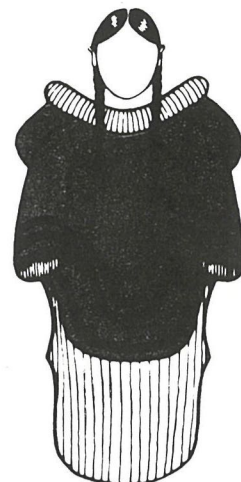


1993
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Suvaguuq



PAUKTUUTIT
INUIT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

National Newsletter on Inuit Social and Cultural Issues

INUIT WOMEN IN BANFF, ALBERTA

This newsletter contains information on the Banff Centre's *Community* project and the Inuit women who participated in it. The project was conceived by the Visual Arts Programs at the Banff Centre as a way of addressing issues about relationships between artists, their art and their communities. Participants were involved in a residency (room and board for ten weeks plus studio space, materials and art supplies, access to tools, equipment, instruction, etc.); a symposium or conference; and exhibition space in the art gallery. Plans for outreach into various communities have been made and the Banff Centre intends to produce a publication.

Last year the Banff Centre for the Arts contacted Ruby Arngna'naaq and asked her to coordinate the project on behalf of Inuit women. Ruby suggested working through Pauktuutit and she initiated discussions which led to our involvement in the project. In December, the Board of Directors began contacting women who might enjoy and benefit from working with other artists and with the state-of-the-art equipment and resources available at the Banff Centre for the Arts. The *Community* project began on January 18, 1993 and ran until March 26, 1993.

Ruby Arngna'naaq was the project coordinator. Artists involved in the project are Dinah Andersen (Labrador), Oqqi Taqtu (Arctic Bay), Leah Pootogook (Pond Inlet), Jeannie Ziska (Rankin Inlet),

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The Community Project

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Myrah Kukiiyaut Arngna'naaq (Baker Lake), and Vickie Grey (Kuujuaq). Susan Aglukark worked both as a member of the Pauktuutit group and as a student in the Banff Centre's Music-Theatre Program. Rhoda Karetak (Rankin Inlet) was a guest speaker at a conference held at the Banff Centre during the fourth week of the project. Rachel Qitsualik was the interpreter-translator, and Linda Archibald participated in the early part of the program as Pauktuutit's liaison.

In addition to Pauktuutit, three other groups were involved in the *Community* project:

Second Decade

is a group of artists committed to addressing issues around AIDS and HIV and their impact on various communities.

While at Banff, these artists produced public service announcements for television broadcast.

A New Generation/ An Old Culture

is a group of Japanese-Canadian artists interested in exploring topics of immigration, integration and assimilation of people and culture.

Mekaron

is a multi-ethnic group of artists who came together to approach debates about language with a unifying tool - visual language. Their artwork addresses issues such as race relations and the environment.

Pauktuutit, Second Decade, A New Generation/An Old Culture, and Mekaron came to Banff as completely separate and independent groups. As the members of these four groups and the handful of independent artists working at the centre came to know each other, an informal "community" began to take shape. Friendships developed, cultural similarities and differences were discussed and explored, artists talked about collaborating on projects, and individuals learned about and developed a greater understanding of other people, cultures, and lifestyles. For many of the Pauktuutit women, the experience provided new opportunities for artistic and personal growth and a chance to see the world from a different perspective.

And all of this took place in a setting which is almost too beautiful to be real. The mountains surrounding Banff are so high that clouds sometimes hover below the skyline creating an impression that this place is not a part of the world we know. Elk and deer wander the streets as if the town was made for them and the people are merely an annoyance (Banff is located in a national park where hunting is forbidden).

Community Symposium:

February 10-13, 1993

A three day conference took place at the Banff Centre for the Arts to discuss issues related to artists' involvement in their communities and strategies for community involvement in social change. Ruby Arngna'naaq and Rhoda Karetak gave presentations at the conference. Ruby spoke as the coordinator of Pauktuutit's involvement in the *Community* project. Rhoda was invited to address the symposium as a guest speaker.

Ruby Arngna'naaq

Excerpts from a speech to the Symposium "Art & Social Change"

The Inuit women here at Banff are here as artists and as individual members of Pauktuutit. Pauktuutit has given us a chance to participate, to learn new skills, to work in new mediums in the visual arts, and the choice to work on our own or collectively. We are not here as ambassadors from the Inuit world. We are here to work with what the Banff Centre has to offer and to learn.

