

# BEST INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

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## NUNAVUT 00090

### A Nunavut tragedy, part one: The victim of a murder

*"We still cry at his daughter's Christmas concerts"*

**THOMAS ROHNER**

On Sept. 20, 2010, after fueling gasoline several times that night, Peter Kingwatsiak, 18, killed his stepbrother Mappaluk Adla, 22, with a single gunshot to the head while Adla slept on the living room couch in his home in Cape Dorset, a Nunavut community of about 1,300 on south Baffin Island.

In 2016, a Nunavut judge convicted Kingwatsiak of first-degree murder and sentenced him to life in prison with no parole eligibility for 25 years.

In the first of a three-part series, *Nunatsiaq News* draws on court documents and interviews to focus on the lives touched by this violent death: the victim, the killer, their families and communities.

Mappaluk Adla was a father of three when his stepbrother, Peter Kingwatsiak, killed him.

His youngest, a daughter, was only two. He loved to teach his princess how to brush her teeth. Having good teeth was important to Adla.

That little girl will never know her father because of what Kingwatsiak did, Adla's mother, Kumaarjuk Pit, said at Kingwatsiak's sentencing in Cape Dorset's community hall in June.

"We still cry at his daughter's Christmas concerts because he's not there to see his princess at special occasions."

The story of Kingwatsiak and Adla is a story about Inuit families fractured by violence from within. It's a story about Inuit men with such anger, confusion and hurt, they turn on themselves, each other, their friends and their families. And it's a story about the justice system's apparent inability to curb that violence.

The roots of this story reach back to the 1950s, when Inuit society experienced a rapid, drastic change from a traditional hunting lifestyle towards a life embedded in modern Canadian society.

Many Inuit men found themselves on the margins of a wage economy, unable to provide for their families as they once did. Feelings of uselessness, powerlessness and despair grew, and, for many Inuit men, persist today.

The trail leading toward Adla and Kingwatsiak's story is littered with the stories countless broken Inuit men, many of whom lash out in violence.

Numbers alone can't tell the story: Nunavut's Life Severity Index, which measures the seriousness and rate of violent crimes, is five per cent higher than the national average, with the vast majority of crimes committed overwhelmingly by men.

Domestic violence in Nunavut are nearly three times higher than the national average, about 42 per cent higher than anywhere else in the country. Inuit women and children are overwhelmingly the victims of that domestic violence.

And young Inuit men—who, between the ages of 15 and 24, have died by suicide at a rate over 40 times the national average in the past 15 years—are also four times more likely to face arrest than the average Canadian.

But the story of Kingwatsiak and Adla is not just about statistics. It's about lives.

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## THOMAS ROHNER

*Nunatsiaq News*

A well-written 360 degree view of a murder that eschews the well-worn narratives and looks at the stories behind the lives of the victim, the killer and the society in which the crime took place. It treated all parties fairly, allowing each to tell their own story. It's obvious that Thomas Rohner earned the trust of all those involved.



Mappaluk Adla died of a single gunshot wound to the head on Sept. 20, 2010. He was 22. It was his 18-year-old stepbrother, Peter Kingwatsiak, who pulled the trigger. (PHOTOS COURTESY ETULUA ADLA)



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# NUNATSIAQ NEWS

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Suicide needs our attention, says leader — 6

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Xavier Anahok-Komak of Cambridge Bay shows a couple of teeth May 23 during the Original Inuit baby-crawling competition. Anahok-Komak sprinted to a gold medal finish — then again, he was the only entrant this year. The photo by RED SUN PRODUCTIONS.

## Inuit kids in government care: an inside look

*"I feel like I wasn't a kid. I was just a case number"*

**LISA GREGOIRE**

OTTAWA — When she was around 12, she tried to hang herself because it seemed like the only way to stop getting groped and raped by men and boys who came and went from the drunken household where she was raised.

A family member found her, cut her down and brought her to hospital, but she didn't trust anyone anymore. That hug felt good and she was grateful and she remembered that she had a younger sister to protect.

She is an adult now, 20 years old, brave and beautiful.

She likes horror movies and Eminem. She used to write stories and poetry but she suffers from anxiety now and can't seem to pick up a pen anymore.

