

DAREarts works with Webequie First Nation to empower their youth

Webequie FN, ON (Tuesday, November 14, 2016) After success in **Marten Falls (Ogoki) FN**, Canadian charity **DAREarts**, in partnership with the **Stratford Festival** is now in Webequie FN, continuing their First Roots program that is empowering Indigenous youth aged 11 to 19 using the arts. The program, unfolding now in remote northern communities, responds to the Calls to Action from 'The Truth and Reconciliation Commission' by supporting youth education and Indigenous culture. It consists of multi-disciplinary storytelling that combines traditional teachings, the core DARE values (Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence), and contemporary communication methods. The stories will be shared through DAREarts YouTube to connect Indigenous youths with all Canadians, and will help inform a new 2017 Stratford Festival production, *'The Breathing Hole.'*

DAREarts completes a week in remote, fly-in-only **Webequie FN, ON**, continuing eight years of collaborating with this community's children, elders and educators to create confidence-building dance, drama, music, visual art, photography and videography. A **DAREarts** team of four artist-educators landed last Monday for a week of arts workshops with more than 40 kids, followed by a community showcase and feast on Sunday. Team members are: DAREarts Lead Teacher **Laura MacKinnon**; artist **Betty Carpick**; Juno-nominated musician **Glenn Marais**; and Stratford Festival artist **Michelle Jamieson**. Community liaison for the team is Noront Resources' **Kaitlyn Ferris**. Having now completed projects in **Marten Falls (Ogoki Post) FN** and **Webequie FN** the team will work with other northern First Nations in early 2017.

DAREarts has had a significant impact through its work with **Webequie FN** over the last eight years. *"Webequie is home in so many ways,"* says musician Glenn Marais, who facilitated the youths composing a song called 'Makswa Seenan Maa Moe (Stronger Together)'. *"DAREarts is deeply connected to this land, and considered family by many. The realizations and shared experiences we have had are beyond measure."*

DAREarts lead teacher Laura MacKinnon adds: *"One of the most incredible things here has been the commitment of the high school students who are past DAREarts participants. They have been great role models for rehearsing their song and learning their dances, and helped the younger kids feel safe to step out of their comfort zone."*





The partnership with the **Stratford Festival** is fundamental to this year's **DAREarts** program. In August 2017, the **Stratford Festival** will premiere *'The Breathing Hole'*, a new epic allegory written by Colleen Murphy and directed by Reneltha Arluk in honour of Canada's sesquicentennial. It tells of a polar bear encountering change on northern Canadian land through five centuries. In this partnership with DAREarts, Indigenous youths in each participating First Nation will share their own story about a bear. These new creative works will be presented as a pre-show throughout the run of *'The Breathing Hole'* in Stratford.

Of the program, DAREarts founder **Marilyn Field** says: *"It is incredibly rewarding to see the capacity within each of our Indigenous youths to believe in themselves, create, achieve and lead others."*



DAREarts is a charity that empowers young at-risk Canadians aged 9 to 19 to ignite change as leaders. DAREarts stands for Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence. Visit www.darearts.com to learn more. DAREarts 'First Roots' program partners with First Nations. Upon invitation, DAREarts artist-educators work alongside youths, local artists and elders. Together, they address challenges such as school absenteeism, hopelessness and suicide. DAREarts' lead supporters are: **Northbridge Insurance, Scotiabank, TD, Anne Livingstone** and **The Ontario Arts Council** (an agency of the government of Ontario). Supporters of this program are: **Palgrave Rotary Club; David & Teresa Thomas; Noront Resources; The Paul Semple Award; and Allan Drive Middle School.**

The **Stratford Festival** is North America's largest classical repertory theatre, presenting works of William Shakespeare and other great writers. It is the premier classical theatre destination renowned for both excellence and innovation.

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