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Inuit community mourns losses

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KANGIQSUALUJJUAQ, QUEBEC - Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard spent Sunday in a grief-stricken small community. Nine people were killed in an avalanche early New Year's Day in a remote northern Quebec village.

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

Bouchard visited the local hospital and spoke with community leaders. He also looked at the school that was demolished in Friday's avalanche.



Rescue workers dig for survivors

As the shock of the event settles in, some people in the Inuit village are wondering whether the deaths of their loved ones could have been prevented. Some residents had questioned the wisdom of building a school so close to the mountain. Last year a school committee requested that a snow wall be built around the school.

The principal of the school says it will likely be months before it can re-open. "We should not ever go back in this building again unless something major is done about the avalanche risk," said Jean Leduc.

Experts are expected to visit the community to assess the risk of further avalanches.

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





Twenty-five people were injured, and 13 of them were airlifted to a hospital in Montreal. One adult and three of the six children were released Sunday morning. Two adults remain in critical care.

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