

Coalhurst High School's Shay Anne Pierson is one of five national winners of the STEAM Horizon Award

For years there's been a push to get more girls involved in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

Shay Anne Pierson knows they still have inroads to make, but the fact all five of this year's STEAM Horizon Award winners are women isn't lost on the 18-year-old.



"I was like 'wow, it is all girls,'" recalls the Coalhurst High School student upon learning she was among those winning \$25,000 towards her post-secondary education. "Girl power!"

Although it is starting to change, Pierson acknowledges the STEAM fields are still dominated by males. Traditionally girls were pushed towards having children, she says, rather than expanding their interest in science and the like.

"We weren't told we had the capacity to make a change in the world, other than having kids. I think now girls are starting to realize we have more power than we've been told," says Pierson, who will accept the award in Ottawa this week.

The awards are sponsored by the Ingenium Foundation with the hopes the recipients will act as role models and ambassadors for future STEAM generations. That shouldn't be a problem for Pierson, who plans to become a teacher.

"I definitely want to share my passion for science with others and inspire kids to do great things," she says. The award isn't just an honour, it will truly make a difference in her life.

Pierson has had the highest average at Coalhurst High the last four years and achieved a 99 per cent average on her last report card. University was only possible for the Grade 12 student, however, if she earned the tuition herself. "I'm currently working three different jobs – four if you count math tutor – so I've been trying to save up. But I didn't actually have the money to go to school," says Pierson. "Now I do."

She's had a love of science for as long as she can remember, with an affinity for astronomy. There's an endless number of things yet to be discovered in space, and Pierson says she loves learning new things.

In addition to her grades in the STEAM subjects and the fact she's an accomplished singer, she emphasized her impressive history of leadership and mentorship – much of that as a member of Palliser Regional Schools' 'Blue Team' – in her application to the Horizon Awards.

The Blue Team consists of a handful of students from each high school who are charged with planning, organizing and hosting division-wide student leadership conferences.

"We also got the chance to speak and teach kids to be leaders, get out of their comfort zones and push themselves to go further," says Pierson.

Each of the winners will travel to Ottawa to receive their award at a ceremony to be held Tuesday, May 15. Joining the high school students will be top government officials and corporate sponsors.

For more information on the awards, go to <https://steamhorizonawards.ca/>