

Learning Something New



This book is part of the Tulliniliara Reading Series, developed by the Department of Family Services in Nunavut. The Tulliniliara Reading Series is a unique, Nunavut-developed literacy initiative that infuses awareness of skills, interests, and careers into a culturally appropriate reading program.

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

The Tulliniliara Reading Series informs readers about jobs available in their community. It also provides opportunities for readers to consider their own interests and skills when thinking about future work. Awareness of career possibilities at a young age will better prepare children to understand the opportunities that are open to them and the importance of staying in school.

These books represent the Department of Family Services' investment in the early development of our future workforce.

Book details

Level:	13
Text type:	Fiction
Subjects/themes:	Construction, apprenticeships, building a qamutiik
Key features:	36 pages of text, dialogue, procedural text

Learning Something New



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Apak wiped the sweat from his face. It was summer, and the sun was high in the sky. Apak was working on the construction site for the new arena in his community.

Apak had always liked building things: shacks, qamutiit, igluit. He had learned from his ataatsiaq when he was young. In high school, he took shop class every year.

When he graduated, he applied to be a carpenter's apprentice. He took courses at the Arctic College and spent his summers working on construction sites. As an apprentice, Apak enjoyed learning the skills he needed for construction projects on real job sites.





Even though he spent most of his days working hard on the construction site, he often went home and worked on other building projects in his spare time.

This summer, he had built a new back porch at his anaana's house. The house looked out over the ocean. He loved to sit there with his younger sister, Palluq, after a hard day's work.

Today, he was helping build the frame of the new arena. It was hard work, but Apak loved imagining how great it would feel to play hockey in an arena that he had helped build.

Apak set his circular saw on a piece of wood and started to cut. Before he cut anything, he always remembered the different things he had been taught by his supervisors, teachers, and his ataatsiaq.

Mark the wood with a straight line. Cut straight along the line. If you make a mistake, start over.

Bzzz! The saw buzzed as Apak carefully made the cut.

Just then, his supervisor, Lucassie, came over. “You’ve been working hard this week, Apak,” he said. “A few more days and we’ll be ready for the electricians and plumbers to come in. See you on Monday!”

As Apak walked home, he smiled proudly.





When Apak arrived at home, he found Palluq stacking piles of wood outside their house.

“Hi, Apak!” Palluq said excitedly.

“What are you up to out here?” he asked.

“Well, I went to the dump today to help anaana drop off our old couch,” she said. “And then I saw all this wood sitting there. I thought we could use it to build something!”

Apak smiled. “Awesome idea. What do you want to build?” he asked.

“I thought we could build a new qamutiik for Ataatsiaq,” Palluq said.

Ataatatsiaq's qamutiik was getting very old. They had used it for many years, and Apak had helped him repair it many times. But the wood was beginning to split in some places.

"That's a great idea, Palluq," Apak said. "I've never built a qamutiik on my own, but I've learned a lot from Ataatatsiaq. And Lucassie has taught me a lot about woodworking on the construction site. I think we can do this together!"

"I can be your apprentice!" Palluq said, smiling.





“We can start by taking all the nails out of this wood,” Apak said. He showed Palluq how to remove nails with the claw end of a hammer.

Palluq worked slowly, just like her older brother. Apak watched her and smiled as she took breaks to stretch out her hands. It was hard work, but she didn’t complain even once.

“Why don’t we take a break and get some supper?” Apak suggested.

Palluq smiled gratefully. “Anaana made tuktu stew today,” she said. They warmed their stew and ate it on the back deck.

The sun was still high in the sky. “Can we keep working?” Palluq asked.

“Atii,” Apak said with a smile. “Can you grab the handsaw from the shed?” he asked. “I’ll get the sawhorses from the under the house.”

They set up a work space in the driveway. Apak organized the wood into piles based on how long the pieces were.

“We will use these pieces for the runners,” he said, pointing to the longest pieces of wood. “And we will use these shorter pieces for the *napu*, the slats on the *qamutiik*. But first we have to measure and cut them so they are all the same length.”





Apak showed Palluq how to measure and mark 12 pieces of wood, just like he'd learned on the construction site.

He cut one piece using the handsaw, then handed the saw to Palluq.

