

Michener-Deacon Fellowship Report 2025

Work for the Nunavik story began in the summer of 2025. I first sent several interview requests to the municipalities of Puvirnituq and Inukjuak so that I could visit their water supply facilities. I also contacted the Inuulitsivik Health Centre to meet with healthcare staff on site, as well as the CLSC in Inukjuak.

During the summer, I conducted two phone interviews before leaving for Nunavik: one with Dr. Yassen Tcholakov, a public health physician and head of the infectious diseases department in Nunavik, and another with Manon Rancourt, who was formerly coordinator of hospital services at the Inuulitsivik Health Centre.

Scheduling on-site interviews was difficult. On the eve of my departure for Puvirnituq, I had only one interview scheduled, with Dr. Vincent Rochette-Coulombe, who works full-time in the North.

It was only once I arrived that I was able to connect with residents—starting with a woman seated next to me on the plane. After talking for several hours, she agreed to ask her husband if they could give me an interview.

The next day, I spent an entire morning with the whole family. They were very generous with their time. I visited their home, they answered all my questions, and even took me along to fetch water from the river, something they do regularly when their reservoir is nearly empty.

By showing up in person at Puvirnituq's town hall, I finally met Peter Napartuk, the municipal manager I had been trying to reach for months. In the end, showing up spontaneously was the best way to get a tour of the village's water facilities.

Next, I headed to Inukjuak, but the plane couldn't land there due to weather. I ended up in Kuujjuarapik, where I met two construction workers. Since no one answered at the hotel to give us rooms (for me and other passengers), I decided to join the workers at a construction camp where I spent the night. I got along very well with them, and they offered to show me the Hydro-Québec power plant located in Inukjuak—the only one in all of Nunavik. There, I met an Inuit employee who agreed to an interview.

In Inukjuak, I also met the mayor, who answered my questions. I visited the CLSC, where I spoke with several healthcare staff members, including nurses and an Inuit midwife.

In total, 15 interviews were conducted for the report. Although some residents declined to be interviewed, I was able to speak with six Inuit individuals. After returning from my trip, I also spoke by phone with Ian Lafrenière, the minister responsible for Relations with First Nations and Inuit.

Most of my investigative hypotheses were confirmed by the information I gathered. Water shortages affect healthcare delivery, contribute to the spread of disease, and solutions are not easy to implement. However, while I expected that constant water shortages would impact residents' mental health—causing anxiety or burnout—the reality was different. The people I met were very resilient, which is the focus of the final article in this series. They have adapted to shortages and are not overly stressed by the lack of water, though it does complicate daily life.

Four written articles will be published on November 22, 23, and 24, 2025, on the Canadian Press and La Presse Canadienne wire. Two radio segments were also produced and will air on November 22 and 23, 2025.