

Safe, Inclusive and Accepting Schools

Bouncy is nervous about starting school and a friendly teacher reaches out, offering a warm greeting. Later, Bouncy makes a new friend. Another teacher chats with Specs, while Toof meets up with old friends. Knack and Fixit look on with satisfaction as all the different members of the school community are welcomed and start their new school year.

Narrated Message // *Schools are important places of learning where everyone deserves to be welcomed, feel safe and be included. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children can encounter many cultural challenges when attending public school. This can be difficult for them and for us, their parents and families. Schools can work hard to ensure that they create welcoming, safe and inclusive environments for everyone. We can help them in their efforts by sharing our culture and ensuring they understand our traditional ways. There are school board, school council and community supports that can help us share the ways in which our children learn. A welcoming school is a place where students can learn, grow and reach their full potential. Everyone can play an important role in nurturing a positive school environment where all children, their families and all the people that work there feel like they belong.*

IDEAS

- Making sure that students and all members of the community feel safe, welcomed and accepted. Actively welcoming all students and their families and making sure they feel like they belong.
- Acknowledging differences, similarities and shared values. Creating a place that shows the beauty and value of diversity.
- Seeing how a welcoming school helps children feel good about themselves and their culture. Honouring and celebrating the many different Indigenous cultures found in Ontario schools.
- Making sure we name and do something to stop bullying in our schools. Knowing the difference between bullying and conflict. Building skills and taking steps toward working together.
- Making sure that positive ways of behaving with each other are in place for all members, young and old, in the school community. Helping others to act in a kind and respectful way, and to help others change. Modelling respectful and open-minded behaviour.

- Looking for family member help and encouraging everyone to get involved at school, in any way they can.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Family Members

1. What are some of the messages in this film?
2. What does a safe, welcoming and accepting school look like, sound like and feel like to you?
3. What suggestions do you have for creating a more welcoming and inclusive school?
4. What can the school do to help welcome Aboriginal families and make sure that they feel like they belong?
5. How can you be part of these activities? In what ways could you help?
6. What personal stories do you have to share?

School Staff and Community Leaders

1. What does a safe, inclusive and accepting school look like to you?
2. How can you facilitate a welcoming school community for Aboriginal families? And how can your colleagues, the administration or board help you with this?
3. What ways do you have for honouring cultural differences in your classroom or at large in the school community?
4. What actions have you taken to welcome and include students and families from diverse backgrounds that have worked for you?
5. What ideas do you or your school have for involving Aboriginal families? What ideas do you have to further support and meet the specific needs of Aboriginal children and their families?
6. How can you and your school partner with families to nurture safe, welcoming and accepting schools?