

Young Inuit artists from Cape Dorset unveil mural about climate change in Montreal

'I'm going to remember this for a long time,' says 14-year-old artist Saaki Nuna

Sima Sahar Zerehi · [CBC News](#)

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'It's a big surprise for me when I see the big buildings and I see the artwork I did,' says Saaki Nuna, a 14-year old Cape Dorset artist working on the mural in Montreal. (CBC)

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A group of young artists from Cape Dorset have left their mark on the walls of Montreal, with a massive colourful mural that speaks about the impact of climate change on Inuit.

The mural on Rue Ontario East is the Embassy of Imagination's second project in the south.

Last year, the Cape Dorset-based youth art group created a [mural in Toronto](#), their first foray out of Nunavut.

"I'm going to remember this for a long time, because I'm enjoying it here," said 14-year-old artist Saaki Nuna in Inuktitut.

The other three artists working on the mural are Tommy Quvianaqtuliaq, Johnny Samayualie, and Salomonie

Ashoona.



The artists left to right: Salomonie Ashoona, Saaki Nuna, Tommy Quvianaqtuliaq, Johnny Samayualie standing in front of the half-finished mural. (Embassy of Imagination)

The four are joined by mentors Susan Rowsell and Parr Josephee, who was part of the group that painted the Toronto mural last summer during the Pan Am Games.

The youth are from a remote Arctic community and say painting on a three-storey building has been an eyeopening experience for them.

"I'm sure my family will remember this, too, for a long time. It's a big surprise for me when I see the big buildings and I see the artwork I did," said Nuna.

'Bringing the human side of the story'

The mural titled 'Qanuqtuurniq,' an Inuktitut word meaning to be innovative and resourceful, depicts a stylized face protruding from an abstract Northern landscape that includes sea mammals, caribou, an iceberg and igloo.

Alexa Hatanaka, one of the two facilitators who runs the project, said part of the inspiration for the design came from a talk by an [award-winning Inuk climate change activist](#).



The mural titled 'Qanuqtuurniq,' an Inuktitut word meaning to be innovative and resourceful. (Olivier Bousquet)

"We were listening to talks by Sheila Watt-Cloutier about global warming and Inuit perspective and bringing the human side of the story into the equation, not just focusing on the land and the animals," said Hatanaka.

The final mural design is a collage of the various sketches and ideas that the youth compiled while listening to Watt-Cloutier.

The reaction to the mural in Montreal to date has been very positive, said Hatanaka. Hatanaka added that their local partner is [MU](#), which has been posting updates about their progress.

MU's mission is to beautify the city of Montreal by creating murals that are connected to diverse local communities.

'A strong bond with Cape Dorset'

Hatanaka and Patrick Thompson, who are both based in Toronto, have worked on several art projects in the Arctic over almost a decade. They have created murals in the Nunavut hamlets of Cape Dorset, Igloolik, Iqaluit, and Hall

Beach, as well as in the Northern Quebec villages of Kangiqsujuaq, Kuujjuaq and Inukjuak.



Patrick Thompson with young artists. Alexa Hatanaka and Thompson say they have a special connection with Cape Dorset. (Susan Rowsell)

But the team says they have a special connection with Cape Dorset, which is known for its art scene.

"We just created such a strong bond with Cape Dorset and realized that we could have much more impact working with the youth there, following up with the same youth, doing workshops with the same youth."

The group has plans to work with the young artists from Cape Dorset again next year on another mural.

With files from Jordan Konek and Caroline Nepton