We are also here as Inuit women. As women, we know what it is like to grow up female, sometimes in two cultures. Many women followed their children to the communities when mandatory education was instituted in the 1950s. The RCMP and government administrators sometimes physically removed children from their families to bring them to schools in the communities. In the old days, the RCMP was respected and what they said was adhered to because they said they were the law. Many of our women paid a high price for education, either as people put in schools, or as parents.

We were also brought here as artists, for Inuit make things that people find beautiful. The concept of making art was introduced to Inuit very early in the assimilation process with southern culture. Certain things were recognized as "art." For us, it was simply the ability to make something with our hands, something visible. In European and southern Canadian culture, people told us we were very good at making things. We were therefore categorized as a group of people who are good at making things, an artistic group of people.

There are also the ones like me, who translate, who make prints of things, of other people's work. Are printmakers artists? I am a printmaker and in a sense I am an artist. Yet Inuit, viewing art in our own terms - in the Inuktitut language - do not differentiate between artists and craftspeople. Our word for *art* means "making something which is not real; imitating or pretending to make an image"



Inuit are not the "sweet smiling people" we have been projected as, but human beings responding as humans to the ways we were brought up. In some instances, there has been a violent response. Our art work shows human pain and human joy - the joy of being alive and of enjoying the environment. One of the works produced here is on suicide.

Inuit women have been struggling with the concept of unnecessary violence and what to do about it. Pauktuutit is working on a booklet on basic counselling skills. This booklet is not for social workers or psychologists but for anyone who is ready to sit down and listen to another person and perhaps offer guidance (but not necessarily). Inuit women artists here will be contributing to the overall work of Pauktuutit by providing artwork for the handbook.

The idea for the booklet came from women at one of Pauktuutit's annual general meetings (AGM). Each region sends delegates to the AGM with the right to vote on their behalf and to present and discuss ideas. Delegates prioritize issues and when

they return home they inform women there about what went on.

Unlike other groups, Pauktuutit brings out problems and then moves towards action. This year, for example, after talking about family violence there will be a healing workshop at the AGM. Pauktuutit does not deal with women's rights as such (in southern terms). How they lobby is as different from the south as our lifestyle once was.

In Inuit society, people do almost anything not to confront. I have been told many times to "stay still, watch, listen." Inuit may smile, walk away or leave a situation but it does not mean we agree. We absorb what is going on and then look for a non-aggressive solution.

In closing, I would like to thank the Banff Centre for providing Inuit women with the opportunity to work with their equipment, resources and technologies and with other artists from across Canada. Thank you.

In the discussion that followed Ruby's presentation, one of the participants noted a similarity between Inuit and Japanese approaches to confrontation. During World War II, Japanese Canadians living on the west coast were moved to prison camps and their property was confiscated by the government. Those involved in the movement to have the government provide an apology and compensation for these human rights abuses had to deal with the issue of how to get justice from the Canadian system while preserving and respecting their tradition of being non-confrontational.

Rhoda Karetak

Excerpts from a speech to the Symposium "Art & Social Change"

(summary of a presentation originally in Inuktitut)

Many times, the language barrier has kept me silent.

I grew up not knowing hunger for both my father and grandfather were good hunters. In the days when dogs were not tied up, they had beautiful fur. They had no master and were free to be themselves.

Inuit people were given numbers. Since people had to be numbered and dog teams had to be tied, I want you to understand what a painful thing this was. This was a time of change, with no turning back.

I grew up with my father's dog team. I knew them, lived with them. When I saw that dog team tied, they were crouching and filthy. I didn't want to believe it. Years later, when I realized that we had access to the press and newspapers, I wanted an official day declared for the dogs.

In the communities, children have been mauled by dogs, my husband's face was scarred, and I didn't want to love the dogs any more - I worked on loving the dogs less.

When the schools came, a lot of Inuit gave up their power to the education system and left their own people behind. Inuit were very influenced by other people, and there has been a loss of many of our traditions. Education

itself is good, if it has a use, but the education system changed so much.

When we were living a lifestyle not really ours, many things were destroyed. Skidoos and speed destroyed dog teams. Dogs had to be tied and the RCMP shot loose dogs. A dog team cannot function without the lead dog.

Houses were introduced and with them many diseases. At one point a hundred people left with TB. Many of the elders who left to go to hospitals died of malnutrition because they could not digest southern food.

