

2020 \$1 Million Winner

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Imaa, Like This

Children & Youth Expressing Themselves Through Music

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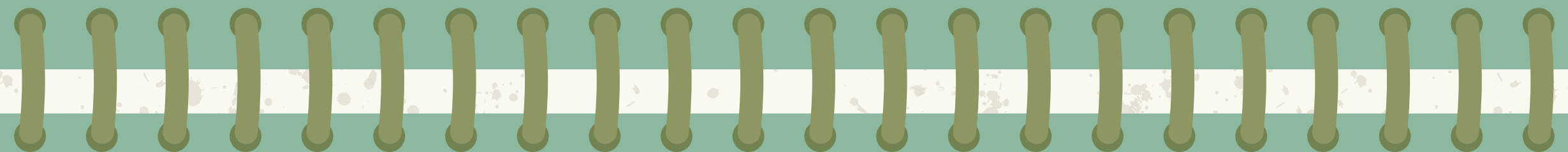
The Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

Nominator: Adam Arreak Lightstone
Member, Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Team: Naiome Egeesiak and Darlene Nuqingaq (Team Leaders), Alassua Hanson, Natasha Harwood, Valerie Kogvik, Connie Kwon, Nancy Mike, Amber Miners, Mary Piercey-Lewis, David Serkoak, Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory

This report was compiled and created by the Qatalyst Research Group, with the help of Ilitaqsiniq, the project team, and AIP.





“Winning the AIP is a dream come true for us all!” said Naiome Eegeesiak and Darlene Nuqingaq, Imaa team co-leaders. “Many children, youth leaders, and parents have asked for more music education opportunities. Now, we can develop and offer a culturally relevant Sistema inspired after-school music program for young children, employ local music instructors, and provide mentorship to aspiring youth music leaders from across Nunavut to facilitate music programs in their home communities!”

[Click here to read the full article.](https://www.uphere.ca/articles/over-3-million-arctic-inspiration-prize-winners)

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Music for Social Change

“Imaa, Like This”: Children & Youth Expressing Themselves Through Music teaches Inuit children music, mentors Inuit youth musicians to become community music leaders, and trains Inuit post-secondary students to be Inuit music educators. The program provides open access to culturally relevant education in a safe, nurturing environment through an intensive daily after-school music program. The teaching is rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles such as:

Tunnganarniq (inclusion),

Piliriqatigiingniq (collaboration)

Pilimmaksarniq (developing skills from mentoring and effort.)

The program is intended to create positive social change that arises through children learning to play music together and helping each other to do so.





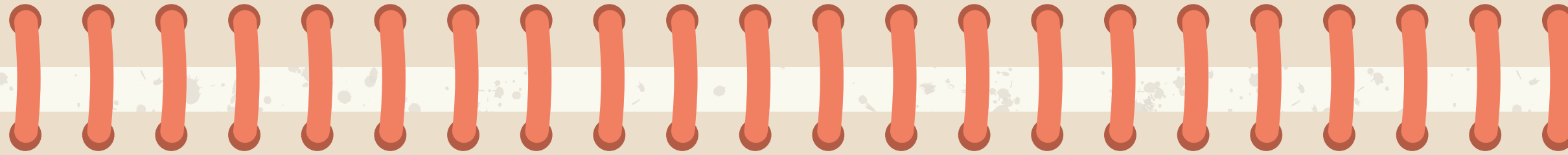
Students share their musical talents with friends and family.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QWwQXuOKPoW7TBQH3B9_G2TMn2BnmSUJ/view?usp=sharing

Accomplishments

With the help of AIP funding the project team was able to accomplish:

- An operational Sistema-inspired music centre at the Nakasuk School Library Iqaluit that is safe, nurturing, and inclusive. The program has been running since Fall 2021.
- Community concerts and events to showcase and celebrate children's musical & social progress to the community.
- Teaching resources created by Imaa teachers include teaching videos (introduction to fiddle, accordion, throat singing, and drum dancing) with written PDFs that are available on the Iqaluit Music Society website.
- August 2022 - pre-Music Camp gathering with a youth music program from Gjoa Haven.
- August 2023 - provided mentorship to the local Iqaluit teaching team as part of the annual Music Camp.



