

For many Indigenous peoples, sharing information about how to act or live in a good way is done by sharing stories or teachings. These stories include messages about values, morals or how to act. For example, the well-known Inuit legend of Sedna talks about the challenges and tensions in a culture, how important family and children are to Inuit, and how they are sometimes forced to make difficult decisions. The overpowering role of nature is evident in these situations, as is the presence of sometimes malevolent forces.



FILM GUIDES

This section of the guide is designed to provide information and structure for those who are leading group discussions using the short animated films. COPA encourages you to review the whole guide, however, in order to absorb the many practical ideas and strategies presented throughout.

ABOUT THE FILMS

Ten short animated films are available to help jumpstart conversations among educators, schools and communities. They are meant to feel realistic and, at the same time, offer a light touch to serious topics. Each film has been adapted for educators from COPA's A Circle of Caring project for families and schools, and is now infused with new content and imagery as guided by Indigenous peoples and educators.

The film series is designed to help us imagine how we can all be a positive part of students' learning and growth, and play an important role in creating safe and welcoming schools. It is designed to help strengthen the bonds of kinship and community between students, adults, educational partners, and Elders. Ideally, the films will support students and all people to feel more worthy and supported by those all around them. The films promote COPA's vision: the positive cycle that encourages us to learn, reflect, grow and change.

The films feature the Capsule families and other friends and are available on DVD. They can also be found online at copahabitat.ca. Each film is close captioned and available in six Indigenous languages spoken in Ontario: Cree, Inuktitut, Michif, Mohawk, Ojibwe and Oji-Cree. Each film is also available in French and in English and is introduced by an Elder.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

COPA hopes you'll enjoy meeting the different characters that appear in the short animated films. They are carefully crafted to reduce stereotyping such as male and female roles, cultural and racial beliefs, and physical ability.

THE ELDERS



Wisdom is an Elder with a great love of learning and a passion for the stories of her ancestors. She has always enjoyed learning about her culture and listened closely to the Elders' stories. She enjoys sharing her knowledge, especially with the young. Her favourite thing to do is to sit by the fire and tell stories.

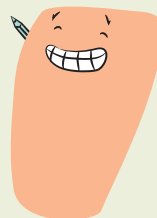


Anik loves the outdoors and has great respect for nature. As a young child, Anik was always excited to go fishing, hunting and canoeing. He learned to respect Mother Earth, the animals, all people and living things, from both his family and the Elders. Anik remembers that as a young child he thought the Elders were like the trees: tall, strong and full of knowledge.

THE TEACHERS

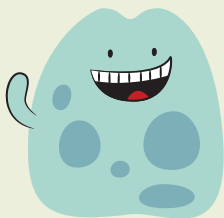


Ehnita is a bright and experienced instructor. Years of learning and teaching have taught Ehnita that great things happen when everybody works alongside each other, sharing with and respecting one another.



Kari is a young instructor with a passion for knowledge and a great sense of wonder at the world. As a new educator, Kari is eager to learn from students and their families.

THE POLKADOT FAMILY



Dot is a hard-working adult who cares for the family. Whether it's gloves, moccasins or leather bracelets, Dot loves to spend countless hours creating beautiful beadwork.

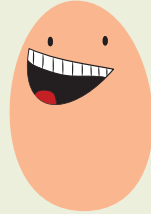


Spotty is 13 and a bright, cheerful character who loves colour and music. Spotty loves meeting new people and is always making friends.

THE CAPSULE FAMILY



Sage is an adored grandparent and helps care for the family. Sage loves to be in the company of young children. Sage enjoys taking chances and discovering new things.



Knack is an adult who cares for the family. Knack always wears a friendly smile and takes great pride in tackling jobs, working hard and getting family members involved.



Fixit is an adult who cares for the family. Fixit loves to repair things and always has a project going on. Fixit's projects don't always work out as planned, but the family is thankful for all that energy.



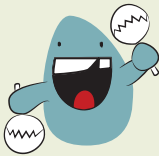
Keenly is a happy-go-lucky young adult who is excited about life. Keenly is always involved in different hobbies and talks to others about them. Keenly always carries a bag full of useful items, including tools for different hobbies.



Fones is a quiet and thoughtful teenager who is always listening to music and plugged into headphones.



Specs is a 12-year-old who loves to read and lend a helping hand to others.



