

## How come it's different for Oki?

Today we have some scenarios to share with you. We'll be doing lots of thinking in question time, and we'll be hearing from other children, too.

Are you comfortable? We'll start with a scenario about Matilda.

Suppose that Matilda is the best player in the cricket team. The team has made the grand final and it is the last practice session before the match. The coach has a 'no put-down' rule and is very strict about it: no one is allowed to make fun of another player.

Anyone who does is dropped from the team for the next match. During practice, someone fumbles what should have been a very easy catch, and Matilda makes fun of her. The coach notices, and says, 'You know the rules, Matilda. I'm afraid you won't be playing in the grand final.'



*Matilda is the best player in the team, and it's the grand final. Should the coach have let her play, even though she'd broken the rule? Or should the same rules and consequences apply to everyone in the team? What do you think and why do you think that?*



**Monty:** You have to have the same rules for everyone, or it's totally unfair.

**Ty:** Well, in a way, it's like everyone in the team is being punished, because now they will have less chance of winning. So maybe they should give her a different punishment just this one time.

**Ariana:** I disagree. A rule's a rule. You can't make exceptions for people just because it makes life better for you.

Okay, let's think about a different scenario. This one is about a group of people called the Inuit, and they live in a very, very cold environment, close to the North Pole.

Their land is a land of snow and ice. In the winter, even the sea is frozen. In the summer, the sea ice melts, and so does the snow on some of the land. But, even in summer, if you dig down just three centimetres into the soil, the soil is frozen - it never thaws out. You can't grow vegetables or fruit or wheat or rice. And there are no trees.

In the past, the Inuit lived entirely off the land. There were no shops. They had to hunt and fish for their food. And they had to make their houses and their clothes and their tools from what they could find on the land or in the sea. We call these people the traditional Inuit people.

It's different now. Today, many Inuit live in towns, they have shops, electricity, roads and cars. But this scenario is about the traditional Inuit people.

In summer, the traditional Inuit hunted reindeer on the land. They called them caribou. And they ate the caribou meat raw. They sewed the caribou skins together to make shelters and clothes, and they used the sharp caribou bones to make needles, and the caribou ligaments as their thread. Nothing was wasted.

They also caught whales - and all the men in the community had to help with the hunt. When they caught a whale, they would often pack it in ice, so that they had something to eat in winter.

When winter came, they hacked out blocks of ice to make igloos to shelter in.

Just surviving was constant hard work and required cooperation from everyone in their community.



*Can you imagine what it would be like to live in that community? What rules and laws do you think they might have had? Do you think they would be similar to the rules and laws where we live?*



**Ariana:** Yes, I think everywhere has pretty similar rules – like... don't kill people, don't hurt other people, don't steal. You have to have laws like that so that you can all live together.

**Ty:** Well, there would be lots of differences too, because their community was so different. They wouldn't have laws like don't speed, or don't ride your bike without a helmet.... But they probably had other rules around safety.

**Monty:** Maybe they had a rule about not wasting anything.

The Inuit also had laws about being lazy. Any members of the group who didn't help with the hunting or the fishing or the toolmaking or child-minding were punished.



*Why do you think they had that law?*



**Monty:** Because they had to make sure that everyone helped out or they wouldn't survive.



*Do we have a law or a rule like that?*



**Ariana:** Not really. People may think you're a slacker, but there are no rules against being lazy.

**Ty:** Because we don't really need that law. If some people don't do their fair share, we're not all going to die. There are enough people pitching in to keep everything going.

The Inuit also had a law about sharing. If one family had plenty of food, and another family didn't have enough, the family with plenty had to give food to the family without enough. And if the family with plenty didn't share, they were punished.



*Why do you think they had that law?*



**Ariana:** Maybe there was no government to help out families who couldn't work as much.



*Do we have a rule like that? If not, why not?*



**Monty:** No, there is no law to say that you have to share. It's just considered a nice thing to do.

**Ty:** Well, we've got taxes so the government can help out families that need it.

Let's think about some of the punishments that the Inuits would use. Let's say that one member of their group is called Oki. If Oki did something wrong that wasn't too serious – maybe took a fish from another family, he would have had to give them a fish back again and apologise.



*Can you think of any punishments that are a bit like that at school, or at home?*



**Monty:** Yes, I took my brother's skateboard without asking, and mum made me give it back and say sorry to him.

If Oki did something slightly more serious, say he took a whole bucket of fish, and maybe he had done it before, the group may decide to ignore him for a while. Everyone in the village would avoid him, and when he tried to talk to someone, people would respond simply with the sound 'eeee'. The Inuit would go on like this until they were convinced that he would not behave in that way again.



*Can you think of any punishments that are a bit like that at school, or at home?*



**Ariana:** We don't make that noise, but we might stop playing with someone.

If Oki did something really serious, maybe stole his neighbour's fishing equipment, which meant that they couldn't catch any more fish, the group might make Oki leave the village. And that would make his life very, very hard. He wouldn't be able to see his family and friends, and he'd have to work all the time just to survive. And he would have to do that until the group decided that his behaviour had changed. And then he would be invited to return.



*Can you think of any punishments that are a bit like that at school, or at home?*



**Ariana:** That's like 'time out'.

**Ty:** Or being sent to jail.

But ... what if Oki was the best hunter in the group? He was the strongest and the cleverest, and he always led the hunt. And so, he was very important to the community.



*Do you think he should still get expelled from the group?*



**Monty:** Yes, because it wouldn't be fair if he got a different punishment.

**Ty:** I'm not sure. If he wasn't there to lead the hunt, everyone in the group may not get enough to eat, so they all get punished.

**Ariana:** Well, isn't that the same as when Matilda didn't get to play cricket?

**Ty:** No ... I think this is different – because it's life and death for the whole group, not just whether they win a comp. or not. So, I don't think they could afford to expel him.

In real life, the Inuit would have given Oki a lighter punishment – he would get the 'being ignored' punishment.



*Do you think that was fair?*



**Monty:** I guess so, because they might all starve if they expelled him.

**Ariana:** It wasn't fair, but they didn't really have a choice.



*So, do you think it was the right thing for the Inuit to do, even if it wasn't fair?*



**Ty:** Yes, it was definitely the right thing to do. You have to think of the consequences for everyone, and that may mean you have to do something unfair.



*Could it be that it was the right thing for the Inuit to do, even if it's not right for the cricket coach to let Matilda play in the grand final?*



**Ariana:** I feel like we should treat everyone the same, but I can see how it depends on the circumstances.

**Ty:** Yes, I agree. Even though we think it is wrong to steal, for example, and so do the Inuit, it's easy for us to say, 'Everyone who breaks that rule gets the same punishment', but they just can't afford to say that.

Okay, so when we first started thinking about this, it seemed that the way the Inuit dealt with people who broke the rules was unfair, because people were being treated differently.

But when we learned more about them, we found that it was not because they had less concern for fairness – they had laws about sharing and helping. But to survive in their harsh circumstances, they were forced to put the survival of the whole group before everything else, including treating people fairly and consistently.

We heard some really thought-provoking ideas today! Thank you for joining us. You might like to keep thinking about whether different rules in other communities might be the result of different circumstances, even though we have the same underlying values. Have a talk to your family and friends about what they think, too.

*Photo credit: [Library and Archives Canada](#)*

*Thank you to our wonderful actors Ariana, Monty and Ty who helped us to hear different points of view. While sometimes these points of view might have reflected their own opinions, at other times they were asked to express an opposing view in order to help us think more deeply about the topic.*