“Your turn!” he said. “When you're an apprentice, the best way to learn is by trying things yourself. Hold the saw very straight and cut along the mark that we made on the wood.”

Then he held the wood steady on the sawhorse as she cut.

When they were done, Palluq looked exhausted. Sawing was very hard work.

“Now it's time to cut the napu pattern,” Apak said. “Let's go inside and I'll show you how.”

Inside, Apak found a cardboard box and broke it down flat. He grabbed a pencil and scissors.

“Ataatatsiaq taught me to draw the shape on cardboard first,” Apak said. “Then I cut it out and use it as a stencil.”

Apak carefully drew the napu pattern.

“Should we start cutting the pieces?” Palluq asked, and then yawned. Apak laughed. He could tell his little sister was just as excited about learning how to build as he had been.

“Let’s wait until tomorrow,” Apak said. “The sun will be setting soon, and it will be dangerous to use our tools in the dark.”





The next day was Sunday, so Apak had the day off. He and Palluq got started working outside first thing in the morning.

First, Palluq traced the napu design onto each two-by-four that she had cut the day before. Apak showed her how to use a handsaw to make the notches. Then she used sandpaper to smooth down the edges of the notches.

Next, Apak showed her how to shape the runners with a skill saw.

“The shape of the runners changes depending on where you live and the surfaces that you are travelling across,” Apak said as he watched Palluq cut.

When Palluq was done, Apak joined the runners together with a nail.

“Hang on, why are you doing that?” Palluq asked.

“Good question! Apprentices should always ask questions. You want each runner to be the exact same shape so the qamutiik travels smoothly,” Apak explained. “We will join them together to shape them at the same time. Then we will take this nail out.”

He used a tool called a plane to flatten out the top and bottom of the runners. After a few minutes, he gave Palluq a turn.

“This is way easier than sandpaper!” she said, laughing.





Finally, Apak and Palluq were ready to tie the napu to the runners of the qamutiik.

They drilled several holes down the sides of each runner.

“This is the front napu, called the *napuliuti*,” Apak explained.

“We attach the napuliuti and the back napu first.” Once they were attached properly with rope, they moved on to attaching the other napu.

“We use rope to attach the napu because we need the qamutiik to be flexible when it is moving over the ice,” Apak explained as he was tying the ropes.

Palluq watched for a while and tried a few loops herself.

By the time they had finished, Apak had blisters on his hands from the rope, and Palluq was dripping with sweat.

“Is that it?” Palluq asked happily.

“Not quite,” Apak said. “We need to add *pirraak*, or sliders, to the bottom of the runners to help them move across the ice. We have an old PVC pipe we can use.”

Apak cut the pipe so that a piece would fit along the bottom of each runner. He showed Palluq how to use a drill to screw it onto the runner.





Then Apak went into the shed and found a piece of sheet metal.

“What’s that for?” Palluq asked.

“Ataatatsiaq taught me to attach this to the nose of the runners to make them even stronger,” Apak explained. As he measured, cut, drilled, and hammered the sheet metal onto the runner, Palluq watched quietly.

She was amazed at how skilled her brother was.