Toof is a curious seven-year-old who likes to look around the world, taking Bouncy on all sorts of adventures.



Bouncy is five and the youngest member of the family. Bouncy loves to play and is full of energy.

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REFLECTING ON OUR ROLE

An educator takes a journey, learning about the rich cultural traditions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Bringing these ways of knowing and being into our schools can transform learning and teaching for all.

Narrated Message // *Sometimes when people think about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, stereotypes and negative images may come to mind. These ideas can stop people from seeing us as who we really are. Indigenous peoples are diverse, strong and proud. Our cultures and traditions are rich, our histories are vast and complex and our contributions to Canada are many. We can change our preconceived ideas by becoming aware of how Indigenous people see and interact with nature and the world and our ways of knowing and being and teaching and learning. Learning about new cultures can be intimidating but don't be afraid to ask students, families, board staff, and community members—including Elders. We share similar values but we are not all the same; we are First Nations, Métis and Inuit and our many cultures and traditions are each beautiful and unique. Our heritage is very important to us and we strive to make our children proud of their culture and of who they are. Learning about our cultures and making an effort to include our traditional ways of learning and being into the classroom and school, makes the school a kinder and richer place where Indigenous children and their families feel welcome, safe, nurtured and acknowledged.*

(Reflecting on our Role cont'd on next page)

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What practices can we put in place to support an environment in which Indigenous students feel comfortable and proud to share information about their cultures and histories?
3. How can we learn about Indigenous cultures and histories, including the impact of colonization, along with the rich heritage of First Nations, Métis and the Inuit?
4. What steps can we take to establish a relationship between the local Indigenous communities and the school so that we can learn from each other?
5. How can we include Elders, Senators, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and community leaders in teaching students and school staff? How can we learn to share that knowledge in a respectful manner?
6. Who can we reach out to at the school or board level to become more informed about policy?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- As educators, we may be afraid that we don't know enough about Indigenous histories and cultures. We may not know where to start, what to do or how to do it without offending. We can review our school and board practices and policies so as to be better equipped to implement them. We can reach out for support from the Indigenous Education leads at our board, community resources, Elders and others for knowledge, wisdom and support.
- Our students and their families can be an important source of knowledge. At the same time, we can't assume they want to play that role. We need to avoid placing an undue burden on Indigenous peoples to inform us about their cultures and histories.

- We can actively seek out ways to embed Indigenous ways of being and learning into our schools, our classrooms and all our education practices. There are many adults at school, at the board, at home and in the community that educators can turn to.
- We can build a positive Indigenous presence by inviting Elders to provide an opening or song at a school event (research the traditional protocol for doing so). We can acknowledge the traditional territory on which the school is located with signs in English and the Indigenous language(s) of that territory. We can ensure the library has a broad range of relevant books and resources and that they reflect the realities and culture of Indigenous students and do not perpetuate stereotypes or freeze peoples as part of “history”.
- We can recognize that family and community events may not coincide with the school calendar and treat these absences as learning opportunities for all students.
- When working to create safety, inclusion and belonging at school for Indigenous students and families, it is important for us to be mindful of history; remembering and recognizing the historical abuse and exclusion of entire Indigenous cultures in society can create a basis for understanding and change.
- Non-Indigenous educators can act as allies by striving to create empowering conditions in our schools. We can look at our own beliefs and identify negative views or misinformation that we have absorbed from society.
- We can explore training options available to educators; for example, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation and Faculties of Education offer online and face-to-face courses in Native Studies and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

