

# Young offenders learn new ways from elders

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Photo by Suzanne Ngui

**Inookie says he doesn't want to see these young offenders return to the camp in future.**

by Suzanne Ngui  
*Special to Nunatsiq News*

**IQALUIT**—One hundred kilometres southeast of Iqaluit, out on the tundra, young offenders have been given a choice.

In an effort to promote rehabilitation, they have been offered a different way to make up for their offenses.

Sleeping in a small dwelling, surrounded by

lots of frisky dogs, young boys are being taught traditional Inuit ways by two elders and their families, in collaboration with the territorial Department of Justice.

Brothers Inookie and Lucatsie have lived on the land for their entire lives. They have lobbied for several years for the chance to help wayward kids regain their self-respect and pride. In September 1993, they got their wish, and the outpost

camp was opened.

### Family bonds

Mary-Lou Sutton-Fennell, a community corrections specialist with the Department of Justice, says that the outpost camp can help young people "develop a relationship with themselves based on respect and a knowledge of their own ability and their capacity to learn."

The men teach by example, says Adamie Itorcheak, a nephew, and the person who acts as a liaison between his uncles and the government. The elders do not dwell on the past crimes of the boys, he said. They treat the boys with respect and as equals. They do not force anyone to do anything, and there has never been a problem with violence at the camp.

Inookie says the boys are at the camp for a reason. He doesn't want to see them return to past habits and he hopes they have better futures.

### Learn new ways

Life in the North is not the same as in the South, says Lucatsie. He hopes the kids take this experience

and carry it always in their hearts and minds, drawing strength from their knowledge.

Unlike serving a term in custody the kids do not have a repetitive daily routine. But they are busy all the time.

Daily chores include maintaining a supply of water, which has to be fetched from the nearby lake. But each day brings new tasks. One day they could be rescuing a snowmobile that fell through the ice, and the next day they could be out hunting.

Accessible by boat, plane, dog-sled and snowmobile, the camp is not isolated. It is visited by hunters, especially during the winter. Recently, three polar bears kept the kids company for a week, eating the remains of their walrus meat.

One young offender, finishing a two-and-a-half-week term at the camp, said he really enjoyed it and will miss it, but he said he will make sure he will never be sent back.

### Life on the land

The building now houses



**Lucatsie says he hopes the boys take this experience with them and draw strength from it when they leave the camp.**

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six young offenders and three staff members. The kids spend most of their day either outside, or at the houses of their mentors, going home only to sleep. Inookie and Lucatsie have separate homes not far from the lodge.

The two men aren't afraid of their wards trying to escape, and security at the camp is minimal. For instance, if there is only one

young offender at the camp, the staff can sleep at their own home.

Because adjusting to life in the outpost camp takes time, and because of the bonds created between the elders and the young men, kids with longer custody sentences are the best candidates to go through the program, says Sutton-Fennell.

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