

1996

2020



HURST LEGACY AWARD RECIPIENT: MICAHA NELSON

"I'm so honoured to receive the Hurst Legacy Award - Hurst was like a dad to me."

My early childhood was the definition of unstable. Moving countless times between Jamaica and Toronto while my parents separated and reunited meant new schools, new neighbourhoods and new friends – not an easy time for a shy little girl. My mom and I finally settled in the Toronto area and when I was 12, we heard about Trails from friends who were in the program.

From the first day in 1996, Trails became my “home away from home.” A haven where I was given the traditions and structure that I craved. An extra family that provided grounding and constant support. Thanks to Trails, I had the opportunity to travel to Wales and go horseback riding as part of the Gold Duke of Edinburgh award. I would never have had that incredible opportunity without Trails.

After graduation, I was a Dion Bursary recipient, which helped pay my way through my degree at McGill University and included mentorship from Sylvain Dion. It was like having another Dad checking up on me. Despite him being a very busy and successful business man, he was always there for me, providing guidance, checking on my grades and genuinely caring for me and wanting me to succeed. When my own dad got cancer and moved in with me so I could take care of him, Sylvain was there to help me through.

Deeply inspired by my Trails experience, I studied International Development Studies because I wanted to focus on youth and education. Trails gave me tools that I wanted to use to influence the next generation. After working abroad, I shifted my focus to helping local kids find health and wellness. I became an elementary school teacher, yoga instructor and natural health practitioner. With my combination of skills, I started a wellness and education business called Balance First Workshops. I am privileged to give back to the community and share my mindfulness practices at the Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment, a centre offering free after school programs for girls, some in challenging situations.

I have also given back to the Trails community, maintaining a close relationship with those who made such a difference in my life. Since graduating, I have been a Facilitator, a graduate mentor, a volunteer and now I serve on the Board of Directors.

Trails gave me tools to stick with things even when they're challenging. I have learned that I can push through and overcome anything. It is such an honour to receive this award – Hurst was like a dad to me and I will be forever grateful for Trails.