News Release

For Immediate Release

James Ungalaq and Mathew Nuqingaq awarded the 2025 Commissioner's Arts Award

Iqaluit, Nunavut (February 18, 2026) – The Honorable Eva Aariak, Commissioner of Nunavut today announced the recipients of the 2025 Nunavut Commissioner's Arts Award honoring outstanding artists in Nunavut.

"It is an honor to recognize James Ungalaq and Mathew Nuqingaq for their distinguished careers in the arts," said Commissioner Aariak. "The work of these two artists highlights Inuit worldview in unique ways and superbly shows the diversity of the arts in Nunavut."

Each of the recipients of the 2025 Commissioner's Arts Award receive a cash prize of $5,000. The award is presented annually to established Nunavut artists who have made a significant contribution to the arts during a lengthy career. The artist may have distinguished themselves in visual arts, performing arts or literature.

The music of James Ungalq was groundbreaking, merging Inuit language, life experiences and contemporary instrumentation to give Inuit a voice in Canadian music which has encouraged the development of contemporary Inuit music," said Commissioner Aariak. "Mathew Nuqingaq's artistic exploration of traditional Inuit implements takes Inuit culture and brings it to a modern artform, shown in his jewelry that is been paired with high fashion and in his stunning silversmithing of the crown of the mace of Nunavut, five silver loons dancing together."

"Both James and Mathew continue to share their knowledge and experience to mentor young artists, helping to bring Inuit artistic vision to the world" Commissioner Aariak added.

The Nunavut Commissioner's Arts Award was created to honour the artistic achievement of established Nunavut artists. Nominations are reviewed by a selection committee and are judged on their artistic achievements and the quality and impact of their work.

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