

HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

Equitable and Inclusive Education Best Practices

At the Upper Grand DSB, we work collectively to ensure all are welcomed, included and valued. As a system we know that equity and inclusion are valuable contributors to overall student success. As a community we are committed to ensuring that all students are engaged and feel welcomed and included in every aspect of school life.

Why is this important?

When choosing a costume for Halloween, be mindful of the way your choices impact those around you. Ensure that your costume choice does not dehumanize any one group that experiences oppression due to systemic barriers.

It is important to note that in compliance with **Ontario's Human Rights Code**, The Code prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area.

Some of the protected areas include, but are not limited to: Ancestry, Colour, Race, Ethic Origin, Place of Origin, Creed, Disability, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

Impact Over Intent

Concerns arise when people consider using characteristics, stereotypes and stigmas of a culture – clothing, accessories, skin color, and/or religion – and replicating them into a costume. Consider impact over intent.

Whether it is intentional or not, wearing certain costumes has real consequences and negatively impacts the people that deal with this kind of discrimination on a daily basis.

Safe and Inclusive

It is important to keep Halloween safe and inclusive by leaving culturally insensitive, racist and sexist stereotypes out.

Protecting and upholding the human rights and dignities of all individuals is a shared responsibility and choosing a costume that is offensive, hurtful or potentially harassing and/or discriminatory in nature goes against our policies.

Culture is not a costume. Trying on another race, culture or identity contributes to stereotypes and causes real harm to communities that have been historically marginalized and who continue to face systemic oppression today.

Gender Identity is not a costume. The transgender community faces real harm on a daily basis. Should you choose to dress as the opposite gender, consider whether you are mocking gender traits or enforcing harmful gender stereotypes.

Ask yourself:

- Does this costume make fun of human traits, identities, cultures, or race?
- Does this costume reduce culture or identity to stereotypes?
- Who might be harmed by my choice of costume?
- Is this costume depicting and perpetuating a stereotype or stigma associated with a particular race, culture, gender, ability or religion?
- Does this costume include a replication of a garment that is a significant component of a particular religion or culture of which I do not identify with?
- Is this costume depicting a historical time-period where that look/costume is now considered offensive and discriminatory?
- Does this costume represent elements of a culture or cultural practice that is being commoditized for consumption?
- Can I confidently say that this costume choice would not be considered offensive to a particular race, ethnic origin, gender or religion?

Costume ideas should avoid the following:

(Please note that this is not an exhaustive list)

Any cultural stereotype.

Blackface

The Covid-19 pandemic

A person with differing abilities

Animal cruelty

A prisoner

People with mental illness.

Culturally specific references: e.g. Day of the Dead, Hula

Depictions of violence

Anything transphobic

Anything mocking gender identity

Body objectification

Anything trivializing

Body Shaming

Individuals experiencing homelessness

Remember: Halloween can be a time for fun. Think critically and creatively when choosing a costume that honours the dignity of each human person, so that everyone can enjoy themselves.