Traditionally, people spent the months of August and September away, making preparations for winter clothing. When this was no longer done, many people froze because they were without adequate clothing when their skidoos broke down. A lot of people also fell into water and drowned: on skidoo, they were travelling too fast, not judging distances the same way as with dogs. For me, these things were very heavy in my head - I did not realize what was happening to me.

We had a lot of hope in the education system. Then, I heard about suicide. From that point on, about once a month I heard about someone killing themselves. This went on for years.

Someone wrote a song about the pressure of getting an education in order to get a job, but then learning that there are no jobs anyway.

I remember father, he was his own master and he taught us to stand on our own feet. It was a different life then. You may be aware that the fur bearing animals are no longer able to provide for us. Fur can be warm, even when it is wet. Southern clothing must be layered until one cannot move. When you take proper care with the fur and when the clothing is designed properly, you can use it for a long time.

Many of the traditions are returning. There is a deep longing among young people, a search for survival, a search for roots.

I have spent many hours thinking about those who have taken their own lives. I have struggled for ideas to help people deal with the issue of suicide, gone to many meetings, talked to psychologists and other specialists. There are barriers in terms of policies.



Also, I was starting to think of things to do to change the situation, turn it around and bring us back to happiness. We are stuck in sadness.

I have felt the heaviness of the issues. Many women have a constant fear in their hearts that it would be one of their children who would commit suicide.

One of the contributing factors is relationships splitting up. It is not the only reason, but it contributes to the problem.

The rates of suicide are too high. One woman lost two children in this way -- that is too much. There was no note, people do not know the reason. To wait for solutions will be too late.

There have been many social changes in our time. I had one of my favourite children in the 1970s. She was so spoiled her teeth rotted. I loved her deeply. A favourite Inuit food before the government regulations was goose. Now we can get geese only in the spring. We spent 25 years with the RCMP regulations and we could not break the laws. We spent a lot of time being hungry for Inuit food.

I remember being given a goose. I gave the most delicious part, the thigh, to my daughter, my favourite child. She saw me giving her the most delicious part and she said, "Mom, I don't want to eat a little bird." I didn't understand this and it was very painful to me that she did not understand what I was offering.

I joined an organization to change the regulations, but I didn't realize it was an international law, not a Canadian one.

In Arviat, the birds gather in the fall. I lived close to the RCMP station and the birds used to run to my house when children chased them. If my door was open, the small birds practically flew in! They ran to my house because it was close to the RCMP.

There was a lot of pain and a lot of joy in our lives. One of my daughters is quite educated. One day I asked her to go fishing with us and she took a long time to decide. If it was me, I would have said yes right away. I asked her what was wrong. She said she didn't want to see a fish dying. I was in shock. I would never have thought this way.

As a mother, I am very sensitive to the changes taking place.

Previously, I spent a lot of energy encouraging my children to go to school, to get an education. One son didn't want to go to school and he was very angry. Traditionally, we would not have approved of people spending time laying around. There was too much work involved in just surviving for us to value games or spend time doing nothing. When it was time for work, my son wanted to play games. People going through the education system are lost to their parents; parents no longer understand them.

I also saw my daughter pregnant, looking in books for information instead of asking me, one who knows.

There is a lot of misunderstanding. Older people lost their voices as younger people told them they don't know...

I want you to know, I am proud to come here and show through our arts and crafts how life was. There are many beautiful things we left behind because we did not understand the value of them. Many things we have lost, including our elders. Partly because we have no tradition of writing things down, these things were lost. Through the Inuit Cultural Institute and the Inuit Tapirisat, we are beginning to be proud of who we are.

As a child, I was very unhappy with my gender. I come from a family of many males. But today I am proud for we can do so many strong and beautiful things. For many years I was unhappy because I could not go hunting. Today I can go hunting, even by myself.

Through art we can preserve the knowledge of the past. We can remember what things were originally called in Inuktitut - naming things is important. Art is a way of preserving knowledge.

