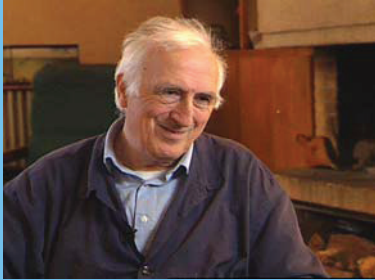


# belonging

THE SEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE



*A documentary  
film about the  
social vision of  
Jean Vanier*



*“We may think our deepest need is to be loved.  
Jean Vanier argues that even deeper  
and more universal is our desire to belong.”*

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

for Discussion Version

Revised 2012





# ***BELONGING: The Search for Acceptance***

*A documentary film about the social vision of Jean Vanier*



*"We may think our deepest need is to be loved. Jean Vanier argues that even deeper and more universal is our desire to belong."*



Written by Beth Porter, M.A. and Greg Rogers, M.Ed.

This guide accompanies the discussion version of the film *Belonging: The Search for Acceptance* (Windborne Productions). This version of the original 50-min. DVD is formatted in six segments. Copies of this guide and of the DVD, either discussion version or original version, may be obtained from L'Arche Canada: [education@larche.ca](mailto:education@larche.ca), 1-800-571-0212 or 905-770-7696 ext. 108.

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***This Teacher's Guide*** supports curriculum topics related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Tolerance, Respect and Human and Societal Behaviour. It is a revised and updated version of the 2003 "Study Guide" which was evaluated and recommended by Curriculum Services Canada (CSC).

**This kit (film and guide) is useful for Implementing curriculum in several secondary level disciplines:** Social Studies, Contemporary History, Civics, Guidance, Leadership, Family Life, Character Education, Philosophy, and World Religions.



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## INTRODUCTION TO

# *Belonging*

When Canadian filmmaker Karen Pascal of Windborne Productions travelled to France to meet **Jean Vanier**, soon after the 2001 attacks of 9/11, she planned to make a film about *him*, but *he* wanted to make a film about what he said is the most important issue facing humanity today—***Belonging***. The outcome is a fast-paced, intense and challenging film essay that speaks to us today as much as it did when first released in 2003. It is *our* contemporary history, and it illustrates for us the context in which so much has changed in our global society in the past decade.

Since its release, the *Belonging: The Search for Acceptance* Kit (film and teacher's guide) has been welcomed by educators across Canada and beyond. It is excellent front material for several disciplines. Alberta Education has created an online Learn Alberta resource for Social Studies on Jean Vanier that includes five of the six segments of the film and the guide. While the Kit has especially found a place in secondary school Civics, Leadership and World Religions courses, it has also been used in Grade 6 Social Studies and in Family Life courses. As well, instructors in university faculties of education use it with teacher candidates as part of their foundations training.

The film essay develops the theme of belonging from many angles, drawing upon the social vision of Jean Vanier and including comments from other respected thinkers and the first-hand experiences of a wide variety of individuals. The theme of respect and appreciation for diversity is strong. The film probes the relationship between personal identity, role, and knowing oneself; and it examines experiences of belonging and alienation in school and work environments, in community, in family and marriage, among refugees, and in the broader global society in which we live. The message of the film is powerful and provokes deep thinking about the student's personal and spiritual growth.

### ***Using this Guide and Planning Class Time***

This guide addresses issues of leadership and community-building in schools. It invites students to grow in self-knowledge and as responsible citizens. The intent is to help viewers reflect at a personal, community and global level. **Part A** contains questions on each of the six segments of the film. Parts B, C and D offer questions for personal reflection, classroom or group activities and inquiry or major research assignments. **Three appendices** provide additional questions (i) for leadership programs and for situations where only a short discussion is possible, (ii) for retreat days, and (iii) for media literacy. Material from this guide has been adapted by school boards for Professional Development or Teacher Enrichment days with a focus on creating a school culture of inclusion, on overcoming bullying, and on meaningful work.

The film is 50 minutes in length, divided into six segments of 6 to 12 minutes each. If possible we suggest showing all six segments together to begin with. Then we recommend selecting segments and using the film over a number of class sessions, because the content is quite dense and the theme of belonging is treated from a different perspective in each segment. We indicate some likely answers in italics for some of the questions.

Note: If you are using the original version of the film, you will find the start point of each segment indicated in the Table of Contents after the segment length.



## ***Jean Vanier***

***A Young Person who Followed his Heart;  
A Man who is Changing our World!***

**Jean Vanier** has made a difference in the lives of countless people around the world—those with disabilities, their families, and the many young people who have chosen to help in L’Arche communities.

Jean was born in Geneva, Switzerland, where his father was serving as a Canadian diplomat.\* In the 1930’s, the family moved to England where Jean attended school until he was eleven.

Because of his father’s job, Jean lived in many different countries. The family, which would include five children, moved often but, like their parents, they kept close ties with Canada and grew up speaking both French and English.

At the outbreak of World War II, Jean’s father was posted to Paris. In 1940, when the armies of Nazi Germany were poised to attack Paris, the Vanier family fled the city and headed south to the port of Bordeaux. They managed to escape on an overcrowded refugee boat bound for England. This was Jean’s first glimpse of the appalling situation faced by many refugees.

The Vaniers returned home to Quebec where Jean attended school. War-time Europe had made a strong impression on him and he wanted to help out. He was just 13 when he followed his heart and secretly prepared an application to England’s Royal Naval College and asked his father’s permission to go. His father’s answer was simple: “I trust you,” he said. It was a remarkable response considering that his son would have to cross the Atlantic during the full heat of the war when many ships were being torpedoed, and would then start a new life far from home. Jean has often spoken of the importance to him of his father’s trust at that time and how, later, it helped him to trust himself.



*Jean at 13, leaving by train to  
Halifax and then England,  
1942.*



*Jean as a young naval officer.*

Jean became a naval cadet and an officer in the British Navy and, later, the Canadian Navy. He was well known for his sense of fun and also for his deep concern for those serving under him. He knew about the suffering life can hold. For instance, at 17, on leave in Paris after the war, he accompanied his mother to the railway station to meet starving Holocaust survivors and was shocked at the cruel things human beings can do to each other. In his early 20s, he decided to leave the navy and return to Paris to begin university studies in philosophy. He received his doctorate, then taught philosophy at St. Michael's College in Toronto.

Still searching for a career that would fulfill him both intellectually and spiritually, he visited his spiritual mentor, Father Thomas Philippe. At the time, Father Thomas was a chaplain at an institution for people with developmental disabilities near Paris. Jean was disturbed to see the dreadful conditions in which these people were living—locked away from the rest of society, and leading dismal, unproductive lives. “There must be a better way for them to live,” Father Thomas remarked. Jean was up to the challenge. Once again, he chose to follow his heart and took a risk.



