EMAIL FROM ROB (RE: ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE CARILLON, MARCH 21, 2014)

I think I was telling all of you about our show in Steinbach Manitoba recently. There had been a snowmobile accident and we were told by some people that were at the funeral that the accident was the work of God. (Much like people who told me that my accident was not because we were going to fast on an icy road...but it was planned by God).

I had a lot of kids thanking me for breaking down some of those cliches in our shows last year...so I wanted to address that in our show a bit this year.

This article was written about the show. You will see how it talks directly about it. It was not over the top... because I did not want to get into a religious talk to much. But I think the article is great and really sounds like we got that message out there!

There is a picture of the article below...as well as the text underneath it (which is easier to read)

ARTICLE IN THE CARILLON, MARCH 13, 2014:

Robb Nash works to destroy clichés

by Judy Peters

Rock star and motivational speaker Robb Nash returned to Steinbach on Friday to share his story and music with students at Steinbach Regional Secondary School. Nash last performed in the city during Project Hanover last April. This time he gave two shows at the high school with hopes of reaching hundreds of young people who need some inspiration.

The show included Nash's story of despair and triumph, encouraging students to make each day count. After battling many health challenges from a serious motor vehicle accident, Nash struggled in many ways. Somehow, he found the strength within to make something of his life, to do something with his life. That is why he tours schools, prisons and reserves, sharing his story.

"We're not here for ourselves," Nash told the attentive audience of young people. "We're here for other people.

"In this last year, we have had 174 students walk up to us after shows in junior highs and high schools and pull suicide notes out of their pockets and hand them to us," Nash said during his show at the SRSS.

After the show, Nash spoke with The Carillon.

"Police have told us that people often carry their suicide notes with them for two months before losing their life to suicide, waiting for someone to either push them over the edge or to tell them it's going to be okay," he said. "We all have breakthroughs in our lives and my team is just trying to help them find theirs."

Sometimes those breakthroughs come from Nash sharing his view on common clichés that are often pushed onto young people.

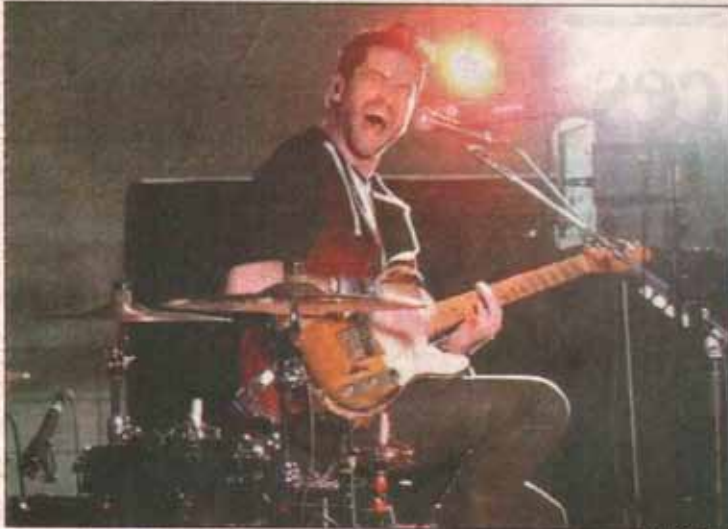
"At the SRSS, we spent time with students who thanked us for destroying the brutal clichés that are told to them by teachers, parents, even pastors. Clichés like 'Everything happens for a reason.' I know people said that to me after my car crash and that left me wondering why I had to get hit by a semi truck."

Nash has met with many people in hospitals and prisons, heard their stories and has concluded that the common cliché has done more damage than good.

"We never say that. We say that things don't happen for a reason, but rather that things happen with potential. My accident had the potential to leave me angry and bitter the rest of my life. Or there was potential for me to take my story and turn it around to help others by sharing my experience. It was not a predetermined situation. If you choose, we can all try to turn our stories around. But it takes a choice."

Another cliché Nash tries to destroy deals with a possible reason tragedies occur.

123 THE CARILLON, HURBOY, MARCH 13, 2014 STEINBACH, MAN.



Robb Nash shares his powerful music with students and staff at Steinbach Regional Secondary School. His powerful and encouraging message is shared through music as well as true stories.

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Another cliché Nash tries to destroy deals with a possible reason tragedies occur.

"People often say tragedies are fate or worse, that they are the work of God. People actually said that to me. That my accident was something God planned. I spent over a year giving the finger to the sky because for a brief time, I actually believed their words. People actually teach that."

The breakthrough for Nash came when someone saw the anger in him following the accident that stopped his heart during his senior year of high school and left him seriously injured.

"They saw that I believed my accident happened for a 'reason.' Then they said something that changed my life. The reason we

Stores con after opto

by Grant Burr

ANDERSON Family Vision Care stores will continue to operate at their various locations, including Steinbach, following the death of Dr. Arnold Anderson on Feb. 28.

The optometrist, who has had a practice in Steinbach for decades, died in a car accident in St Andrews, where he made his home. Anderson was 66.

Manager at the Steinbach location, Lorraine Wiebe, says she will remember her boss as a kind hearted, compassionate man with strong character and personality.

"All his staff he treated like family," she says. "I'll miss his sense of humor. He had a great sense of humor. It was more like a friend than an employer."

Anderson proved to be a great mentor and good teacher to staff and expressed real care and ap-

Ste Anne po

by Chris Gareau

AMAN pulled over in Ste Anne last November for driving erratically was fined \$250 in Steinbach court Thursday for possessing crack cocaine.

Ste Anne Police spotted Lascelles White, 58, swerving between eastbound lanes on Centrale Avenue around 12:30 a.m. on Nov. 30. White told the federal prosecutor that he was not impaired but swerving because of the weather conditions. Environment Canada records show it was cloudy with a wind speed of 9

Elma Pat 204

Greetings all. It's beginning to look like spring. It's Monday, Mar. 10 and the temperatures have hit zero. What a blessing. Although this was the second coldest winter since 1999. I am glad to see the signs of a warm-up, meaning the snowman will soon

Upcoming Events

Fri, Mar. 14 Steinbach

“People often say tragedies are fate or worse, that they are the work of God. People actually said that to me. That my accident was something God planned. I spent over a year giving the finger to the sky because for a brief time, I actually believed their words. People actually teach that.”

The breakthrough for Nash came when someone saw the anger in him following the accident that stopped his heart during his senior year of high school and left him seriously injured.

“They saw that I believed my accident happened for a “reason.” Then they said something that changed my life. The reason we had an accident that day was because we were going too fast on an icy road. It sounds simple. But that set me free. I didn’t have to be mad at anyone or anything. We are not puppets, but we are all going to have bad days. It’s up to us to decide what we are going to do in those bad days.”

One person thanked the Robb Nash team after the SRRS show because she had been told that her parents had died for a reason; to teach her a lesson.

“She had lived with that guilt her whole life. After seeing our show for the first time, that guilt left her. So did her anger.”

Nash said his show does not provide people answers to anything but rather encourages people to ask questions.

“I believe, if we are asking questions, we will find answers. I think we live in a world where people have stopped asking important questions.”