BUILDING PRIDE AND IDENTITY

An educator learns about the diversity and rich traditions of Indigenous cultures. They discover ways to nurture pride and identity among Indigenous students and their families.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Our rich Indigenous heritage is very important to all of us. Our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students can be proud of their cultures and of who they are. Sometimes students can encounter bullying and even racism because they are Indigenous. This can make them feel badly about themselves and put them at risk. It may affect the way they feel about school. Knowing about Indigenous traditions, recognizing cultural diversity and being aware of our wholistic ways of learning can positively affect Indigenous students and help them succeed and flourish. Organizations and community members and leaders, such as Elders, Senators and Knowledge Keepers can offer guidance. When we help each other learn, we grow stronger together. We have proud First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures; each beautiful and unique.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachings and traditions are part of our students' education?
3. How might we and our colleagues help support Indigenous families' efforts to strengthen their children's pride in their culture and history?
4. How might we build relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and community members and leaders so that they may share their knowledge and cultures in schools, fostering pride and identity?
5. What more could be done to make First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachings and cultures more present in all of our students' education? What opportunities are there in our day-to-day work life to incorporate information about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and traditions?
6. How can we learn more about the discrimination that Indigenous students face? What steps can we take to address and prevent it?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- While Indigenous peoples share many similarities, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada have distinct cultural, linguistic, historical, spiritual, geographical and other differences between them and within them. We can avoid lumping all Indigenous peoples into one group and making stereotypical assumptions about them—most notably what we believe Indigenous peoples are supposed to look like.
- It is important to remind ourselves that identity can be a source of confusion, shame, fear and guilt, as well as pride, for our students. Indigenous leaders and Elders often identify language as a vital link to this re-connection. Introducing our students to the existence of our many Indigenous languages is a positive step toward establishing that link. (Use the online Language Tool to bring these languages to life for young people.)
- It is important that we respect how Indigenous students identify themselves. Cultural pride and identity is both individual and communal and is interpreted differently by each of us. It can change depending on the setting that a person finds themselves in. Some Indigenous students may be proud—exploring and affirming cultural identity, happy to share—while their family members may feel very differently about their heritage.
- Indigenous students may experience a cultural divide and feel that they are living two lives—adjusting to non-Indigenous ways of being, while at the same time maintaining their cultural identity at home and in their community. By developing positive relationships and greater cultural awareness, we can begin to understand these complexities and help ensure that all students and families feel that these parts of their lives are better integrated.
- We can learn more about bullying, racism and discrimination and name it wherever we find it, while striving to prevent it ourselves. We can also help our students understand how different forms of injustice are interconnected. Being an ally to those around us who experience discrimination matters too—even in those small, quiet ways. We can talk with strength and respect, keeping our own power without taking away that of others. We can respect our own rights, and those of others too. We can work hard to even out power imbalances whenever possible.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

People are gathered together for a harvest celebration outside the school, illustrating the value and beauty of diversity and inclusion.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Diversity, equity and human rights are fundamental values we cherish. It matters that all of our students feel welcome and safe in their school community. When our students see themselves, their cultures and traditions reflected in the school curriculum and school life, it gives them a sense of belonging. Educators can seek Indigenous peoples' guidance on nurturing positive environments for students. Our knowledge, wisdom, experience and traditions can combine to create welcoming, safe, strong, and free school communities. When all of us respect each other and work alongside each other, we create spaces that enrich our student's lives, broaden their horizons and enhance their success and well-being. The teachings of our Indigenous ancestors can guide us all to respect each other, including people from every background, as well as the animals and the land. Together, we can bring our vision of equity and diversity to life and shape a positive future for all young people, and for all of us.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What steps are being taken in our classrooms and at our school to foster equity and inclusion?
3. How can we help make sure Indigenous students and families feel like they belong? How can we help all students and families understand the value of equity and inclusion?
4. How can we encourage caregiver participation that better reflects the diversity of your school?
5. What strategies can we put in place that might strengthen the visibility and belonging of Indigenous students and their families?
6. Who are the key people at our school or board who might help with this?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- Knowing how important it is for all students and their families to feel like they belong, we can promote inclusion by taking steps to ensure everyone feels welcome in the classroom and at school. We can reach out to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and their families and adjust our pedagogical practices to *indigenize* the learning environment.
- We can communicate the value of diversity and inclusion for student success on all fronts.
- We can become more aware of the subtle ways language can be harmful. Biased terminology often reinforces our Eurocentric perspective; for example, we might teach our students that well-known non-Indigenous works of art are called “masterpieces” but significant Indigenous cultural and artistic expressions are spoken of as “crafts”.
- We can examine stereotypes and not perpetuate them. Discriminatory stereotypes portray Indigenous peoples as being “savage” or “uncivilized”. Other stereotypes, such as the “noble savage” or the “Indian living in harmony with nature,” may seem less discriminatory, but still distort identities by promoting unrealistic and dated generalizations of people.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Bouncy is nervous about starting school and a friendly teacher reaches out, offering a warm greeting. All members of the school community are made to feel welcome as they start a new school year.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Everyone deserves to feel welcome, safe and fully included at school. First Nations, Métis and Inuit students can encounter many challenges when attending public school. This can be difficult for them and their families due to the effects of residential schools and racism. One way for educators to work towards creating safe, strong and free schools is by learning and sharing our knowledge and appreciation of Indigenous cultures. Learning about the cultural traditions of our communities from us, being aware of our ways of learning, and making an effort to include them in different aspects of school life can make a world of difference for all. Inviting community members to share traditions and ways of learning and being, develops awareness in non-Indigenous students and strengthens pride in Indigenous students, too. Welcoming classrooms and schools means that students can learn, grow and reach their full potential.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What does a safe, inclusive and accepting school look like and feel like?
3. How can we facilitate a welcoming school community for Indigenous families? How can we work with colleagues, the administration and board to help with this?
4. In what ways can we honour cultural differences in our classrooms and in the larger school community?
5. What actions can we take to welcome and include students and families from diverse backgrounds?
6. What ideas can be developed to ensure that Indigenous families and Elders, Senators and Knowledge Keepers have a meaningful role to play at school and in our students' lives?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- We can strive to engage Indigenous students' caregivers and families, and find opportunities to welcome them as important members of the school community.
- By examining our materials, activities and the images we see around us, we can find out more about who is missing, who is visible, and what students are learning about themselves and others. (See appendix.)
- We can acknowledge differences, similarities and shared values—creating a safe space that highlights the beauty and value of diversity. We can ensure that Indigenous students and families have opportunities to help shape a school community that better reflects their ways of being.
- Explore COPA and OTF materials (safeatschool.ca) that provide both a vision and practical strategies to help facilitate safe, inclusive and accepting schools.

POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING

A collage of memories highlights ways for educators to be positive role models for our students, who learn from each other and from us about growing up and belonging.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *We are important role models to our children and youth. Actively and respectfully including Indigenous traditional teachings in schools not only helps our children learn, but also builds pride and understanding. Our traditional teachings are founded on values of honesty and truth. We are inspired by the values and traditions of our ancestors. We have respect for each other, for the land, and for animal life. We cherish harmony and peace and are proud of our heritage. Guided by our spiritual values we aspire to attain our highest potential. When educators invite and welcome members of our communities as role models to share our knowledge with the school, we enhance our students' personal and academic development and success.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. In what ways can we model kindness and empathy with our students?
3. What are the ingredients of healthy communication?
4. Why is apologizing important? What makes for a meaningful apology?
5. What are some of the challenges to being a positive role model for students? What steps can we take to overcome those challenges?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- As we all know, our students observe our behaviour and learn from it. Being aware of our everyday interactions and how they affect everyone around us is a powerful means to transmit positive messages. Students tell us that adults rarely retract or apologize for their behaviour, while expecting them to do so. Being a positive role model entails acknowledging errors and striving to repair the problem.
- Treating each other kindly when we have different views can be difficult. Listening carefully and talking respectfully with others even when we disagree can go a long way. We know that by working together we are more likely to build caring and accepting classrooms and schools.
- We can watch our students interact with others to gain insight into their strengths and challenges, and how to offer support. We can celebrate successes—even small ones!
- Indigenous ways of being and knowing can teach us about positive role modeling, nurturing understanding, empathy, patience and kindness. This is one step toward *indigenizing* the classroom.
- We can use Indigenous role models from history, contemporary society, science, arts, medicine, entertainment, culture and other facets of life.
- We can show ourselves to be learners alongside our students when we invite Indigenous knowledge keepers and community members to share teachings.
- We can model respect by infusing these teachings into the learning environment while resisting cultural appropriation.