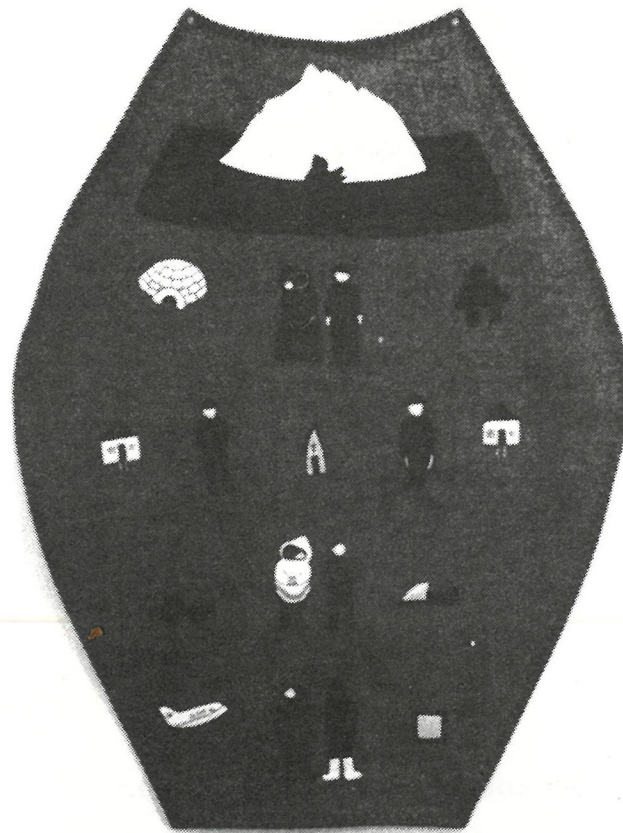
Profiles

Jeannie Ziska Rankin Inlet, Northwest Territories

In the early years, Pangnirtung was home to only four Inuit families, yet it had an RCMP, a Hudson Bay store, a doctor, and even a hospital. From 1920 until 1971, people from all over the Baffin region came to Pangnirtung for hospital care. Jeannie was born at a camp just outside of town and her family moved into the community when she was two years old. She lived there until she was twenty-four when she moved with her husband to Broughton Island, then Iqaluit. For the past fifteen years she has lived in Rankin Inlet with her husband and daughter.

Now that her daughter is an adult, Jeannie has time to devote to work. She loves to sew and she makes beautiful wall hangings and parkas. She is also enthusiastic about the many opportunities available at the Banff Centre to learn new skills - like ceramics and silkscreening. After spending many hours in the silkscreen workshop, Jeannie returns to Rankin having mastered this new medium.

The first piece of work Jeannie produced in her studio at the Banff Centre was a wall hanging telling the story of Qallunaat coming to the north - first the whalers, then the RCMP and missionaries, and finally southern workers and bureaucrats. At each stage, Qallunaat and Inuit married and produced mixed children. At the very top of the wall hanging, an iceberg sits as a reminder that problems are much larger and deeper than what one sees.



Dinah Andersen Goose Bay, Labrador

Dinah was born in OKaK Bay, north of Nain. Her family was a part of the 1956 resettlement which resulted in her being raised by her grandparents in Makkovik. Dinah remembers how the resettlement led to a generation of young people attending school in English and how they were discouraged from speaking Inuktitut. Her grandmother was advised by the church to speak English at home so that the children would do better in school. Today, Dinah suffers from the loss of her mother tongue, and this loss becomes more evident to her when she is with Inuit from other regions where Inuktitut still thrives.

During her residency at Banff, Dinah decided to create a body of work relating to her early experiences. The theme is "assimilation". She felt it was only appropriate to begin in soapstone - the "traditional" Inuit medium. The idea was to progress through time into a more westernized art using more westernized materials - a progression in itself. Dinah created a set of six pieces using wood, soapstone, sinew, line, fur, beads, cotton, and rope. These pieces deal with the impact of southern culture on Inuit in Labrador from the 1500s to the present.

Dinah's work is both impressionistic and realistic, and she has a background which includes formal art training as well as practical experience. Dinah spent a year at the residential school in North West River but she found it difficult being away from home from September to June. During her first summer back in Makkovik, she looked for a job so that she wouldn't have to return to school. A series of jobs kept her busy over the next few years - cooking for teachers, helping the cook at the hospital, working as a clerk in the craft centre and later at the government store. During this time, her grandmother taught her how to make traditional clothing and skin boots as well as crafts.

After her grandparents died, Dinah decided to return to school. In Goose Bay, she finished grade 11 and then she began the Labrador Teacher Education Program through extension courses offered in Hopedale. This led to an interest in continuing her education, and Dinah ended up studying art history at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. In the fall of 1985, she began studying at the University of Ottawa and she graduated in 1988 with a B.A. (concentration in Fine Arts). Dinah continued her specialized studies in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at the University of Ottawa and is now one course short of graduating from this program. Dinah's thoughts on Banff: "It's an incredible opportunity. There is so much to learn and the facilities here are first rate."