Nash encourages students to reach out to each other. He also encourages teachers and parents to see their children through a positive lens rather than looking for the negative aspects of young people. He also encourages students to realize their actions have an impact on the adults around them.

Nash urges adults to share their stories with young people.

“It’s amazing what happens to someone when they find out they’re not alone.”

[See photo of article below]

ROBB NASH FIELD OBSERVATIONS

December 2013

Manitoba

Diane Watt

*First field observation by the Werklund research team.

Research sites:

A high school (grades 9-12; 150 students) in rural Manitoba

On the Robb Nash Project tour bus

Documents related to this field observation:

Field observation report

Field observations on bus

Field observations during performance at the high school

Data sources:

~informal conversations (written notes; audio recordings)

~researcher observations

~interviews with team members (written notes; audio recordings)

~photographs

Audio recordings of interviews (on bus):

24 minutes – Jonny Holliday

34 minutes – Robb Nash

16 minutes - Tyler Marshall

14 minutes - Tom Hiebert

19 minutes – Karen Hamilton

23 minutes – Robb

(Interview with Dale – poor quality recording)

Content of photos:

(Share only with permission from Robb Nash Project)

~RNP team members on the bus and at the school

~the tour bus

 ~the hallways and outside the school

~Robb's bracelets

~Robb's autographed arms

~Robb's guitar

~Robb Nash team setting up the gym for the performance

~cutting tools given to Robb

Emerging themes:

Exceptional commitment from the team

They are "all in" (i.e., highly dedicated)

They are there for the "why" – strong belief in what they are doing

What's special about Robb Nash?

Unique ability to connect with youth

~Use of popular culture to communicate

~Use of humour

~Natural storyteller

~Music & visual storytelling

Genuine, caring, authentic, “from the heart”

Personal experiences of hardship

Powerful, engaging, magnetic personality

A natural leader

The RNP philosophy/vision

Description

~HEART a central theme

Delivered through story/music/visuals/popular culture/personal connection

Youth not viewed from “deficit” perspectives

Message resonates strongly with youth

Content of the RNP

The show (visuals; script; meeting with kids afterwards)

The music/songs

Pre- and post-show videos

Posters; bracelets

The website

Social media

Establish there is a problem that demands this response

Youth response to the RNP (suicide notes; cutting tools; email messages; stories of Robb’s interactions with youth)

Include stats on youth suicide, substance abuse, mental health, prevalence of cutting, etc.

Evidence that the RNP is having a positive impact

a. Youth response (observe at concerts; document analysis; social media; email)

b. Adult response

~willingness to donate to the RNP

~teacher comments at school today (“overshwhelmingly positive”)

~social worker comments at the school today

Stories from Robb & team members of their experiences with youth

Quantify where possible (# of suicide notes; # of cutting tools; # of emails; content analysis of social media/ other docs; # of schools/shows; etc.)

Awards and official recognition

Mainstream media coverage of the band

Connections to the RNP strategic plan

Possible next steps:

1. We may want to add to our schedule of observations

~There are other compelling sites we could visit to get a broad perspective on Robb’s growing influence (Youth Detention Centres; teacher audiences; cultural events; etc.).

~Each school visit requires several hours of follow-up work. We may consider inclusion of a wider variety of sites.

~Need to allocate resources for document analysis, literature review, data analysis, and report writing.

2. Document analysis

~This is a key site to inquire into re: student response and to argue program effectiveness

~I will meet with Karen in January:

To compile a list of non-school sites Robb interacts with (for possible field observations);

b. To obtain documents relating to student responses to the Robb Nash Band

(e.g., Karen has 80+ pages of emails from kids);

To obtain the two videos Karen sends to school counsellors before a performance and the one used for follow-up/class discussions after the show;

To interview Karen re: what specific info she provides to schools/counsellors before a performance (to describe their pedagogies, links to what is already out there, to make argument for educational legitimacy).

~Decide who will do document analysis.

~Analyze social media sites for messaging (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube).

~Analysis of words to songs used in performances.

~Analysis of videos used during the performance and other visuals, logos, etc.

3. Suggested literature

a. Pedagogies of the heart (strong theme amongst team);

b. Stats on youth suicide, substance abuse, cutting, etc.;

c. Programs that exist in school/community (to contrast with RNP?).

4. Digital recordings of interviews

~These provide direct quotations from team members.

5. Have team meeting in January to discuss next steps.

ROBB NASH FIELD OBSERVATIONS

December 2013

Manitoba (on the bus)

Diane Watt

Travelling on the bus between Winnipeg and the rural community where the band was performing provided an opportunity to get to know the members of the Robb Nash Project (RNP) team. We discussed the project's vision, how and why they became involved, their individual roles, how they work together, life on the road, and how they connect with youth through music and story.

Data collection: informal conversations, interviews, photos

[hand-written & iphone notes, digital recordings, digital photos]

RNP team members on the bus:

Tom Hiebert – Chief Executive Officer

Tyler Martin – Tour and Production Manager

Karen Hampton – Events and Support Manager (Located in Calgary. Our main contact person for access to venues and documents)

Dale – Driver and Security

Jonny Holliday – Drummer & Social Media

Robb Nash - Musician

When I ask Robb about who is on the RNP team, in addition to the people listed above, he stresses there are many others he considers part of their team. For example:

The couple who saw the show and then anonymously donated the tour bus two years ago;

The masseuse who gives Robb free massages;

The film producer who makes their videos;

The hairdresser who styles their hair free of charge;

Perimeter airlines who provides the use of a plane to travel to remote schools.

~6:50 Met Karen & Tom in lobby of Hampton Airport Inn, Winnipeg

~7:00 bus pick up

[Note: What follows is not a verbatim transcript. Direct quotes are in quotation marks. Otherwise, the text is drawn from notes taken during the interviews and conversations.]

From Winnipeg to the rural high school

~After introductions, Karen, Tom, Jonny and I talk about the RNP. Robb sleeps in the back for first part of the trip. Tyler is working on his laptop. Dale is driving.

1. OTHER AUDIENCES beyond youth in school:

[We may want to devote resources to checking out work the RNP is doing in these sites and the response from different audiences]

~Tom explains that in addition to working with youth directly, "We want to influence the influencers."

~Other events/sites the band plays at:

~WE Day

~Conferences (Teachers, Childcare Workers, Professors)

~Canmore Teacher Conference

~Lethbridge

~Red Deer

~Sheridan College

~University of the Fraser Valley

~Mount Royal University

~Youth detention centres; prisons

~Manitoba Youth Centre

~Calgary Young Offenders

~Alternative schools

~Group homes

~Upcoming Events:

~they are working on collaborative project with Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

~February 21, 2014 band will be at Pallister PD Day (1:30 Telus Centre, Calgary)

~contact Karen if we want to send a researcher

~They would like to play at UOttawa when there in May (I have contacted Vice Dean at U
Ottawa to see if they can arrange something)

~I suggested the band might come to Werklund and they are keen to do this in Fall 2014 if we
want to arrange something

~Karen: the band does the same show for these audiences that they do for youth in the schools. What is
taught is universal. Normally it takes 1 hour.

