



## DAREarts 2019 Leadership Award Recipients



### **Illiaz Ally**

When he first came to DAREarts in grade 5, Illiaz had been labelled a troublemaker at school and struggled to control his actions. Now 16 years old and in grade 11 at West Humber CI, Illiaz is the first to jump in and make a positive difference everywhere he goes. He credits his time at DAREarts as having helped him to view the world in a new way, where he can inspire others and aspire to be the best version of himself. He works hard at school, currently maintaining a 96% average, yet still makes the time to volunteer whenever possible. With his entrepreneurial spirit, Illiaz plans to pursue a business degree at Ryerson University once he graduates high school.



### **Carissa Christensen**

Carissa moved to Ontario from British Columbia when she was 7 years old. She felt out of place, transferring schools several times and trying to fit in while also struggling to control her emotions. At DAREarts in grade 8, she discovered spoken word poetry as the perfect outlet for her struggles with bullying and social anxiety. Now in grade 9 at Northview Heights Secondary School, she continues to put herself out there and has enrolled herself in a variety of local spoken word workshops to further hone her craft. Using her voice, she hopes to inspire confidence in others who are facing challenges in their lives.



### **Taegan Lee**

Taegan is 11 years old and attends Britannia Elementary School in the downtown eastside of Vancouver. She is passionate about basketball, but was nervous about taking risks and sharing her voice. This year, her class took part in DAREarts and she discovered how the values of Discipline, Action, Responsibility, and Excellence could help her make new friends, try new things, and help her to redefine herself as a confident young leader. Despite her stage fright she found her inner resilience and volunteered to sing in front of her entire school at the DAREarts Showcase! She now helps out at school by hosting assemblies and is captain of her basketball team. Her current goal as she nears the end of elementary school is to help others conquer their fears and become their best possible selves.



### **Evan Troutlake**

Evan is 26 years old and is from the fly-in only community of Webequie First Nation. In 2009, the DAREarts team met Evan and despite being quiet, he always stepped up to participate and warmed each workshop with his calm, friendly approach. Evan is a gifted guitar player and music runs in his family. In fact, Evan has composed the guitar parts for three different DAREarts songs, one of which, "Spirit of The North", has become an anthem of hope in the community. Evan has grown into an incredibly capable and confident young man, evolving his role from being a student in DAREarts to becoming a co-facilitator and mentor in recent years. Evan is actively involved in his community, working with the youth empowerment group "Choose Life", coaching the Bantam Hockey team and being a mentor to the youth in his community.



### **Tiana Wesley**

Tiana attends Vezina Secondary School in the fly-in only community of Attawapiskat First Nation. Throughout her childhood, she experienced the devastating effects of addiction in her home life, and struggled with feelings of negativity and isolation. She has since taken action to improve her life and focus on her own wellbeing. This year, her class worked with the DAREarts Team to embrace wellness through the arts, and she seized the opportunity to surround herself with positivity and focus on shaping her own successful future. She currently plans to finish school while working part time, and looks forward to sharing her story to help empower others who need support.