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*Lynne Robson
reports for CBC TV*
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Inuit community in shock

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KANGIQSUALUJJUAQ, QUEBEC - Residents of a northern Quebec village are mourning the death of nine people in an avalanche on Friday.

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A wall of snow slammed into a school gymnasium during a New Year's celebration, burying the partygoers.

"It was like an explosion," school principal Jean Leduc said. "You heard an immense crack and the wall was flying into pieces and, the next thing you knew, the gym was entirely covered in snow."



*Rescue workers
dig for survivors*

Despite the chaos, survivors began digging for victims right away.

"Everybody was screaming," Mary Baron, the school's director said. "I wasn't buried completely and right away went to dig out my son."

Rescue efforts were hampered by temperatures as low as -20 degrees. Bad weather prevented outside help from arriving.

The isolated community is about 1,500 kilometres north of Montreal.

The cause of the avalanche is under investigation. One possible cause might have been vibrations caused by a gun salute just before the disaster.

Twenty-five people were injured. Five children were among the nine people killed.

The losses could have been much worse; earlier in the evening the gymnasium contained 400 to 500 people.

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