

WAGING PEACE

"When I looked at this group, I said to myself, What in heaven's name have you allowed yourself to walk into?"

-Edy Guy-François, principal of Caledonia Junior High

At Caledonia Junior High—like at so many schools—students and teachers live in an environment of disrespect and potential danger. Enter Edy Guy-François, Caledonia's fifth principal in four years.

At first, Edy despairs. Then, drawing on her own experience as a kid headed for trouble, she resolves to change the school. Tough and uncompromising, Edy tempers her discipline with compassion. She comes down hard on kids who break the rules but also encourages a new peer mediation program, institutes monthly dances and celebrates with a wild winter carnival.

The results are tangible and nearly immediate. And then budget cuts threaten the gains.

Waging Peace looks beyond the sensational headlines on school violence to offer real solutions. The film shows the hard work that goes into turning a troubled school around. It lets us know how students *really* see school and demonstrates the positive effects of trusting teens and giving them some responsibility.

Waging Peace is the first of a series of two films. The second, **Learning Peace**, follows a year at Annapolis Elementary School, which instituted an anti-violence program.

Director: Teresa MacInnes

Producers: Peter d'Entremont (Triad Films), Kent Martin (NFB)

Part 1

33 minutes

Order number: C9101 173



Closed captioned. A decoder is required.

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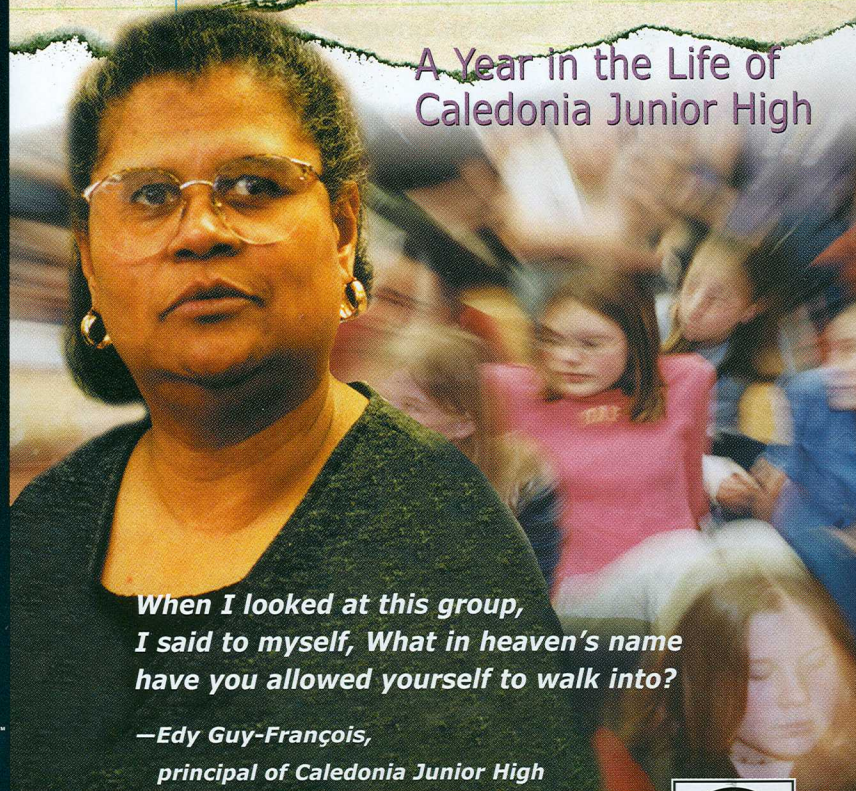
WAGING PEACE

Part 1



WAGING PEACE

A Year in the Life of
Caledonia Junior High



*When I looked at this group,
I said to myself, What in heaven's name
have you allowed yourself to walk into?*

—Edy Guy-François,
principal of Caledonia Junior High

Classroom Edition Part 1



A National Film Board of Canada Release

Introduction

In **Waging Peace**, a junior high school in Nova Scotia transforms its culture from one where the threat of violence seems quite real to one of peace. The transformation involves three distinct groups. First, there is the school administration, headed by principal Edy Guy-François. Edy shows great emotional strength. She provides initiative and helps her teachers deal with the changes necessary to turn Caledonia Junior High into a peaceful school. A group of teachers skeptical about the changes forms the second group. The difficulties these teachers experience show how entrenched school cultures can become, and how strongly they can resist change. The third group the film highlights is the students. Many of them had, during elementary school, heard stories of violence, intimidation, and harassment at Caledonia. These stories can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

While this two-video set is intended for use with students, it is important for teachers and school administrators to acknowledge that they, like their students, may harbour feelings of isolation and alienation. It is not reasonable to ask educators to provide safe environments for their students when they themselves do not feel safe.

Although **Waging Peace** deals with a junior high school, it is just as relevant for any secondary school. In order to use the video effectively, teachers should give some thought to the nature of the teenage years—a period of excitement and risk-taking. Adolescents tend to feel divided in loyalty between family and peers in a struggle to belong. As a result, teens form (or join) cliques in an attempt to find their own niche. **Waging Peace** depicts a number of student cliques at Caledonia Junior High; they are based on socioeconomic status, race, traditional masculine ideology, type of dress, and academic achievement. From 'the nerds' to 'the loners,' the video portrays how student groups take control of various areas of the school as a means of self-preservation.

