

Ikuualaaq's Worries



This book is part of the Inuutsiarniq Reading Series, developed by the Department of Health in Nunavut. The Inuutsiarniq Reading Series is a unique, Nunavut-developed literacy initiative that infuses Northern values of healthy living and self-care into a culturally appropriate reading program.

The Inuutsiarniq Reading Series was developed to support the reading level guidelines outlined in the Department of Education's Inuktitut reading program, Uqalimaariuqsaniq. Uqalimaariuqsaniq is a sequential and progressive Inuktitut reading program that supports students in their development as readers.

Healthy students are better learners and become healthy adults. For more information, visit www.gov.nu.ca/health and your local health centre.

Book details

Level: 12

Text type: Fiction, realistic

Subjects/themes: The importance of talking to someone about your problems; healthy lifestyle habits; friendship; stress in a family

Key features: 40 pages, past tense, dialogue, story taking place over more than one day

Ikuualaaq's Worries



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Ikualaaq woke up on the couch to the sound of the wind howling. It was a cold night.

He looked over at the clock in the kitchen. It was almost three o'clock in the morning. This was the third time this week that he had fallen asleep on the couch waiting for his mom to get home.

Just then, he heard his mom come in the front door. He rubbed his eyes.





“How is Aja, Anaana?” Ikualaaq asked.
“Your aunt is still very sick,” his mom replied. “I need to be there again tomorrow to take care of her.”
“But my first hockey practice of the season is tomorrow night!” he said. “You were supposed to drive me. And remember how we were going to order new skates? My old skates barely fit me anymore.”

Ikualaaq's mom sighed and sat down next to him. "We talked about this, Ikualaaq," she said. "We can't afford to buy you new skates this year. I've been helping out your aunt a lot with money. You know she is sick, and she can't work."

Ikualaaq was so disappointed. How was he supposed to play hockey without skates? He wrapped his blanket around his shoulders and went to his room without saying goodnight.





Ikualaaq fell back to sleep. The next time he opened his eyes, the clock said eight thirty! His mom must have gone to check on his aunt before work. And he must have slept through his alarm. Ikualaaq was going to be late for school.

He scrambled out of bed. He changed, brushed his teeth, and rushed out the door without eating breakfast.

At school, Ikualaaq was tired. During math, his eyelids felt so heavy that he let them close for a moment. His friend Tanya was sitting next to him. She must have noticed him nodding off because she nudged his arm. "Wake up!" she whispered. For the rest of the day, Ikualaaq thought about getting home and curling up in bed to sleep.





When the bell finally rang at the end of the day, everyone rushed to get their outdoor clothing.

Tanya walked out of the school with Ikualaaq. “Are you coming to hockey tonight?” she asked him.

“I can’t tonight. I’m busy,” Ikualaaq lied. Ikualaaq didn’t want to tell his friend that he couldn’t play because his skates were too small. Tanya always had new equipment.

Tanya looked confused. “But you were so excited for the season to start! And we played road hockey all summer so we could be ready for the season,” she said. “You can’t miss our first practice. We have a game this weekend!”

Ikualaaq didn’t know what to say, so he just shrugged and walked away.





All Ikualaaq could think about was missing the hockey season. Once he got home, he flopped onto the couch and closed his eyes.

A few hours later, Ikualaaq awoke to the sound of the phone ringing.

“Hello?” Ikualaaq said.

“Hey, Ikualaaq,” Tanya said.

“What do you want?” Ikualaaq asked. He knew he wasn’t being very nice.

“Well, at hockey practice, Coach David told me to ask you if you were going to be at the game this weekend,” Tanya said.

“I’m quitting the hockey team,” Ikualaaq snapped, and he hung up the phone.

Ikualaaq started to cry. He felt sad and frustrated all at once. He didn’t want to eat, or watch TV, or do anything. He just went to bed and tossed and turned for the rest of the night.





The next morning, Ikualaaq would not talk to his mom. At recess, he stood by himself on the hill, far away from the rest of his classmates.

“Hey, Ikualaaq,” he heard Tanya say. She was walking up to him. “I brought two apples for a snack. Do you want one?”

Ikualaaq was surprised that Tanya wanted to talk to him after he had been so rude to her.

“Sure, thanks,” he said. He realized he was really hungry. He had barely touched his breakfast that morning.

“Ikualaaq, my mom told me that your aunt is sick,” Tanya began. “Is that why you haven’t been acting like yourself lately?”

Ikualaaq felt his cheeks get hot. He was upset for a lot of different reasons. He didn’t know how to explain them all.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Ikualaaq said.





Tanya stood next to him and they ate their apples in silence. He felt a bit better having a friend with him. At the end of the day, Tanya found Ikualaaq outside. “Do you want to walk home together?” Tanya asked. “Sure,” Ikualaaq said.

They walked side by side for a while without saying anything. Finally, Tanya spoke up.

“Ikualaaq, we really missed you at practice last night,” she said. “Why did you quit?”

Ikualaaq started to feel frustrated with Tanya again, but then he took a deep breath. She had been such a good friend the last few days. Maybe he could talk to her.





“I quit because my skates don’t fit anymore,” Ikualaaq said. “And my mom can’t afford to buy me new ones. My aunt is really sick and can’t work, so my mom has been helping her out with money.”

Ikualaaq sighed. He didn’t want to look at Tanya. He was worried what she would think about him now.

“I can give you my older brother’s old skates!” said Tanya. “I’m sure they’ll fit you.” She smiled at Ikualaaq encouragingly.

“Really?” Ikualaaq asked.

“Totally!” Tanya said. “I just have to ask my brother if it’s okay.”

“Wow, thanks, Tanya,” Ikualaaq said. “That’s really nice of you.”

Ikualaaq felt better. Just telling Tanya one of his problems made him feel a lot less worried.

“I’m happy to help,” Tanya said. “You can talk to me about anything.” She punched him lightly on the shoulder.





“Well, I guess I have had a lot on my mind lately,” he said.

He decided that maybe Tanya would understand, so he kept talking. “I’m always tired because I fall asleep on the couch waiting for my mom to get home from my aunt’s,” he said. “Then I wake up late and don’t have time to eat breakfast. And I am always at home alone in the evening because my mom isn’t there. I don’t like being alone all the time.”

Tanya looked at Ikualaaq with concern.

“Ikualaaq, I knew something was wrong, but that is a lot to deal with on your own,” she said. She put her arm around her friend. “Hey, I have an idea.” she said. “Maybe we can go to the school breakfast program together tomorrow.”

Ikualaaq had always been too nervous to go to the breakfast program on his own. He had been worried that none of his friends would be there, and he would have to eat by himself.

“Okay,” he said.





“You can come over to my place after school or for dinner tonight if you want,” Tanya said.

“That would be cool,” Ikualaaq said. “But I think I should go to my aunt’s house tonight. I haven’t been there for a while. I guess I’ve been mad at my mom for spending all her time there. And I’ve been nervous to see my aunt since she got sick.”

“Well, maybe it would make your aunt feel better to see you,” Tanya said.

“You’re right,” Ikualaaq said. “And I bet it would make my mom happy too.”

Ikualaaq paused. He realized he felt less sad and confused.

“Thanks for talking to me, Tanya,” he said. “I feel a lot better now.”

“My anaana always says that talking about what is bothering you can help you understand it better,” Tanya said. “And if you understand it, then you can figure out how to fix it!”



Tanya and Ikualaaq waved goodbye to each other.
Then Ikualaaq decided to walk to his aunt's house.
When he got there, his aunt and his mom were happy to
see him. That made him happy, too.



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