



Ontario Institute for Education Leadership

*Ontario Leaders Collaborating
for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being*

STRENGTHENING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARENESS

Rights and Ribbon Skirts

A principal who identifies as white has been at her school located in a rural farming community, for four years. The demographics of the school community are predominately white with the exception of several Asian students. The vice-principal, who identifies as Indigenous, is newly appointed to the school and is in her first year as an administrator. The staff and students have been engaged in learning about residential schools and their impacts on families and Indigenous communities. On Orange Shirt Day, the vice-principal wears an orange shirt and her ribbon skirt which reflects her lived experience as an Indigenous woman.

While supervising students in the cafeteria, some grade 7 and 8 students direct Indigenous slurs towards her. This upsets the vice-principal who becomes agitated and reports what happened to the principal arguing that that these students are engaging in racial acts. The principal confronts the students and explains that their name-calling directed at the vice-principal is racist. She reminds them of the activities they engaged in to prepare for Orange Shirt Day. The Principal thinks the students will acknowledge that they were wrong but on the contrary, they don't.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. How do you ensure your vice-principal feels safe and that the issues are addressed appropriately?

2. How do you consider the impact of this group of students' actions on the self-identified Indigenous students in the school, who are not a visible minority, and who may have witnessed the name-calling?

3. What are your next steps with the students who were doing the name-calling? What process should be followed? What communication will there be with their parents and when?

4. On the topic of Indigenous Inherent Rights and Human Rights, what additional learning needs to take place in the students' classes, in the school as a whole?
