

Inuit Women Working in the Nunavik Justice System: A Relational Perspective on Justice

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Volume 46, numéro 1, 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1096501ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1096501ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones (CIÉRA)

ISSN

0701-1008 (imprimé)

1708-5268 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Hervé, C. & Laneuville, P. (2022). Inuit Women Working in the Nunavik Justice System: A Relational Perspective on Justice. *Études Inuit Studies*, 46(1), 63–83. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1096501ar>

Résumé de l'article

La littérature concernant les rapports des femmes inuit avec la justice les a jusqu'à présent dépeintes essentiellement comme des victimes de divers types de violence ayant besoin d'aide. Cependant, la justice ne les concerne pas seulement en tant que victimes, délinquantes ou membres de la famille affectés. Aujourd'hui, nombre d'entre elles travaillent dans ce domaine en tant qu'actrices cruciales pour leur communauté, apportant un soutien aux personnes en difficulté et les aidant à s'orienter dans une structure complexe. Nous soulignons ici le rôle important que jouent aujourd'hui les femmes inuit du Nunavik dans le maintien de l'harmonie communautaire. Nous présentons également leur point de vue sur le système judiciaire et esquissons ce à quoi pourrait ressembler un système de justice inuit aujourd'hui. À cette fin, nous présentons les résultats d'un projet de recherche pour lequel nous avons mobilisé une méthodologie participative, une approche ontologique, ainsi que des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Nos résultats suggèrent que la justice au Nunavik n'est pas simplement une institution légale et devrait être définie de manière beaucoup plus large. Elle devrait incorporer les principes moraux de la responsabilité sociale et de l'interdépendance.

Inuit Women Working in the Nunavik Justice System: A Relational Perspective on Justice

Caroline Hervéⁱ and Pascale Laneuvilleⁱⁱ

ABSTRACT

The literature on how Inuit women relate to justice has thus far portrayed them largely as victims of various types of violence and in need of assistance. However, justice does not concern them only as victims, offenders, or affected family members, as many of them work in this field as crucial actors for their communities, providing people in difficulty with support and helping them navigate a complex structure. This article emphasizes the important role of Nunavik Inuit women today in maintaining community harmony. We also explore their views on the justice system and outline what an Inuit system of justice could look like today. Our research project used a participatory methodology, an ontological approach, and both qualitative and quantitative methods. Our results suggest that Nunavik justice is not simply a legal institution and should therefore be defined much more broadly and incorporate the moral principles of social responsibility and interdependence.

KEYWORDS

Inuit, women, justice, nunavik, social harmony, ontology, relationality

RÉSUMÉ

Les femmes inuit œuvrant au sein du système de justice au Nunavik. Une perspective relationnelle de la justice

La littérature concernant les rapports des femmes inuit avec la justice les a jusqu'à présent dépeintes essentiellement comme des victimes de divers types de violence ayant besoin d'aide. Cependant, la justice ne les concerne pas seulement en tant que victimes, délinquantes ou membres de la famille affectés. Aujourd'hui, nombre d'entre elles travaillent dans ce domaine en tant qu'actrices cruciales pour leur communauté, apportant un soutien aux personnes en difficulté et les aidant à s'orienter dans une structure complexe. Nous soulignons ici le rôle important que jouent aujourd'hui les femmes inuit du Nunavik dans le maintien de l'harmonie

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communautaire. Nous présentons également leur point de vue sur le système judiciaire et esquissons ce à quoi pourrait ressembler un système de justice inuit aujourd'hui. À cette fin, nous présentons les résultats d'un projet de recherche pour lequel nous avons mobilisé une méthodologie participative, une approche ontologique, ainsi que des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Nos résultats suggèrent que la justice au Nunavik n'est pas simplement une institution légale et devrait être définie de manière beaucoup plus large. Elle devrait incorporer les principes moraux de la responsabilité sociale et de l'interdépendance.

MOTS-CLÉS

Inuit, femmes, justice, Nunavik, harmonie sociale, ontologie, relationalité

The literature on how Inuit women relate to justice¹ largely portrays them as being victims of different types of violence and in need of assistance. However, justice does not concern them only as victims, offenders, or affected family members; today, many of them work in this field as court interpreters, victim support agents, community reintegration officers, and justice committee members. As intermediaries between the Canadian justice system and the members of their communities, Inuit women play a crucial supportive role for people in difficulty by listening to their tragic stories and by helping them navigate their way through a complex structure. Their positions in the criminal justice system, and their experiences with it, have also enabled them to observe it from the inside. In this article, we highlight the important—and prevalent—role of Nunavik Inuit women today in maintaining community harmony. We also examine their views on the justice system and outline what an Inuit system of justice could look like today.