2. INTERVIEW with Jonny (Drummer/Social Media)

[This interview was digitally recorded (24 minutes)]

Jonny (J): Our primary concern is to figure out how to expand and impact more people

~We reach youth through entertainment/fun combined with a serious message. It is part entertainment and
an inspiring story.

Use of Social Media:

J. is in charge of *social media*. This includes engagement of youth through:

Instagram (the hub, the most influential site)

Twitter

Facebook

YouTube

Post-performance surveys (tens of thousands)

Large volume of traffic on these sites

Unsolicited youth email messages

~detailed, in-depth, youth stories, breakthrough moments

[We should devote resources to these sites/documents for post-performance analysis. Huge volume of material available. Karen is the contact person for access].

~Webisodes (still at the idea stage):

~J: "We can't do more shows, so how do we reach more kids"?

~Content might be in reality TV genre. Following the band from day to day on tour. Finding

kids and having them tell their stories.

~J: Over the years we have figured out not to accept private messages. No direct messages. This is for legal reasons and because our team could never keep up with the volume. Our goal is to talk to kids and let them figure it out on their own. We don't want kids to get attached/dependent on us. We want kids to ask questions and figure it out for themselves.

~Diane: How did you get involved in the RNP?

~J: I wanted to be a positive influence through music, but there is so much BS in the music industry and I didn't know how to do that. Then I met Robb 4 years ago. It was the first time I met a musician with a similar goal/dream. This is my third year doing this full time.

~D: How has your involvement impacted on you personally?

~J: It's the stories you hear...There are so many hurting kids out there. It's heartbreaking. I want to use music to have an impact... Would also like to have an impact on teachers. Inspire them. Talk about the "what" and the "why" you do what they do and remind them of the "why." The issue of caring and the influence they can have...

~J: We don't like to use the word "bullying". We don't use it because we don't want to empower the word. We take an encouraging approach rather than, "don't do that"...

~D: Why do you think you are having such an impact on youth who see your show?

~J: "The kids think we are one of them." They look at us and think we are about the same age. It's the way we dress and the way we talk. We don't preach. Music opens the door. We tell stories. We are always fine-tuning our songs and our message. We work in waves between funny and serious.

~D: Tell me more about your songs.

~J: Each is on a specific topic:

Robb's story

Thief of Colours – ties in with suicide and addiction

Lighter song – not waiting until you see a tragedy; listening to the stories around you

Young woman's song – Robb worked with her at an alternative school.

~"It's genuine. We let our hearts guide us to get to this place"

~D: Describe the song-writing process.

~J: They capture a story. It's a very personal thing. The song is like a bullet. Based on true stories.

~J: Kids tell us, "that didn't feel like a presentation. More like we were all just hanging out."

~J: Robb woke up from his accident bitter, not enlightened. He decided to try to turn it around. He got a taste of doing something for somebody else. He wants others to know what that feels like.

~J: There is consistency in the suicide notes we see from kids – "I feel insignificant."

3. From INFORMAL conversations on bus

~Brian Moylan (Media Designer, based in Vancouver) is in charge of making videos for the website and for the live show.

~A "Teaching Plan" is being worked on [need to follow up on this... I didn't get any details]

~Tony Myers (Calgary) coming up with a plan

~Tom: "How do we impact more kids and how do we impact them more impactfully?"

~Tom: Have had requests to come to Australia and the U.S. but as a charitable organization can't accept.

~Karen: Robb has been keynote speaker. For example, with prison workers. Topic: how to deal with tough kids. He explains how it works and how there is no formula.

4. INTERVIEW (#1 of 2) with Robb Nash:

[This interview was digitally recorded (34 minutes)]

~Robb [R]: My first concert was in Calgary with MADD. Topic was drinking and driving. This is when he started to hear kids' stories, which were about much more than just drinking and driving.

~R: We've been at this 4 ½ years and we're just starting.

~R: Lucky to find Jonny. Finding a team member that fits in is hard. The most important factor is that the person has heart.

~Diane: How do you prepare before a show?

~R: The show will sound very unscripted and it seems organic, but it's very planned out. It used to be more spontaneous, but after feedback from school Principals and others we realized that certain things needed to be said because they had an impact. After every show Jonny and I talk about how things went and how we can make improvements.

~R: Karen talks to each guidance counsellor before they get there. For example, if there has been a tragedy at the school, how to move on. If not, it's preventative. There is this consistency for all schools they play at. Karen also sends out two videos to the school. There is also a follow-up video to use for class discussions. [Follow-up needed on content of videos and info being sent to school counsellors]. Counsellors watch for troubled kids during and after the concert and do their own follow-up. After shows, kids hand suicide notes, blades, etc. to Robb.

~In Moncton last month, Robb was handed 17 suicide notes during 4 days of shows, and 7 more students handed their notes to their school counsellors.

~R: Strength is inside us all, but how do you tap into it?

~R: We need to listen to the stories kids are telling.

~R: Songs are like medicine. After the show we hand out posters with a link to the music played during the show. The songs remind youth of the stories told during the concert. Personal connections are important. Kids give me bracelets and I give my own bracelets to kids who make statements when I talk with them after the show. This extends the message. Kids contact us years later to tell us what an impact we had on their lives.

From rural high school back to WINNIPEG

5. INTERVIEW with Tyler (Tour & Production Manager)

[This interview was digitally recorded (16 minutes)]

~Has extensive experience in production; a degree in Engineering.

~Tyler: Met Robb at a small club in Winnipeg in February 2001. They started talking and soon after that I became Robb's sound guy. I felt there was something more here. I've been in 3 bands with Robb. After 6 years it has gradually evolved into what we are doing now. Many people have come and gone.

Tangibly, there is something about being involved in this that has greater purpose than a pay cheque or an experience. We could be changing someone's life. Robb is impacting an entire generation or culture.

~T: Robb is a fighter here in this zoo – this is a chance to learn and effect something.

~T: My role is the execution of the tour/performance/music. Robb will throw out a challenge and Tyler figures out how to do it. We make a great team that way.

~T: We have a very demanding schedule, so it's important that we are located in Winnipeg. As Tour Manager, I look after daily operations of the tour, production, lodging, meals, financing. Karen and I do the organizing. I describe myself as the pilot and Karen is the air traffic controller.

~T: Robb is genuine. His story is real and he uses it as a platform to quickly engage others. He has the potential to be able to change people. It's good to be part of something that affects people.

~T: The team with us today are the core group. We are all very focused and committed.

~T: We need to upgrade the bus, we need more gear...

6. INTERVIEW with Tom Hiebert (Chief Executive Officer)

[This interview was digitally recorded (14 minutes)]

~Tom [T]: In 1999 I sold my computer company. I wanted to do something with youth and music. I bought FREQ 107. It was meant to be a Christian station accessible to kids who weren't in church. We changed this. If we wanted to change the lives of youth we needed to play alternative rock – the music kids listen to. We had to approach kids at this level through things kids like. We had large market share in Winnipeg and were #1/#2 with the 18-34 year old demographic.

~T: In 2002, Robb showed up to my radio station, FREQ 107, and asked for a job. I was connected with music producers. Produced an album and band. Robb did the MADD tour...

~T: In 2011, we got charitable designation. This is the start of the Robb Nash Project.

