

BEST INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

This category was really hard to judge, as there were such great entries. It speaks well to the future of investigative journalism in our country with reporters such as these out there, producing great content and shining light on issues that need to be covered, even if it takes more work than normal.

2015 OCTOBER 23, 2015 9

NUNAVUT

GN public service rife with bullying, former staff say

THOMAS ROHNER

Three former Government of Nunavut employees say they were bullied out of their jobs by managers and other senior bureaucrats who ganged up on them.

As a result of the harassment, all three claim serious health issues that still persist. The former workers have been given anonymity for this story, fearing personal and professional backlash for bringing their unresolved issues with the GN to light.

"My supervisor congratulated me a number of times when I handed over my resignation," said one worker, who said he suffered a transient stroke due to workplace stress, his face still partially paralyzed.

Another worker, treated for severe anxiety and depression, said his doctor

they could've turned to are part of that group they feel are targeting them," she said.

Angnakak said she doesn't know if those who say they were targeted are innocent, because she's only heard one side of the story — the workers' side.

But if people feel they're being harassed at work, and if their stories of harassment are falling on deaf ears, something's wrong, Angnakak said.

George Hickes, another Iqaluit MLA, said that across the GN workforce, workplace conflict resolution needs improving because it's likely contributing to the government's chronic understaffing problems.

"If we keep throwing our employees out with the bathwater, we're going to continue to have these capacity challenges," Hickes said.

Iqaluit-Nunavut MLA Pat Angnakak



An expert on "workplace mobbing" says plenty of Nunavut public servants have told him about toxic work environments within the GN. (PHOTOS BY THOMAS ROHNER)

the description of something experts call workplace mobbing.

Workplace mobbing is a "collective campaign... to humiliate, punish, exclude and in the long run eliminate a targeted worker," as defined by Ken Westhues, professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo, who has spent decades studying this phenomenon.

Humans have an impulse to gang up on a target, and an impulse to destroy that target — just like some other animals, Westhues said.

"Mobbing is defined as the arousal of those two instincts at once: to gang up for the purpose of destroying some target," he said.

While incidents of workplace mobbing happen everywhere, jurisdictions with fewer job options, such as the

North, are more prone because harassed workers can't simply quit and leave for another job, he said.

Westhues said he's received a "shocking number" of mobbing reports from the North, particularly from health care professionals.

Incidents of workplace mobbing in bureaucracies use subtle techniques that build the "right kind" of paper trail that looks, from the outside, like progressive discipline, he said.

Fact-finding meetings, for example, are "routinely used" in such incidents to cast suspicion on a worker, he said.

Increasing levels of authority rubber-stamping negative reviews of a worker — such as DMS signing letters of reprimand that are only partially informed — is

another example, he said.

Meanwhile, the psychological and health impacts on the target can be extreme.

"I know many, many targets who've lost everything: their families, their friends, their health, even their lives," Westhues said.

If you are a GN employee who's filed complaints of bullying or harassment, and feel the remedies available to you have failed, you can contact Nunatsiag News reporter Thomas Rohner if you want to share your story at thomas.rohner@gmail.com.

Editor's Note: To protect the identities of sources, we have not gone to their managers to corroborate these stories; we cannot confirm whether the details are complete and true. But we did examine documents and email that support the employees' accounts of what happened.

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THOMAS ROHNER Nunatsiag News

It was a very well-researched topic, involving numerous sources and bringing light to an issue that needed to be addressed. The reporter appeared to be very diligent in the coverage and got the story from all sides. Great work, great topic, overall a great job.

JESSICA DEER, DANIEL J. ROWE The Eastern Door

This series of stories was fascinating. The coverage was comprehensive and added some interesting historical context. The reporters went above and beyond in these stories and are to be commended for their obvious hard work.

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Nine names added to lawsuit against Council

The Fire Brigade's new toy

JESSICA DEER
DANIEL J. ROWE

Nine additional people were added as plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake over membership issues and "mixed couples" residing in the territory.