Traditional Inuit justice practices have been well documented, particularly by legal anthropologists who have analyzed the mechanisms of conflict resolution in pre-sedentary Inuit societies (Briggs 2000; König 1923-24, 1927-29; Hoebel 1941, 1954; Pospisil 1964; Rouland 1978, 1979; Steenhoven 1959, 1962). Other authors have subsequently looked at Inuit perspectives on law (Koperqualuk 2015; Oosten et al. 2001) or the dynamics of social order and governance in Inuit communities (Damas 1963; Hervé 2015; Rasing 2017). Although we do find scattered evidence of their importance across Inuit societies, little has been written on the specific place and role of women in maintaining social order. Karla Williamson (2006)

1. In this paper, we use the term “justice” to encompass all institutions, services, and programs that are part of the justice system or related to it for the purpose of maintaining social peace in Nunavik.

argues that women exerted greater social control than did men while using it more subtly. Koperqualuk (2015) states that the role of counsellor was almost exclusively reserved for women. A woman could even be brought from another community if deemed the most competent person to address a complex situation because of her experience and knowledge. According to accounts of Inuit women political leaders collected by McComber and Partridge (2010), women were generally more resilient than men and thus better able to handle crisis situations. As for Inuit women today, only a few texts describe their role and involvement in dispensing justice, either within the criminal justice system or through community-based justice structures (Crnkovich and Addario 2000; Hervé 2014; Hervé et al. 2019; Jaccoud 1992; Laneville 2017; McComber and Partridge 2010; Reimer 1996). Since the early 2000s, despite a growing number of studies on women's experiences with the criminal justice system, Inuit women, alongside other Indigenous women, have been portrayed mainly as victims (Brassard 2005; Comité consultatif 2015; Crnkovich and Addario 2000; Jaccoud 2013; Laneville 2015, 2017; Makivik Corporation 2013; Reimer 1996). By moving away from a focus on women's vulnerable position in crime and justice, we hope to give them a voice and show rather their active and positive role in their communities.

As with many other anthropological studies, the aim here is to help the reader see and hear the diversity of human experiences and ways of being. This form of engaged anthropology could be defined as “philosophy with the people in” (Ingold 2018). Consequently, this article is not limited solely to documenting the role and place of women in justice. Its aim is also to shed light on how Inuit women in particular view justice. We thus deliberately diverge from legal anthropology, which has been very prolific on the Inuit case, and which, apart from a few studies, has described how Inuit societies function from the rigid and ethnocentric standpoint of a legal system. Instead, we use an ontological approach, with a view that takes into account the different ways of “being in the world” (ontologies), the encounters between these ways, and their cohabitation (Ingold 2000). Specifically, we delve into relational anthropology, following many Indigenous scholars who consider that relationships are at the center of Indigenous ontology and epistemology (Kovach 2009; Mertens, Cram, and Chilisa 2013; Wilson 2008). In other words, we examine the importance Inuit place on the intrinsic quality of the relationships they maintain with each other, with their environment, and with the visible and invisible world around them.

This article presents the results of a research project carried out in 2018 by the Sentinel North Research Chair on Relations with Inuit Societies. The project was done in conjunction with the main justice-related organizations of Nunavik, namely, Makivik Corporation and its Justice Program, and the Legal, Socio-Judicial, and Municipal Management Department of the Kativik

Regional Government. It developed out of collaborations and discussions with these regional organizations during previous projects carried out by the research team members while working for Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik. These projects led us to two main observations, namely, the large number of women in justice-related services in Nunavik and their need to meet, interact, and empower themselves.

Methodology

Our project had three main goals: better understand women's place and role in Nunavik's justice services; learn about women's experiences, perspectives, and challenges in dealing with Nunavik's current justice system; and promote their role and knowledge to improve justice and social harmony. It consisted of four activities: a literature review, a survey, a knowledge building workshop, and the gathering of video testimonies.²

The workshop ran from December 11 to 13, 2018 at the Adult Education Centre in Puvirnituk. Participants were women who had justice-related employment in Nunavik: court interpreters, justice committee members, and agents from the Sapummijit Crime Victim Assistance Centre. They exchanged personal experiences in a safe space that enabled them to become aware of their importance, share their knowledge, and thus empower each other. During the workshop, the participants were asked to speak about their experiences and have their testimony filmed for use as an awareness and educational tool to promote their role in Nunavik's justice system and voice their concerns about this system. By filming these testimonies, we were able to share meaningful messages with people beyond the workshop. The video testimonies of six women are now available on Isuma.tv.³ The phone/email survey was conducted with justice-related employers from January to July 2019 by means of a questionnaire. We gathered both qualitative and quantitative data on Inuit women in justice-related jobs in Nunavik. The goal was to draw a statistical portrait and compare these women with Inuit men occupying the same type of employment.