Education and Employment for Youth Involved

On average, about 10 youth are hired annually to work with young children, teaching them about music, arts, crafts, and helping to run classes (e.g., learning planning and preparation – logistics, snack, attendance, organizing group activities). Youth work Monday to Friday for 2 hours after school, and are hired to help with summer camp. These youth are involved in weekly team meetings where they contribute to conversations and improve their communication and teamwork skills, further enhancing their professional development. Youth also receive training and mentorship from visiting instructors and through workshops.

“I enjoy working here, and I love spending my time with children. kids really brighten my day. It is also a supportive and professional workspace because of my coworkers. My family is also proud that I’m gaining experience and gaining knowledge.”

Youth Leader



“Mia Maurice leading the Imaa drummers!”

Iqaluit Music Society Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/iqaluitmusicsociety/videos/400284049300501>



“We would like to wish a special farewell to our new music friends from the Gjoa Haven music program, as they return home today.

Thank you for learning together, and sharing your music with us! We will miss you!”

Iqaluit Music Society Facebook Page -
August 2022 pre-camp gathering

Summer Camps

Each year, the Iqaluit Music Society hosts a week-long Summer Music Camp during the 3rd week of August. Imaa youth leaders are paired with professional music instructors and assist them in teaching. Throughout the week, youth learn by observing and also get the opportunity to teach mini lessons. There are approximately 8-10 youth leaders each year, and for the 2024 Summer Music Camp they will also be included in the planning, organizing, preparation, and logistics for the camp.

“Being free to be able to express with no judgement, trying instruments and making noises, dancing, singing, using their own voice to like – a safe place, learning to trust our team and feel safe for them to feel more expressive and trying the new things.”

Project Director

A Safe Space for Expression Through Music

By October 2019, there had been about 100 children and youth (60 children grades 1 through 4, and 40 youth) who had participated in the program.

Approximately 45-60 students between the ages of 6 and 8 years old attending programming in 2021-2023.

8-10 youth leaders, primarily high school students, participated in 2021-2024.

In 2024, Imaa began running a class exclusively for children in grades 3 and 4 due to the high demand for children in grades 1 and 2.

“Music is a good way to express feelings.”

Project Manager

Developing Inuit Youth Musicians to be Leaders and Role Models

The project has successfully involved Inuit teens in the program, providing them with training, mentorship, and paid employment opportunities. This not only empowers them but also positions them as role models for younger children in the community - including the students of Imaa Youth Teaching Team.

The teens are learning to work together, communicate effectively, and take on leadership roles within the program, which helps in building their confidence and social skills.



“It was only my first year, but it made a difference in my life working at Imaa.”

Brogan Savard, youth fiddle instructor

Increasing Access to Culturally Relevant Education

- The music program includes traditional Inuit music using a variety of instruments such as the fiddle, accordion, singing, and drumming, making it culturally relevant for the participants.
- By integrating Inuktitut songs and traditional music into the curriculum, the program ensures that the children are learning about their own culture and heritage.
- The involvement of Elders and community members in the program enriches the children's learning experience and fosters a deeper connection to their culture.

Participants learn Inuit throat singing songs like the Love Song, the Saw, Canada Geese, River, and Poor Little Puppy, contemporary songs in Inuktitut such as Tarralikitaakuluk by Looee Arreak, and drum dances for various animals in Nunavut.



“Beautiful drumming by Taiga and Molly.”
Iqaluit Music Society Facebook Page

Nurturing the Health of Inuit Children

- The program creates a physically and emotionally safe space for children to learn and interact.
- Participants are provided with healthy snacks during sessions, promoting better nutrition and overall health.
- Participants have reported feeling more expressive and confident in trying new things within a judgment-free zone.
- The project also emphasizes teamwork and positive social interactions, which contribute to the overall mental well-being of the children.