On October 30, Waneek Miller, Keith Morgan, Terri McComber, Marvin McComber, John Joseph Barry Stacey, Nancy Monnot, and Joseph Larry Delisle served the MCK with the lawsuit.

On Tuesday, the MCK received an amended motion from Grey Cagrain, the same law firm representing the original group of plaintiffs.

"I continue to be disappointed that we can't engage in a community dialogue and/or discussion and that this is going to provincial court. More so, that the names have increased by nine more," said MCK grand chief Mike Delisle Jr.

The additional plaintiffs are Marie Stacey, Neka McComber, Omelia Rivero Lopez, Brenda Fragnito, Christopher Fragnito, Skawennati Tricia Fragnito, Nicholas Fragnito, Louie Fragnito and Elizabeth Corotte.

The Eastern Door spoke with Skawennati Tricia Fragnito.

"Truly, I feel I'm reading it. They did not mention the reasons why my family and I joined the lawsuit," she said of the press release issued by the MCK on Wednesday afternoon.

The release stated that the MCK considers "statements alleging intolerance and encouragement of harassment to be both completely erroneous and highly offensive given its previous and consistent denunciation of such actions."

Fragnito, along with her mother Brenda and brothers Christopher, Nicholas and Louie, joined the lawsuit because they felt they have been exiled from the community.

"Our rights as Mohawk people to be recognized as Mohawks of Kahnawake have been completely ignored," said Fragnito.

Fragnito's mother married a non-Native man during a time when the Indian Act defined an Indian as "a male Indian, the wife of a male Indian or the child of a male Indian."

As a result, women who married out lost their status, and

"We rejoined because we want her to be reinstated and we want to be reinstated. We see our cousins who have Mohawk fathers and non-Native mothers on the band list, no questions asked. "I'm not asking them to be taken away. I want the same thing for myself, my siblings and my children," said Fragnito.

Together, the group is seeking to obtain several declarations, including that sections 20.1 and 20.2 of the Kahnawake membership law are unconstitutional under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and that non-Native spouses are entitled to live in Kahnawake.

Furthermore, they are also asking the court to order the

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The Kahnawake Fire Brigade unveiled its new baby this week. The KFB purchased a 2014 Rosenbauer rescue pumper fire truck complete with a 1400-gallon water tank and a 1400-gallon foam tank. A booster switch on the new truck pushes water pressure up to 400-600 PSI (pounds per square inch) and makes the water use more efficient, as it uses less water to do more. Old standard fire pumps runs between 140-200 PSI. It's a six-man cab, and the KFB got two extra self-contained breathing apparatuses thrown in as part of the deal. The KFB would not release the price tag of the new truck, but confirmed that part of the bill was paid through government funding and the other via fundraising. The Fire Brigade said goodbye to an old friend as staff welcomed its new toy. The old 1993 American LaFrance Century 2000 pumper that served the community for 21 years was sold to St. Michel. It was one of only six in the world, and was often the talk of fire scenes among those that know a thing or two about fire trucks. The KFB currently has four trucks with the new Rosenbauer set to be the frontline engine.

Can union, ethics officer help?

THOMAS ROHNER

Workplace harassment in the Government of Nunavut's public service affects more than non-union, politicians and experts say, leading many beneficiaries to quit their jobs.

George Hickes, the MLA for Iqaluit-Tasiuk, recently told Nunatsiag News that some of his constituents have been harassed so badly at their GN jobs, they felt they had no choice but to resign.

And all too often, these constituents are beneficiaries, Hickes said.

"In general, Inuit people don't like confrontation. It's a lot easier just to quit your job," he said.

representation targets within its workforce, which are "terrible" at middle and senior management levels, he said.

According to the GNV's own statistics, beneficiaries filled 24 per cent of middle and 21 per cent of senior management, government jobs in 2014. That's out of a total workforce of 4,529.

