



First Nations Youth and DAREarts Connect Hockey and the Arts

Arts-based Program to Re-Frame the Culture of Sportsmanship

February 16, 2016 (Webequie, ON) TODAY, youth and elders in the remote fly-in-only Aboriginal community of Webequie FN are putting their creativity to work as they embark on week-long artistic exploration of hockey, sportsmanship and culture. The **NHLPA** have donated hockey sweaters and **Scotiabank Hockey** have provided toques for this special, hockey-arts team.

These youth are part of DAREarts First Roots, an arts-based Indigenous education program, facilitated by DAREarts artist-teachers, in partnership with the community. Over the last 8 years, they have worked together to address challenges such as school absenteeism, hopelessness and teen suicide.

Chief Cornelius Wabasse of Webequie FN explains, *"We have our fair share of social problems here but the DAREarts program really seems to work with our students."* He continues, *"The fact that it is arts-based means it is easy for our kids to adapt to and be good at, and so they want to come to school as a result."*

This week, DAREarts will blend the community's love of hockey with the arts to address good sportsmanship, anti-bullying, culture and intergenerational collaboration. Guided by the DAREarts team of Indigenous artist Cathy Elliott, Juno-nominated musician Glen Marais, and Lead Teacher, Laura MacKinnon, along with community elders, the youth will explore the Indigenous history of hockey (they invented the game!), paint hockey masks and compose an original song to be performed with hockey moves and traditional dance at a special community PowWow on February 20th. The project will also be posted on social media and showcased at DAREarts First Roots Feast in Newmarket, Feb. 25th.

Marilyn Field, DAREarts Founder says, *"The personal growth in the youths as a result of their creating is nothing short of exceptional. We are so proud of them."* She continues, *"With hockey and the arts, these youths will use art, words, music and dance to share an important message of good sportsmanship to all the community and beyond."*

DAREarts First Roots program is part of DAREarts' national initiative to give underserved youth the confidence, courage and leadership skills to resist negative peer pressure so they can ignite positive change in their lives and in their communities. Due to the remoteness of Aboriginal communities, the DAREarts team flies into communities for one to three week-long periods to work alongside local Aboriginal artists and elders. In addition to Webequie, ON, DAREarts has been invited to numerous other First Nations communities and is currently seeking funding to meet these invitations.

DAREarts is a 20 year old national charity (#88691 7764 RR0002) that empowers underserved Canadian youth with the confidence and courage to ignite change as leaders, using innovative arts education. Recognized for its role in the development of leadership in at-risk kids across Canada, DAREarts continues to reach out to more communities across the country. DAREarts stands for Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence. DAREarts' 5-year program works with 9-19 year olds from schools in underserved communities, empowering them to be leaders. For more information, visit www.darearts.com or visit <http://www.darearts.wordpress.com>

DAREarts lead supporters are: **Northbridge Insurance, Guy Carpenter, Scotiabank, TD and The Ontario Arts Council.** Additionally, DAREarts First Roots program supporters include **Noront Resources, Sarah Haney, Ann Livingston, Dave and Teresa Thomas, RBC Foundation** and the **NHLPA.**

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