*Jean and others by the first L'Arche house, in Trosly-Breuil, France, 1964.*

In 1964, he bought a small house in the French village of Trosly-Breuil and invited two men from an institution to share it with him. He called the house “L'Arche,” after Noah's Ark. Almost immediately, young people began to come from Canada and other parts of the world to help and share life in this new kind of community. Jean knew that in giving of themselves both the young people who came to help (the “assistants”) and those with disabilities would be enriched.

He also knew that they would form life-changing friendships. In L'Arche, each person is recognized and helped to bring his or her gifts. Many assistants say that their experience in a L'Arche community has helped them grow personally and find meaning and direction in life.

Today, there are 135 L'Arche communities in 37 countries on five continents. Jean also co-founded an international support movement for families of people with disabilities. It is called Faith and Light and it now includes over 1700 groups around the world. Jean Vanier still lives in the first L'Arche community, in France. Now in his 80s, he travels less but continues to write, to give talks and retreats, and to meet with the many people who come to seek out his wisdom. Many of these are young people.



*Friends celebrating in a  
L'Arche home in Canada.*

Jean Vanier is a leader in highlighting the plight of those who are easily marginalized—not only those with disabilities but also those who are prisoners, homeless or elderly. Maclean's magazine has called him “a Canadian who inspires the world.”

\*In the 1960's, Jean's father, Georges Vanier, became a much-loved Governor-General of Canada. Georges and his wife, Pauline, founded the Vanier Institute for the Family and championed other humanitarian causes. Many schools and other public places are named after Jean's parents or after Jean himself, a sign of the valuable contribution they have made to Canada.

*-You can learn more about Jean Vanier and L'Arche on-line:*

*www.jean-vanier.org; www.larche.ca*

*www.larche.org (L'Arche International);*

*www.larcheusa.org*

*-Check your library for books by Jean Vanier.*

*-You can listen to Jean Vanier's CBC Massey Lectures  
("Becoming Human") on the CBC Radio One website  
archives.*





## **PART A**

### **SEGMENT ONE:**

## ***Introduction to Jean Vanier and the theme of Belonging***

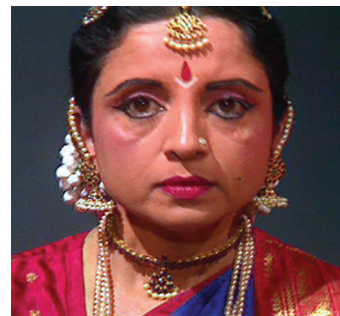
**PROMPT:** Who is Jean Vanier?

*See the biographical sketch at the beginning of this guide.  
Invite a pair of students to do a short presentation on Jean Vanier.*

**PROMPT:** What does it mean to belong? Where do you feel you belong?

*View Segment One or the entire film*

1. **How has our world changed since 9/11?**  
*The film says that in North America our “twin paradigms of security and stability have crumbled,” and that “we long to be connected and to find meaning.”*
2. a) **What is at the core of Vanier’s new vision for our world?**  
*Vanier says, “Every human being is important.”*  
b) **What is the message at the core of your vision for our world?**
3. **The film says that the “need to belong” is foundational to personhood and is “deeper than the need to be loved.” Discuss an aspect of your own experience that would confirm or negate this view.**
4. Jean Vanier says, “The history of humanity is one group breaking off from another group, creating their own rituals, creating their own language, and so on . . . and then wars.”
  - a) **Do you agree or disagree with Vanier’s statement?**
  - b) **Does his statement hold true at the level of your school community?**



5. When discussing prejudice, John Dalla Costa says that human beings always draw lines, and that the more we draw lines “the less we become as human beings.”
- a) **How do you understand this statement?**
  - b) **Give an example that proves or disproves his point.**
  - c) **On the personal level, what enrichment do you gain from knowing people who are different from you?**
6. a) **Define the term “culture.” What does Vanier say a culture gives to us?**  
*Jean Vanier says that culture offers (1) a place of belonging and (2) a place of security (3) a way for weak and strong to be together (4) opportunities for celebration.*
- b) **In what ways does your school community meet the four criteria that Vanier suggests?**



7. a) **Who is Patrick, and what is his story?**
- b) **The film shows Patrick’s birthday party in the L’Arche community where he lives. Explain how celebrating Patrick’s birthday benefits both Patrick and the people who are with him.**

8. At Patrick's party you may have noticed that there were people (L'Arche assistants) who appear to have come from different parts of the world, as well as people with various kinds of disabilities, and young and older people.



- a) What do you think it would be like to live together in such a diverse group?
  - b) What might help you to get along together in such a community?
  - c) What does Vanier say helps create community?  
*Vanier refers to celebrating together and laughing together, doing mimes and having fun together.*
  - d) What builds community in your school?
9. a) How does Vanier say we destroy community?
- b) What destroys community in your school?
  - c) What destroys community on a global scale?





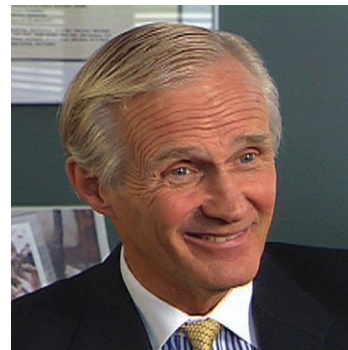


**SEGMENT TWO:**

## ***Belonging and Work: Am I What I Do?***

**PROMPT:** How would you answer the question “Who are you?”

1. “We human beings have a craving for the infinite— infinite power, infinite pleasure. We are never, never satisfied with the finite.” (Jean Vanier)  
**Do you agree or disagree with Vanier’s statement? Use examples to support your position.**
2. Businessman Eric Barton says that eight out of ten apparently successful business people don’t know where their life is going. **If this is true for business people, would the figure be different for students? Discuss this statement in light of your sense of direction in life and the sense of direction that your friends have.**
3. The following people relate stories of how they realized that in some way they just did not belong.
  - a) **Briefly describe each of their stories:**
    - i) **Eric Barton** (Chairman, Millar Dallas Inc.) . . . .
    - ii) **Don Champagne** (Executive Vice-President, A.J.E. Productions) . . . .
    - iii) **Wendy Peacock** (Businesswoman and marketing manager) . . . .
    - iv) **Jonathan Ison** (Promotions and Marketing Manager) . . . .
  - b) **What is your story about school and belonging?** (When do you feel you belong with your friends? When don’t you feel you belong? What will you tolerate to ensure you are included? What won’t you tolerate to be included?)