Our methodology was participatory. We engaged with Nunavik regional organizations and Inuit women at various stages of the research. Our partners contributed to the project by sharing their needs and priorities, recruiting research participants, giving access to specific information, and responding to the survey. Two women, Siasi Smiler Irqumia and Niali Aliqu,

2. For more on this project, go to Sentinel North Research Chair on Relations with Inuit Societies (<https://www.relations-inuit.chaire.ulaval.ca/femmes-inuit-justice-et-harmonie-sociale>).

3. www.isuma.tv/chaire-sur-les-relations-avec-les-soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9s-inuit/inuit-women-who-work-in-nunavik-justice-services.

assisted the workshop by designing its agenda with us and facilitating the three-day discussion in Inuktitut. They also helped the research team analyze the results by reading and commenting the first report following the workshop (Hervé et al. 2019). Mélodie Duplessie worked on the translation of the testimonies and supported the video editing. Finally, eight other Inuit women were involved as workshop participants.

Recognized as a scientific paradigm (Heron and Reason 1997), “participatory research is based on the conviction that knowledge is never an object separate from the person, but rather is inscribed in its relationship with the person and his or her immediate experience of the circumstances in which the relationship occurs” (liberal translation, Bourassa et al. 2007, 1-2). Throughout the project, building good relationships and building on the participants’ abilities were seen as key actions toward producing new knowledge. This is consistent with the principles of reciprocity and empowerment at the core of the participatory approach (Bourassa et al. 2007; Garakani 2014; Morris 2016; St-Arnaud 2003). Although researchers have applied participatory research principles in a wide variety of ways (MacDonald 2012), we sought here to follow two specific guidelines: (1) question our theoretical assumptions about what justice means while making room for participants’ perspectives and experiences and (2) ensure that the participants gain something useful from their participation, both personally and community-wise.

Portrait of Inuit Women Who Work in the Nunavik Justice System⁴

Our survey confirmed that Inuit women of all ages are more highly represented than are Inuit men in justice-related employment in Nunavik, regardless of job type or employer. We identified a total of 19 job titles held by Inuit in justice-related jobs in Nunavik. The titles were all reserved exclusively for Inuit people, with the exception of the position of police officer. The jobs were in seven different organizations: (1) Native Para-Judicial Services of Québec (SPAQ); (2) Québec Department of Justice; (3) Tulattavik Health Centre; (4) Inuulitsivik Health Centre; (5) Kativik Regional Government (KRG); (6) Makivik Corporation; and (7) Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF).⁵ The last five organizations are Nunavik regional organizations that manage their own justice programs. The two health centres are responsible for youth protection services (DYP). The Legal, Socio-Judicial, and Municipal Management Department of the KRG administers the Crime Victim’s Support Centre (regionally called Sapummijit)

4. For more details on this section, readers can consult Laneuville 2019.

5. In 2021, this police force was renamed Nunavik Police Service (NPS).

and the Community Reintegration Program. The Makivik Justice Program administers the local justice committees and inmate services.⁶ With the exception of interpreters hired by the Department of Justice for the Itinerant Court, Inuit employees were absent from programs administered by the provincial or federal governments, such as correctional, parole, and legal services, and the Criminal and Penal Division of the Court of Québec. A major reason for this absence was the requirement to have a degree to work in such positions. For this same reason, Nunavik regional organizations had no Inuit women in positions requiring a law degree, such as legal counsel for Makivik or the KRG.

Under the 19 job titles held by Inuit employees in justice-related employment, we found women in 124 of the 149 Inuit-held positions.⁷ Women thus held 83% of these positions in 2019. Moreover, they exclusively held 14 of the job titles. Women were least represented in the police services, followed by the justice committees.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of women by job title and identifies which positions were clerical (shaded rows) and which were fieldwork (intervention work, customer service or litigant support work). In 2019, 77% of these women were doing intervention work, and 23% of them office work. Very few men held clerical positions, as 93% of these were held by women. While the majority of the titles corresponded to regular positions (14 out of 19), most women (56%) were not regular employees; they either had casual jobs (as in the case of justice committee members or cell guards), worked on contract, or were self-employed (court interpreters). Finally, fieldwork was more often in the form of casual employment over clerical work.

