



Context

Between 2009 and 2011, the level of crime recorded in Nunavik increased by 29%. Since 2008, the number of criminal cases heard by the itinerant court has jumped 119%. Despite adjustments and improvements made by police, the itinerant court and correctional services, crimes and violence in the region are having unacceptable impacts on the well-being of residents as a whole and are closely associated with alcohol and drug abuse. Almost 80% of crimes in the region are committed while the offenders are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

A Few of the Challenges

For many years, police, justice and correctional services, health and social services, education and employment services, and other local initiatives have tried to respond each in their own way to the worsening problem of alcohol and drug abuse and crime. The results of this work have clearly not re-established a sense of well-being, safety and social peace in the region.

Alcohol and drug abuse, and the crime it contributes to, continues to increase mainly because of a lack of specialized, adapted and coordinated resources and services.

The justice system is currently designed to punish offenders and to deter potential offenders most often through sentences/punishment. Notwithstanding, it is well documented that sentences/punishment are not effective deterrents for people struggling with alcoholism or drug addiction.

Police, the itinerant court and correctional services alone can not solve the problem of crime and violence in Nunavik. It is now time to explore alternative approaches to reconstruct social regulation in the region.

Solutions and Priorities

The Working Group on Justice in Nunavik was created in 2008 and includes representation from the Makivik Corporation, the Kativik Regional Government, and the Québec-government departments of justice and public security. It has a mandate to analyze justice-related issues and propose solutions and guidelines to the problems encountered in the delivery of justice and correctional services.

In 2011, the Working Group on Justice in Nunavik in particular recommended implementation of the project described in *Reconstructing Social Regulation in Inuit Communities: A Field for Action and Public Policy*. This recommendation is being followed up under the leadership of the Regional Partnership Committee.

Through the mobilization of existing regional and local resources the Reconstructing Social Regulation project aims to improve the way service stakeholders and families work together to deal with behaviour that leads to crime. This approach combines and balances public health services with traditional policing,

justice and correctional services. It is a new and more adapted approach that will obviously require a strong partnership with numerous Québec government departments and agencies.

The Reconstructing Social Regulation project is intended to help lower alcohol and drug abuse, crime and consequently the number of incarcerated Nunavimmiut.

The main activities under the Reconstructing Social Regulation project are to be:

- Structured, adapted and coordinated awareness and prevention programs for the whole region.
- A mobile, specialized intervention team (police officers and public health workers) to respond at the place of occurrences, assessing the situations, deciding on the best course of action (such as sending the offender to a sobering-up centre or the police station) and beginning the delivery of services immediately.
- A modern community residential and treatment centre staffed with well-trained and specialized resources.
- Family or community help centres to improve coordination between formal and informal resources.

The Working Group on Justice in Nunavik has also recommended a number of improvements to the delivery of justice and correctional services in the region. These recommendations include:

- Permanent justice services for the Hudson coast based in Puvirnituq, similar to the services already delivered on the Ungava coast (court clerk, legal aid, criminal and penal prosecuting attorneys).
- Trials before a specialized and permanent court, including a judge assigned permanently to Nunavik.
- Court appearances for offenders through videoconferencing.
- Appearances before local justice committees for some lesser crimes, where available.
- Improved funding for local justice committees.
- Regarding incarceration:
 - Hold all Inuit detainees in the same provincial detention centre.
 - Deliver quality addiction prevention and treatment programs, and social reintegration programs.
 - Implement a direct airlift between Nunavik and detention centres in the south.

Discussion

Direct and rapid access to adapted justice and public health services in the region can help to improve the quality of life of Nunavimmiut, and contribute to resolving some of the more important challenges facing the communities, such as increasing crime, school dropout, and various health issues. All Nunavimmiut must be part of the solution.