Eric Barton



Wendy Peacock



4. “It used to be the case that people would find their sense of identity and belonging and who they felt comfortable with at their workplace.” (David Lyon)

- a) How do you get your sense of identity?
- b) What are some of the present trends in the workplace?
- c) How might these trends affect one’s sense of identity and belonging?
- d) What knowledge, skills and values do students need in order to prepare them for a workplace where these trends exist?

5. Mary Jo Leddy tells the story of a man who always carried an empty briefcase and used it as a pillow.



- a) Why did he carry the empty briefcase?
- b) Leddy says, “We all do it.” Provide examples of an “empty briefcase” in your life and in the lives of people you know.

*Examples might include a cell phone or an ipod or the latest electronic device, having a twitter account, a car, popular brands of clothing, preferred foods or drinks.*

- 6. Jean Vanier says that power and strength separate people and that weakness and cries for help bring people together. Have you found this to be true in your life? Explain.
- 7. Give examples of how advertisers and marketers use the concepts of belonging and identity to persuade consumers to buy their products.
- 8. To what degree is your own identity and belonging shaped by marketers? Is this always a negative thing?
- 9. People often feel lonely in a crowd. Explain why this is so using specific examples.

10. Vanier says that in order to belong in the fullest sense we have to know how to be alone and how to “live our loneliness.” What do you think he means by this statement?
11. Vanier says that competition, at its best, can stretch people. Competition can also lead to situations where others are pushed down.
  - a) Where are you involved in competition?
  - b) Give examples where competition leads either to stretching oneself or to pushing others down.
  - c) Is it possible to be competitive and compassionate at the same time? If so, where in your classroom, your team, or your school community do you see this happening?
12. Complete the following metaphors using ideas from the film as well as your own ideas.
  - a) Society is similar to a pyramid in that it . . .
  - b) Society is similar to a body in that it . . .
13. We hear Bruce Cockburn singing:  
*I've proved who I am so many times,  
The magnetic strip's worn thin.  
And each time I was someone else,  
And everyone was taken in.*
  - a) What is Cockburn's message in this song?
  - b) In what ways is this message mirrored in your life?
  - c) Who are some other artists who sing about this question of identity?





### **SEGMENT THREE:**

## ***Belonging and Exclusion***

*Note to Teachers:* This section is very powerful in its presentation of how young people are included or excluded. You may want to be aware of students who could be particularly affected by this.

**PROMPT:** What does it feel like to be on the outside of a group?

1. “For a baby, bonding is essential.”
  - a) What can people do to ensure that a baby bonds with those around her/him?
  - b) What happens when such bonding does not occur?
  - c) Describe a personal experience with a baby where you witnessed the type of bonding discussed in the film.
2. In the film, a vice-principal says, “Self-confidence is the best thing you can give a child.”
  - a) What do you understand self-confidence to mean?
  - b) Who in your school experience or elsewhere has helped you grow in self-confidence?
  - c) How does a safe learning environment contribute to being successful?
  - d) How is a safe learning environment connected to being allowed to take risks and make mistakes?
3. One of the teachers says, “The social codes in the classroom are intricate and complex.... The children decide what the rules are and who is different....”
  - a) Is this true in elementary school? Give examples.
  - b) Is it also true at the high school level? Give examples from your own school to support your opinion.



4. Every human being has different abilities—areas of strength and areas where they need support.
  - a) **What would other people say are your gifts and talents?**
  - b) **Identify areas in your life where you need support.**
  - c) Vanier says, “The weak person reveals that it’s okay for me to be weak too.” **Reflect on your own experience with someone who needs support. Are you drawn to this person or are you tempted to bully or exclude him or her?**
  - d) **Why do you think you respond in this way?**
  - e) **Are there ways in which you are helped by the person who is weaker?**
  
5. In the sequence on bullying, a student, Sean, says that he does not agree with the once popular saying, “Sticks and stones may break your bones, but names [or words] will never hurt you.”
  - a) **Sean talks about being called a girl. Why is this a form of bullying?**
  - b) **How can you be sure that name-calling is not bullying?**



*Whether or not name-calling is bullying depends on the context and how the receiver hears the name-calling. The latter is not in our control, and regardless of what the person being called a name says or how the person acts, we cannot know for certain whether he or she feels hurt. Name-calling is bullying when the recipient is offended or feels hurt. It is the responsibility of the speaker to ensure his or her language does not offend the recipient. The speaker must also carefully consider the effect that name-calling has on those who overhear it. (You may be interested in this online resource: [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)).*

6. Bullying is a way for the aggressor to deny that you belong to the group.

- a) **In your opinion, why do some people bully others?**
- b) **In the school community, have you witnessed bullying? (i) Have you supported a bully? (ii) Have you been a by-stander when someone was being bullied? (iii) Have you assisted someone who was being bullied? (iv) Have you been a bully? (v) How do you feel about the role you adopted in each of these situations?**
- c) One of the speakers says, “Unless we intervene, the schoolyard bully could become the boardroom [or corporate] bully.” **What do you think he means?**

7. Melanie says, “if you’re not in the group, you’re the one being made fun of.”

- a) **Is this true in your experience?**
- b) **Is it true in your observation of your school environment?**
- c) **When do you feel you belong with your friends? When don’t you feel that you belong?**



8. One of the professors says, “Usually, if people have friends they are less likely to be bullied.” **As a leader, what can you do to include students who may be bullied or excluded?**
9. In another film (*Choosing Our Future*) Vanier comments that bullies need to discover that “their deepest identity is one of love and not of power.” **How can bullies be helped to discover this?**

10. Leaders often break with the norms of their community to forge a new path. In doing so they risk their sense of belonging.
  - a) **Brainstorm examples of leaders who have done this.**
  - b) **What qualities do leaders need to help them do this?**
11. For personal reflection: Jean Vanier says, “To love someone is not just to hold onto them and protect them but to reveal to them that they are precious, and to say, have trust in yourself, you can grow, you’ve got gifts, you are special.” **Are there any people you love in this way? Are there people in your life who love you in this way? Write about these people and their impact on your life or yours on their life. You may want to illustrate your journal entry by adding photos or artwork.**