6. Since 2020, Makivik is responsible for court services in the Nunavik region.

7. For this analysis, we did not count the vacant positions.

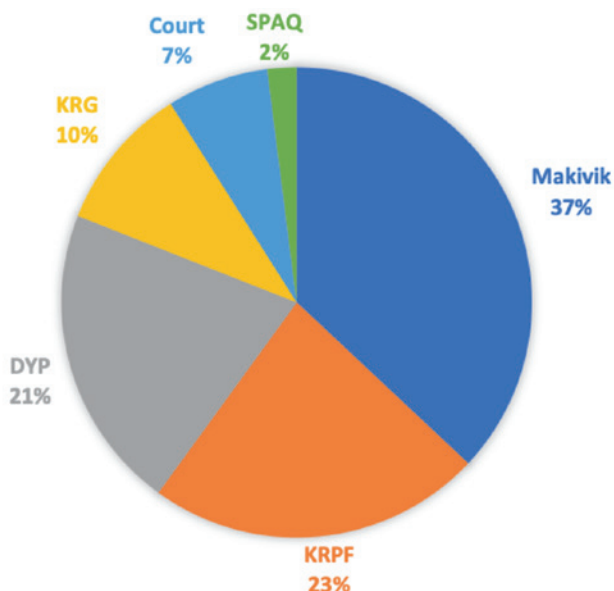
Table 1. Representation of Inuit Women in Justice-Related Jobs in Nunavik

Organizations	Services	Job Titles	No. of Women	% of Women
SPAQ	Court work	Court worker	2	100%
Québec Justice	Itinerant Court	Office clerk	1	100%
		Court interpreter	8 out of 9	89%
Health Centres	DYP	Administrative officer	7	100%
		Administrative technician	1	100%
		Social assistant	16	100%
		Community worker	2	100%
KRG	Socio-judicial	Administrative and financial advisor	2	100%
		Crime victim support agent	7	100%
		Community reintegration officer	4	100%
Makivik	Justice programs	Administrative assistant	1	100%
		Development officer	1	100%
		Justice committee coordinator	7 out of 9	78%
		Justice committee member	35 out of 48	73%
		Inmate liaison officer	2	100%
KRPF	Police services	Administrative assistant	4	100%
		Administrative technician	4	100%
		Police officer	1 out of 2	50%
		Cell guard	19 out of 27	70%

SPAQ (Native Para-Judicial Services of Québec), DYP (Director of Youth Protection), KRG (Kativik Regional Government), KRPF (Kativik Regional Police Force).

Chart 1 shows the percentage distribution of the 124 Inuit women hired by the seven organizations, with the Makivik Justice Program ranking highest with 37%, followed by the KRPF with 28%.

Chart 1. Percentage distribution of female employees in justice-related employment according to their employers.

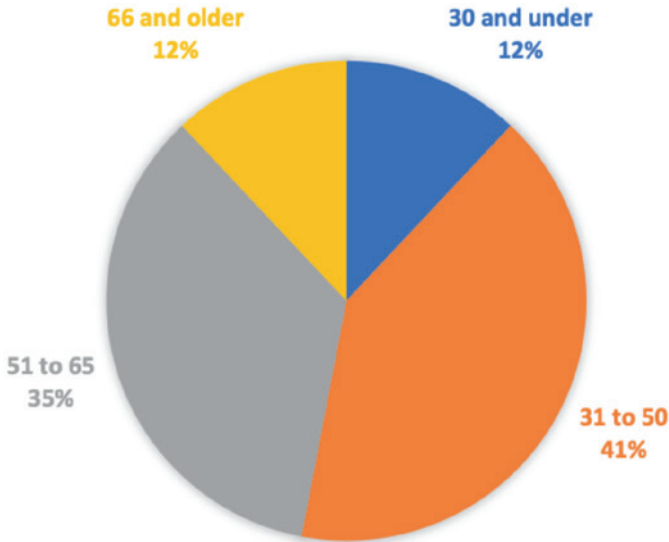


SPAQ (Native Para-Judicial Services of Québec), KRPF (Kativik Regional Police Force), DYP (Director of Youth Protection), KRG (Kativik Regional Government).

At the time of the survey, 33% of the female justice-related employees travelled regularly for their work (a few times a year, or monthly). Specifically, 83 of them did not travel at all or very rarely for work, 10 travelled a few times a year, and 31 travelled monthly. Office workers tended to travel more than did fieldworkers.

If we take the 124 employees as a whole, except for cell guards (whose ages were not recorded), women between the ages of 31 and 50 formed the largest age group, accounting for 41%. Next came women who were 51-65, accounting for 35%. Makivik’s employees were among the oldest; indeed, of the 46 female employees, 34 were over the age of 50. In addition, only Makivik hired women over the age of 66; these were justice committee members representing 12% of all Inuit women in justice-related employment. These individuals frequently owe their positions to considerable life experience and are often community Elders.