WHOLISTIC LEARNING

Fones is nervous about canoeing alone for the first time. A teacher and family members offer encouragement, rooting for Fones along the way. As a result, Fones feels more able to take on challenges and do well in school.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *School can be a challenging place to be for Indigenous students. It is important to believe in each student's potential even when they are struggling. Being aware of our traditional ways of knowing and learning can help us reach out to students and help them succeed. Our cultures allow us to learn more about ourselves. When we join together we help nurture their whole well-being on intellectual, physical, spiritual and emotional levels. When students feel supported and have wholistic learning opportunities, they feel more confident and able. They can grow as individuals and as part of a safe, strong and free community. Recognizing and believing in students' abilities, strengths and understanding their unique learning needs promotes a lifetime's worth of self confidence and self-esteem and the foundation of academic and social success.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What different educational practices can we incorporate to ensure the success of Indigenous students?
3. How could we learn more about how students learn best?
4. How can we support caregivers to in turn support their children's education at school and at home?
5. Are there families at our school that require additional support in order to enhance their children's learning?
6. Who are the key people at our school, board or local Indigenous community who might help with this?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- As educators, we know that everyone learns at a different pace and in different ways. Culturally, many Indigenous students learn best through hands-on activities: by being out in nature, by singing and playing, by observing and practicing. Incorporating bodily/kinesthetic, musical and environmental teaching styles into daily activities will increase chances of student success.
- We can encourage students to share their optimal learning styles with us so that we can be more effective and they can have greater agency in their education.
- We can help our students realize their potential by evaluating their academic progress outside of the conventional bounds of literacy and numeracy.
- We can recognize that body language speaks volumes and transforms relationships, especially when the language of instruction is not the student's or their caregivers' mother tongue. Learning by observation is highly prized among Indigenous peoples. For the Inuit, for example, being at eye level, and not standing above the student, is natural and important.
- Actively listening is considered respectful. Many Indigenous students and their family members may have fairly long pauses in their speech. These pauses are not for lack of words; they are part of the culture.
- Teaching and learning is viewed as a community responsibility. Traditionally, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, friends, neighbours and many others play a role in helping raise and educate children within the community. Connecting students to peers, family members and community supports can mean greater student success and a sense of achievement within a circle of care.
- It is important to understand that communication and learning may be hampered by a history of discrimination, stereotyping and non-acceptance. Relationship building is the key to overcoming these barriers.
- We can acknowledge that we also learn from our students. This can be humbling for us and empowering for them.

WORKING TOGETHER

Knack receives a telephone call from Specs' school and panics, thinking that the school is calling with news that the worst has happened. Knack is relieved to hear that Specs is fine; the school is just calling to let caregivers know about an upcoming field trip.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Phone calls from school can be scary for Indigenous families due to their history with residential schools and racism. As educators we can be aware of this anxiety. We can address concerns, call simply to collaborate with caregivers and the community, and to celebrate student successes. Working together and learning from each other allows us to better support and enhance students' academic progress and well-being. Active communication between the school and our students' caregivers means students will flourish and realize their potential.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. How can we strengthen our belief that families are a central part of the school community? How do we create school community together?
3. How does the experience of residential schools impact Indigenous families' participation in school life and how might we modify our interactions with them?
4. What can we learn about education that Indigenous families and communities are doing with their children outside of school? How can we bring that knowledge into our classrooms?
5. How can we help caregivers feel more comfortable reaching out to us?
6. What steps can we take to help ensure caregivers are comfortable with all forms of school communication?
7. What can we do to strengthen a student's support network if they're attending school away from home?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- Indigenous caregivers may feel anxious when the school contacts them. They may be reluctant to speak to us or return our calls, due to their tragic history with the school system.
- It can be helpful to share general information with families about the school system. COPA has produced guides that can be a benefit to caregivers. They can be found at **settlement.org**.
- Opportunities to connect with the school can be useful; for example, giving caregivers ways of reaching out to you, encouraging them to be part of school life, and using the school website to share news and activities. We can build relationships by sharing positive news about their children's learning, as well as when they are having difficulty.
- We can also make attempts to meet with family members where they are most comfortable, such as public libraries, local coffee shops, community agencies or Friendship Centres.
- If we do not live in the school communities in which we work, we can understand that we are playing the role of a "guest" invited into the "home" in which our students and their families live. We can be aware of the many different types of families and avoid making assumptions about them.
- We should feel free to ask local knowledge keepers about practices, protocols and information if we are unsure; for example, when might Indigenous students be away for annual hunts and how can information about this practice be shared with all students?
- We can recognize that access to one's culture is not a privilege; it is a fundamental right for all.

PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

Fixit and Knack are anxious about the upcoming parent-teacher meeting at school. They have never gone to one and are not sure what's expected, until they watch a film that explains it all.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Caregivers and families have a lot of valuable information about their children, but school meetings can be intimidating. Many people in Indigenous communities are anxious about schools and worry about discrimination and language barriers. So, how can educators work towards building relationships between school and home? It takes a whole village to raise a child, according to a well-known proverb. Education is an important process that is shared between home, school, and the community. Learning about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and about traditional ways of learning from caregivers, guardians and members of the community, can help to better connect with students and establish better communication between home and school. Welcoming caregivers to meet and attend school events along with friendly phone calls are great opportunities to connect. Reaching out to caregivers in the community can have a real impact in students' lives helping them improve their chances of success on all fronts.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. Why is it important to build relationships with Indigenous families?
3. What factors reduce attendance at parent-teacher meetings?
4. How can the school encourage Indigenous caregivers to connect with the school?
5. What might support caregiver and teacher communication to enhance student success?
6. Are there families at our school that require additional support in order to enhance their children's learning?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- Not everyone is aware of the value of parent-teacher meetings; clarifying their importance to student success is key. Offering flexibility in scheduling and location will go a long way.
- It may be difficult for caregivers to participate due to work, transportation or childcare responsibilities. Anxiety about visiting the school and speaking with staff may also play a part.
- Students themselves can be effective messengers, encouraging their caregivers to attend. By describing these meetings in a positive way, we can make students and caregivers more likely to want to participate.
- It can help to allay concerns by telling caregivers in advance about the goal of the meeting. These will likely be more constructive if caregivers feel prepared and have a say. If taking notes, we can explain what their purpose is. We can use the online Language Tool to learn how to greet families in their mother tongue, should it be one of the included languages.
- We should be aware of differences in communication, while modeling respectful interaction. It is helpful to try to avoid adversarial seating arrangements and be mindful of one's physical size, voice and body language. We can use language everyday people can understand and avoid jargon or acronyms. We can explore COPA and OTF's Professional Learning Module at safeatschool.ca to learn more about engaging caregivers as meaningful partners in their children's education.

OUR SCHOOL COUNCIL

Fixit has been invited to join the School Council, but has no idea what this will involve or if they have the right skills and know-how to become a member. Fixit learns about the role of the Council and how they might take part.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *Councils are very important in our cultures. They help us organize and govern our communities. School councils offer caregivers from Indigenous communities important opportunities to contribute to school life and help support their children. School councils can provide opportunities to positively impact the community and are an important way to include families from Indigenous communities to do so. Having Indigenous voices on school council is an inclusive way to reach out to families and further indigenize our learning environments. When educators share their interest in learning more about Indigenous cultures they nurture positive relationships with Indigenous communities. Caregivers will feel more motivated to take part in school life. Educators can work with families and the community to find as many ways as possible to include Indigenous perspectives at school. By sharing cultures we support a flourishing school community where all students can reach their highest potential.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What information do caregivers and family members need to know about how and why to join School Council?
3. What are the factors that might encourage or prevent their participation? How can the school encourage caregivers to join?
4. Are there Indigenous families at our school that could be encouraged to join?
5. Who are key people at our school, board or local Indigenous community who might have a positive influence in this regard?
6. What role can students play in encouraging their caregivers?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- It is important that we make a concerted effort to reach out to Indigenous caregivers so that they feel welcome at the School Council.
- Indigenous adults may be reluctant to join due to a lack of self-confidence; they may feel that they are not equipped to contribute at this level or face challenges juggling the responsibilities of daily life. We can address these barriers by looking for a spectrum of ways for people with diverse skills to contribute.
- Not everyone knows the importance of a school council for student success. We can provide information about its value and the ways caregivers can play a role. We can encourage them to attend a meeting as an observer—just to see what a School Council meeting is like.
- Should they attend, we can take extra care to actively welcome and include them. Planning ahead for this is a good strategy to ensure full participation; for example, designing activities that everyone can contribute to in a meaningful fashion.
- We can try to expand the nature of school activities so that there is the possibility of a broader range of contributions. Often, we limit ourselves to what was done in the past; imagining new goals and projects and inviting community members to take part can ensure a greater diversity of membership.

LISTENING CAREFULLY

Spotty is feeling upset and comes to talk to an educator. Spotty slowly opens up and tells them about the problem. The educator shows concern and support by being attentive and listening carefully. Spotty feels better after talking and coming up with ideas for how to handle things.

NARRATED MESSAGE // *In our Indigenous communities people of all ages come together to talk, discuss, tell stories and listen to one another. Listening is very important in our cultures. Sometimes, our children may encounter difficulties at school like problems with their studies, bullying and even racism and discrimination. Educators can listen carefully to their students and watch for signs of problems. Approaching an educator in a time of difficulty might be hard for students. It can make all the difference if we are approachable, and listen carefully. Educators play an essential role in nurturing caring environments for all students. By being there, we help build nurturing, caring relationships with students that can help them make positive change and flourish.*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What might encourage Indigenous students to share their concerns? What are the barriers that might make it difficult?
3. How do we describe listening carefully? What are the challenges to putting it into practice as an educator?
4. What can we offer Indigenous families in our school that would help them when talking with their children? What support do we need to make this happen?

IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

- There are many ways we can communicate clearly with our students and let them know that we are there for them. Finding time in our busy lives to check in is an important form of support.
- We can reach out when our students seem worried or sad, although they may not always want to share their concerns with us. By listening carefully and allowing them to tell their story, they are more likely to do so.
- We can provide students with the time and space to move at their own pace. Listening to their ideas means that we can help them develop their problem-solving skills, rather than rushing to do the thinking for them.
- We can allow wait time. When an Indigenous student is speaking, we should not rush to fill in the words if there is a lull in the conversation. The student likely knows what to say next. We can enjoy the quiet (wait time) and allow the student to continue at their own pace.
- We can use Problem Solving Together: COPA's Tool for Empowerment to develop this skill.

Working together requires trust and this can be hard when we or someone we know has experienced racism or injustice. The Cree Tipi Teachings are sacred values that sustain the Cree spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally. One of the 15 teachings is about strength and reminds us that we can draw on spirit to help us do things that are difficult. Spirit gives us strength.



APPENDIX

EVALUATING RESOURCES⁴³

What to include—does the resource...

- correctly locate and identify First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples?
- acknowledge the cultural, physical, and linguistic diversity between and among Indigenous peoples?
- present information about Indigenous peoples respectfully and accurately?
- acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty and promote a better understanding of the unique relationship between Indigenous peoples and the federal government?
- recognize and honor the intrinsic value of Indigenous cultures as well as the importance of continued cultural and linguistic survival?
- acknowledge Indigenous contributions to Canadian society, history, politics, and culture?
- include Indigenous perspectives and experiences in a respectful manner?
- address controversial or complex subjects by giving equal voice to all sides, including Indigenous peoples?
- depict the cultural, spiritual, political, and economic diversity among present-day Indigenous peoples?
- recognize and honor contemporary and/or historical Indigenous peoples who are heroes or heroines within their own communities?
- portray indigenous peoples as intelligent, capable, trustworthy, and caring human beings?
- nurture cultural and personal pride in Indigenous students?
- provide positive Indigenous role models for all students?
- encourage all students to respect Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures?
- inspire all students to learn more about Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures?

We can also prioritize resources that centralize Indigenous ways of knowing and being such as oral teachings from Elders, experiential learning, music and dance in addition to the written word.

What to watch out for—does the resource...

- mix and match cultural attributes or characteristics from different First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities?
- feature generic “Indians” or a vague pan-Indigenous identity?
- imply all Indigenous peoples from North America have the same language, culture, history, spiritual traditions, or way of life?
- promote stereotypes or caricatures of indigenous peoples, groups or cultures?
- imply Indigenous peoples or cultures are inferior or bad?
- use biased language to create prejudiced impressions of Indigenous people or cultures?
- perpetuate blatant inaccuracies about Indigenous peoples, histories or cultures?
- omit, avoid, or minimize Indigenous histories, peoples, or experiences?
- imply that all Indigenous peoples or cultures are identical or extinct?
- present only a non-Indigenous point-of-view of history or events?
- mention only Indigenous peoples who were useful to Europeans?
- avoid controversial or complex issues or gloss over harm inflicted by the policies or people in the government of Canada or other institutions?
- deny or seek to undermine Indigenous sovereignty, cultural self-worth, or linguistic value?
- contain any material that would shame or embarrass an Indigenous student?
- contain any material that would cause any student to think Indigenous peoples are inferior, bad, or unimportant?

QUESTIONS

Self-Reflection

1. What are some of the things I have learned about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples?
2. Where do I remember learning those ideas (media, books, family, school, etc.)?
3. What have I done, or what could I do, to unlearn any negative ideas?
4. What manifestations of racism have I seen (or experienced) in my school?
5. What are some small steps I could take in my own life (e.g., personal and professional interactions) to share more evenly my power and privilege?
6. What kinds of strategies can I identify (or have I implemented in my school) that can facilitate the development of young people's ethnocultural identity?
7. What differences can I see among students?
8. What differences do I know about, even though I cannot see them?
9. What differences might there be, even though I cannot see them and do not know about them?
10. What do I know about identities that are important to individual students in class? What assumptions, if any, have I already made about students' identities?