**SEGMENT FOUR:**

## ***Stories of Refugees: Uprootedness and New Belonging***

**PROMPT:** Have you ever been uprooted or do you know someone who has? What does being uprooted feel like?

1. Vanier says that an “artisan of peace” has the strength to welcome the enemy. He went on to say the enemy may be within one’s family setting.
  - a) **What qualities does an artisan of peace possess?**  
*Ideas may include knowing one’s identity, belonging to a group or having friends who share one’s values, and having a spiritual rootedness—Vanier speaks of “praying to have the strength to welcome the enemy.”*
  - b) **What would strengthen someone who desires to be such an artisan of peace?**
2. Benjamin Santamaria, a refugee from Mexico, and Felix Opio, a refugee from Uganda, talk about how they were threatened and mistreated in their countries of origin.
  - a) **What is a refugee?**
  - b) **In what ways can the experience of being a refugee be compared to being bullied?**  
*Both the person bullied and the refugee experience being seen as “different,” being isolated, excluded, perhaps called names or labelled for their point of view or values or appearance or accent, perhaps being harmed physically.*



3. **What does the film suggest is important in order to help refugees feel like they belong in Canada?**  
*The film showed a refugee walking with a Canadian friend, refugees eating together with Canadians. Mary Jo Leddy spoke about the slowness of the application process and their having no rights.*
4. **a) Why did Benjamin Santamaria, a teacher, have to flee his country?**  
**b) What other professionals tend to be at risk when an oppressive regime is in power?**
5. **Jehad Aliweiwi says “If you were an Arab or a Muslim, or a person who appears to be an Arab or a Muslim, reality came crashing after September 11<sup>th</sup>.”**  
**a) What does he mean?**  
**b) How has life changed for people who are or look like Arabs or Muslims since 9/11.**  
**c) Maher Arar is one example of a Canadian who suffered from being falsely accused. What happened to him? Are there other similar cases?**  
**d) Do you know anyone personally who has been affected by this prejudice? Explain.**
6. **Jean Vanier says, “We have to all become conscious that there is good and evil in each one of us, and the whole question for a human being is, how to help people rise up in goodness, what do I need to rise up in goodness and what are the factors that make me fearful and push people away and crush people.”**  
**a) Do you think Jean’s comment that there is good and evil in everyone is true of you?**  
**b) What is it that makes people feel they must crush others? (e.g., fear of difference, unfamiliarity.)**  
**c) What do you do to help goodness “rise up” in yourself, especially when you are in challenging situations?**

7. Mary Jo Leddy says, “We have to welcome the world.” Otherwise “we will end up at war with each other.”
  - a) **To what extent does your school “welcome the world?”**
  - b) **To what extent are students ending up “at war with each other?”**
  - c) **What steps can be taken to maximize “welcome” and minimize “war?”**
8. Vanier thinks of universalism as being proud of one’s own culture and language and at the same time being open to the culture of other people. **Do you embrace Vanier’s idea of universalism? In what ways?**



Mary Jo Leddy





**SEGMENT FIVE:**

## ***Understanding Conflict as a Search For Belonging***

**PROMPT:** In what ways do you think conflict can be a search for belonging?

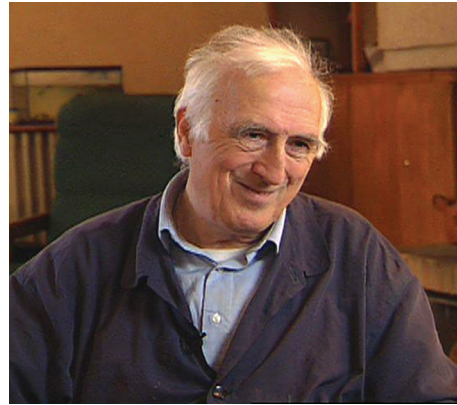
1. Terry LeBlanc talks about the plight of aboriginal people. What are some of the injustices he is referring to? What steps can be taken to redress these injustices?
2. Using the metaphor of society as a home, Terry LeBlanc says that aboriginal people have been obliged to live in “the closet,” while “the party” goes on around them.
  - a) **What do you think he means by this?**
  - b) **What other minority groups may feel they must stay in “the closet?”**
  - c) **What can you and your friends do to help others feel they belong at “the party?”**
3. Sociologist David Lyons says that the quest for belonging cannot be separated from justice.
  - a) **Do you agree or disagree with this statement?**
  - b) **Besides the right to life, liberty, food, shelter, etc., is belonging or love also a right?**  
*Students may wish to refer to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*
  - c) **What key elements in a society increase social justice?**  
*Students may mention, for example, a well-functioning democratic/responsible government, good laws and a just legal system with fair appeals processes, protections for human rights, the social safety net, universal access to good health care.*



Terry LeBlanc

- d) **What elements in a society work against social justice?**
  - e) **In Canada today, what are examples of social justice issues?**  
*Students may mention, for example, First Nations' rights and land claims, poverty and homelessness.*
4. **In your school community are there rules to ensure justice or fairness when it comes to deciding who will have certain privileges, belong to certain teams or clubs, or participate in certain programs? What happens when there is injustice?**  
*Students may conclude that in a community, injustice destroys unity and leads to resentment and anger.*
5. There are many territorial conflicts in our world today—between Israelis and Palestinians, Indians and Pakistanis, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, various groups and countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and sometimes, aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people in North America.
- a) **What hope is there that these territorial conflicts can ever be resolved?**
  - b) **In these conflicts each group has its own story and perspective. One speaker says, “The challenge is how to make people recognize that there is another way of belonging than just building my own little borders.”**
    - i) **Do you think people can live with a sense of belonging without having “borders?”**
    - ii) **Canadians are admired for having some success at meeting the challenge of living well together in an ethnically diverse society. In what ways can this Canadian experience be shared with other areas of the world?**
6. Another speaker asks, “Is belonging simply a matter of trying to be with those with whom we think we have some similarities, or is it a matter of working out our differences by accepting and learning to belong together?” What is your view?

7. Jean Vanier says, “The unity of humanity is more precious today than any proving of anything.” In discovering this truth, he says, we also discover that “the heart of everything is forgiveness.” We come to see what is inside us that pushes the other. We discover that we’ve hurt each other and that we can forgive each other.



*Jean Vanier*

- a) **What are some conflicts in your own life or community? Describe what the “territorial borders” are in these conflicts. Which borders are put up by you, and which by others** (Note that “territory” can take various forms - for instance, a coveted job or responsibility, or a relationship, or a physical space.)
- b) i) **Describe a situation where a conflict involving “territory” has been resolved.**
- ii) **What needed to take place in the resolution process?**
- iii) **Did the elements Vanier mentions - the unity of humanity and the need for forgiveness enter into the resolution?**

8. Jean Vanier describes human maturity as “the development of the intelligence in the service of love and humanity.”

- a) **What is service learning?**
- b) **How does service learning help you develop the kind of intelligence Jean talks about?**

9. **In the film you saw a group of women sewing the Quilt of Belonging. How does the image of working on the quilt represent the idea of belonging?**  
*See PART C (pages 33-34) for a note about the Quilt of Belonging and an activity for further developing the idea of a quilt.*





**SEGMENT SIX:**

## ***Belonging to Another***

*Note to Teachers:* There are questions on relationships and religion in this segment that may be more suitable for personal reflection than for group discussion.