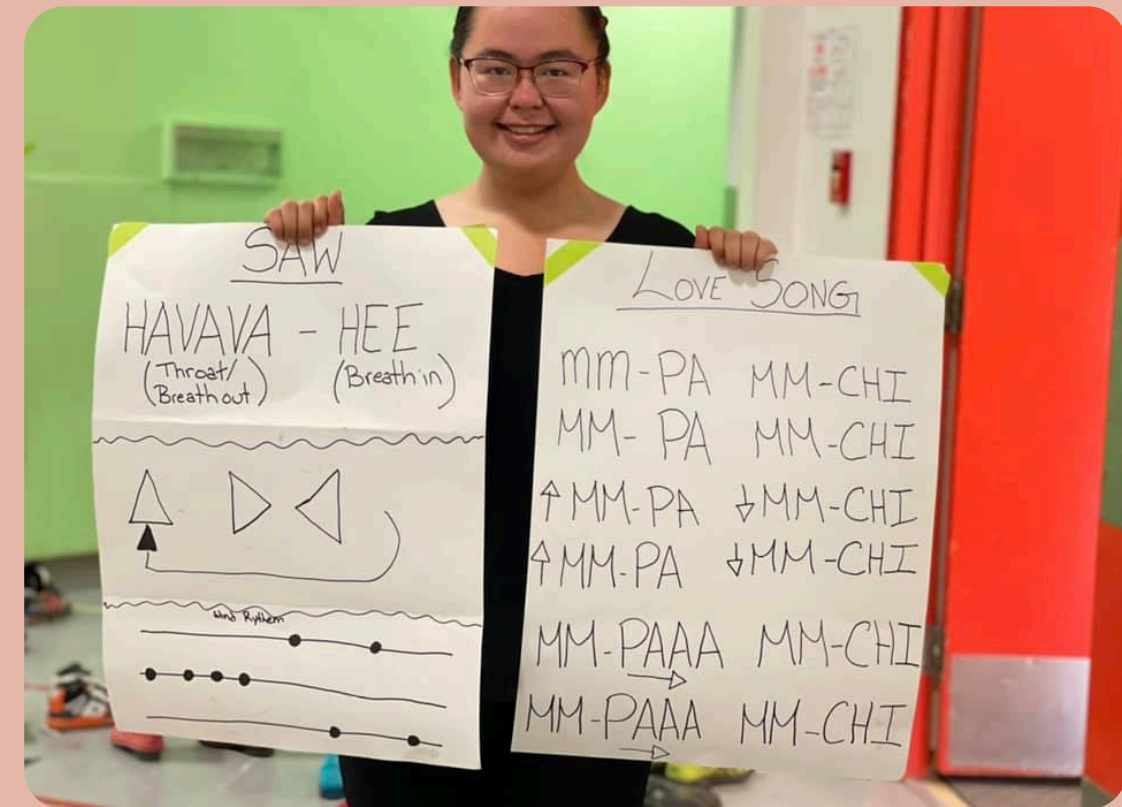
“Children are learning the music and songs, they have a safe and happy place, a healthy snack every day. They gain confidence and have positive interactions with the young adults and teens that are in our program.”

Connie Kwon, Program Coordinator



Creating Cultural Continuity

- Imaa, Like This has helped to improve cultural continuity by helping to develop Inuit music educators that are capable of providing Inuit music education.
- Through performances at community events like Christmas concerts and year-end concerts, the children are able to showcase their skills and share their cultural knowledge with their loved ones and community. Practicing and performing traditional music further strengthens Inuit cultural pride.
- Workshops and visits by Elders and community members provide additional cultural education, reinforcing the importance of traditional practices and knowledge.
- There are currently 11 individuals teaching at Imaa, with specialties including: fiddle, accordion, general music, throat singing, Inuit string games, beading, drum dancing, arts and crafts, group games, and guitar.



“Our very own Molly Ell is so resourceful—she made these teaching posters for her throat singing students at music camp.”
Iqaluit Music Society Facebook Page

Future

Imaa hopes to do outreach to more Nunavut communities, create a teen music outreach/music program, and increase fiddle and accordion programming.



Other Funders & Sponsors



Teaching videos and teaching resources.



Instrument purchase (pianos, fiddles, ukuleles, accordions)



Annauma Foundation - music leadership for teens