In **Waging Peace**, Caledonia students discuss their frustration with their feelings of powerlessness when it comes to changing the culture of their school. A student survey indicated that students did not believe raising their concerns with the school administration or teachers would be of any help. Without a voice, the students tended to settle their differences through the use of force. The 'eye for an eye' mindset became the modus operandi of the student body, fuelling an acrimonious school climate.

Pre-Viewing Activity

Prior to showing the video, the classroom teacher may wish to organize the students into small groups, or to present the following questions to the whole class for discussion:

- What would a peaceful school look like?
- Do you feel we have a peaceful school? Why do you feel this way?
- Have you ever felt alone in this school? If yes, what was that like? Were you able to do anything about it?
- Do students in our school belong to certain groups? What do you have to do to be a member of a certain group?
- Are you a member of a certain group? What do you have to do to belong?
- If our school is not peaceful, what could we do to make it so?

The teacher must present these questions in a calm and non-judgmental manner. The students must feel free to discuss their thoughts. The teacher must give credence to every voice in the room. In the process, teachers may find themselves getting in touch with their own inner voice.

Some students may feel that their voices have been silent or silenced. They may feel more comfortable meeting privately with their teacher after class. They should be encouraged to do so; it is important that all voices be heard.

If the video is shared with other classes in the school, those classes should be afforded the opportunity to share their thoughts with each other. Of course, the staff at the school should participate in a similar process and ask the same questions of themselves.

Post-Viewing Activity

After the students have viewed **Waging Peace** with their teacher[s], the following questions could be posed to either small groups or to the whole group:

- What did you think of the video?
- Were there people in the video who stood out for you? Who were they and what do you remember about them?

- Do you think Caledonia Junior High School is on its way to becoming a peaceful school? Why or why not?
- What did the school do to make itself more peaceful?
- Are there things happening at Caledonia Junior High School that have also occurred at our school? What are they?
- Is there a need for peer mediation at our school? If so, where would we start?

Once again, the students must feel free to discuss their thoughts as the teacher continues to listen non-judgmentally. An opportunity must be provided for all students to express themselves, either in the whole group, in small groups, or individually.

If students from other classes are shown the video, there should be an opportunity for those classes to come together to discuss. And the school staff could also participate in a similar process.

After seeing **Waging Peace**, students may wish to embark on a peaceful school mission. An endless stream of activities could emerge: story writing, class plays, public speaking opportunities, art displays, creative dance, song composition, guest speakers, and celebrations of acts of kindness at the school. Perhaps the school could produce its own video promoting peaceful ways and invite their school community to a showing. Sharing their personal video with other schools and school districts could serve as a vehicle for the students and the school staff to extend their conversations on creating peaceful schools. The possibilities are endless.

Additional Resources

Videos from the NFB

Learning Peace (2002, Order# C9101 205): The companion film to **Waging Peace**, about how an elementary school that has fostered a climate of peace struggles to maintain it.

ShowPeace Series (2000, Order# 193C0000 090): Bestselling three-part series of humorous animated films on conflict resolution.

Colour Blind (1999, Order # C9199 233): Bestselling anti-racism video for teens.

Waging Peace

Director/ Writer:
Teresa MacInnes

Cinematographer:
Kent Nason

Sound Recordist:
Arthur McKay

Editor:
Peter Giffen

Original Music:
Steven Naylor

Narrator:
Tara Doyle

Producers:
Kent Martin
(NFB)
Peter d'Entremont
(Triad Films)

Executive Producer:
Sally Bochner

Order Number:
C9101 173

Running Time:
33 minutes



Taking Appropriate Actions Series (1998, Order # C9198 003): Bestselling two-video package that addresses inappropriate behaviour and sexual harassment in schools.

Someone To Talk To (1996, Order # C9196 063): A portrait of peer mediation and mediators at two high schools.

Playing Fair Series (1993, Order # C9191 131): An award-winning series of three short films about racism, respect and equality.

(For more NFB titles, or to order in Canada, call 1-800-267-7710 or visit www.nfb.ca/store)

In Print

Adams, Hetty. *Peace in the Classroom*. Peguis Publishers Ltd, 1994. (A complete peace education program for K-6.)

Carr, Rey and Greg Saunders. *The Peer Counselling Starter Kit*. Peer Systems Consulting Group, 1979. (A comprehensive peer training program.)

Sheanh, Gerry. *Helping Kids Deal with Conflict*. Peguis Publishers Ltd, 1996. (A guide to the role of teachers and parents in creating a safe environment.)

Online

Evergreen:

www.evergreen.ca

A foundation that helps promote positive school environments by naturalizing grounds with gardens.

League of Peaceful Schools:

www.leagueofpeacefulschools.ns.ca

A network that empowers schools to create a culture of peace.

Safe & Healthy Schools:

www.safehealthyschools.org

Lesson plans and resources.

www.nfb.ca