~T: My role as C.E.O. is to play a role on the Board and also be the interface between the Board. I manage the business aspects of the corporation.

~T: Response Robb gets from kids is powerful. This project is the culmination of years of working together.

~T: Everyone on the team has a defined role and “everybody's all in”

~D: Why should doners support the RNP?

~T: It is hard to find another project that gets these kinds of results. All the money goes toward the mission, unlike many other charities. If somebody cares about young people, how can you not be involved? Robb's relationship with the kids is genuine and real. He speaks to their heart and soul. His show talks directly to their soul and they recognize that.

~T: The research we are doing at Werklund (measurement & evaluation) will help them to do their strategic planning. *Key point is how to integrate what we are doing with this research project into the strategic planning process?*

7. INTERVIEW with Karen (Events & Support Manager)

[This interview was digitally recorded (19 minutes)]

~Karen [K]: I met Robb in February 2011 and started working for the project in August, 2011. Before this I worked for another non-profit group in Calgary that is involved in a character education program in schools. I was doing bookings and am familiar with the schools from this work.

~K: What Robb describes as “the why” we do what we do is important to me. I see myself doing the administrative duties of a visionary leader. This frees up the leader. Robb’s vision is wonderful. He has special qualities. Robb is genuine and his motives are unselfish. He is one of the most selfless people I’ve ever met. He was just at Ashern school talking to kids for 3 hours. He didn’t have to do that. I have so much respect for decisions Robb and Tom make. Robb is incredibly humble. Robb can walk into a room and he owns it.

~K: To potential doners, I would talk about the impact this has on the kids. Email after email is proof. It comes to me every single day. [Karen has compiled 80 pages of quotations from these emails].

~Karen has her fingers in everything. Her role has increased. She develops admin systems.

~K: New opportunities are coming in to Robb all the time.

~K: I am so honoured to be part of this. I live and breathe this stuff. This is a winning team.

8. INTERVIEW (#2 of 2) with Robb Nash:

[This interview was digitally recorded (23 minutes)]

~Robb joins the team back on the bus just before 3:00 p.m. That is 3 hours after the end of the performance. He has just spent 3 hours talking to youth. I am amazed at his energy levels given everything he has just been through. I ask him how he is feeling and he says he feels good. After an hour he starts to look tired. I am physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted just from watching what Robb just did.

Robb opens a drawer and pulls out a small tin container full of sharp instruments and throws in 3 more razors just given to him by youth at the school we just visited. Robb talks about one girl in particular who told him she had a plan for the weekend to kill herself. This is the girl the school Social Worker had told Karen and I about. The Social Worker ended up picking her up to bring her to the performance today to make sure she could see the show and speak with Robb.

~Robb: The school Social Worker is taking over now. We are leaving, but this girl is getting help now. The girl told me that during the performance: “It felt like you were talking to me directly.”

~Robb talks about the symbolism of the kids giving him the cutting tools.

~Diane: You are a comedy act during parts of the show. I didn’t get all the cultural referents.

~R: That’s the point. These referents connect me to the kids. We are insiders.

~R: I start with my own story and adjust how its presented continually based on feedback we get. Jonny and I do this.

~R: "Our performance is a handshake to make the conversation happen after the show. The breakthrough comes during the music." Kids come up to me after to say thanks. Today I gave out 16 bracelets"

9. INTERVIEW with Dale (Bus Driver & Security)

(The digital recording was too poor to play back)

Dale: I drive, help set up the show, and where ever help is needed. I joined the band in September 2012, and have known Robb for a while. "I do this job because I get to see so much good being done when there's so much that is not good out there." A girl came up to me after one concert and said she was going to stop cutting... "It's not a job when there's a 'why.'"

D: As a team, we all get along really well. We are like a second family.

D: People just need to come see a show to see what is happening. They need to see the kids' reactions. Teachers tell us they can't believe how attentive kids are to the message.

D: December to January when weather is bad we just make short trips locally. The bus goes as far as Ottawa and anything further east the band travels by air.

D: Demand is growing for the band.

D: This bus was donated by a couple who saw the show, were very impressed, and wanted to help. They want to remain anonymous. This bus would be worth \$1million new.

~4:30 p.m. observations

~Robb is sitting on the floor of the bus. His hip was also injured in the accident and he is in pain. Karen is working on his shoulder.

~Robb talks about FREQ 107 and how that's where he formed the band. He and Tom talked about how they could have an impact across Canada by buying radio stations across the country. Eventually they realized the band could give them the influence with youth they were looking for.

~When I ask him about his family, Robb also talks about being the youngest child of 6, and about how as Christians they rejected his music for many years.

~5:10 p.m. bus drops me at Winnipeg International Airport

ROBB NASH FIELD OBSERVATIONS

December 2013

Manitoba (at a rural high school)

Diane Watt

~9:15 Arrive at rural high school (150 students)

~Team roles:

~Karen goes directly to the school office to announce our arrival; Tyler Martin heads to the gym to work out the set up for the performance; the guys immediately start unloading equipment from the bus.

~T. G. (social worker attached to the school) meets us at main entrance. Karen gives him a big hug. T. G. grew up in this town and went to this school. Karen later explains she feels she knows him given their numerous conversations over the past few months to organize for today's performance.

~Karen is first point of contact to organize a Robb Nash event. The website is an important source of info for schools.

~The band sets up:

~They use one end of the gym. I ask why they are on the gym floor rather than on the stage.

Robb wants the band to be on the same level as the kids, not above them.

~these guys are tall - Robb is 6'5 and Tyler & Jonny are also tall; all dressed in black; chains hanging from pants; short hair spiked up; they look like a rock band

~their team work is evident; each person has clearly defined roles; teamwork

~Robb stops several times during set up to tell me stories:

Robb: "You asked me on the bus how many people are on our team... "Everyone has something. They can be a vehicle for something bigger"

~Shows me his guitar; donated by the guitar maker - he's "on the team" (see photos)

~Mentions hair dresser who cuts his hair for free - she's "on the team"

~His masseuse does not charge - she's "on the team"

~ "The guy who does our videos saw us play. He told me: *I know what I do*

but I don't know why. I want to help....

~The website includes many others who have donated to the RNP

He shows me his arms, which are covered with signatures in black ink and explains

if a youth wants him to sign their arm, he won't unless they also sign his arm. This practice started with a youth at a detention centre who told Robb nobody would ever want her autograph. Robb told her he did. (see photos)

Robb shows me his bracelets (see photos). These were given to him by youth. He

also has his own bracelets he gives to particular troubled kids after the show.

Robb stops to put new string on his guitar. He tells me all about Tyler, the Tour

and Production Manager. He praises the amazing things Tyler can do with video and sound.

~10:12 a.m. Set up complete. Rob and Jonny warm up.

~Before the show:

~several girls go up to Jon while he's warming up to have photos taken with him

~a few students start coming into the gym. They carry their own chairs and sit themselves in rows in front of the band.

~Robb is talking with a girl who approached him.

~Robb moves to the back of the gym where kids now streaming in through back doors. He talks to teachers and staff.

