

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mississauga Arts Council announces Billy Talent as the 2026 Arts for Mental Health Award recipient

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Billy Talent are recognized for their long-standing support of Make Music Matter, helping people affected by trauma heal through music therapy

Mississauga, ON - October 8, 2026

Mississauga Arts Council (MAC) is pleased to announce the winner of the 2026 Arts for Mental Health Award: Mississauga rock band **Billy Talent (Ben Kowalewicz, Ian D'Sa, Jon Gallant, and Aaron Solowoniuk)**. They are recognized for their support of **Make Music Matter**, an organization that uses the creative process as a therapeutic tool to help empower marginalized individuals and communities.

Sponsored by Bell Canada, this influential award recognizes the impact of Mississauga individuals/groups who have made a significant contribution to arts for mental health initiatives. The award will be presented at MAC's gala fundraiser for the arts, the **MACsquerade: The Artist's Dream on November 19th, 2026, at Luxe Convention Centre in the Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre.**

"We are honoured to accept the 2026 Arts for Mental Health Award. For close to two decades, we have worked with organizations like Make Music Matter, whose music therapy program has had a positive impact on the mental health and well-being of their participants—something we have witnessed firsthand," says **Ian D'Sa, lead guitarist of Billy Talent**. "Our roots as a band have always been deeply tied to Mississauga, and we are very grateful for the recognition and support the city has shown us over the years."

"Billy Talent's work speaks to something much larger than philanthropy. It reflects a belief that music can help people navigate difficult experiences, find their voice, connect with others, and begin to heal; that belief is at the heart of what the Arts for Mental Health Award represents," says **Mike Douglas, Executive Director, MAC**. "For 15 years, Billy Talent has been working with Make Music Matter to use songwriting and recording as tools for healing and empowerment. We are honoured to recognize Billy

Talent and the lasting example they continue to set for artists who use their success to uplift others. Congratulations, Billy Talent, on this well-deserved recognition.”

All are welcome to congratulate Billy Talent during the Arts for Mental Health Award presentation at the **MACsquerade: The Artist’s Dream** on **November 19, 2026**, at **Luxe Convention Centre in the Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre**. Step into the imaginative world of **The Artist’s Dream** for an unforgettable evening featuring interactive experiences, live and silent auctions, captivating performances, dancing, gourmet cuisine, and an open bar.

Proceeds from this evening support MAC’s artist-focused development, including [MicroGrants](#), one of the only initiatives in Mississauga directly funding individual artists, where every \$1 invested sparks \$4.50 in total sector impact. Help local creatives realize their dreams and bring their visionary projects to life.

Tickets on sale now! Don’t miss out on your chance to attend this highly anticipated evening in support of the Mississauga Arts Council. Tickets are \$200, with discounted rates for groups of 10 or tables of 12. **Learn more and get tickets:** macarts.ca/events/macsquerade/

Thank you to our current MACsquerade: The Artist’s Dream Sponsors!

Presenting Sponsor: Luxe Convention Centre at Hyatt Place Toronto/Mississauga Centre

Champion Sponsor: Bell Canada, Century Audio Visual

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About Billy Talent

Billy Talent is one of Canada's most successful bands. With nearly three million albums sold internationally and over two billion global streams, their impact is undeniable. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Billy Talent II, an album that stands not only as a defining moment in rock music, but also as the band’s most commercially successful album to date. Beyond the charts, their core focus remains a three-decade-long commitment to philanthropy and community impact. Recognized with the 2026 JUNO Humanitarian Award, the band consistently uses its platform to champion humanitarian causes. Through sustained partnerships with Make Music Matter, War Child, and MS

Canada, they support communities affected by conflict and youth living with Multiple Sclerosis. From their first high school food drive to raising hundreds of thousands of dollars, Billy Talent's dedication to advocacy is as vital as their musical legacy.

Learn more: billytalent.com

About MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award

MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award recognizes leaders and organizations which improve the health of individuals through arts programs and activities. Sponsored by Bell Canada, this award is presented annually at the MACsquerade Ball to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organizations who are making a difference in our community. Previous winners include Ian Hoare & Ruth Watkiss (Memories to Music, 2025), Anu Srivastava (V-Serve Canada, 2024), Sybil Rampen (Joshua Farm Gallery, 2023), Dr. Colin Saldanha (ArtsCare, 2022), Susan Ksiezopolski (WriteWell, 2021), Anna Silgado (Artists in Momentum, 2019), and Mind Forward Brain Injury Services (2018). Learn more: macarts.ca/a4mhaward

About MACsquerade

The MACsquerade is the Mississauga Arts Council (MAC)'s annual gala fundraiser for the organization. Each uniquely themed gala features live performances by local Mississauga artists, silent and live auctions, dancing, gourmet food, an open bar, and the presentation of the Arts for Mental Health Award. Proceeds support artist-focused development programs, including MAC's MicroGrant program, which funds local artist-led projects. Learn more: macarts.ca/macsquerade

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For more information about MAC's Arts for Mental Health Award or MACsquerade: The Artist's Dream, please contact:

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