**PROMPT: What are some challenges that come with belonging to another person or to a group of people?**

1. Christina deJong, a woman who has been separated from her husband for eight months, says, “You feel most alone when you are not understood.” **Give an example from your own experience when you have felt alone and you have not been understood.**
2. Jean Vanier implies that when people are lonely or in emotional pain they need others who say to them, “I’m not frightened of you and I’ll walk with you.”
  - a) **Are there people in your experience who do this for you? For others?**
  - b) **Why do you think we tend to feel uncomfortable in front of (and may even try to avoid) other people who are in pain or lonely?**

*Students may note that we can feel powerless in front of what can’t be “fixed” and that this can be frightening, and also that we can be frightened because another’s pain or loneliness can remind us of our own fragility and that we too are vulnerable to pain and loneliness.*

3. Rabbi Dow Marmur says, "...religion gives a point of reference beyond the social into the theological."
  - a) **What does he mean?**
  - b) **How does this statement help us to think about belonging as a member of humankind?**
  - c) **Is what he says true for all religions?**
4.
  - a) **How does this section of the film elaborate on Jean Vanier's "new vision for our world?"**
  - b) **Give a brief summary of Vanier's "new vision for our world."**



*Jean and Patrick*



## PART B

### *Personal Reflection Questions*

Teachers please note: Students should have viewed the entire film before responding to the questions in Parts B, C, and D.

1. **Write a letter to Jean Vanier telling him about something in the film that was important to you and why it was important. Include anything else you would like to say to him. Be sure to introduce yourself in your first paragraph. Aim for a letter of one to three pages.**
2. **Is there anyone else in the film who you would like to have a conversation with? Who? What would you ask or say to this person?**

3. **Your Identity: An Exercise for Journaling or Personal Reflection.**

*Jean Vanier says you must know your own identity in order to listen to the identity of another. “It’s only when I know a bit who I am, that I can discover who your are”.*

**a) How do you understand this statement?**

**b) Who are you? (Describe your identity.)**

*Students may describe their identity in terms of their values, gifts, roles, family, choices they make when free of peer or family pressure . . . .*

**c) Sometimes we do thing—empty gestures—that don’t really align with our values. Sometimes we do or say things that have no real meaning behind them. For instance, we ask someone how they are, but we are not really interested. How will you know when your actions in the world express who you are and when they are empty gestures?**

**d) Often a sense of personal identity may depend on being better than someone else, or belonging to a group that is better than some other group. In what ways can you relate to this idea?**





- e) **What does it mean to you to be fully alive?**  
*(Vanier associates growing from closed-ness to openness with being “fully alive.”)*
- f) **Write a personal mission statement expressing your identity and your purpose in life.**  
*Examples: “I am a student with a rich cultural background who respects other people and hopes to influence our world in positive ways.”  
 Or “I am a team player who really cares about other human beings and tries to make sure others feel included.”*



#### **4. An art project on personal identity: The Symbol of the Tree**

- a) At Patrick’s birthday party, there is a mime in which two individuals are a tree. When Jonathan and Anne Ison discuss their move to Tulsa, Oklahoma, we see a tree being uprooted. **Explain what trees symbolize in the film.**

*Students may note that our lives have roots in a particular place, family, culture....*

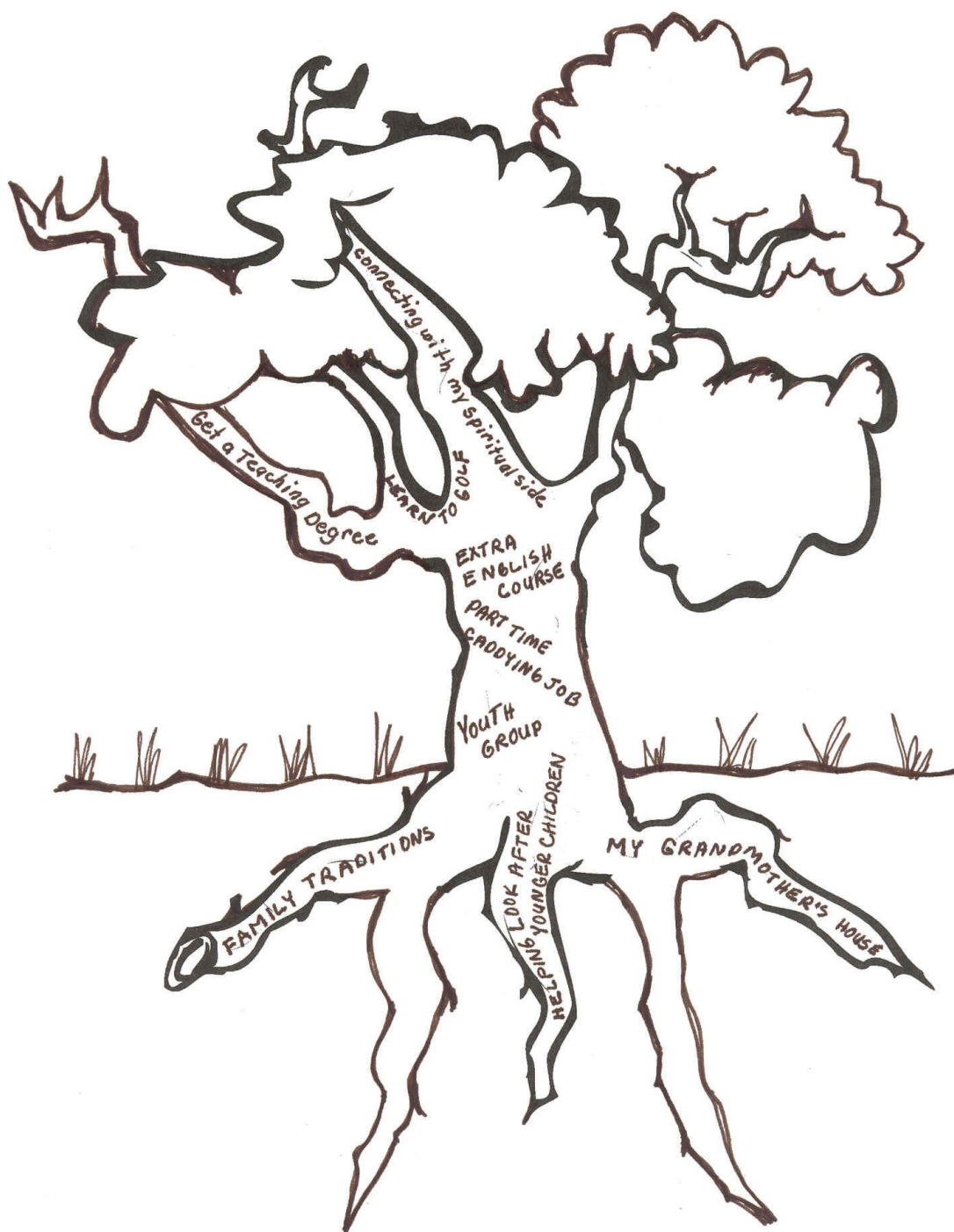
- b) You will need blank paper or poster board and something to draw with.

