NUNATSIAQ NEWS

May 31, 2026

Dear CCNA Judges

Re: 201 Premier Awards - Best News Story

Nunavik police chief faces scrutiny over racist remarks

The Nunavik Police Service was facing a lot of public scrutiny in 2025, due in large part to three police-involved shootings of three Inuit men in three different communities when the Nunavik Police Service hired a new chief, Jean-François Bernier, a veteran police officer from Quebec City.

Shortly after his arrival in Kuujjuaq, the administrative centre of Nunavik's 14 Inuit-majority communities, sources tipped Nunatsiaq News to reports that Bernier had been disciplined 20 years earlier for using racist language during the arrest of a man in Quebec City.

Concerns about this aspect of his past swirled in Nunavik, where a tense relationship already existed between the Inuit-majority population and police officers, who are often southerners.

Reporter Dominique Gené set out to find out how a new police chief with a blemish on his record for racist comments would be able to lead a police force in a community where racial tension and distrust of the police were already running high.

Dominique had only moved to Kuujjuaq as our Nunavik reporter about three months before this story emerged.

She dug through disciplinary hearing records to confirm that Bernier had been sanctioned, to learn the specifics of the case, and to learn what his penalty was for the mistake.

Then, she asked the new police chief for an in-person interview to ask him about the disciplinary hearing and how he felt he could lead the police force at this challenging time.

The result was a story where the police chief acknowledged the mistake he made when he was younger, took responsibility for it and vowed to be accountable to the new community he was appointed to serve.

The story cleared the air about rumours that had swirled in Nunavik and held the new chief accountable.

Thank you for considering this entry.

Corey Larocque

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