~Lights are down. Music plays in background. Not too loud. The two large screens behind the band display images of Robb and Jonny and "credits" including:

~ "Nashguitars" (donated)

~ "Spaun Drum Company" (with an image of Jonny) (donated)

~ Red band on bottom of screens: @jonnyholliday @robbnash

~Karen mentions how she follows social media to read kids' comments. Sends sampling of these to doners to provide them with feedback on the impact the band is having on youth audienes

~Tom talks to Karen and I about possible corporate sponsors, but stresses he does not want corporate logos on anything. He does not want to lose the authenticity of what Robb is doing. He does not want to use Robb to sell products. They have a "thank you" page for doners on the website and that's it.

~11:00 a.m. Performance begins

...with a video: EKG machine with red line tracing & heart (This symbol/logo is also used on web site, business cards, bus, etc.). [Heart theme]

~Robb is seated with his guitar at centre stage. He begins with his story of near death, second chance at life. Tells about how he had 4 songs on top 40; 2 top singles – he was headed for commercial success, but he walked away from a record deal. Decided he wanted to use his story to help others instead. Now he tours schools, reserves, and detention centres to talk to youth... He performed for 100,000 students last year; was nominated best new artist...

~Cheers from kids.

~Robb hoots. “How many are happy to skip school for an hour?” Cheering. “You’re welcome!” “I’m going to play song for you... Do you like hockey? The lockout...? Here’s a song about hockey for you...” The Winnipeg Jets are mentioned. Humorous. Gary Bettman & The Count from *Sesame Street* are on the screens. Kids get Robb’s joke. They laugh.

~Robb does imitation of Stewie from *The Family Guy*... “Does Peter... Joel in the wheel chair..” (kids are laughing)... This is a comedy act...

~Robb asks and answers his own questions:

“You guys left your career as band?”

“Yes” ...

“Goofy!”

~Robb tells the story of his car accident (uses numerous pop cultural references):

“First responder thought I was dead... They told me they could see my brain cuz no I had no head on one side” (tilts head and makes a goofy laugh). “ My family was told to come see my dead body. As you can see I am still alive!” (using humour throughout this)... “Then my family was told I won’t wouldn’t wake up from coma.... And they let student doctors do surgery on me cuz they didn’t think I’d wake up!” (jokes... Talks very, very fast. I am having trouble keeping up but the kids seem to be getting every word)... “Do you want the gross details?... People ask me – Robb, is that real hair? They stapled my skin back, but if I ever go bald I will be one ugly dude!”... “Doctors told my family that if I wake up I won’t know anyone”... He acts out imaginary conversation:

Doctors: “Hey, what’s your name?”

Robb: “Pedro?”

Doctors: “Where you from?”

Robb: “San Francisco?”

Doctors: "How'd you get hurt?"

Robb: "Surfing?"

~Laughter

~Robb continues: "Head injuries erase your memory. The last memory I have is from two days before

the accident. Three months it took to get memory back. At first there was no hair, just metal"... Robb screeches in a high voice: "That freaked me right out! ... I saw some of you touching your heads!" (jokes, kids laugh)... "They told me all the things that were wrong with me. I am 6'5" and thought I'd be good at sports. And now my mom has to bath me again and I'm 17. Well Robb, this is your fate. This sucks.... People would tell me -- *Everything happens for a reason* -- but all I could think about was, this sucks. It happened in grade 12 and I wanted to play sports and I can't even go to the gym in case ball hits me on head."

"And then I started hearing voices telling me - *you're not good for anything*. Then finally.... Robb I think I know what happened. You had an accident on icy roads. I don't think things happen for a reason. I think they happen for potential. I can be angry for rest of my life or I can do something about it. I don't know why I got a second chance and others don't. I feel guilty. Why am I still breathing? I don't know why, but I am going to make every breath count... It's annoying when people ask you what you are going to be. I hated music in school. I couldn't even make it into the choir!"

~"The first day I stopped being angry I didn't hear: *Go to africa. Build a well*. (joking). The first thing I did was to phone the semi-driver that hit me to tell him I'm alive. I went to the police to find out who he was. He was a big trucker from Wisconsin. I called him and said:

Robb: "Remember that accident in Manitoba?" He got quiet.

"I thought I should tell you, I'm alive. I'm ok."

Trucker: "I'm just so sorry about your friend." He was crying.

Robb: "No, that's me."

~"He had been haunted by accident. He hadn't driven since that accident. He was on anti-depressants. We talked for two hours."

~ "Everyone asks you what you want to be. Nobody asks *why*? I started researching who is having an impact on world -- it's not *what* they did that's important, it's *why* they did it. Nobody knows Steve Fonyo ran across the country. Terry Fox is known even though didn't finish because of *why* he did it..."

~ "Nobody cares about what you do. It's why you do it."

~ “I had a career, but my record label said *no* to touring schools, reserves, prisons...”

~ “We are going to play some music for you. Please welcome Jonny Holliday.”

(Crowd is very engaged. Cheers).

~ “On our fifth album we wrote, *One Last Breath*... If that was my last breath what were the last things I said to people? My nightmare was watching my own funeral and nobody showed up” (one year after the accident) ...

~Performs song #1: *One Last Breath*

~the background video has the band performing live and the words to the song; it is synched with the live performance

~a girl at back of gym is dancing

~[At this point I am feeling very close to tears, myself]

~teachers on chairs at back of gym are riveted on the show; the gym is still

~When done, cheers from audience

~Robb: “Want to hear another voice I can do?... Only three people? (jokes). Does the voice.... Tells story of when he told his dad: “I like to do voices.” And his dad replies: ‘Why don’t you do something with your brother, learn to build something.’ ... Robb: “Everybody has something they do. Telling funny stories is what I do” (lots of laughs). [He is a comedy act].

~Robb introduces his team: Karen, Tom, Tyler, Dale, Jonny

~Tyler stands at back of gym with his sound controls, which are on an ipad... As he’s being introduced by Robb, Tyler demonstrates his job. He turns off Robb’s Mike... controls the effects, makes Robb’s voice wavy... also controls the videos. (This is fun)

~Robb tells story of his former drummer – his buddy Jessie. (Talks too quickly for me to get everything)... “He had addictions. He’s all in with drums but also with drugs... We just got called to one community. An 8 year old took her life. We know you lost somebody at this school, too... We went to the school right away and did a show. The friends of this girl had a pack and they were worried someone else was going to commit suicide, too. “Pain doesn’t go away, but neither does your strength. Booze, drugs have never fixed anything.”

~(A girl walks out of gym).

~Robb introduces a VIDEO: "This is from a school in Alberta last year – a 17 year old shot himself. Family and friends of this guy did this video and asked us to show it.

~(Another girl leaves the gym. An adult follows her out).

~Content of video: Friends, a councillor, and parents talking about the boy who shot himself –

"...we thought he might be struggling but he wouldn't talk about it..."

Boy's father: "We couldn't save him but we want you to save other people"

~Robb tells kids: "136 kids have handed me their suicide notes" [I am crying]

Robb: "That emotion you have is not a curse, it's a gift."

~(An adult walks out of gym).

~Robb introduces next song: "Whatever thief is trying to steal your life, tell yourself, just for today.."

~Performs Song #2: *Thief of Colours*

~I wish I could have taken the advice I was given.

~Video screens: Rob and Jonny performing the same song

~(Another girl leaves the gym).

