

# A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO ONLY IN MY HOMETOWN

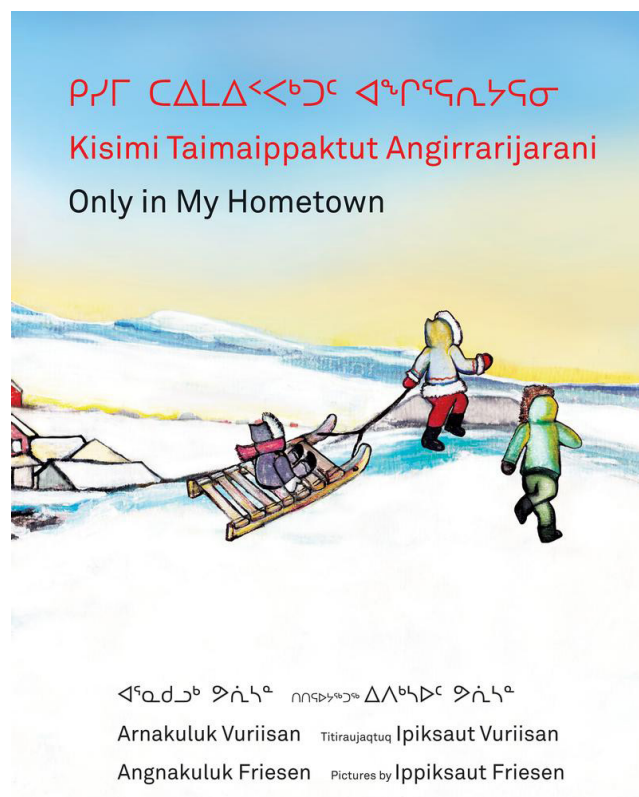
Written by Angnakuluk Friesen and Illustrated by Ippiksaut Friesen

## ABOUT THE BOOK

The Northern Lights shine, women gather to eat raw caribou meat and everyone could be family in this ode to small-town life in Nunavut, written in English and Inuktitut.

Sisters Angnakuluk Friesen and Ippiksaut Friesen collaborate on this story about what it's like to grow up in an Inuit community in Nunavut. Every line about the hometown in this book will have readers thinking about what makes their own hometowns unique. The book has strong social studies curriculum connections to introduce young readers to life in the Canadian North, as well as Inuit language and culture.

The simple English text is translated into Inuktitut and written out in syllabics and transliterated roman characters.



**Only in My Hometown**  
**Written by Angnakuluk Friesen**  
**Illustrated by Jean Kusagak**  
**JUVENILE FICTION**  
Reading Ages 3 to 7  
9781554988839  
Hardcover with jacket

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angnakuluk grew up in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. She enjoys spending her time at the cabin with her family at the river and sewing for her loved ones. Angnakuluk is a student of the Nunavut Law Program in Iqaluit Nunavut and a prospective graduate of the University of Saskatchewan's Juris Doctorate program in 2023.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ippiksaut Friesen is an Inuk from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. She studied drawing and ceramics at the Matchbox Gallery located in Rankin Inlet. She's a graduate of Emily Carr University, where she received her bachelor's degree in media arts, majoring in animation. Her mixed-media art focuses on Inuit community through animation or illustration. She lives in Iqaluit, Nunavut.



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## BEFORE READING

### Looking at the Cover

Ask students: When you look at the cover of this book, what do you notice?

Point out that the cover wraps around to the back of the book as well. Students should notice that there is snow, children are playing, the children are bundled warmly, the land is flat with some rolling hills (tundra), and there is a small town close by and the land and sunrise in the distance. Students may predict that the story takes place in Northern Canada.

### What's in Our Town?

Discuss what the students' community is like. Ask them: Is it known for anything special? What are the families like in your community? How do the seasons change in your community?

### Personal Connections

If there are any students in the class from smaller remote towns, discuss and make notes about their experiences and memories from living there.

### Life in the Far North

Have students research life in the Arctic. Compare with a larger city. Ask them: What do you think it would be like to live in the Arctic?

Using Google Earth (projected on a screen or whiteboard), take students on a virtual tour of the Arctic tundra. Students will get a sense of how diverse the area is. Ensure that you "visit" Rankin Inlet, as that is the town where the story is based and where the author and illustrator are from. Make note of how different it appears from the town/city where the class lives. You may wish to create a comparison chart listing the features of each place. Discuss with students what is similar and what is different.

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## DURING READING

These are guiding questions that can be discussed orally — as a shared response as a class or in small groups — or completed as individual reading responses. This book should be read over a couple of days to gain the most insight from the discussions.

### Legends and Stories

Often small communities have their own legends and stories to coincide with landforms, people, landmarks and buildings, like the one on the second page of this book.

Legends and stories help to build a sense of community within a small town. Ask students: What, if any, stories have you heard about your town?

### Personal Connections

Ask students: How is your community the same as the community talked about in the book? What makes your community unique?

Legends are a vital component in Inuit cultures. Storytelling is used to teach life lessons to youth, to explain landforms and other natural phenomena and to tell stories about our ancestors. Stories can bring people together, build a sense of community and strengthen relationships.

