

# Families

By Jesse Unaapik Mike and Kerry McCluskey  
Illustrated by Lenny Lishchenko



EDUCATOR'S  
RESOURCE



# Families

## About the Book

Talittuq is excited to start his first day of Grade 2. He is looking forward to the new school year, but as he meets his friends for the first time after summer vacation, he notices that a lot of his friends' families are very different from his own. Some have one mom and one dad, and some have only a mom. Some kids live with their grandparents. Some live with two dads or two moms. As Talittuq hears about all the fun his friends have had with their families, he learns that families come in many different shapes and sizes, and what holds them all together is love!

## About the Authors

Jesse Unaapik Mike was born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut, where she lives with her partner, Moriah, and her daughter, Niviaq. She is raising her daughter through shared custody and hopes to raise her in a better world with more love and less hate. Jesse has been advocating for Inuit youth since she was a teenager, and has built on this to advocate for all Inuit on issues that most people will not speak of.

Kerry McCluskey lived in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, for five years before moving to Iqaluit, Nunavut, in 1998 to work as a journalist. Nearly twenty years later, Kerry continues to write, and has built a wonderful home in Iqaluit with her son, River Talittuq Sukaq Gordon McCluskey. Her son features prominently in many of the stories she tells.

## About the Illustrator

Lenny Lishchenko is not a boy. She is an illustrator, graphic designer, and comics maker who will never give up the chance to draw a good birch tree. Ukrainian-born and Canadian-raised, she's interested in telling stories that people remember years later, in the early mornings when everything is quiet and still. She's worked with clients such as Lenny Letter, Power Athletics Ltd., Alberta Venture, and Rubicon Publishing. She is based out of Mississauga.

## Pre-Reading Discussion Questions

Introduce the book to the students. Hold the book up and read the title, *Families*. View the illustrations on the front cover and use the following prompts to begin a class discussion.

- Who do you see on the front cover?
- What are they doing?
- What do you think the book might be about?

Continue the discussion. Choose a few illustrations from the book and use the following suggested questions to engage students in predictive thinking.

- Who are the characters in the story?
- What do you think the characters are like in the story? How do you know?
- Where does the story take place? Why do you think this might be important?
- What do you think the characters might learn throughout the story?
- Why do you think this book is called *Families*?

## Vocabulary

Tell the students that as they read this book, they will encounter some new Inuktitut words. Explain that Inuktitut is the traditional Inuit language. If you are in the south, you may want to do a short lesson on Inuit culture and where Inuit live. Before you read the book, go through each word in the glossary. Have the students repeat the words after you. Ask if anyone is familiar with any of the terms.

- Have the students practise reading the words and their meaning with a partner.
- As you read the story, the first few times you encounter an Inuktitut word, ask for a volunteer to remind the class what that word means.

## During and Post-Reading Discussion Questions

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *Families*. Provide students with the chance to voice their own opinions, share their experiences, ask questions, or point out anything else they may notice about the book.

- Where does Tallituq live? Where does his *ataatta* live?
- How does this make Tallituq feel?
- What grade is Tallituq in? Why was he excited for his first day of school?
- What makes you excited about going to school?
- Why does Tallituq think Quakkai is so lucky?
- Why does Quakkai have three moms?
- Do you know anyone with three moms?



- Where was his cousin over the summer?
- His friend Joannasie lives in Iqaluit with his ataata. Where does his mom live?
- When Tallituq goes home, he shares with his mom that all families are different! How does his mom respond?
- Do any of the families in the book remind you of your family?
- What did you learn after reading this story?

## Follow-Up Activities

The following activities provide students with the opportunity to learn and share about their own families. It is important to encourage students to be proud of their families—no matter what the word “family” means to them.

### Family Circles

For this activity, talk about some of the many kinds of families that exist. You can start the discussion by using examples from the book and sharing about your own family.

Next, have the students complete an individual family circle diagram. Ask the students to write their name and draw a picture of themselves in the centre of the page. Then have them write the names of their family members around them. This could include people who live in their home as well as those who don't. They may choose to draw pictures of their family members as well. After they complete their diagrams, have the students share their work. After each student has had a chance to present, take some time to discuss all the different types of families that are represented in your class.

### Family Mobiles

This activity is intended to get the students thinking positively about their family and their family members. If you have coat hangers available, they are an easy way to make a mobile. If you cannot provide one for each student, you could ask each student to bring in a coat hanger from home.

Provide the students with different colours of construction paper and yarn or string. Have the students draw and cut out the faces of their family members. On the back of each picture, ask the students to write one or two nice things about each family member. Have the students attach their drawings to the hanger with the yarn or string. If possible, hang the mobiles throughout the classroom before sending them home with the students!

### Family Recipes

Cooking and baking are great ways to spend quality time with your family, and many families have special family recipes that have been passed down over generations. For this activity, ask the students to bring in a recipe from home, preferably one made for a family celebration or holiday. Have the students ask their parents about the history of the recipe; where it

originated, why it was made, and why it is special to their family.

Next, have the students write a short story about the recipe and have them share their story and recipes with the class. This is also a good time to discuss different family traditions and holidays!

## Send a Letter to an Elder

For this activity, have the students write a letter to a grandparent or other family Elder, or family friend. Have the students reflect on the previous activities and choose a family member or friend they would like to write to. Before they start writing, brainstorm different things they might want to include in their letter. Some examples might include:

- Greeting: Hi, how are you? I wanted to write you a letter and let you know I have been thinking about you. We have been learning about families in our class and I thought this might be a good time to write and tell you about what I have been up to!
- Share a few things you have been doing (at home, at school, with friends).
- Share a good memory you have with them.
- Ask about what they have been doing.
- Closing: I miss you and hope to see you soon!

Give the students time to write their letters. Invite volunteers to share their letters with the class. Students can take their letter home and ask a family member to help them mail it.

