

## A Surprise Honour: Introducing the OPACC Board Chair's Choice Scholarship

Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer (OPACC) awards scholarships to remarkable students who have faced extraordinary challenges with strength, grace, and perseverance. Our scholarship recipients are chosen based on a rigorous set of criteria—but mostly personal essays that speak to their journeys through adversity, often involving a cancer journey.

But this year, something different happened.

OPACC awarded a surprise, additional scholarship: **The OPACC Board Chair's Choice.**

This new, unannounced category wasn't part of our original scholarship lineup. It wasn't planned, published, or promoted. It came from the heart.

After reviewing all the applications, one story stood out to the Chair of the OPACC Board—not because it fit the standard mold of a “winner,” but because it resonated on a deeply personal level. This applicant's story may not have ticked all the conventional boxes, but it carried a raw honesty, quiet resilience, and emotional depth that couldn't be ignored. It was a reminder that sometimes, impact can't be measured in scores, rubrics, or scales.

So, in an unprecedented moment of inspiration, the Board Chair created a new scholarship on the spot—a recognition of the power of personal connection and lived experience.

The OPACC Board Chair's Choice Scholarship is a **one-time award, created especially to honour OPACC's 30th anniversary.** It stands as a testament to the belief that everyone's story matters.

It honours the courage to be vulnerable, the strength to keep going, and the kind of personal truth that touches hearts, even if it doesn't always fit neatly into categories.

Here is an inspirational quote from the application:

“I realized all throughout my cancer journey, art was the only thing that gave me comfort, whether that be by consuming or creating it. What draws people into art is human connection, as behind every piece, you are aware there is a person who's written their own life experiences in between the lines—and when a person can relate to what it's trying to convey, the world feels a little less lonely.”

We congratulate this year's recipient of the inaugural—and only—Board Chair's Choice Award, and we thank them for reminding us that sometimes, the most important criteria is simply: *This moved me.*

*Congratulations Andrea Lin, OPACC's Board Chair's Choice Scholarship (\$500), which was funded personally by the Chair of the Board and not through OPACC funds.*