**Using the tree as a metaphor, draw yourself as a tree in the forest of this world. Label your roots to show what gives depth and stability to your life. Label your branches to show in what areas or directions you would like to grow (what your goals are), as you think about your future. Then, on the trunk write the elements in your life right now that are nourishing you so that you can grow and reach your goals. Look at the sample drawing of the tree on the next page for ideas.**

*The important thing is to keep our eyes on what we want to grow into. Do we want to grow in greater community, greater openness, greater compassion, greater listening, or do we want to just be a tree that’s more powerful, so that I’m the biggest tree and the best tree and all the other little trees are stupid?*

*Jean Vanier*

**SAMPLE DRAWING**





## PART C

# Community - Building Activities

Teachers please note: Students should have viewed the entire film before responding to the questions in Parts B, C, and D.

1. **Create slogans that describe a classroom where there is a strong sense of community.** These slogans might encourage a safe classroom learning environment and let everybody know that they belong. They would be suitable for placing on a banner over the entrance to a classroom. *(For example: “No mistakes; Only feedback here!” or “We value diversity.”)*
2. **Using Vanier’s list of the four benefits that culture offers--**
  - a place of belonging,
  - a place of security,
  - opportunities for celebration, and
  - a way for weak and strong to be together--**how could you or your student leadership team improve your school’s culture so that it is more of a culture of belonging?**
3. The Quilt of Belonging is an example of an art project that builds a sense of belonging and also *represents* belonging and community. **As a class or school, create your own “quilt of belonging” with each patch depicting the uniqueness of one individual and all the patches, when sewn together, representing a celebration of your diverse community. Squares may be decorated using various means including permanent markers. Alternatively, the class may choose to create a collage or even a video with the same goal in mind.**

**ABOUT THE QUILT OF BELONGING:** The idea of making a quilt to show respect for each individual was widely demonstrated a few years ago by the AIDS quilt in which each patch represented a person who had died. Esther Bryan had the idea of asking people from every First Nations group and from every country from which Canadians have emigrated to make a quilt square for a Quilt of Belonging. The quilt was taken across Canada so that many different people could work on it. It consists of over 200 squares. Today, the quilt continues to travel and be displayed in communities across the country. The following website tells of the quilt's development and shows many of the artistically designed quilt squares.  
<http://www.invitationproject.ca>

## PART D

### *Major Research Assignments*

Note to teachers: You and your students will want to choose among these questions. Most are suited to group work. Students should have viewed the entire film before responding to the questions in Parts B, C, and D.

1. **Research the “Roots of Empathy” program or another community-building program in your area.** What is it? When, why and by whom was it founded? How is it making a difference in people’s lives? (*Note to teacher: You may want to assign groups of students to various programs and projects in your area and ask them to report back to the class, giving a presentation that will be instructive for other class members. In the case of Roots of Empathy, a video conference with a class doing the program might be a possibility.*)
2. **Research what federal and provincial laws exist to deal with the following scenarios:**
  - a) **Someone paints a racist comment on a building.**
  - b) **Someone calls another employee in the workplace by a derogatory sexual or ethnic term.**
  - c) **An employer who wants to date an employee persists with the invitation and with sexual comments after the employee has refused.**
  - d) **A job application form asks applicants to give their ethnicity.**

*Your school board will have a race and ethnic relations policy document. Federal and provincial laws exist regarding hate crimes, discrimination, harassment and employees’ rights. Besides the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there is a Canadian Human Rights Act, and provinces and the federal government have Human Rights Commissions. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation is another resource.*





3. Javed Akbar of the Pickering Islamic Centre says “God’s intention is that we “reach out to the destitute, to the orphan, to the deprived and to the homeless...” and that “we can better serve God’s purposes in the wider world by reaching out to those who are different from us.” Social justice projects can provide common ground for people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds to meet.

**Research a project or an organization that is intentionally interfaith where people of different faiths work together for the good of others. Interview some of the people involved in this project or organization. Learn what attitudes and techniques help them to get along with those who are different from them in the project. Find out how working together and getting to know each other has changed them. An example could be an interfaith alliance. You may know of such an organization in your area. If not, use an online search of “interfaith” and a particular region or city to find such an organization.**

*Such organizations may focus on the environment, affordable housing, needs of homeless people, advocacy for those who have disabilities or on other social issues.*

### ***Questions related to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada***

4. **Research and describe the situation of First Nations people who live on reserves in Canada today. How is their situation different from Canadians who do not live on reserves? How are their rights different? What are some of the challenges and roadblocks they face?**



*Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo is one of many First Nations leaders who have advocated strongly for better schools on reserves.*

5. **Choose one issue of concern to one group of First Nations, Inuit, or Métis people (e.g., environmental concerns in northern Alberta or British Columbia or in the Arctic, schools or clean water on a specific reserve in Manitoba or Ontario). Describe the problem. Why has this become an issue of social justice? What should be done about it?**
6. **Research “Jordan’s Principle” and explain the story behind it. In what other matters has the sharing of jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments been problematic? Give an example of a problem this has created.) How would you resolve this issue? (e.g., disputes over paying for services such as hospitals and schools, differences in environmental priorities, disputes over resources and harvesting rights.)**

7. **What are some changes that the Aboriginal Rights Movement, the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and other self-advocacy organizations have achieved? What are some legislative changes that are still needed? In what ways can the (non-legally binding) UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signed by Canada in 2010, help to support these changes?**
8. **How and when did the Indian Residential School system operate in Canada? Why was it established? Who paid for it? Why were residential schools harmful to many of those who attended them? Why has the residential school experience been harmful to subsequent generations? What does the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission seek to achieve? What are some of its successes and limitations? Why do some First Nations people not support this commission?**

### *Questions related to People who have Disabilities*

9. The film shows people who live in Jean Vanier's first L'Arche community in France. When Vanier started L'Arche in 1964, most people with intellectual disabilities spent their entire lives in institutions, isolated from society. **Research the history of an institution near where you live that used to house—or maybe still houses—people who have intellectual disabilities.** What was life like there? If it is still open, how has life changed for the people who still live there? Where do most people who have intellectual disabilities live today?



