



## News Release

### Nunavut Literacy Award

**IQALUIT, Nunavut (July 31, 2006)** - Baker Lake elder Winnie Owingayak has been awarded Premier Okalik's Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Nunavut. The national award recognizes outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy promotion.

"A dozen Nunavummiut were nominated for this year's honour and they all deserve recognition for their contribution to strengthening literacy in our territory. Winnie Owingayak was selected for her longstanding commitment to fostering literacy both locally and nationally," said Okalik.

For years Mrs. Owingayak hosted an Inuktitut radio call-in show and is well known in her home community for encouraging Inuktitut language acquisition through community events and games playing with children. Through her work with the Inuit Heritage Centre and the Virtual Museum of Canada she has raised the profile of Inuktitut throughout Canada.

"Winnie's commitment to developing the Tuhaalruuqtut Ancestral Sounds project has provided all Canadians with an opportunity to learn of the unique aspects of our language and culture." said Okalik.

The annual literacy award was developed by Canada's 13 premiers as part of their efforts through the Council of the Federation to promote and recognize the outstanding achievements of individuals who promote, support and encourage literacy. One medallion and award certificate is presented in each of the provinces and territories.

Owingayak will receive her medallion at a reception to be held later this year.

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Winnie Owingayak biography attached.

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### **Biography – Winnie Owingayak**

Winnie Owingayak, an elder from Baker Lake, has been selected as Nunavut Premier's Council of the Federation Literacy Award winner for 2006.

Winnie was instrumental in the development of the Tuhaalruuqtut Ancestral Sounds Project, a Baker Lake Inuit Heritage Center exhibit on the Virtual Museum of Canada Community Memories web site. This site contains Inuit songs, legends and photographs.

Over the years Winnie used the local radio station to promote literacy by speaking Inuktitut and encouraging elders to share their knowledge by having them phone in and tell their stories. She has encouraged Inuit to collect Inuktitut words, explain the meaning of songs and legends, and record interviews with elders.

In her community of Baker Lake Winnie energetically organized dances and Inuit cultural games, held discussions with high school and elementary school children and passed on the rich Inuit culture.

As an inspiration to young and old and in-between Winnie has played a key role in preserving the Inuktitut language and culture and bringing it to the world.