Chart 2. Distribution of employees by age group.



In all positions, 89% of the women had been in their positions for at least one year, and 30% for more than five years. Only 18% of the women had been in their positions for more than ten years. This is a relatively high turnover. It is not specific to Inuit employees in justice-related employment, as it has been reported previously as being a socio-cultural characteristic of Nunavik’s labour market by Duhaimé (1991) and Canada’s mining industry by Tester and his colleagues (2013).

No prior training or degree was required for any of the positions, with the exception of the police position, which required a college degree and training at the École nationale de police du Québec. Once hired, most women in fieldwork positions had access to training sessions once or twice a year, whether it was with the SPAQ, the Court, the DPJ, the KRG, or the KRPF. Only the Makivik justice committee members and the KRPF guards appeared to lack formal training. With respect to administrative jobs, the KRG provided its regional administrative and financial advisors with three training sessions per year, Makivik trained its employees at least once a year, and the DYP offered annual training in partnership with the Collège Marie-Victorin, based in Montréal. The other employees of the Court (clerical staff) and the KRPF (administrative assistants and technicians) had occasional training sessions, depending on the needs and the means available, and often on the job. Although many women would obviously benefit from more training opportunities, such opportunities are limited by the resources available to the organizations and the high employee turnover.

Inuit women of all ages are omnipresent in all justice-related positions reserved for Inuit employees in Nunavik. Their role in justice is thus obvious, although these positions are more on the periphery of the justice system, as they are not yet central actors, such as judges or lawyers. This omnipresence certainly illustrates their general interest and dedication to community well-being,⁸ which suggests the relevance of engaging their knowledge, experiences, and views on justice.

Women's Views on the Justice System

Many authors have described how the Canadian justice system was imposed on Inuit over the last century, from the posting of the first Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers across the Arctic, beginning in 1920, to the setting up of the Itinerant Court in 1974 (Jaccoud 1995b), and the implementation of the Makivik Justice Program in 2000 (Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics (CERP) 2018). Since then, critics have often pointed out the inadequacies of the justice system in dealing with Inuit realities, perspectives, and values. These inadequacies include the punitiveness of the current system, the communication problems, the complexity, cumbersomeness, length, fragmentation, and formality of the judicial process, the lack of legitimacy and the interference in community life, the commodification of justice, and the cultural inadequacy of the Euro-Canadian vision of justice (Crnkovich and Addario 2000; Jaccoud 1995a, 2013; Laneville 2015, 2017; Lee 1996).

The Puvirnituk workshop participants recognized that Nunavik's current justice system consists of a set of rules imposed on them by colonial policies. For Alacie Tukai, a court interpreter, the Court system reflects another way of resolving conflicts and perceiving interactions: "The Court system is mainly done in the *Qallunaaq*⁹ way and not much in the Inuit way, although more and more [ways] are adapted accordingly, and I wish that it continues to grow." The Court is perceived as a disturbing experience by all Nunavimmiut¹⁰—offenders, victims, and workers alike—who do not necessarily understand its rules and symbols. Louisa Kuananack, Justice Committee Coordinator in Puvirnituk, emphasized its ambiguous nature:

About the court's pros, I find that [they have] too much power. They do not try to understand the traditions of Inuit people. But I do believe

8. This interpretation is supported by a 2017 Statistics Canada survey: "among Inuit women, the most common employment area was health care and social assistance (27%), significantly higher than their male counterparts (4%)" (Arriagada and Bleakney 2019, 7).

9. *Qallunaaq* means a non-Inuit, usually a Euro-Canadian. *Qallunaaq* is the plural form.

10. *Inuktitut* term used to designate the inhabitants of Nunavik.

they are right when it comes to breaking laws. But the court has too much power when I look at the Inuit traditions. At the same time, I know the court is right when it comes to those who make mistakes and break laws. That does help us.

The workshop participants did not reject the justice system. They recognized that they now had to deal with it, find a way through it, and eventually improve it. They saw their role more as that of intermediary between a foreign system and their people:

I work with defence lawyers and for the detainees who are brought to the justice, to the defence lawyers. It is important for me. I take it seriously to work [in] the justice [system], to listen well, to be ready at any moment, making sure they understand, to be open at all times to the justice, to be open about what we work on, making sure the detainee does not resist to be brought to the justice, assuring them not to be afraid of their conditions and to their future consequences. I try to be open at all times because it is important to me. I want to be ready for my fellow co-workers at the justice. (Louisa Kuananack)

This role of intermediary remains difficult. Women see themselves in a situation where they have to navigate between an imposed system, which acts as a punisher, and their people, who do not necessarily understand or accept all its procedures:

What I find most difficult at work is after I meet the victims (we are called “supporters,” victim support), when they face the judge to talk about what they went through, are interrogated, and asked questions. So they have to tell the whole story in detail to the judge. I find that hard. We meet women, men, children, Elders, teenagers, when they go through hardship. And having to work with them, to guide them in what they have to do for the court, and showing them how it works, and telling them who the workers at the court are going to be, I also find that hard. (Anonymous)

The issue of interpretation is central to the participants’ views on how the justice system should be improved. As Louisa Kuananack put it:

About the court’s cons, we never have enough interpreters. For example, the lawyers, when they interrogate their client, because they don’t have interpreters, the clients just get confused of what they should be doing next. That is a weakness I really see, lacking interpreters when the court is in town.

Alacie thought likewise. Having more interpreters would allow for better communication and greater mutual understanding:

It would progress much more and there would be more understanding with each other. I also wish that the Inuk, the court, and police officers communicate more effectively and try to understand each other more. If they do not understand each other, it does not go anywhere. Really understanding, trying to find out what others are thinking, trying to have a better knowledge, and learning with each other and towards Inuit.

Louisa and Alacie both confirmed the real lack of knowledge and persistent misunderstandings on both sides of the system, a situation that has been denounced for more than 20 years now (Crnkovich and Addario 2000; Jaccoud 2013; Laneuville 2017). Having more Inuit working in the justice system has been mentioned as a potential solution. One workshop participant suggested another solution: Give judges and lawyers more time before the trial to adapt their interventions:

I do have something to say about the court system. I know I can be heard as well. As we know, the person interrogated, and the judges have at least one interpreter. Although the question they ask could be clear, sometimes it can get mixed up. Lawyers, judges, and supporters/interpreters should meet together first to do a briefing and clarifying the questions, and perhaps modifying the questions if we must. The person or the accused who is interrogated does not understand sometimes. Interpreters are good but *Qallunaat* use terms as *Qallunaat*, which is normal, but the terms are hard to understand. Perhaps using lighter or easier words would be better. (Anonymous)

During the workshop, our participants showed a relatively high degree of motivation in their work. They all defined their role as helping people in need; a role not limited to their workplaces and extending to general relationships in their families and communities. Helping others, listening to them, and encouraging them were their main motives and quite often the primary reason why they had begun working in the justice system: “I saw people who needed help. That’s why I joined: to help others. I am trying to understand them,” explained Alacie. They declared that they felt valued whenever they helped someone reach a goal, such as not going back to jail. Nunavimmiut have the ability and legitimacy to help others as a result of personal experiences (Hervé 2015). One participant explained that her own past difficulties now helped her support others:

I used to be the victim, I understand them, what they go through. I try not to let them affect me. Because I have to do a professional job, I do that job even if people don't like me doing the job. I don't let them affect me in any way (Anonymous)

Although they liked their work, our participants said that they sometimes had trouble keeping up with the demands of the job, particularly when facing tough situations. For example, Leah Unaluk, a court interpreter, found it very difficult whenever she had to tell parents that their child would have to be placed in a foster home:

When the parents receive the news that they cannot have their child at home, it is difficult for me. You do interpret but it is very difficult for the parents. And even more if you are a mom yourself. But you have to be strong and to listen to all these stories.

Other challenging aspects were evidenced in their work, such as working in their own communities, having to intervene with friends and family, and at times feeling pressure and judgment from community members. Consequently, they experienced an emotional overload with which they struggled to cope. As one participant put it:

I started working in 2013. I'm still learning, I did not know that before, how to not bring the problems of work at home. I knew that time I didn't have to do it, but when I started working I couldn't. I turned to alcohol because it was too difficult for me to deal with the work I do. In the weekends, my boyfriend knows that I need to be free for the weekends, he knows what I have been through. It helps a lot. When we do something with our hands it is very helpful. This is how I learned how not to bring these problems to my home. I need time sometimes. I make earrings. When they told us their problem, I think I'm going to forget. But I write everything, so it won't affect me at home. (Anonymous)

The stress they experience can sometimes make them quit their jobs. Consequently, the workshop participants said they needed assistance at times to feel safe and secure when working with people with traumas and also to support them. They were also widely scattered across different communities and organizations. This situation contributed to a sense of isolation and a heavy emotional burden. Both employees and employers acknowledged the need to build a support and solidarity network to bring these women together.

