



### Organizational Overview:

DAREarts is a non-profit charity, founded in 1996, that uses arts education to empower vulnerable Canadian children with confidence, courage and leadership skills to overcome difficult life circumstances.

### Aboriginal Program Background:

2005 – 2007: DAREarts participated with Canadian Armed Forces Junior Ranger camps to help northern First Nations youth develop life skills. Connections made with Band Councils resulted in invitations to help youth in isolated fly-in communities overcome the effects of substance abuse and suicides.

2007 – 2009: DAREarts worked with Webequie First Nations on a 3-year pilot project, using arts as a tool to promote healing in Aboriginal youth, who were empowered through music, filmmaking and digital artwork. Youth participated in the filming of "Fill My Hollow Bones", a film which encapsulates the project. Please visit DAREarts' YouTube channel to view a short trailer of the film: <http://www.youtube.com/user/DAREarts>. Elder Ananias Spence later named the program **Nee-tum-Ochee-bek (First Roots)**.

2010 – 2011: The **First Roots** program has grown in Webequie and expanded to Marten Falls (Ogoki Post) and Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and to Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia.

The program provides a creative outlet and has strengthened the voices Aboriginal youth through new channels of communication, helping to unlock their potential. This has brought a more positive outlook to the communities, as well as decreased substance abuse and suicide among youth, and accomplishes the goal described by Webequie traditional teacher Bill Jacob:

*"Our youth need to learn how to turn to traditional and other positive support systems to take care of themselves during times of stress and community unrest. "*

### DAREarts First Roots Program Details:

Focusing on traditional teachings of COURAGE, RESPECT, TRUTH, LOVE, HUMILITY, WISDOM and HONESTY, youth build their confidence, cooperation and leadership skills while reconnecting with their heritage. Collaborating with artists, traditional teachers and elders, they develop a storytelling presentation for their community as a finale to intensive week-long workshops. In circle discussions, they build mutual trust, honesty and respect among the group. The entire community participates as audience for their presentation and celebrates the youth's accomplishments with a traditional feast.

### Workshops include:

**Drama:** Youth explore how characters from their story relate to real life experiences. **Dance/Movement:** Hip Hop and classical elements combine with traditional dance to encourage movement and positive self-expression. **Photography:** Youth photograph their world, seeing it in new ways to tell their story. **Film-making:** Youth explore and relate to the beauty of their community. **Set Building/Design:** Youth and Elders work together to build and decorate a large presentation screen, on which images by the youth are projected. **Music:** Youth compose, perform and record a song, with drumming as the heartbeat of the music. **Fashion/Art:** Youth create their own canvases and learn to transfer their designs to fabric to express their individuality.

### Program Requirements:

A DAREarts team of 4 or 5 teachers and artists, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, travels to each community and works together with the community's teachers, elders and artists. Necessary supplies and equipment are brought to the community. Up to 30 youth are engaged in multi-arts workshops held in the school or large community space and youth also film and photograph in the outdoors, helping them to see their community through a different lens. The community is encouraged to participate in the program and help celebrate the youth's accomplishments in the final performance and community feast.