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Presentation
Criminal Justice Review Roundtable

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Unnusakktut, Tunngasugitii

It's with great pleasure that I join you today and to welcome you to Nunavut.

The work you are undertaking today is very significance for us in Nunavut. I will tell you why. It's no secret that Nunavut has the highest crime rates in the country. In my view it is a symptom of the state of our society.

Annually, NTI publishes a report on the state of Inuit culture and society. The 2013-2014 report focuses on the justice system in Nunavut. We have brought copies in all languages for you.

Many of the social and economic challenges experienced by Inuit today are rooted in the loss of power and control as a result of these policies.

Beginning in the early 20th century, the Government of Canada's criminal justice system was used to advance Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic and indeed Nunavut.

This laid the groundwork for incredibly intrusive social policies such as community relocation and residential schooling.

the administration of justice in Nunavut, yet Inuit continue to play a marginal and largely unutilized role in this area today. This reality is reflected in the statistics.

Between 1999 and 2012, Canada's crime rate decreased while Nunavut's crime rate more than doubled, and the proportion of those crimes are considered serious and violent.

The reasons for this trend are complex, but a partial explanation can be found in the territory's continuing lack of infrastructure and resources needed to care for its people.

Today we require 3000 housing units to address the severe housing shortage in Nunavut. Being homeless puts stress on our population who have already experienced trauma.

Women and children are most vulnerable to violence, often because they lack access to shelter or affordable housing.

These are compounded by the fact that basic mental health services are scarce in Nunavut, and there are few safety nets in place to ensure that people struggling with trauma or mental health disorders can obtain the services and supports they need. As a result the Nunavut Court of Justice, the Legal Aid Program, and Nunavut Corrections are too often the first stop for troubled people who do not have access to care.

The system that exists in Nunavut today is failing our children and youth. Far too many grow up experiencing adversity and lack the services and support they need in order to live productive lives.

These same children and youth enter the criminal justice system, creating a vicious cycle.

It is a system you must look at holistically.

We need to partner, communicate and break down the silos to address the challenges facing Inuit.

We need to build up Inuit so that Inuit can regain power and control over their lives. Utilizing the community justice committees is a step toward the goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to welcome you to Nunavut. I wish you a successful roundtable discussion as you review the criminal justice system.