



Christine Kay/NNSL photo

**Artist Joel Maniapik and his family** stand before the mural created for the Legislative building.



Christine Kay/NNSL photo

**Pangnirtung MLA Peter Kilabuk (right)**, weavers Geetee Maniapik and Anna Etuangat on either side of artist Joel Maniapik (middle) and Deborah Hickman (right).

# Hanging history

## Massive tapestry unveiled at Legislative building

by **Jasmine Budak**  
Northern News Services

### Iqaluit

A once stark wall in Nunavut's Legislative Assembly is now adorned with a lofty labour of love.

A magnificent 10-foot by 22-foot tapestry mural now hangs in the lobby of the Legislative building in Iqaluit after its unveiling last Tuesday.

Titled *Back Then*, the mural depicts a watercolour painting by Pangnirtung artist Joel Maniapik. Seven weavers

from the Pangnirtung Tapestry studio worked full-time for seven months on the largest tapestry ever woven in Canada. The idea for the mural originally emerged to celebrate the new millennium and the birth of Nunavut. But, funding complications delayed completion for a couple of years. Because of the magnitude of the project, weavers could be paid an hourly wage rather than a piece rate that would normally be provided.

"They're much more comfortable being paid at an

hourly rate, and everyone seems to be able to make a living wage that way," says Peter Wilson, general manager of the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts.

### Monumental piece

"It's really enhanced the notoriety of the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio because even southern communities have been aware that we're working on this monumental piece," says Williams.

"So the reputation of the studio has really grown a lot in

the last year."

The studio also has a major exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (in Hull, Que.) which opened last February and will remain until next September.

"... The Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio joins the ranks of the small handful of studios throughout the world which create tapestry commissions for installation in large buildings," said the project's arts advisor Deborah Hickman in a speech at the unveiling.

Hickman also praised the

tapestry weavers for their commitment and patience.

"It is a slow and methodical process ... those who produce it are makers, craftsmen, artists and magicians," she said.

Joel Maniapik's painting was chosen from various artist submissions for its aesthetic appeal and its ability to be woven and translated into fibre art. In the past, paintings that have inspired tapestry murals have been a montage of images, but Maniapik's is different.

"In this case, we have chosen one complete work of art and basically translated it into a tapestry," says Williams.

The watercolour painting depicts a barren landscape with an inukshuk in the foreground and people on the horizon.

"It really speaks of the land ... it also has a quality that harkens back to an earlier time," says Williams.

The tapestry currently hangs low on the lobby wall, but will be raised after the Queen's visit in October.