She's trying to understand and dispel the nightmares and flashbacks, anger and fear and, perhaps hardest of all, the label of worthless which people placed on her until she believed them and called herself that too.

"I feel like I wasn't a kid, who I was," she said.

"I feel like I wasn't a kid. I was just a case number in the (children's) Aid Society. I don't feel like a human. I don't feel like I ever had a chance to be a child."

## WHO'S AT THE DOOR

Are Montreal police officers racially profiling Indigenous people?

By Jesse Staniforth

"Have you had any issues with Aboriginal people?" This was the question that police officers in Montreal may have been going door-to-door asking residents of certain neighbourhoods.

It happened at least once — and in a triumph of bad luck for the Montreal police (SPVM), the person who answered the knock was Oasis Michelin, a Nunatsiavut Inuk journalist from Labrador who happens to have a more European-looking complexion. Officers told him they were knocking on doors in Michelin's downtown neighbourhood asking whether residents had been having problems with homeless people.

Except Officer Alex Mitu didn't say "itinnavut" (the French word for homeless). Instead he said "autochtones" — Aboriginal people. And while he quickly corrected himself, Michelin said he continued to talk about "homeless Inuit sleeping in parks and scaring people." The officer warned Michelin that he should keep an eye out for homeless people in alleys trying to get into backyards and break into houses, and he gave Michelin a flyer explaining this was part of a proactive strategy following complaints the previous summer about the behaviour of homeless "autochtones." The flyer urged residents to call 911 if they saw anyone:

- Consuming alcoholic beverages
- Loitering or being passed out drunk
- Fighting
- Creating a disturbance
- Urinating
- Interrupting traffic

The flyer went on to state that the SPVM intends to prioritize helping people and referring them to community resources, but underlines that they do not rule out enforcing municipal laws. The flyer didn't use the words "homeless" or "Indigenous," but Michelin said he felt it was clear from Officer Mitu's choice of words just who the SPVM was targeting.

Cabot Square, at the corner of Ste-Catherine and Atwater streets, has been a hangout for homeless people for decades, and the square's homeless population has a higher percentage of Inuit than in other neighbourhoods in part because of the nearby Fort Street housing provided to Inuit in town for medical treatment.

"There are homeless Inuit around here," Michelin said. "There are lots of homeless people. The housing on Fort Street is still there, and there are a lot of people who live in Verdun and Pointe-Saint-Charles, as well, because it's cheap and more English. Plus, there are several centres in Verdun, including an employment centre. So people walk between Verdun and Fort Street all the time, and this area is on the route."

When the doorbell rang, Michelin was entertaining his friend Stephen Agluvak Puskas, a Nunavut Inuk researcher, radio producer and activist. They'd just returned from Home Depot and were in the process of putting together a barbeque for a dinner party that evening.

"We were waiting on more people to come and that's when the doorbell rang," he said. "I thought it was guests arriving early to make supper with us!"

In other words, the two Inuit professionals were doing what most Montrealers do on a warm evening — grilling some burgers, cracking a few cold ones and relaxing with friends. Until the police showed up to warn them about drunk Inuit. And that's one of the things that really bothered Michelin, who saw it as racial profiling.

Michelin notes that there are plenty of other populations in Montreal who engage in the same kinds of behaviour that the flyer warned against — drinking, fighting, passing out drunk or causing disturbances — but that police do not seem to be in a hurry to warn residents about.

Inuit like to hit the town just like everybody else — especially when they're out of their communities for a business or school trip, or a visit to relatives.

"You're in Montreal — you go to the bars and party!" Michelin exclaimed. "I'm from Labrador and I've come down to the city many times. It's exciting because I don't have to drink with the same damn people!"

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## LISA GREGOIRE

*Nunatsiaq News*

A powerful story that required a lot of trust in Lisa Gregoire on the part of the participants. I liked the use of "she" and "he" rather than pseudonyms as it drew me in as a reader by making me feel as if I were already familiar with the people involved.

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## JESSE STANIFORTH

*the Nation*

A chance encounter brings to light a problem of racial profiling in Montreal. Jesse Staniforth made good use of a variety of voices to bring this story to life.