

May 27, 2024

In September 2021, Jack Anawak, an Inuk elder and former Nunavut MP, shared a tip with reporter David Venn about several houses in Naujaat, a community of about 1,100 people, that were built in the 1980s. He said the homes were among the best built in Nunavut, a territory where almost two-thirds of its population live in public housing.

Venn sniffed out a solutions-based story that could spark productive conversations around the territory's housing woes. In October 2022, he travelled to the Kivalliq region. With nothing but a crude hand-drawn map featuring the homes, he went door-to-door asking about these units. He learned of the 1980s Government of the Northwest Territories Homeownership Assistance Program — a success that changed lives by the hundreds — and asked, could it be done again?

Venn put his boots on the ground where few journalists have—Rankin Inlet and Naujaat—and walked the communities in -20 C, overcoming language and cultural barriers, to meet with sources he'd found in phone books or from others in town.

Returning to Iqaluit, he sleuthed through archived government documents worth hundreds of pages, spoke with housing experts, and government officials. Up against a tight production schedule, Venn wrote 10,000 words in 16 days. The final product was a balanced, four-part, 8,000-word feature series with 40 photos, 15 interviews and a special print edition in English and Inuktitut. The solutions-based, narrative-driven "Our Home" ably conveys a bygone housing program's little-known success and its deficiencies.

Venn's perseverance and determination led to the kind of series that tested our resources, but ultimately set a new standard for reporting at our paper. Readers praised Nunatsiaq News for its timely, imperative, and compelling reporting. Answering a question about HAP months later, housing minister Lorne Kusugak said the government has been hearing "across the territory" how great "ownership programs used to be" and that NHC is pitching "a new Homeownership Assistance Program 2.0." Details were released in April 2024.

I am pleased to support this entry for the Canadian Community Newspaper Awards.

Sincerely,



Corey Larocque, managing editor
Nunatsiaq News