Women's Views on Justice: Balancing Everyone's Responsibilities

When we discussed the workshop agenda with the two facilitators, Siasi Smiler Irqumia and Niali Aliqu, the first issue that came up was the word “justice” itself. We realized that we did not understand the word the same way. Siasi explained that “justice” translates to *irqatuiviliriniq* in Inuktitut, a neologism invented to define the criminal justice system itself and meaning literally “the fact to be reminded.” Therefore, when Inuit use this term, it refers exclusively to the justice system and even more precisely to the Court. As we wanted to engage in a broader discussion on the concept of justice as a moral principle rather than as an institution, the word was deemed too restrictive. The notion of social harmony appeared to be more adequate, that is to say, justice as it related to the ideal of social peace. In an introduction to the workshop, Siasi encouraged the participants not to confine themselves simply to the concept of justice, and she talked about harmony in relationships:

When we talk about justice, we only think of the accused who have to go to the Court. When we will talk about justice here, it's not just about the Court. It is also about the relationship, the fact of working together. [...] And we will talk about the harmony. We will have to understand each other and learn from each other

Furthermore, although the research team was expecting the participants to take advantage of the workshop to talk more directly about their work, the discussions soon turned to their role within the family and to their relationships with others. It became clear at one point that an Inuit model of justice would ultimately be based on the importance of everyone knowing his or her place and responsibility in the family and the community.

Women's role within the family and the community is central. During the workshop, Inuluk Ulaayu, among others did not hesitate to assert this point: “Women are more supervising than men. It's more women who lead in the community.” She recalled the role of women in the past:

The women used to take care for each other, when they used to work together. For example, when they did a *qajaq*,¹¹ they used to work together. They used to have the baby on their back. There were no arguments. We had a good relationship. If something was going to happen, like a feast, they used to eat together. If a walrus was caught, they used to gather. [...] If one didn't have much, they used to share and give her tools if she needed. I remember those times. They used to take good care of each other, and they used to invite people to eat.

11. Kayak.

According to the literature, Inuit women also used to be known for their important role in maintaining social harmony. They could find common ground between opposing parties through calm discussion, even if the situation had to be settled publicly (McComber and Partridge 2010; Reimer 1996). Feminine qualities such as patience, calm, and selflessness were particularly valued in addressing situations (McComber and Partridge 2010). This female social control was reinforced by an informal solidarity network. When sewing or preparing game meat, women would also discuss social issues. Such meetings had the effect of creating a support group, a monitoring network, and a place for advice and exchange, in addition to fostering strong bonds among the women (Oosten et al. 2001; Reimer 1996).

As Inuluk explained, women were responsible for dividing and sharing the food, a task that was paramount to family survival when their men were away. If this task was poorly performed, a food shortage could ensue that would create serious conflicts within the community. It was therefore a heavy responsibility to ensure equal food access for all, and it was given to the most important people, as Siasi told us:

My grandmother used to be [a] leader. If they caught an animal, she was the one who could split the food, because there was not so much to share at that time. She would sew for people without clothing. [...] She used to be a leader. She used to love others and care for them.

Not only did women have to skillfully calculate rations to ensure that everyone had enough to eat until their husbands returned, but they also had to worry about the survival of other families in the event of food scarcity (Billson and Mancini 2007; Guédon 1967; Koperqualuk 2015; Laakkuluk Williamson 2006). Sharing and selflessness were values that women taught their children by showing them how to manage the supply of available food, and it was also important for women to inculcate a sense of solidarity, sharing, duty, and respect in their children (Koperqualuk 2015).

Certain tasks traditionally fell to Inuit women, who had the implicit responsibility of preserving the social order. This is notably the case with the *sanajit*, the birth attendants, who were considered to be the godmothers of the children they helped deliver. They were responsible for encouraging and coaching these children. In return, tradition dictated that at the time of killing their first game animal, these children would each give their *sanajik* the fruit of their success, thus showing that they had integrated within themselves the obligation to share and respect the social and cosmic order, this order being essential to survival and collective peace (ibid.). Women passed down these social norms from generation to generation to ensure the adoption of values and behaviours that would help preserve peace in both the family and the community (Lee 1996; Makivik Corporation 2013; Karla

Williamson 2006). Mothers and grandmothers thus had an important role in maintaining the social cohesion so vital to group survival (Oosten et al. 2001; Reimer 1996; Sigouin 2010). This female responsibility was not only important in the family but also extended to the well-being of the entire community (Reimer 1996).

To be able to define what an Inuit model of justice could look like, our workshop participants felt it necessary to redefine their respective roles and responsibilities within their families. They listed the following: taking care of the children; taking care of the house; sewing; providing food; working; and being engaged in the community. Although they had a clear idea of what their role was and should be in the family and the community according to the Inuit way, they emphasized that it was not so easy to practise what they preached. As Siasi explained: “It’s difficult to bring back our own culture. Discipline is not the same as it was before. Because of alcoholism, drugs. We are now under the law. This is how we are losing our tradition.” This view was shared by other participants, such as Alacie, who stated: “Women used to provide for everybody. [...] And now, it’s very difficult to find someone who can help, even to make parkas.”