~(Two kids -a boy and a girl- meet at back of gym from opposite sides of gym and move to front row)

~(Another boy leaves the gym - comes back 2 minutes later)

~Robb: "You never think its going to be you. But life is about all those people around you, too. We just got called to a school in B.C. Can you do drinking and driving? Three grade 12 students got hammered during the show. They ran over a three year old girl and her mother. They have the memories of the girl hitting the car..." (Robb's stories come from his personal experiences & those of others he meets).

~Robb: "Are you enjoying the music? Is this okay?" (clapping)

~Song #2 (missed title):

~T. G. (the Social Worker) is video taping with his phone

~Screen shows concert of live performance. There are no words on this one.

~Robb: "I want to give my voice a break, so I asked the staff if there are any good singers. Madeline will you come here?" (audience claps). "Now hold the mic close – some people hold it by their belly button"... (Madeline does a duet with Robb and she's great! Audience is squeeling, and clapping

along. Robb hoots after the song and asks audience to give her a big round of applause.)

~Robb tells story of how a couple donated their bus. Adele had rented it for her US tour.

~He tells audience how *Perimeter Airlines* donated a plane for them to travel up north.

~Robb tells story of a lockdown facility for youth in Calgary where he sang for only 5 people. A young woman came up to sing with them. They later recorded her song. She was released from the facility but stayed on to mentor other girls. She performed with them for 22,000 people at the Saddle Dome. They brought her on stage.

~Perform Song #3: *Shadows*

~The girl writes and performs her song with the band: The video/song tells the story Robb just shared

~Robb: "I guarantee there was somebody who was scared to come to school today. Can you say, *Hey Robb, we aren't going to pick on that kid anymore?*"

~Song #4: *Trouble Child...* At alternative School (with 20 kids)

~Wants to show how we all have different gifts

~The kids at the alternative school wrote this song to their parents and to some teachers

~Robb asks audience to watch the video

~Robb: "Normally 30% get through that program. With this class, 100% did"

~Robb: Refers back to his own story. Getting in an accident. Didn't make him better in any way! Would he do it over again? No? Lost feeling in his arm; still undergoing surgery...

~ "If you like our music...If you don't want our music that's okay..." (audience: noooo)(humour)

~Robb: “we have posters to give out – with a link to the songs we performed plus others; we’ll be at the back if you want to talk to us...”

~ “We read every message...but if you need someone to talk to, link to a councillor”

~Most common question I get: “Robb, can I feel your head?” (humour). Could I bite your arm?”

~Mentions “Likes” to Facebook, other social media...

~Robb: “I love your town... I come here in the summer..” (Girls at back start giggling.)

~Noon: Show ends. (Huge applause).

~crew takes down set.

~Noon to 3:00 p.m. Interaction with students

~Robb and Jonny go to the back of the gym to meet with students, hand out small posters with link to songs, pose for photos, and sign autographs. There are around 100 kids crowded around them.

~T. G. (Social Worker) tells Karen and I: “I talked to a few people and there is an overwhelming positive response from staff and teachers.” He also tells us the story about one troubled girl who didn’t want to come to school today. T. G. called her and picked her up. She hung around to talk to Robb. They talked and shared hugs and she broke down crying. T. G. said they were “tears of relief.”

~One girl ran out of the gym after getting her autograph yelling: “OMG!”

~Jonny returns to stage to disassemble his drums. Three students talk to him and get photos with him. There is another small group of kids standing nearby.

~Three boys hang around the crew as the take down the set.

~20 minutes after the performance there is still a lot of energy in the gym. Numerous kids still hanging around.

~Karen: “For Robb its after the concert that’s most important. He will stay as long as they want him.”

~The girl who sang with Robb was asked to keep it a secret. She had just found out that morning. Robb had asked the school to find a student who likes to sing. She told us it was an amazing experience.

~45 minutes later: Set has been taken down. Group of kids still lingering with Robb. Talking.

~A girl signs her autograph on Robb's arm in black marker.

~Robb has moved over into a corner with 3 girls and a boy. They have formed a small circle and are sitting on chairs.

~1:15 p.m. groups of students linger to talk with Robb:

two blonde girls

one boy sitting on a chair, hanging head, looks upset

small group with 2 girls (one crying) and 2 boys

two aboriginal girls

~2:00 p.m. Robb is still talking to kids while others wait.

~Robb signs a boy's guitar

~2:30 I return to the bus with Karen.

~3:00 Robb returns to the bus. Depart for Winnipeg Airport.

ROBB NASH FIELD OBSERVATIONS

February, 2014

Saskatchewan (1 urban & 2 rural secondary schools)

Diane Watt

RN team members present on this trip:

Tyler Marshall – Tour and Production Manager

Dale – Driver and Security

Jonny Holliday – Drummer & Social Media

Robb Nash

1. Day One: Urban Middle School (+ Approximately 250 students from 2 other middle & high schools)

~Three students in wheelchairs are also present. They are not from this school. Robb later told me they often have special guests at their concerts – usually individuals who are experiencing challenges in their lives.

~Walked into the school with a man I met in the parking lot. There is a very relaxed, friendly atmosphere at this school. There is no sign-in procedure to enter school.

~It is lunch hour. The temperature is minus 22 plus wind chill, so around -30. All the kids are inside, creating a very busy, yet pleasant hallway. Interactions between students and teachers are relaxed and congenial. Great atmosphere.

~In the gym: Jonny and Robb warm up. Tyler is doing sound/video checks.

~Catch up on news... They are still working on something with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

~The band used to fly everywhere, but its much better now to be able to travel by bus. Would rather drive 12 hours than fly.

~Jonny: "Story and music open the door"

~ "Our primary concern is how do we expand to impact more people?"

~Webisodes are one option they are considering. Follow band as reality TV. Need more resources to be able to do this.

~Robb said they recently had a planning meeting. He told me that at that meeting he said something that needed saying and now his head pain has stopped. There is no way they can keep doing this many schools. Need to do something differently. Bringing more than one school together in one location is one option.

~Tyler explains how they try to customize each show. Today they added photos taken by a female youth they met in Regina three years ago [B, who is now 19]. They are always tweaking the show to fit the context of the particular school.

~A girl comes up to say "hi" to Rob [B]. She shows him something. They exchange hugs and greetings. Her mother [C] then walks up and tells Rob: "You've made such a difference in her life." Another woman takes photo of the mother, daughter, and Robb and they all walk out together, talking. After Robb returns to the gym, he asks me to talk to B and her mom.

11:57 B shows her friend Robb's signature on her arm & her tattoo

~12:45 Kids start entering the gym

~Conversation with the Principal: They heard about the band and wanted to know how to get them to come here. They found the band's website. It would have been a two-year wait she says, but the band had a cancellation. The school's grade 5 to 8 students are attending this show. The band has never been here before.

~1:08 Students from the third school just arrived. Off to a late start.

~Chatted with B's former teacher. She stressed how much B has affected people around her since meeting Rob 3 years ago. She is a mother of 5 children, herself, and is inspired by B. She said B's experiences with the band have inspired her and she in turn inspires others. This has had an impact on all the kids she works with. They initiated the "acts of kindness movement" at the school as a result. She says: "Robb is definitely making such a difference in people's lives"

~B showed me her tattoo. It has Robb's moto on it.