MYTHS VS FACTS⁴⁴

MYTH // Indigenous peoples are all the same.

FACT // The term Indigenous (or Aboriginal) is used in Canada to describe three distinct groups who each have their own unique histories, cultures, languages, perspective, spiritual beliefs between them and among them. Indigenous peoples do not all look the same either—they may have brown eyes and black hair or be blond and blue-eyed or multi-racial. Indigenous peoples are as diverse in appearance and cultures as any other community.

MYTH // First Nations, Métis and Inuit people get everything for free.

FACT // Reservations and lands were not “given” to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Indigenous peoples receive the same benefits as all Canadians including Child Tax Benefit, Health Insurance and Employment Insurance. Where treaty rights exist, they are still subject to regulation and/or funding such as hunting, fishing, housing, education and health. Government legislation such as Bill C31 and C3 (addressing sexist discrimination against Indigenous women and their children) continue to impact and limit rights-based eligibility and access to services.

MYTH // Indigenous people get free housing and post-secondary education.

FACT // Under the Indian Act, the federal government provides a level of housing and post-secondary assistance to First Nations and Inuit peoples to achieve the same standard of living as other Canadians. Funding is capped and has only increased 2-3% in the last 25 years. These subsidies are provided in a manner similar to those offered to all Canadians.

MYTH // Indigenous people are tax-exempt.

FACT // Income earned by a First Nations person having Status and working on reserves is exempt from income tax. Generally, First Nations people must pay income tax when working off-reserve and all other taxes. Depending on the province, some Status people do not pay provincial sales tax but this right is unevenly applied. Although on-reserve members don't pay taxes, they pay fees for services, such as water and garbage pickup. Foreign diplomats are also tax-exempt.

PROTOCOL FOR INVOLVING ELDERS

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples all have traditional knowledge keepers. In various communities they may be referred to differently—Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Community Elders and names in Indigenous languages. These titles are earned and given within the community to members who carry the traditional teachings, cultural practices, history, ceremonies, and often the language of the community. The titles are not based on the person’s age; therefore, some Elders can be relatively young as long as the community recognizes them as a knowledge keeper.

Cultural differences among Indigenous peoples come into play with Elder protocol. For example, when asking an Anishinaabe or Cree Elder to give a traditional teaching or to open a ceremony, it is the custom to offer tobacco. For Haudenosaunee Knowledge Keepers, Inuit Community Elders and Métis Senators, it is usually not necessary to offer tobacco first. Ask in your local community or the Elder what the protocol is. It is best practice to offer an honorarium and a small gift. Travel expenses can also be covered if the Elder has to travel.

On the day of the event, greet the Elder ahead of time and make sure they have some coffee, tea, or water to drink. Ask how they would like to be introduced. Have them speak first, avoid interrupting and allow time for opinions and thoughts to be shared. In a social event with food, Elders are generally served first. It is disrespectful to interrupt, openly argue or disagree with an Elder. Again, it is important to acknowledge and follow the protocol and practices of the specific Indigenous communities in your geographic region.

Humility is one
of the Seven
Grandfather
Teachings:
knowing that
we are not
above or below
others in the
circle of life.



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JOINING THE CIRCLE

This guidebook is part of COPA's Joining the Circle project designed in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit families, community leaders and Elders and a wide range of educators. Topics include pride and identity, helping students succeed, understanding challenges Indigenous young people face, and nurturing safe and healthy schools and communities. Order a free toolkit at infocopa.com or see materials online at copahabitat.ca.

COPA

COPA is a Francophone non-profit organization founded in 1995. We provide students, families and schools with multimedia educational resources, as well as training in the area of abuse prevention, and equity and inclusion. COPA's unique approach is based on individual and collective empowerment, founded on principles of social justice to bring about positive change. COPA cares deeply about human rights, especially those of children and all marginalized groups. We all belong.

OTF

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is the professional organization representing teachers in Ontario. OTF's responsibilities include promoting and advancing the cause of public education, raising the status of the teaching profession and promoting and advancing the interests of teachers. OTF also represents teachers and all other members of the Teachers' Pension Plan in the administration of the Plan and management of the pension fund, and acts as the link between teachers and the Ontario Ministry of Education.

