

Support, love, togetherness, leadership, and guidance. Characteristics I always have felt were important in the pillars of a community. In my adolescent years, I moved around a bit, never too far from the first place, which was a blessing. I started in Brampton, then to Mississauga, then back to Brampton, and finally to Caledon. In all these stops, the community around me was very strong and welcoming. I grew up around Brampton and Mississauga mainly during my developmental years, which aided in my view of the world; Having people of all cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs, to me, is what truly builds a community. As I moved to Caledon, I was in a predominantly white neighbourhood, which I noticed, but it hadn't struck me as difficult or an obstacle, because in this community were people who were accepting, loving, supportive, and believed in togetherness as a whole. Having been lucky enough to live in such open-armed areas, I understand I have had a very privileged upbringing, which many children, especially black children, haven't gotten. As I have become older and more educated, I have learnt how important it is for children, in particular, to have some sort of guidance or leadership so they have someone to look up to and relate to. In my small Caledon community, there were maybe 3 other black families, one of which consisted of 3 boys, and two girls. One of the young girls was about 2-3 years younger than me. We went to the same school, took the bus home together, and she would sometimes ask for help with homework. I eventually had started spending time with her family, tutoring the youngest girl with her french work, and playing with the young boys. From my time there, I was able to look up to the oldest sister for guidance, and the youngest to me. Though I had only maybe spent time with the family from ages 7-8, I still think of them, and I hope they still think of me. The memories that come with creating relationships and helping others in your community last forever, and can be the most rewarding feeling without gaining anything.

From a young age, I have been the responsible older sibling and cousin, which is where I learned of my love for kids. The summer before high school, I started volunteering at North Bramalea United Church, which held the Mighty Day Summer Camp. I was just an activity room leader at first because I was too young to handle a whole group of kids, but I took pride and responsibility in setting up different

crafts and games for the kids. I wanted their time with me to be something they told their parents about when asked about their day. I found creating relationships with the children on a personal level helped with their trust and cooperation. We created nicknames for each other and did icebreaker activities to help them feel more comfortable around us. My time as an activity leader helped with my experience for my next year as a camp counsellor. Working with the children as their leader was so much fun, I forgot I was their leader because they made me feel like I was adventurous, young, and carefree. As the summer would go on, I would notice how they interacted with others, their inclusivity, and cooperation was strengthened, and the leadership skills they were gaining were remarkable, and just showed how much being in a healthy community can do.

Along with my time as a camp counsellor, I am Co-Valedictorian for my RAP Drama program at Mayfield Secondary School, I have taken part in many rallies for change over the years for sexual education, black injustices, climate change, and many others. and I also began volunteering to help with an organization called The Every Woman Project. The Project was about creating care packages for homeless women and dropping them off at shelters around Toronto. My experience in creating and dropping off the packages was both empowering and heartbreaking, but working with other women, helping the community was undoubtedly a beautiful moment. I like to think I've done more than enough for my community, but the truth is you never can do enough. There is always something to do, something to join, to help better the community, and be the leader that is needed. I am grateful to have had a few opportunities to give my help to others and take on leadership skills, and I will continue to be a strong leader in my community.