Leah Pootogook
Pond Inlet, Northwest Territories

Leah was born in an outpost camp near Pond Inlet. She remembers going by dog team to visit relatives in Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay and going by foot with her younger brothers to look for caribou. Leah had a very traditional childhood and at this stage in her life, it is something she appreciates very much. During the past few years, Leah has been relearning many of the traditional skills.

At the symposium on Art and Social Change, Leah said:
"I am an Inuk. I don't know how to drum, and I don't know how to sing "a ya ya", but I am an Inuk woman. I am learning the traditional skills of an Inuk woman. I sew kamiks of sealskin and caribou leg. I am a woman." As Leah spoke, her strong sense of herself and the feeling that she knows deep inside who she truly is reverberated throughout the room.

Leah wants other women to know that there is lots to learn at the Banff Centre and she hopes others will have an opportunity to come. The mountains at Banff remind her of home and the people *"seen like Inuit'- they are not strangers but open to us."*

Leah's thoughts on the changing role of women: *"In 1993, the work of Inuit women is completely different. I can take a skidoo apart, repair it and put it back together. I can do things not allowed in the past."*

... and on the art of ceramics (making pottery): *"When I go south, I see a lot of things and wonder who made them. I now know how they are made - it is important to know that human beings make these things. We can do this at home."*

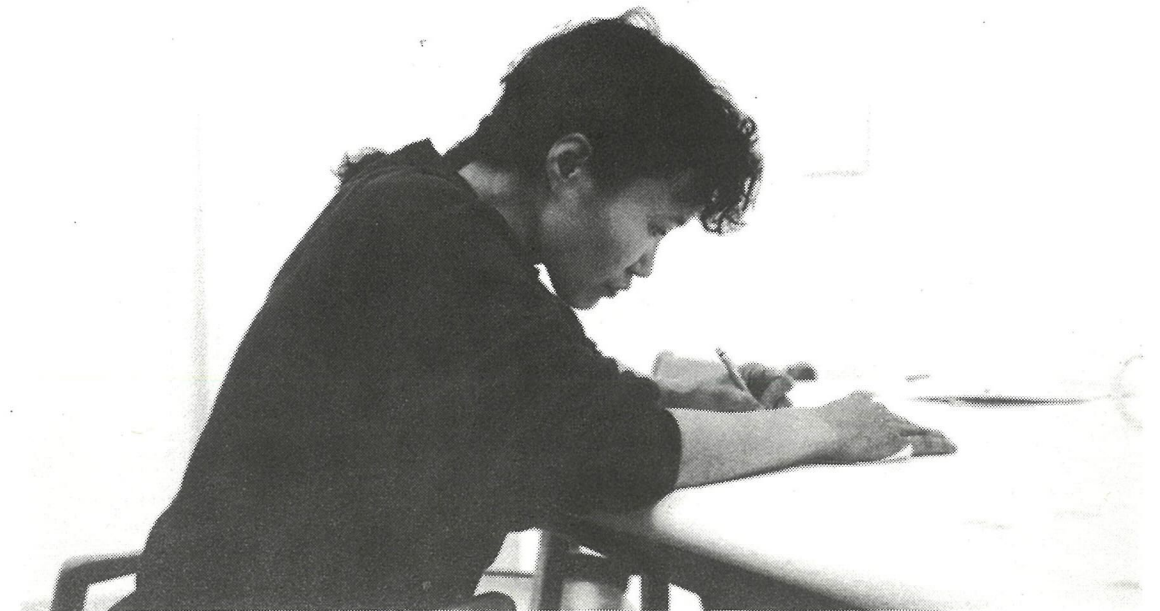


Leah made a wall hanging which she presented to Pauktuutit to show her appreciation for the opportunity to go to Banff. It is shown here behind delegates at Pauktuutit's 1993 Annual General Meeting in Goose Bay, Labrador.

Oqqi Taqtu
Arctic Bay, Northwest Territories

Oqqi was born at Sanford Fiord, between Pond Inlet and Clyde River, and she now lives in Arctic Bay. She is the youngest of five brothers and three sisters. Oqqi started going to school in Clyde River when she was nine years old. She remembers loving school because there was so much to learn. This enthusiasm for learning is still with her today and it was very much in evidence at the Banff Centre. Oqqi learned how to develop and print her own photographs and she became so good at it that she is trying to set up a darkroom at home in Arctic Bay. Preparations are also being made for a special exhibition of the photographs Oqqi took while she was at Banff.