~Show starts. Robb begins with his story. Freezing rain... Friend had new license...From small town with 200 people. ...Captain of all his sports teams. Thought life would be sports and now my mom has to bathe me again.

~When Robb starts the show, he gets kids laughing right away. It is a way to test the audience and he needs to connect quickly. The show is only one hour long.

~Audience listens attentively

~Hates it when people say to him: everything happens for a reason. He thinks things happen with potential. Stresses you can make a choice. Why did I get a second chance? I had done nothing to deserve a second chance. I want to do something that matters. I want to make my life count.

~The truck driver involved in his accident hadn't driven since that day. Robb taking the time to call him to say he was ok, set the trucker free. "That felt good. How could I tell my story to young people to make today count?" ... We all wear bracelets that say - make today count.

~Robb: "What you do isn't as important as why you do it."

~Record label didn't want Robb to do shows for free. How are you going to pay the bills?

"At first it was just me and my guitar going into classrooms".

~Song: One Last Breath - Then I started having memories. What is the last thing I said to my mom and buddies? Just give me one last breath to say I am sorry; One last breath to make it right.

~Words are on screen. B is near the front taking photos.

~From extremely serious, the tone now changes to humour. Comic impersonations. Stewie from Family Guy.

Kids like this. Laughs. Some clap

~Robb: "Everyone of us has different gifts."

~Owner of radio station was Robb's hero. Robb did prank calls. He asked Robb to go out to find out what people need. Bought boots for the needy.

~Robb tells audience he recently talked to a guy in prison who killed his parents. "We all have regrets."

Someone is out there trying to steal your life from you.

~Story about former band member. R: "Whatever my buddy did he was all in. But he put it in to drugs."

~R: The band recently got called to a school. An 8 year old took her life; at another school a 13 year old. But there was a suicide pact. So band was called to that school... Real life and death stories

~Robb: "Pain doesn't go away but neither does your strength."

We all have pain. Drugs. Cutting. Suicide.

~Video. School in Alberta, a 17 year old shot himself. They asked if we would show these films to others. They've been updated. ... Pain doesn't go away. Colton's parents were at the show in Lethbridge. That day a girl handed in her suicide note.

~Robb: I have 159 suicide notes. Many are written months ahead.

~Song: Just for today- that's how you win every challenge

Song - Thief of Colours

Just for today. (Photo of B's tattoo has been added at the last minute. It is on screen)

New video. Kids ripping notes. Parents of Colten. Robb talking to kids.

We just got called to school in BC. Talking about drinking and driving. Kids got stoned during our show. These three kids got in a car. They ran over three year old girl & her mom.

~A different atmosphere at this school... Younger audience

No kids coming in or out of gym. Also many younger kids in the audience. Haven't seen anyone leave.

~ "When you go through your tough day remember you have strength. Pain never goes away."

~Song - Quickly

I'm gonna give my voice a break. I asked school if any good singers. C and G come here. Kids in audience gasp...

We haven't practiced, so give them applause. Kids start clapping in time automatically. The song is familiar. The girls look quite young. Maybe grade 6 or 7

~R: An older couple came up to talk to us a couple of years ago. They said, "We want to make a donation." They went home. They bought us a new tour bus.

~Perimeter. Free flights.

~Did show for five people at lock-up facility. Maya. Tells her story. Laid on train tracks. Locked up for some of things. We recorded it in prison. Lock down facility. She stayed to help other girls in prison. She joined us in Calgary for a show. She said she had demons in her head trying to take her out

~Song- Shadows is her story. Added more captions to tell her story from when I saw it in Manitoba.

(always tweaking)

~We've talked to 900,000 people. There are kids afraid to come to school. It's up to you.

~Robb makes specific mention of the school's "random acts of kindness" initiative. Asks kids involved to raise hands.

~"Do those little things."

~Robb: Watch story on the screens for this one. We met a guy in van who offered to film this for us. He said I like what you do. He has won Emmy awards. Davinci Code and others.

"We all have different gifts."

Last song is story about the kids. They wrote song with Robb. First time they heard it was on the radio

Robb: "Watch the words and their faces"

~Song: Trouble child

~Normally 30 percent get through that program. That year 100% did. They knew what their purpose was.

~Local School mentioned by Robb where there had been a suicide recently: live life without regret. Parents who lost their child gave shirts to kids.

Radio interview. Guy said to me: Good you got hit by a semi. I said, not good! You'd do it again wouldn't you? No! Could I be angry about that. Ya. But I want to be here for others.

Rob tells kids about free song downloads. If you prefer Justin bieber... Kids yell noooooo.

Our videos are there. If you need help there are counselors.

Most common question: Can I feel your head. Doc says no. You said you can't feel with your arm. Can I bite your arm?

Lots of videos of us on YouTube. Found: I bit Robb Nash.

Ends on a very funny note. (Grade 5 boys in front of me are talking and laughing about this)

Loud applause at end

\$1160 raised by students and presented a giant cheque to Robb. Other schools had money too.

Another difference with this show is there were far more kids. Less intimate. Gym is packed. 400+

~B said it was the quotes that affected her. The message. Listening to the music and watching the videos over and over again.

About an hour after show... Three separate groups of girls crying. Lots of kids get autographs.

Two girls stay to talk to Robb after everyone else has left.

B made a collage of photos of her and band. Framed it for them.

She shares photos on Instagram. She told me Robb follows her on Instagram.

She has two friends she met online who are also followers of Robb. One in Winnipeg and one in Calgary. R and N. They talk all the time. Best friends. Have never met in person.

Her mom, C: "Knowing Robb helped her get through a bad time"

Internet/social media play a huge role. This needs to be developed. That could be one of our recommendations.

Kid in wheelchair told Robb - "You think you've got a story. I've got a story!"

Day Two: High School #1 (270 students, grades 7-12)

~9:15 concert

Talked to a teacher before the concert to find out about the school:

town and farm kids attend as well as kids from surrounding reserves

Question: Why are they on stage today and not on floor with kids?

~Stern adult at door when I entered the school. Different atmosphere from yesterday. Feel the tension.

~Robb was set up on stage when I arrived. Drove through storm, so slow going.

Older audience today. Laughs of recognition to Robb's jokes feels more mature than yesterday.

Kids listening very intently. Kids are getting it.

Kids laugh at Robb's story of high school choir teacher not thinking Robb had any potential.

Last night Robb and I discussed how the show is different every time you see it. I had noticed different things from Manitoba show.

Jonny intro.

Last breath

I never did anything for anyone

Nightmare of own funeral and nobody showed up

Intro with Robb's story takes about 20 minutes

Professional nature of the show is impressive: the music, video, words - together are very powerful.

More humour. Message. Prank calling people.

This time noticing different layers/aspects of the performance.

Introduces team. Technical stuff with Tyler and his iPad is another connection to kids.

There's a thief out there that wants to steal your life. We have pain so we turn to drugs. Doesn't solve anything.

The power of story. Rob is talking about kids. Uses current, real life examples

Colten video. It's okay to get help.