What options are open to them for housing and for meaningful daytime activities or work? - What are some success stories? What are some challenges and some frustrations that still exist? (If your school has a community life-skills class you may be able to interview the teacher, a student, and a parent involved in this class.)

10. For small group work:\* In 2010, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Now it needs to be fully implemented in each province. **Find this Convention on the Internet and read it. Choose one or two items (clauses) in the Convention that are not yet fully implemented either in your school or by the town or city where you live.** Think about all the different ways in which your issue needs to be addressed. For example, wheelchair access includes not just a ramp but also such adaptations as elevator buttons low enough to be reached, automatic doors, wide doorways, a lower sink in washrooms... Find out if provincial legislation has been passed yet to ensure these clauses of the Convention are implemented? Inquire of your school or local leaders about plans to implement them. Prepare a report for your class that includes recommendations for actions that you and your fellow students could take.

*If your focus is in your school, meet with student leaders and administrators, and perhaps with school board trustees to request implementation. How might you collaborate in this? For example, if you chose accessibility for blind students, could you organize a group of readers to assist these students? If you chose sports accessibility for students who use wheelchairs, could you organize a fund-raiser to purchase equipment for a wheelchair basketball team? At the municipal level, request a meeting with your elected representative, conduct a letter-writing campaign, prepare and circulate a petition.*

\*If possible, include a person who has a physical or intellectual disability in your group. They will help you know where the problems exist.



***Questions related to the experience of Refugees and Immigrants, and to Canada's Refugee and Immigration Policies.***

**11. Research the Canadian Government's legislation regarding refugees.** What are the criteria used in deciding if someone can stay in Canada? Who applies these criteria and how are they applied? How long does it usually take for a refugee to find out whether he or she will be able to stay? What is life like for refugees while they are waiting? What rights do they have? What rights do they not have? What do you think of the way Canada handles refugees? What happens to those who are not accepted as refugees? Do you have suggestions for improving the ways Canada responds to refugee claimants? Last, in what ways do ordinary Canadians do a good job of welcoming refugees? *(Some faith groups sponsor refugees; volunteer organizations, such as Romero House and Matthew House, in cities across Canada, help them with settlement and legal processes.)*

*Many of our countries that have been created out of immigration have actually become very cold towards refugees.*

*John Della Costa*

**12. Interview someone from another country who has come to live in Canada in the past five years. This person may be a refugee or an immigrant. Tell their story.** Include information such as: What processes this person had to go through to come to Canada. How this person was welcomed (or not welcomed) on arrival? What was difficult or frustrating for this person in the procedures they went through to be accepted to stay in Canada. Did they feel that the process was fair? How could the process have been better? Have they found employment? Was it difficult to find employment? Were there other challenges that the person or their family needed to overcome? What opportunities have presented themselves in their new homeland? What do they enjoy most about Canada? What are the biggest challenges? At what point in their story, if any, did they begin to feel that they belonged in their new country? **If this question reflects your own reality or that of your family, write about or tell your own story.**

*(If you live in an area where there is no immigrant or refugee whom you can interview, answer question 11 or 13 instead.)*



- 13. Research Canada's Immigration Policy.** How has it changed over the years since the early 1960s? Who is encouraged to immigrate today, by this policy? Who is excluded? What economic factors influence immigration? What other factors influence immigration? When immigrants arrive, how are they helped? Are there differences in the amount of help available from province to province? What do you think of Canada's immigration policy today?



*Students will likely discover many changes since multiculturalism was established as Canadian policy. They will find a variety of factors that influence the likelihood of being accepted or even of being able to apply to immigrate to Canada—economic status in their home country (it costs to apply), age, education, profession, the political situation in their country of origin, but also prejudice against certain people—such as people with disabilities—or against certain countries. They will find regional differences within Canada in the amount of help available to learn English or French and to find employment in their field.*

- 14. Research human smuggling.** What is it? Where is it happening? Who is doing it? Give examples of attempts that have been made to smuggle people into Canada. What has happened to these people—and to the smugglers? Is it always wrong for a refugee to try to enter Canada in this way? How are those who enter Canada in this way especially vulnerable—either to government detention or to further victimization? If you were desperate to leave your home country, would you consider paying to be smuggled into Canada? Why or why not?

*Besides looking into legislation, students may want to consult non-governmental and advocacy organizations such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, and classic books on this topic, such as None is Too Many, by Irving Abella and Harold Troper, on the Canadian policy of refusing Jewish immigrants from Nazi Europe, and Mary Jo Leddy's At the Border Called Hope, on the stories and bureaucratic struggles of contemporary refugees.*



## *Appendix One*

***Questions for Leadership Programs and for settings where only a brief discussion of the film is possible.***

***Students should have viewed the entire film before working with these questions.***

1. “How do we love [our] own culture but be open to other people’s culture? How do we welcome difference?” (Jean Vanier)
2. The film says that since 9/11 our world has changed and our “twin paradigms of stability and security have crumbled.” In what ways has the world changed?
3. Is belonging fundamental to our development as persons? Why or why not? Is it fundamental to our development as leaders?
4. The pictures of the L’Arche community where Vanier lives showed many different people celebrating together. What do you think enables such a diverse group of people to live together? Would you add anything to Vanier’s ideas about celebration?
5. Vanier says, “It’s only when I know a bit about who I am that I can discover who you are.” Why do we need to know ourselves in order to know others?
6. Marketing tries to tell us that “things” will make us “complete.” Do they make us complete? Discuss or jot down some differing perspectives on this question.
7. In the sequence about babies, Vanier speaks of the “incredible power of the weak” and says, “The weak person reveals that it’s okay for me to be weak.” In what ways does the weak person have power? Under what conditions is the power of the weak person negated?
8. Who made you belong in leadership or called you to be a leader? What did this person see in you? Did you see that in yourself before they called you to be a leader?