Oqqi is a very quick learner - her first watercolour painting is so good that it is hard to believe she had never used paints before. Oqqi is a disciplined artist, working long hours with few breaks. Once she begins a project, she works at it consistently until it is completed and then, quickly, she moves on to something new. Pauktuutit wishes her the very best of luck as she pursues her artist career.



Myrah Kukiiyaut Arngna'naaq
Baker Lake, Northwest Territories

Myrah is a well known Baker Lake artist. She tells stories on paper using bright colours and shapes - some are recognizable while others are the creatures of myth or dreams. In one picture, three men struggle over a knife: one man is going to hurt himself and the others are trying to stop him. An RCMP officer is off to the side watching ineffectively. A social worker sits in the background on the phone, again ineffective in the face of a life and death struggle.

The artist, like her work, is unique. She is capable of communicating with a wide range of people at an almost intuitive level - it is communication which reaches beyond verbal language. Myrah does not speak English and she has difficulty hearing, so conversation can be difficult for her even in Inuktitut. Yet, she is able to reach people in a way which most of us cannot even dream of doing. Through facial expressions and movement, Myrah tells stories that everyone understands, but her skill goes beyond the ability to make herself understood without words: Myrah touches the emotions of people she come into contact with. Her laughter is always accompanied by the laughter of others. Her curiosity and her eagerness to learn is ageless. She watches, thinks, shows and tells and all around her people listen and respond.

Myrah is reworking a beaded amauti originally made by her grandmother. Susan Aglukark suggests making this the beginning of a story about what life used to be like and how the experiences of elders can still be passed to the next generation. The theme is change. The outcome is still not known.



Susan Aglukark

Everyone knows Susan Aglukark. She joined the women at Banff for six weeks and spent much of her time in the Music-Theatre Program perfecting her near-perfect voice and participating in acting and movement classes. Susan worked very hard, but she still found time for quiet conversations and to work on drawings in the studio she shared with Myrah Arngna'naaq.

Susan's comments on her experiences at the Banff Centre:

"The time spent at the Banff School of Fine Arts was definitely an eye-opener. I have come to realize and understand and have greater faith in my ability to conquer my goals, but only through realizing and accepting the fact that I can do what my heart decides I can do. That time at the Banff School of Fine Arts really enforced in me the idea that I am my own greatest hindrance and that nothing and no-one on earth knows my dreams and goals and aspirations. Only I can decide what I can or cannot accomplish.

For this reason, I challenge youth and anyone who dares to dream (as elder Myrah Arngna'naaq did) to take that dream one step further, decide exactly what is hindering you from accomplishing your goals. You will realize, as I did, that really you are stopping you. This realization will help you to open other doors and give you a new sense of freedom."

Susan Aglukark is one of six Canadian singers and songwriters featured in a Canada Day special of Wayne Rostad's show "On the Road". Filming took place in Rankin Inlet in March. The show will be aired on CBC television at 8 pm on July 1st.

Vickie Grey
Kuujjuaq, Quebec

Vickie arrived in Banff for the second half of the ten week program, and she set to work immediately. During a very short period of time, she produced three carvings and numerous drawings and then went on to learn silkscreening and jewellery-making. She also made prints on T-shirts, sweatshirts, paper and silk scarves.

Vickie has plans to open a studio in Kuujjuaq and she believes she will do quite well with the thousands of tourists passing through each summer. Meanwhile, she is working at home and doing her carving in an outdoor shack. Good luck, Vickie.



photo credit: Oqqi Taqtu

A letter from the Banff Centre of the Arts:

February 18, 1993

To the women in Pauktuutit,

Ingrid Bachmann, Jack Butler and I would like to tell you how much we have enjoyed working with Pauktuutit and with the women who are a part of our residency at this very moment. We have learned a lot and hope that we have been able to give the women something in return.

We also hope this is the beginning of more opportunities to work with Inuit women - and men. We would like you to share this wish with people in your communities. If anyone would like to find out how she or he can come to the Banff Centre to make work, we would be happy to talk to them. Here are our phone numbers:

Ingrid Bachmann (403) 762-6401
Jack Butler (403) 762-6114
Lorne Falk (403) 762-6302

Sincerely,

Lorne Falk, Program Director
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