

Revolution director issues environmental warnings to CtK students

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

With the topic of declining shark populations garnering widespread media attention recently, it seemed fitting that the third instalment of Christ the King Secondary School's Sonar2Voice concert series focused on one of the planet's most-threatened fish species.

Guest speaker Rob Stewart of Toronto, whose award-winning documentary *Sharkwater* has been followed up by the just-released *Revolution*, spoke to about 700 CtK students in the gym about the ominous future of not just sharks, but the world's ecosystems in general.

Stewart's environmental warnings were just part of Sonar2Voice's multi-media presentation, which also included poetry, dancing and musical performances by four local-area bands, including headliner Brighter Brightest.

Stewart, a former photojournalist and now film director, said that most people carry a negative stereotype of sharks as man-eaters, as portrayed in the 1975 movie *Jaws*, when in fact they're a food staple in dozens of developing countries and socioeconomically important to other nations for



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Photo by Glenn Heshka

recreational fisheries.

"You've got a better chance of being crushed by a vending machine than being eaten by a shark," Stewart told the audience.

"We're killing 100 million sharks a year. Shark populations have dropped 90 per cent in 30 years, which wasn't an issue (because) conservationists

weren't talking about this. It wasn't in the media. Why would people care that sharks are being wiped out—one of the oldest, longest-lasting, most-important predators the planet has. We need sharks and they're being killed for shark-fin soup."

Teacher Mark Knowlton, who helped co-ordinate the event along with CtK's

student-run Green Club, feels that fusing education and entertainment helps convey the information more effectively to the students and promotes awareness specifically about marine-biodiversity issues.

The inaugural Sonar2Voice concert's theme in 2011 explored dolphin captivity, most notably Japan's hunting industry, followed last year by the commercial seal hunt in eastern Canada.

"It gives the kids the sense that if they wanted to come to this hearing how important sharks are, they leave really understanding what role (the sharks) play in the oceanic ecosystem and how cool they are," said Knowlton, who said the Sonar2Voice trilogy is likely complete—unless someone would like to take over the reins of a concert that took more than eight months to organize.

"If their numbers continue to keep going down as drastically as they seem to be, this is a cause for concern. What the students want to do with that information is up to them. We, as organizers, accomplished our goals and we'll be watching to see what happens with the national policy on shark products and finning. The Green Club is going to be doing other things now."

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