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For Immediate Release

President extends condolences on passing of respected elder, accomplished musician and artist

On behalf of the Nunatsiavut Government and Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, President Johannes Lampe today extended his heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of respected Makkovik elder Gerald Mitchell, who passed away Thursday at the Labrador Health Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. He was 86.

Born on January 17, 1937, Mr. Mitchell was one of five children to Albert and Lillian Mitchell. He attended boarding school in Makkovik before moving to Happy Valley-Goose Bay in 1954 to look for work at the military base. He worked as a cook's helper and a house painter and later as a sign painter.

Having gained some popularity as a singer, Mr. Mitchell was often asked to perform at schools and concerts. In 1964, he was invited to do a live performance on CBC radio in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and would eventually become a regular guest as "The Labrador Balladeer". It was around this time when he began to draw and take serious interest in visual arts. He acquired training as a visual artist at Sheridan College in Ontario before moving to St. John's to take on a position at a print shop. During the 1970s-80s he did drawings for *Them Days* magazine, and much of his artwork has been featured on calendars, children's coloring books and other publications.

Mr. Mitchell returned to Makkovik every summer, from 1987-1994, to work at the community's fish plant. He took up permanent residence in the community in 1994 until recent years when he moved to Harbourview Manor, a personal care home in Mary's Harbour on Labrador's south coast.

A recipient of the Stompin' Tom Connors Award from East Coast Music Awards and the Unsung Hero Award of MusicNL in 2010, as a recording artist, composer and performer, Mr. Mitchell inspired many succeeding Labrador artists and gained the respect and admiration of many within the province's music industry.

"Mr. Mitchell was very well respected – as an artist, musician, songwriter and as a person," says President Lampe. "He touched many people over the years through his creative talents, and left an indelible mark on Labrador's rich cultural identity. His legacy will live on through his drawings, paintings, songs and music for many years to come."

Media Contact:
Bert Pomeroy
Director of Communications
(709) 896-8582