



## NORTH OF 60 - KUUJJUAQ MISSION – Quebec Region

### Ungava Community Lodgings (UCL) - Mission and services

#### Mission

The UCL is a local non-profit organization founded in 2009, whose mission is to house men with severe and persistent mental health problems. As such, it also qualifies as a supervised home. The organization offers these men a healthy, safe environment, with opportunities for recovery, to foster their social integration into the community. The approach adopted by the organization is based on the therapeutic management model, meaning that each person participates in the management of the home according to his or her interests, abilities and wishes.



#### Services

Many services are offered. However, we are particularly interested in those that are closer to the mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, namely food assistance and thrift stores as tools for socio-economic development.

#### Food assistance

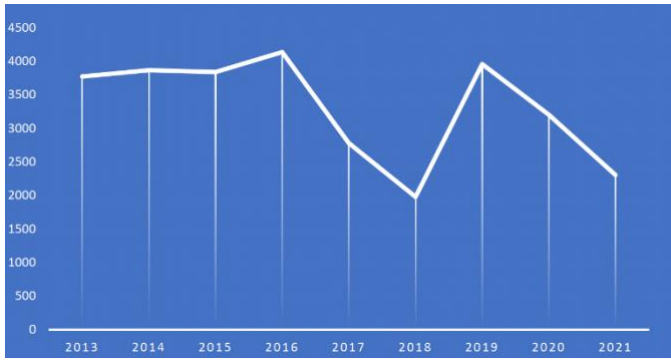


This service involves the preparation and distribution of healthy food to UCL residents and people living in poverty throughout the city. The objectives are to ensure food security and mutual aid within the community, to break isolation, to destigmatize people with mental health problems and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to offer competitive employment to people with social integration problems.

Every day, a team of volunteers and staff distribute ready-to-eat meals to families and individuals in need.

Distribution is by truck, 4-wheeler or snowmobile. Beneficiaries include families with many children, seniors, people living alone, people with physical or mental disabilities, and even people affected by Covid-19, who are in isolation or quarantine.





The graph below shows the number of meals served by UCL over the past nine years. These are the dishes distributed to needy families or individuals from 2013 to 2021.

The two dips observed in 2018 and 2021 are respectively due to a reduction in resources, the second being exacerbated, of course, by the effects of COVID-19.

### Thrift Store



It's the only thrift store in the region where people can acquire clothing, books, objects (electronics, kitchen equipment) and furniture in exchange for a voluntary contribution. It's known as *I Care, We Care*. For people with limitations, the center offers transportation for items such as furniture.

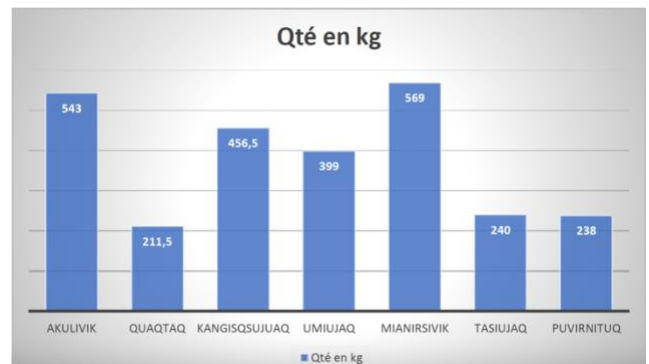
The interior was designed in line with SSVP-CRQ guidelines, i.e., in addition to shelves of clothing, books, shoes and other items, the *I Care, We Care* thrift store has a coffee corner and a small children's corner with small tables, chairs and games. This strategy makes the thrift store a real meeting place for families and people looking for bargains or a cup of coffee. The aim is to meet the primary needs of people or households with little or no income, to offer them a safe place to gather, to promote recuperation, to offer competitive jobs, and to counter the stigmatization of people with mental health problems and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Management is in the hands of coordinator Betsy Saunders (pictured left). She is an employee and loyal customer of *I Care, We Care*.

From April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, the thrift store recorded a total of 6,081 visitors, including 4,153 adults and 1,928 children. Today, the average visit is between 30 and 40 people a day.

Since the clothing supplied by SSVP-CRQ is destined for needy people in the various villages of Nunavik, this graph summarizes the number of boxes of clothing delivered to 7 of the 14 villages in the region, for a total of 2,657 kg.