Pat Angnakak, another Iqaluit MLA, told Nunatsiag News that favouritism in hiring may also contribute to those low numbers, as Southerners tend to hire other Southerners.

"I hear people talk about that all the time — it's who you know, not what you know," Angnakak said.

And many of the constituents who have

to bring their workplace conflicts, told her they felt let down by their union.

When faced with workplace harassment, beneficiaries tend to quit because they don't feel empowered or educated enough to go through the process of filing an official grievance, said Bill Fennell, president of the Nunavut Employees Union.

"I know some Inuit who are strong activists for workers' rights... but a lot of beneficiaries think the union is just a deduction on their paycheck," Fennell said.

He added that he hopes to hold workshops in the months ahead to educate workers on their rights and the kind of support the

mobbing suggested to Nunatsiag News that southern Canadians grow up acquiring skills to deal with bureaucracies.

The same cannot be said for many Aboriginal people, said the expert — Ken Westhues, professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo.

Westhues said Aboriginal names often emphasize "kinship values," which rank family ties over individualistic goals.

And an emphasis on kinship values can actually be a disadvantage when mobbing incidents occur in bureaucratic environments, he said.

"When Aboriginal people get into trouble, they're more inclined to phone a brother, while

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Hills take the Hill

Chelsea's Lisa Gilheo and daughter Felicia Green take part in the 100% Possible Climate March in Ottawa on Nov. 27. Thousands turned out for the rally, just one of 1,700 marches held worldwide. The LD Nation made their voices heard loud and clear with a number of Chelseaites spotted in the crowds and a host of nearby 40 Wokeledees on hand with signs and earth-themed getups.

Mike Beedell Photo

Mom fights broken system

Begs for help, threatened with foster care instead

By Anastasia Philopoulos

On a grey morning in downtown Hull, a final decision is about to be made that will forever change Amelie's family.

The Wakefield mother of two is embroiled in an all-out battle, yet walks calmly into an office on Sacre-Coeur armed with paper work, letters of character, doctors records, and weeks worth of personal notes jotted down between homework sessions, shifts, and making supper.

She's fighting to keep her teenaged daughter, Stephanie, who has been dealing with mental health problems since she was a young child.

Over the past two years, Amelie has incessantly knocked on doors in the public health

care system, desperate to find help for her teen. Instead, Quebec's department of child protection has threatened to put the 16-year-old girl into foster care, against her mother's will. This, after promising the family mental health services that never came.

This is the final meeting that will seal Stephanie's fate.

Amelie and her family's names have been changed in this article to protect their privacy.

Stephanie was only nine years old when she first told her mother she wanted to die.

"That's hard for a parent to hear," Amelie said. "There's got to be some pain in there to be able to use such strong words."

From a young age, Stephanie was strong-willed and often demonstrated defiance for authority. But it was only two years ago, when she was just 14, that things took an intense turn.

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Proof pot makes you dumber

By Ben Bulmer

The kind and heartfelt act of buying flowers has found a Cantley couple in a lot of trouble.

A Cantley woman told a 911 operator she had "made a mis-

take" and had to meet to call 411, not 911, and "trying to find a flower." MRC des Collines spokesperson Martin Fournel told the Low Down.

It's mandatory for the police to follow up on all 911 calls and.

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Why did we get screwed?

By Ben Bulmer

A dramatic budget cut discovered only 24 hours before its approval has left MRC prefects

around the province seeing red. The organization of regional county municipalities (MRC) adopted its 2016 budget Nov. 25

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WORST JOKE OF THE WEEK

Where do Volkswagen go when they get old? The old folks home.

Dre Renée-Sophie Melançon
Dr Ha Minh Ky Nguyen

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ANASTASIA PHILOPOULOS The Low Down to Hull & Back News

A very touching series of stories regarding the issue. The reporter really sunk her teeth into this and didn't let go, which was evident from the entry. Well-written, engaging and good investigative work.

Judge: Evan Careen, Reporter, TC Media, St. John's, NL • Number of entries in the Best Investigative Reporting category: 11