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Building Nunavut Together
Nunavut Inuqatigiingniq
Bâtir la Nunavut ensemble

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Department of Family Services
Inuliryikkut
Ministère des services à la famille

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Upinnaqtuq Award

My name is Marianne Emond, and I am a Community Social Services Worker in the community of Kinngait. I have been in this position since June 2020 and in this time, have met some remarkable young people. The community is very dynamic and there is a lot of artistic and athletic talent amongst this population of youth. However, one youth has been extremely remarkable.

The arena in Kinngait was unable to open this year due to a variety of reason such as mechanical and staffing issues. This was a huge disappointment to the children in the community and a lot of them spoke about missing seeing their friends, playing hockey, and going skating with them. Consequently, this lack of distraction led to an increase amounts of negative behaviours in the community. Collaterals and other professionals in the community thought this was a shame, but no one did anything to change or improve the situation.

Andy Saagiaqtu and his friends saw this issue and took the initiative to shovel off a small lake behind the high school in the community. They went out with shovels and tracked their progress on the community Facebook group. Andy asked for volunteers to go help them to make it go faster, however, was not discouraged, or frustrated when little to no people showed up. He kept shovelling until he had cleared off a decent sized iced rink. Eventually, the Hamlet and other members of the community got involved and went to continue the job that Andy and his friends had started by using heavy equipment, making the ice rink even bigger.

Through all of this, Andy never asked for any recognition and was constantly praising the other members of the community that went to help after he initiated this amazing project. Additionally, Andy is one of the Youth Leaders for the Huskie's Boy's Group at the Elementary School and was asked to join this by one of his former teacher's as he exhibited this type of leadership at such a young age.

I believe it would be very important to recognize Andy and his efforts as this initiative and leadership is something that should not go unnoticed. While he is very humble and is not accepting the praise from community members, his leadership should be encouraged in hopes to inspire younger children and youth to model Andy's community work. While his leadership for the ice rink is short-term and until the winter season is over, his volunteer hours with the Huskie's group will carry on throughout the young boys who are partaking.

Andy's leadership brought so much joy to the children and parents of the community. The ice rink is always full of happy children. Additionally, this initiative has inspired another community member to create an ice rink elsewhere, making one accessible to children and youth on both sides of the community.

I am asking the Board to truly consider Andy – Kinngait is desperate for leaders like Andy, and I believe that being recognized would inspire others to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any additional questions, I can be reached at 867-897-3637.

Best,

Marianne Emond, CSSW – Kinngait