Though they recognized that they, as women, have an important role today, they asserted that everyone, not only women, has a responsibility. They wished that men would get more involved because a harmonious Inuit society should be based on a complementary and balanced relationship between women and men while Elders would have a crucial role in teaching younger generations. Consequently, participants felt that they needed to have more discussions with Elders to be guided by them in their personal and working lives. Moreover, for Inuit, the community is not limited to living people. It encompasses the deceased as well. This was obvious when a participant reminded us that the deceased used to be able to help living people: “We were told that our grandfathers and grandmothers would stay around us even when they would be dead. Kids don’t know about the dead ones when they are young.”

Any further steps in setting up an Inuit model of justice should be therefore based on the following principles. Wrongdoers should not be separated from their families and villages, as individual wellness and collective wellness are deemed interdependent:

Meetings with Inuit and working together would be better, leaving them inside the village. If one has broken a law and has been arrested or is under conditions, he would have to be doing community work inside the village. A woman would be sewing, and a man would go hunting. Sometimes they would see their family members just like back then. They would go do healing sessions inland. If it’s in the summer, it would be in tents or if it’s in the winter, in igloos, with an Inuk person. Perhaps

healing sessions given by one or two Inuit people, or by someone who knows Inuit culture well. It would be nice to work this way inside their own village. [...] We could use our ancestor's words and legends to work on people through the Court. I know that people who work at the Court are just the way they are, and they cannot speak Inuktitut. It would be nice if we start having more Inuktitut speaking. (Anonymous)

The need to involve the communities to provide alternative and culturally appropriate criminal justice measures to Indigenous people has long been recognized in the province of Québec (Comité de consultation sur l'administration de la justice en milieu autochtone et al. 1995; Inuit Justice Task Force et al. 1993). In Nunavik, the signing of the Protocol of Alternative Measures in 2002 has made it possible for Makivik Corporation to develop local justice committee services in a majority of communities (CERP 2018; Saturviit 2017a). Unfortunately, these committees, which are mandated to apply customary law practices, sometimes find themselves in fact as “mere facilitators of the non-Inuit justice system” (Saturviit 2017b, 3). As a result, Inuit need more power and particularly the leeway to work “outside the box” of what has been imposed on them (Makivik et al. 2014; Saturviit 2017a; 2017b).

Conclusion: Toward a Relational Model of Justice

Inuit women play a major role in the Nunavik justice sector. Besides being numerous in this system, they also act as key intermediaries between it and Nunavimmiut. Although our workshop participants consider the current justice system to be a colonial legacy, they have nonetheless chosen to work within it to help other Inuit navigate their way through its complexities. They also believe that the criminal justice system is not the answer to all problems. In their view, it should be considered a last resort, and increased individual and community involvement would be a better solution to the ongoing social problems in Nunavik.

From this perspective, how can we transform the justice system in Nunavik? The question is huge, and it is not our intention to answer it. However, we would like to mention that many people have proposed interesting alternatives and solutions in the last decades; some have been put in place while others have been forgotten. What appears to be important, however, is that transformations cannot happen without changing the structure itself. Inuit women working in justice-related employment in Nunavik put forth that in order to improve the justice system, thinking outside the box is key. Justice should not be limited to the legal system but rather understood as a balanced responsibility shared by all individuals, women and men, Elders and youth, the living and the deceased, Inuit and

Qallunaat, and so on. As a consequence, justice relies on each person knowing their place and role in society and being aware of their state of interdependence. Being able to situate oneself in the world is crucial to maintaining a harmonious social order. As stated by the researcher of Cree and Saulteaux origin, Margaret Kovach, self-location is a core component of Indigenous cultures (Kovach 2009). Ultimately, this implies that Inuit must reflect on their role and responsibility and Qallunaat involved in the system must do the same.

The notion of justice, in its moral rather than legal sense, is much closer to the Inuktitut concept of *saimmaniq*, which means being at peace, in harmony, both within oneself and with everything around oneself. Therefore, when speaking about Nunavik justice, we should not separate it from issues, knowledge, and practices relating to welfare, health, education, and the environment, among other things. Such compartmentalization is entrenched in contemporary Nunavik institutions, as it is throughout Western society. Nonetheless, some local and informal practices continue to reflect more holistic thinking. *Saimmaniq* emphasizes the importance of developing and maintaining relationships of good quality. Relationality is indeed at the heart of Indigenous epistemologies (Wilson 2008).

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