

## Attawapiskat Youths and DAREarts Release Empowering Music Video

**Attawapiskat, ON (Tuesday, June 21, 2016)** – On National Aboriginal Day, a group of youths from Vezina High School in Attawapiskat First Nation is reclaiming their voice by releasing an original music video. Called *Walking for Peace*, the work addresses, in clear yet powerful language, the youths' frustration with the on-going suicide crisis in their community. While the media coverage has been extensive and many experts have visited, the youth feel as though their concerns haven't been heard. Through this music, they are speaking directly to their community, as well as all of Canada, about their experiences, feelings and hopes.

Below is an excerpt of the lyrics:

*Take a look at the media, but not everything is as it seems  
You see crisis after crisis, but you don't see what we see  
In this community we are fighting for equality and peace  
Increase, decrease, deceased, something here needs to be done*

**DAREarts**, a national charity that empowers at-risk youth using the arts, facilitated the production during a two week workshop upon request from the community and officials at Vezina High School, including teacher **Mandy Alves**. The organization, which has previously worked in Attawapiskat providing song writing and videography workshops, assembled a team of leaders in music, videography and education, and arranged for their transportation and accommodation. During the first week, **Juno-nominated musician and artist-educator Glenn Marais** led a song-writing and recording workshop. **Indigenous artist-educator Cathy Elliott** and **DAREarts Lead Teacher Shelley MacDonald** taught the youths how to direct and edit the video during the following week. MacDonald is also the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Program Leader for **The Royal Conservatory**, an affiliate organization whose support as Education Partner was critical for the project. Financial supporters include: **Palgrave Rotary Club**, **Thunder Air**, the **Paul Semple Scholarship Fund**, **Sarah Haney** and **Aeroplan** donors (notably Hans Koehle, Maria Da Cunha, Cheryl Vhal and Victor Ford).

The music video was first presented to the community during a community celebration and feast last Friday night. It will later be presented to **Senator Murray Sinclair**, who won a DAREarts Cultural Award earlier this year, and **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau**. The music video is now available on YouTube at this link: <https://youtu.be/V7fDbOVr3C4>

After finishing the music video, a number of the youths reflected on the process. **Karis Linklater**, age 20, Attawapiskat Youth Committee, said: "The process has been a great one to give people a view of the Attawapiskat we see. It's amazing to see the lyrics of the song come to life." **Nigel Nakogee**, age 15, grade 9 student, said: "Filming the Walking For Peace on the street with everyone was my favorite part. It was cool. I am feeling very excited for the rest of Canada to see it." **Jack Linklater Jr.**, age 16, grade 11 student, said: "I really enjoyed this project. It tells you the real story inside of Attawapiskat, not what others choose to see because of what's in the media. I will still continue to tell the story, the true story of Attawapiskat and walk for peace and hope." **Liza Jacasum**, age 16, grade 10, said: "It was fun creating the song with Glenn and making the music video with Cathy and Shelley. Attawapiskat is my home town and I am proud to live here."

Upon seeing the music video, **Mandy Alves**, said: "This process has allowed our students to show Canada the Attawapiskat that they know, an Attawapiskat that is not defined by crisis but one that is filled with beauty and life and hope." **Glenn Marais** added: "Working with the students of Attawapiskat and teacher, Mandy Alves, on this song was a revelation of truth, compassion and resonate pride that is in the students' words, smiles of



achievement and evident pride in their community and themselves. They have achieved something remarkable with their song and video.”

Reflecting on the journey, **Cathy Elliott** said: “The youth of Attawapiskat have strong voices, and it is so good to hear them speak through music and pictures ... They are using art to express their frustration and love of their community. I'm immensely humbled and encouraged by their strength, humour and resilience.” **Shelley MacDonald** added: “The lyrics and video they created are a testament to the power the arts have to transform. I'm a different person because of this journey!” DAREarts Founder, **Marilyn Field**, said, “The personal growth in the youths as a result of their creating is exceptional. We are so proud of them.”

**DAREarts** is an arts-based educational program that empowers young at-risk Canadians aged 9 to 19 with the courage to ignite change as leaders. DAREarts stands for Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence. DAREarts' lead supporters are: **Northbridge Insurance, Scotiabank, TD** and **The Ontario Arts Council** (an agency of the government of Ontario). Visit [www.darearts.com](http://www.darearts.com) to learn more. **DAREarts 'First Roots'** Indigenous Program partners with First Nations. Upon invitation, DAREarts artist-educators fly into remote communities for up to three weeks to work alongside youths, local artists and elders. Together, they address challenges such as school absenteeism, hopelessness and suicide. The program is part of DAREarts' national initiative to give underserved youth the confidence and courage to be leaders who ignite change in their lives and in their communities.

**The Royal Conservatory's Learning Through the Arts® (LTTA)** is a proven transformative educational program that uses arts-based activities to teach the core curriculum by providing teachers with creative tools to engage all students in math, science, language arts, social studies, and more. Visit [www.rcmusic.ca/lta](http://www.rcmusic.ca/lta) to learn more.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Marilyn Field  
Founder & President  
DAREarts Foundation Inc.  
905-729-0097 or 1-888-540-2787  
[mfield@darearts.com](mailto:mfield@darearts.com)

Matthew Hague  
Communications Volunteer  
416-456-4396  
[Matthew.hague@gmail.com](mailto:Matthew.hague@gmail.com)