...Last night Robb said he finds First Nations kids tend to be quiet. Less communication with them.

-Big, older boy gets up and goes to washroom. Has to ask teacher permission. Comes back after video.

Timing and sequence of video important. No gaps. Maximal impact.

Robb brings out suicide notes as he is talking to the kids.

~Thief of colours

The music brings out the emotion from the stories. Very emotional song. "Just for today" is key message. [B mentioned]. Video now has cutting tools included.

Social media - Power to keep the message alive. Something for kids to hang on to. (Like being with the band)

~Robb: It might not be you but it could be someone you know.

~Robb's sincerity, emotion comes through in his voice & body language. "Pain doesn't go away but neither does the strength."

~Song: Quickly.

"I never saw myself having my own story" (Kid in wheelchair yesterday - I've got a story!)

I need to give my voice a break. T please come up. Some hoots in audience. Big round of applause and cheers. Kids cheer when T sings. Kids cheer and clap. Cheers. Robb sings harmonies. Whistles and cheers after.

Tells the bands story. Shares their experiences with youth.

Maya. In lock down. At Hull, in Calgary. Played for only five kids. At 18 released from lockdown. But stayed to help other girls.

Video tells this story. She said she had demons in her head.

~Song: Shadow

Many First Nations kids in the audience. All eyes on Robb and the video

She was sitting in the audience like you guys. We don't want to change the world. We want you to. You've got to take care of each other. You don't know what's going on with the people around you.

Last video story- there was a job for everyone. Message that everyone has something they can do.

Mentions Instagram and twitter.

New stuff recorded free of charge by Robb's former record company

~Trouble child

Announces small posters with their social media links.

Leave us messages and write on our wall. Don't message me. Need help right now?

Kids smiling.

Principal on stage announces counselors are here if anyone needs to talk. The school is well prepared.

Group of 8+ older aboriginal boys leave gym without talking to band.

I step outside to check weather. Talked to girl in smoke hole. From nearby community. Her mom works there. She liked show. Says kids in nearby community will like it

Two councillors from nearby community are here to offer support to any kids who might need it. Liked show. They stress its important even if it just helps one kid.

Several kids talking to Robb.

A girl and a boy (First Nations) leave gym with the principal. They are crying.

10:40 still kids getting photos and autographs with Robb

Teachers/councillors remain and watch.

Six groups of two or three hang back to talk to Robb. Principal tells us others are waiting to talk to Robb but want to do it in private.

Met D and another man. He is in charge of Mental Health program. They want to bring Robb in next year for family week. Would pay \$2000. Would be several communities. D also mentioned there are a couple of kids at nearby community who have tried to commit suicide several times. They will likely be at the show this afternoon.

11:00 principal brings in a girl to gym after all kids have left. She was the one I met outside. Wanted to talk to Robb in private.

Girl sitting at front entrance. She should be in class. Looking up band's website

Another kid in gym talking privately with Robb

In September, 72 kids showed up from surrounding First Nations communities. The school wasn't prepared. Hired 2.5 teachers. It has worked out well.

Dinner in Regina

-Robb gives Karen's email to kids who are in crisis to get the special song. Not available to everyone

-Some schools don't want to mention the suicide

-Follow up on schools that call Robb in after a suicide. Why are they calling? What do they think the effect is after he leaves?

-Robb explained how kids write notes and wait for the right time. Recently kid had one folded in his pocket. Had been there a long time

-Kids in wheelchairs this afternoon were brought in. Weren't from that school.

Day 2: Rural High School #2 (170 kids, grades 9-12)

~pulled plug on presentations. Poor attendance at the school. Don't have presentations or assemblies because of student behaviour in past.

~a rough school; too rowdy to be allowed to have events like this; 98% First Nations kids. Attendance problems. Self harm.

Video sound light live stories emotion

~I talked with Tyler on bus during lunch in front of school:

~5-6 years of experience have gone into how to engage the kids with their show.

~"We are creating relationship so they trust us."

~School fills out questionnaire about school before show. Questions such as, are you familiar with what the band does? This system helps get relevant info out to schools in advance. They also get a general run-down on school. Gives some idea of what they are getting into so they can customize show accordingly.

~Tyler: At this school, there has been tension with racism. Drugs, alcohol, major drugs. They share info with counselors. We've rarely seen it this bad as it was in the school we were at this morning. Teachers are not aware. There is often a major disconnect between what is going on and what the teachers/staff think is going on

~Tyler: we have to create a relationship in less than an hour. Life lessons to move on. What we say on stage is lasting, but it's only the first step.

Discussed Robb's ability to connect. Counselors don't always connect. The band connects where school can't

There is a line of kids waiting to talk to counselors after the show. Has an impact on the school. You are educating the teachers and councilors, not just the kids.

Robb is step one in the process

Low income, alcohol abuse.

One big difference is music type.

In Toronto they like rap.

They booked show because here at this school kids aren't talking.

~There was a teenager with brain injury at the school this morning. He wouldn't talk to anyone. As soon as Robb left he told teachers – "I want to tell my story now."

~They have alternative videos they can switch into the performance due to local circumstances. Every school they go to has slightly different focus.

~First question Robb asks during show is about getting out of school. Tyler says that helps them to gauge if they are getting across to the kids or not.

~Tyler: They get invited into schools for a variety of reasons. One teacher may be on board when others aren't.

Robb always talks with organizers at beginning. Did anything happen at school recently the band needs to know about? Each context is different and the band responds to that. It could be through use of different music or change in focus.

During this meeting Robb asks for a student that could come up on stage to sing.

Also talks to counselors. Robb explains what they can expect. Kids may leave. They need to watch for kids.

The school from this morning was one of the worst they have seen. Serious cutting. Robb hasn't seen it that bad. School was unaware of seriousness and extent of the crisis.

Pre-show (continued):

Teacher brought in a girl to talk to Robb. He told her just to bring him someone and he would ask them to sing. Teacher had outgoing student Robb and said not that. Girl had head down and seemed quiet and shy. Robb picked up a mic and practice song with her. She agreed to do it.

Robb talked about cultural differences with aboriginal communities. Eye contact. Don't do tight handshake for example. Harder to communicate.

Tyler and I moved chairs closer to the stage. Careful attention put into creating right atmosphere to connect with the kids.

Kids follow Instagram 1,000x more than Facebook (which is considered for parents).

~1:14 kids are coming into gym. Show starts right away.

One kid is calling out.

Tension in room after Colten video

After show: Teacher: "I have been teaching here for 36 years and that's the best thing I've ever seen"

They had the kids. They loved it.

2:45 kid is playing Robb's guitar and a girl is singing. Lots of kids standing around. Robb is sitting down in a chair. Circle around Robb.

A girl wants to touch his head. He yells and scares everyone and they laugh.

Robb got 3 suicide notes this morning. Total 162 now.

The heckler came back into the gym and is hanging around. He is helping move the band's equipment out of the gym. Robb tells me later the kids apologized, but was "just having fun with him"

~Still lively here in gym. 2:57

Teachers trying to shoo kids out of gym, but they want to stay and talk.

The school counselor works at five different schools in region!!

~3:26. Robb has been talking to one girl for about 20 minutes. She had been doing serious cutting.