The thrift store also offers a mentoring service for young people struggling to stay in school or with mental health problems. A teacher supervises a group of pupils experiencing difficulties at school the thrift store. Once a week, she takes them to the thrift shop, where they work on sorting, shelving or boxing clothes to be sent to other villages.

During the time they spend at the thrift shop, the youngsters feel valued and develop their self-confidence. This approach is a real therapy for these young people, for whom the teacher notes a great improvement in their academic progress.

### **Other related services**

The SSVP-CRQ's support for UCL also included two other services: assistance for homeless Aboriginals in Montreal – to which we'll return in greater detail in the end-of-project-activity report - and the implementation of Opération bonne mine (OBM) in the Nunavik region, thanks to funding from Hydro-Québec.

Through the UCL, SSVP-CRQ sent a grant to the Jaanimmarik High School in Kuujjuaq, to support student retention. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, the school remained closed for several months, so much so that the activities planned to reduce dropout and promote perseverance were carried over to the next year.

During our mission, we did not meet with the management team. However, the music teacher we met reassured us that the school was very interested in and motivated by OBM, and was keen to continue its collaboration with SSVP-CRQ.

### **Results of the mission**

This is a report on the achievement of the four mission objectives we had set ourselves before going to Kuujjuaq. These objectives were announced in the introductory section of this report. In this section, and in light of what we observed in the field, we confirm or invalidate their achievement.

#### **Observation of work carried out in connection with the relaunch of the thrift shop.**

Thanks to the support of local partners, UCL has succeeded in rebuilding a beautiful building to house its thrift shop. Although small, the building is new, clean and very well maintained. This is a guarantee for SSVP-CRQ that the clothes are received and stored in a clean and safe place.

#### **Satisfaction assessment**

Whether it was the UCL team the local population, or even the agents from the various departments we met and questioned as to whether the thrift shop managed by the UCL had its *raison d'être*, the answer was without appeal. All agreed that the thrift shop is a real tool for the social and economic development of Kuujjuaq and its villages. They all hope to see the thrift store grow even further, to multiply and diversify its services to the community.

#### **Validating the contribution of thrift stores in the fight against poverty**

We've visited the three major markets/stores in Kuujjuaq, and not everyone can afford the products. At the *Care, We Care* thrift store, these people can have a free cup of coffee, buy clothes or other items that meet their needs, and do so at a cost they can afford. Revenues generated by the thrift store are reinvested in other programs, such as food assistance, i.e., the purchase, preparation and distribution of healthy meals to the underprivileged.

#### **Continuity of SSVP-CRQ support for UCL**

In the absence of a structured project such as the one we carried out with funding from the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, it will be difficult for SSVP-CRQ to continue its support for UCL. The two parties will therefore have to work on opening a Saint-Vincent de Paul structure which, according to the Society's by-laws, would be empowered to receive shipments made by SSVP-CRQ on behalf of the thrift shop. This question aroused a great deal of interest, and the people contacted are ready to commit to this approach.

## Conclusion and recommendations

From everything we've seen and heard, we'd like to say that the project has been a success, carried out professionally and to everyone's satisfaction. It's now up to the UCL team to ensure that the trend towards thrift shops contributing to social and economic development is maintained and that the underprivileged benefit as much as possible.

As for our recommendations, we'd like to make two about the development of the town of Kuujjuaq, as seen in this photo.

Building social housing won't necessarily improve the incomes of the poor. On the contrary, it will increase the number of poor people moving to Kuujjuaq from other villages. In this context, the demand for the thrift store's services would be on the rise, and UCL would need to prepare to meet the needs of its growing clientele. To achieve this, we recommend the following:

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1. In the short and medium term: That the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit renew its financial support for the current project. An envelope of \$100,000 over two years would help maintain a resource at the collection, sorting and shipping center in Kuujjuaq. This would also enable UCL to renew its agreement with Canadian Nord or Air Inuit for the air transport of boxes.
2. In the medium and long term: That SSVP-CRQ work on the implementation of a conference that would be its anchor at the community level. Such a structure need not be registered. It is made up of dedicated volunteers committed to fighting poverty and social isolation. It would be attached to the thrift shop and benefit from UCL supervision.

*Baudouin Kutuka, Coordinator  
SSVP – Quebec Regional Council*

Kuujjuaq Inn Hotel ▲  
Ungava Community Lodgings ●  
*I Care, We Care* Thrift Store ■

