



**The Honourable Edna Ekhivalak Elias  
Commissioner of Nunavut**

**Speech at Northern Scene  
Opening Ceremony, National Arts Centre, Ottawa  
April 25, 2013**

**Tunngahugitti, Ukiuqtaqtumiunik Qunngiaqtitinirmut! Quvianaq!  
Welcome to Northern Scene! Exciting isn't it! It is with great  
happiness that I am here to experience this inaugural Northern Scene  
and to celebrate the rich artistic talent in Nunavut and from elsewhere  
across the Arctic.**

**Nunavut, which means "our land", was created on April 1, 1999, as a  
result of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. The territory makes up  
about 20 per cent of Canada's land mass and contains 25 diverse  
communities within three regions. Nunavunmiut will have another  
reason to celebrate this July 9 when we commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of the NLCA.**

**Today, our territory is a rapidly-growing society that blends the  
strength of our deep Inuit roots and traditions with a new spirit of  
diversity in the emerging face of multiculturalism. Inuit represent  
about 85 per cent of the population and form the foundation of the  
territory's culture. Our population has the largest proportion of youth  
and children, and is also one of the fastest growing in Canada.**

**There are no roads to connect communities in Nunavut. Many  
Nunavunmiut travel to visit neighbouring communities in the spring  
by snowmobile but otherwise all travel is done by air. Nunavut's  
terrain is rocky tundra with little but unique vegetation, with the  
exception of the most westerly community of Kugluktuk with its lush**

summer greenery. Nunavut is located above the tree line and snow-covered most of the year. The average January temperature is minus 30 degrees Celsius and the average July temperature is 15 degrees Celsius.

The many forms of artistic expression help to strengthen, maintain and preserve aspects of the Inuit culture which may have gotten lost. Nunavut is known worldwide for its exceptional carvings, prints and tapestries. The arts and crafts sector contributes \$33 million to the territory's economy. Nunavut also boasts of world-renowned performers, throat singers and actors/actresses. The international success of films such as "*The Necessities of Life*", "*Atanarjuat – The Fast Runner*" and the recent winner of a Canadian Screen Award "*Throat Song*" showcases the talent of Nunavut's resident producers and actors, and the visually attractive landscape of the territory. You will witness unique blends of tradition with contemporary twists.

In addition to the arts, Nunavut also has strong traditional sectors of hunting, which continue to play a significant role in our economy and lifestyle. Nunavut has commercial turbot, shrimp, and char fisheries that offer global markets access to these products. Harvesting from the land and sea in Nunavut is not just an industry; it is a lifestyle that helps keep Inuit close to their natural environment and provides a much-needed food source.

There are many more exciting facts about Nunavut. This is an auditory taste of Nunavut. I encourage you to get a full taste of

**Nunavut's rich artistic talent by visiting the various venues around the capital. Giving you a taste that will make you want more – that will stimulate all your senses. I hope what I have shared with you today and what you will experience during Northern Scene will entice you to visit and explore our awesome and beautiful territory to see, feel, taste, hear and touch firsthand. Enjoy the Scene!**

**Quana, quyannamiik, thank you, matna, quyanainni and merci!**