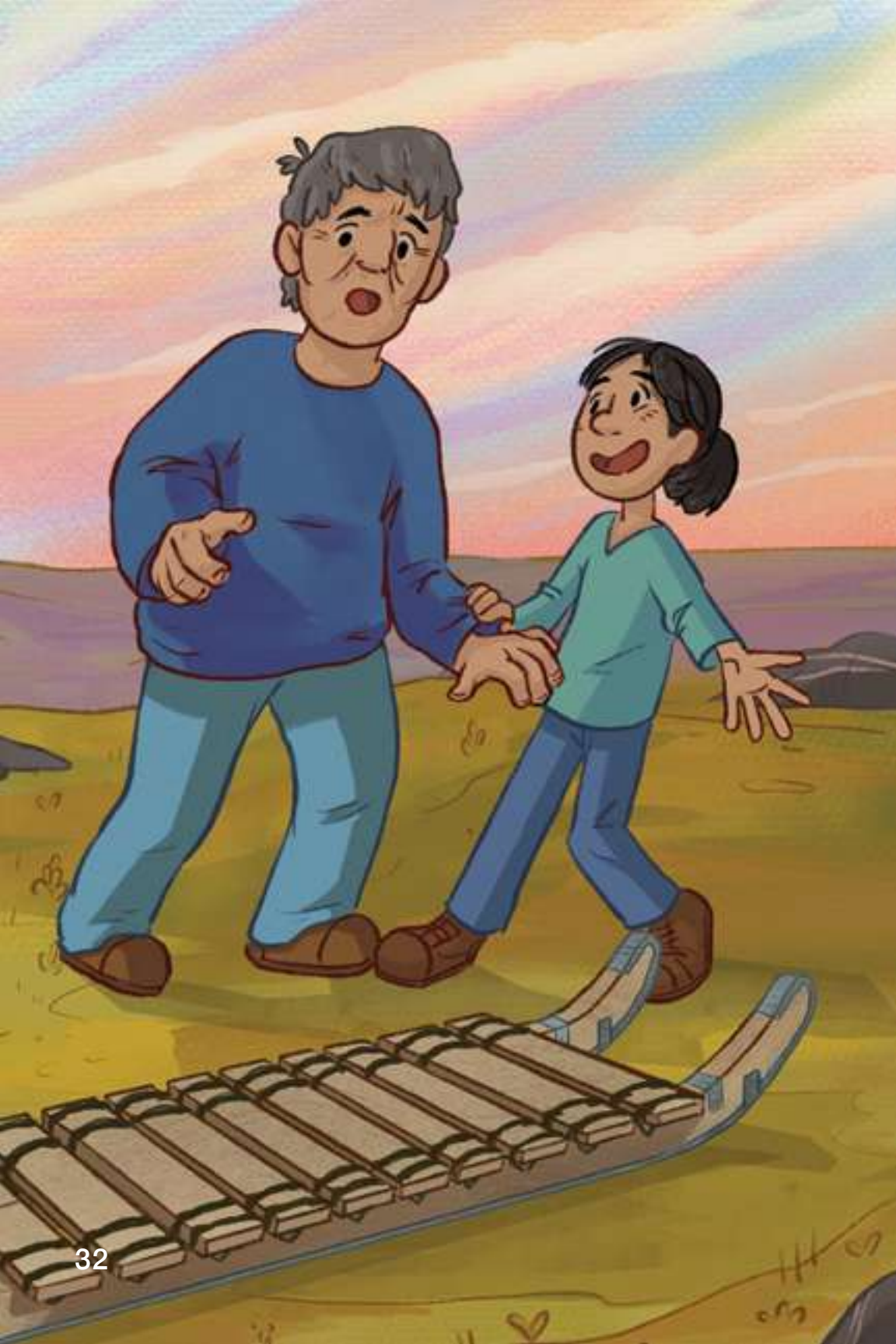
When he finished, he and Palluq stepped back to admire their work.

“I can’t believe we built this!” Palluq exclaimed. “When can we give it to Ataatsiaq?”

“Let’s invite him for dinner tonight,” Apak suggested. He called Ataatsiaq on his cellphone and grinned when he agreed to join them for dinner.

Apak felt just as excited and nervous as he had felt on his first day as an apprentice. He knew that his ataatsiaq would be proud of their efforts, but he hoped that the qamutiik would be functional, too.





When Ataatsiaq came over that night, Palluq and Apak met him outside.

“*Asuujutit*,” Apak said.

“We have something to show you,” Palluq announced. She led her ataatsiaq by the hand to the side of the house where the qamutiik was sitting.

“Did you build this?”
Ataatsiaq asked, amazed.