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## DURING READING

### Raw Meat

In the Inuit culture, eating raw meat is a common occurrence. Ask students: Can you think of why that may be from a historical perspective? Do you know of any other cultures in which the people eat raw meat?

### Laughter

Find the picture where the women are all laughing while eating. Ask students: Why do you think they're laughing? When friends and family come together, there is often lots of laughter.

Have students go knee-to-knee with a partner and talk about a time when they were with their extended family or family friends and there was lots of laughter — what was so funny?

### Children Playing

There's a lot of fun going on in the picture of the children in the house (consider displaying the picture on the whiteboard so students can see it well). Ask students: What are the children doing? What room of the house are they in, or can you tell? What evidence supports your thinking?

### Stuff!

Ask students the following questions and ask them to support their opinions. Why do you think there is so much stuff around that the author has to watch where she steps? (There are many people in the house and things get messy quickly when there are many people around). Is the mess and the impending cleanup worth having friends and family over to visit?

**Traditionally, Inuit ate a diet that was high in protein and high in fat. Their foods came from animals that they hunted, such as caribou, seal and birds. Being so far in the north, Inuit prefer raw meat and there often was no need to cook the meat. Currently, people who live in the Arctic also eat a variety of foods because they have access to grocery stores and restaurants.**

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## DURING READING

### Vocabulary

“Don’t fuss or grovel.” Ask students: What does this quote mean? What other words do you use to express these actions? When have you been told not to “fuss or grovel”? What are things you have to do that you don’t enjoy and that you might complain about?

**An Inuk teaching that is passed from one generation to the next is that the Northern Lights are the spirits of their ancestors playing soccer with a caribou head as the ball.**

Create a list of vocabulary words so students can explore if everyone dislikes the same chores. Have students think about if anyone (parents, guardians) enjoys the things on that list.

### Northern Lights

The author talks about “bright dancing lights.” Ask students: What is she referring to? How do you know?

With students, research what creates the Northern Lights and look at pictures of them online. Ask students to share any experiences of seeing the Northern Lights.

“Glimpses of hope are always appreciated.” Ask students: What do you think this quote means? Why does the author infer that the Northern Lights are a glimpse of hope?

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## DURING READING

### Small Town

“We share in times of plenty  
and are helped in times of need.  
Need a place to sleep?  
Eat! Eat! Eat!”

Ask students: How does this quote demonstrate the values of the author’s small town? Why does everyone help everyone out in small towns? (Many people are relatives; everyone knows everyone; the community helps to raise the children so everyone has a responsibility to help when help is needed.)



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## AFTER READING

**Short-response questions can be used to discuss and engage in writing short paragraphs. Teachers can co-construct a rubric/success criteria with the students to indicate the essential elements of a short written response.**

### **Everyone Could Be Family**

“Everyone could be family.” Ask students: What is the meaning of this final page in the book? Does this final quote mean that in the author’s hometown, everyone IS family? (Friends feel like family in small towns, or in small communities within larger cities, because people get so close to one another and their families.)

### **Retell**

Have students retell the memories presented in the book.

### **Connections to Other Books**

With students, read the following books and make connections between the three books.

Rylant, Cynthia, and Stephen Gammell (illus.). *When the Relatives Came*. NYC: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1993.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau, and Brian Deines (illus.). *SkySisters*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press, 2002.



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## AFTER READING

### **Opinion Piece**

Ask students: What would be some positives and negatives of living in a small, remote community like the author of *Only in My Hometown*? Where would you prefer to live, a small town or a larger city? Support your opinion with ideas from the text as well as your own.

### **Theme**

Ask students: What do you think is the underlying theme/message of the story? Support your idea with proof from the story.

### **Letter Writing**

Have students write a letter to the author and illustrator with the following prompts: Explain to the sisters what made their book special to you. What part of their story did you connect to?

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## CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

### Northern Lights Artwork

Ask students to create the Northern Lights on paper using chalk, pastels or other media.

### Media Literacy

Have students create an advertisement (poster, brochure) either online or by hand, inviting people to come visit their hometown. Encourage students to spend time looking at examples online or in print to gather some ideas.



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## WEB RESOURCES

Rankin Inlet:

<https://rankininlet.ca/>

Life in the Arctic:

“Life in the Arctic: Where old ways and new collide.” CBC News, published August 24, 2012; last updated September 16, 2013.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/life-in-the-arctic-where-old-ways-and-new-collide-1.1163545>

The Arctic Homeland:

Vitebsky, Piers. “The Arctic as a Homeland.” The Arctic Is website (Stefansson Arctic Institute), 2000; accessed October 30, 2018. <http://www.thearctic.is/articles/overviews/homeland/enska/index.htm>

About the Inuktitut language:

<http://www.tusaalanga.ca/node/2502>

Examples and pronunciations of some words in Inuktitut:

<http://www.tusaalanga.ca/glossary/inuktitut>

The Inuit diet:

Robinson, Amanda. “Country Food (Inuit Food) in Canada.” The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2018: last updated July 19, 2018.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/country-food-inuit-food-in-canada>

Northern lights and First Nations beliefs:

Retrieved from the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc. website, October 30, 2018. [http://www.mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/000\\_writeup.pdf](http://www.mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/000_writeup.pdf)