

# Nunavut youth put final touches on Montreal mural

"I can't wait to see their expressions when they see the final piece"

SARAH ROGERS



Cape Dorset youth artists Salomonie Ashoona, Saaki Nuna, Parr Josephee, Tommy Quvianaqtuliaq and Johnny Samayualie, with project leads Patrick Thompson and Alexa Hatanaka, stand in front of the mural the group is painting in downtown Montreal. The mural is expected to be unveiled Aug. 9. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PA SYSTEM)

Working long days under a blazing sun in 30 C temperatures is no easy task, but Saaki Nuna said he's had tons of motivation.

For starters, it's Nuna's first time in the city of Montreal, his first time painting a public mural, and people have been dropping by with freezies and cold water to encourage the sweaty artists.

"It's really hot," Nuna said. "But the people here are really nice."

The 14-year-old from Cape Dorset is in Montreal this week with five fellow youth artists, aged 13 to 15, painting a mural on the side of a downtown apartment building.

Nuna's own contribution to the giant image was designed months ago back home in Cape Dorset, under the guidance of Toronto-based artists Alexa Hatanaka and Patrick Thompson and their Embassy of Imagination initiative.

It includes images of igloos, with seals swimming around them. The theme of the mural is Qanuqtuurniq — innovation or resourcefulness in Inuktitut.

The whole mural is made of different elements of the artists' designs; Inuit cultural imagery flowing around two giant heads with the whole scene being pulled by a qamutik.

“It’s been awesome,” said Tommy Quvianaqtuliaq, 14, another contributing artist from Cape Dorset who is working on his first mural.

“I like it because it’s so big and we did it ourselves.”

Embassy of Imagination’s Hatanaka and Thompson spend three months each year in Cape Dorset, where they helped the young artists prepare their drawings earlier this year.

Once in Montreal, a local organization called MU helped the group find a downtown canvas — a wall at the corner of Ontario and DuFresne streets — onto which the group sketched the projected images.

All through the first week of August, the artists have been painting, with the hopes of unveiling the final product Aug. 9.

“I’ve been hearing lots of good comments [about the mural],” said Parr Josephee, who’s taking part in the project this year as a youth mentor. “People have been coming by and asking lots of questions.”

Josephee, 17, was one of the artists on the Embassy of Imagination’s [2015 mural, a piece in downtown Toronto](#) designed and painted by a different group of Cape Dorset youth.

This year’s project is more hands on though, he said, with a smaller canvas and the teen artists more involved in the process.

Seeing the larger-than-life version of the artists’ work come together is satisfying, Josephee added, coupled with the idea that their work will be on public display for years to come.

“Looking at these kids painting, I can’t wait to see their expressions when they see the final piece,” Josephee said.

Stay tuned to Nunatsiaqonline.ca this week for images of the completed mural.



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