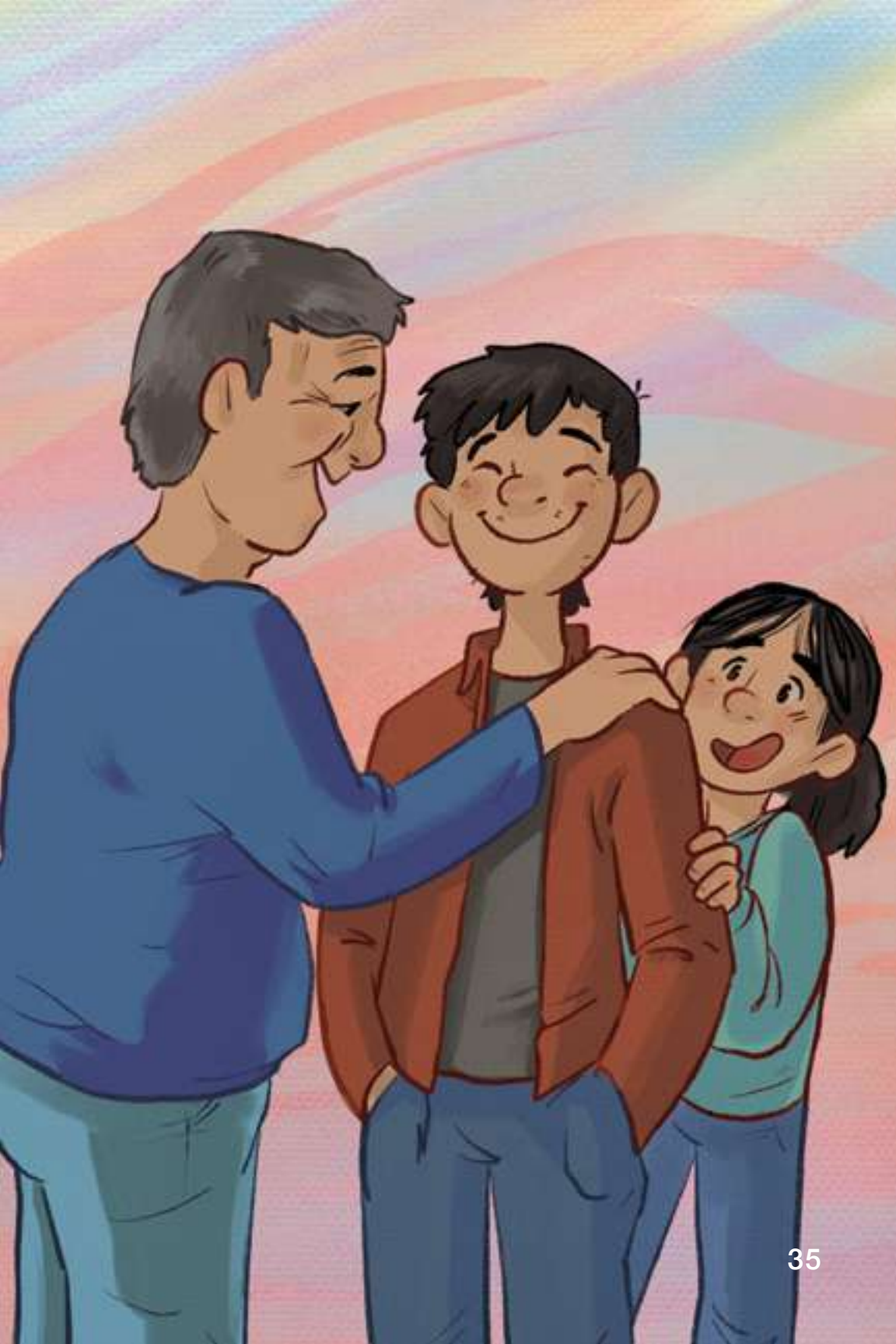
“*Ii*,” Apak said. “Palluq and I built it for you.”

“Apak taught me everything! I was his apprentice,” Palluq said, nudging Apak. “He showed me how to trace the napu and explained why we needed to do everything.” Palluq thought for a minute. “Being an apprentice is a lot of hard work, but I really liked learning on the job!”

“I showed her what you taught me,” Apak said to his ataatsiaq. He watched nervously as his ataatsiaq inspected the napu.

“It’s very well-built,” Ataatsiaq said. “You have learned well. You’re an excellent carpenter. It sounds like you will have many apprentices of your own one day.”

Apak smiled widely.



“I’m so proud of you both. Thank you for this beautiful gift,” Ataatsiaq said. “When the snow and ice are ready for winter travel, we will take this out hunting together.”

Apak and Palluq could hardly wait for the snow to fall.



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