

Dear 92nd Street Y School Partners:

92nd Street Y is delighted to announce the launch of the 2012-13 Musical Introduction Series season, beginning with our first concerts of the year: master percussionist **Valerie Naranjo** and the **Thunderbird American Indian Dancers!** The concerts, on December 5 and 6, brought together centuries of American Indian songs, dances, traditions and the performers' own ancestral stories. Valerie and the Thunderbirds dazzled and impressed more than 3,000 NYC public school students in 92nd Street Y's beautiful Kaufmann Concert Hall with their musical mastery, command of ancient Native American dances and storytelling.

Prior to the concerts, 92Y teaching artists worked in partnership with MIS students and their classroom teachers to explore and analyze traditions, photos and artifacts from Native American culture. Students also considered the Native American idea of 'Walking in Beauty,' which means to be in harmony with all things and all people, objects, animals, plants as well as your own feelings and the events of your life. The classes explored such questions as *Who are Native Americans?* and *What do songs and dances mean to Native Americans?* To find the answers, students and teachers chose from a selection of activities such as making their own dreamcatchers, or creating musical shakers to be played along with Valerie Naranjo's recordings, and they learned to sing and drum three traditional Native American songs.

At the concert, the students sang these songs with Valerie, and they knew them so well that Valerie stopped singing and let the whole audience sing together without her help! Many students also had the opportunity to go up onstage and perform the traditional Native American Feather Dance with the Thunderbirds and play handmade percussion instruments along with Valerie Naranjo.

After the concerts, students reflected with their teaching artists and classroom teachers on what they saw, heard, thought and felt at the concert, first discussing their responses and then transforming them into original writing and drawings. They then revisited earlier activities and discussions, now using their fresh concert experience to inform their participation, and performed the feather dance from the concert right in their own classrooms.

We are extremely proud of the excellent work your students accomplished in this unit, as well as their enthusiasm and joyful participation, which filled the concert hall. Their fascination with Native American culture, songs and dances was engaged through their interaction with lively and thoughtful performers, and deepened by their preparation and the knowledge they acquired in their classrooms.

With warm regards,

Larisa Gelman, Director

Debra Kreisberg, Managing Director