9. Many of us have experienced bullying--as a victim or as a bully or both—at different times. How do these experiences shape us?
10. Mary Jo Leddy describes the man with the empty briefcase, and she says we all have something like this. What is your “briefcase?” Who would you be without it?
11. Referring to the world’s refugees, Mary Jo Leddy says, “It’s not mine to decide who can belong and who can’t.” She adds, “We have to welcome the world.... Otherwise, we’ll end up at war with one another because we don’t know one another.” What did you learn about belonging from the refugees’ stories?
12. One speaker says, “Religion gives a point of reference, of belonging, beyond the social... As long as I have the sense of being with God, I can cope.” (Segment 6) Can you relate to this experience? How?
13. Vanier says, “When we make others know that they belong, then we all know we belong.” How do you think Vanier’s experience connects with his emphasis on belonging?
14. Vanier says “Holiness is the growth from closed-ness to openness,” and that this will lead to our being “fully alive and fully loving.” What can we do to grow in openness?
15. The film suggests that there are opportunities for leadership because the suspicion and discrimination that Muslim people sometimes experience since 9/11. Where is the call for leadership in this situation? What can you do to counter such prejudice? (*e.g., Engage in conversation with people who are Muslim. Know the history of 9/11 and who the various groups were that lost their lives in the attack. Create opportunities for dialogue and joint projects.*)
16. For personal reflection: Vanier says, “To love someone is not just to hold onto them and protect them,” but to reveal, “You are precious. Have trust in yourself! You can grow. You’ve got gifts. You’re special.” How well do I love those close to me in the ways Vanier describes? How do I want to grow in this regard?





## ***Appendix Two***

### ***Questions for Student Retreats***

*Students should have viewed the entire film before responding to these questions.*

1. In the sequence filmed at L'Arche, speaking of Patrick's story, Jean Vanier says, "The movement from loneliness to togetherness...is resurrection." What do you think he means? Is this true in your experience? Give examples.
2. "How do we love [our] own culture but be open to other people's culture? How do we welcome difference?" (Jean Vanier)
3. One of the speakers says, "The more definitive, the more exclusive we are in drawing lines, the less we become as human beings." What do you think he means?
4. "We human beings have a craving for the infinite. We are never, never satisfied with the finite," Vanier says. How does your experience confirm or contradict this statement?
5. Vanier says, "It's only when I know a bit about who I am that I can discover who you are." Why do we need to know ourselves in order to know others?
6. Vanier says, "Loneliness comes because we are not God," but to belong, we have to know "how to live our loneliness." In what ways does your experience confirm or contradict this statement?
7. The film describes "homeless executives who can work anywhere but have no emotional commitments anywhere." Do you know anyone like this? Why is this problematic for the individual? For Society? How important is it to you to have a job that is also a vocation?
8. Vanier says, "Power and strength can separate people, whereas weakness and the cry for help can bring people together." Think of examples to support this statement?

9. “In the heart of God there is room for everybody. It’s because our hearts are so small that there isn’t room for everyone to belong,” says Mary Jo Leddy. What can we do to open our hearts?
10. Rabbi Marmur says, “Religion gives a point of reference, of belonging, beyond the social.... As long as I have the sense of being with God, I can cope.” Can you relate to this experience? How?
11. Vanier asks, “How can I be an artisan of peace, and pray to have the strength to welcome the enemy—and that enemy might be in my own family?” How does this statement relate to you?
12. Vanier asks, “What do I need to rise up in goodness?” What helps are available to you?
13. “At the heart of everything is forgiveness,” says Vanier. “I’ve hurt you; you’ve hurt me. Well, we can forgive each other.” How does this statement speak to you today?
14. Javed Akbar, Outreach Director at the Pickering Islamic Centre, says, “We can better serve God’s purposes by reaching out to those who are different from us.” In what ways do you do this already? How else might you do this?
15. Vanier says “Holiness is the growth from closed-ness to openness,” and that this will lead to our being “fully alive and fully loving.” What can we do to grow in openness?
16. Vanier says that ultimately “we belong to God.” Is this your experience? What might you do to nurture your awareness of belonging to God?
17. For personal reflection: Vanier says, “To love someone is not just to hold onto them and protect them,” but to reveal, “You are precious. Have trust in yourself! You can grow. You’ve got gifts. You’re special.” How well do I love those close to me in the ways Vanier describes? How do I want to grow in this regard?

18. The video includes scenes from L'Arche. The L'Arche Charter states that L'Arche wants to be "a sign of hope" and to be "in solidarity with all who work for justice." Are these ideas represented in the video images of L'Arche? How?
19. The Christian Scriptures contain an image of a faith community as a body in which there are many members, each with a particular role. (Read I Corinthians 12: 14-26.) Just as our physical bodies need each of our parts to be able to function well, so too does our faith community need the gifts of each person. Think about ways in which this metaphor can be extended globally. Name some ways in which you can contribute as a needed member of your school and faith communities. How also can your school contribute as a needed "member" of the wider society in which you live and to the world as a whole?
20. Jean Vanier speaks from a Christian perspective. In the film, a rabbi and a Muslim leader also speak about belonging. Name at least one leader from two or three other religions who contributes a vision of belonging to a common humanity and works for the betterment of humanity.  
*Students may name local interfaith leaders, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi and others.*





## *Appendix Three*

### *Additional Questions for Media Literacy*

*Students should have viewed the entire film before working with these questions.*

1. Read the “Introduction to *Belonging*” at the beginning of this Guide and recall the opening of the film. These explain how and when filmmaker Karen Pascal came to make the video, what Jean Vanier wanted it to be about, and why he chose this topic. *Belonging* is a film essay. Like any essay, it has a thesis or point of view.
  - a) What is the thesis of this film?
  - b) This film was made in 2003. It treats serious concerns of that period, not many months after the 9/11 attacks. Which of these concerns have remained current or even grown in importance? Are there any concerns that have lessened in importance? If so, what are they and why have they become less important?
  - c) The film is also a kind of documentary (a creative treatment of actuality, or a rendering of factual material with little or no fiction.) Jean Vanier did not write the script, nor even approve it, nor did he choose the material that Karen Pascal used to try to illustrate his ideas.
    - i) How well do you think Karen Pascal portrayed the idea Vanier wanted her to present? What parts of the film are strongest in this regard and what parts are weakest? (Think about her choice of pictures, people, events, music.) Give reasons for your opinions.
    - ii) How do you think she made decisions about what to include and what to leave out? Can you think of material that you wish she had included? What and why? What pictures and material would be different today because of changes in technology and fashion since 2003?

- iii) How “objective” should a documentary be? Can a documentary ever be totally objective without bias?
  - iv) If you had been the filmmaker using Vanier’s idea, how would you have developed the video?
  - v) Make suggestions for a script of a film you might make on the subject, “Belonging.” What would be your thesis? What pictures, events, people and music would you include?
  - d) Besides the intellectual, ethical, conceptual and technical challenges, a filmmaker also faces commercial and financial considerations. How might some of these challenges and considerations have influenced Karen Pascal’s decisions in making this film?
2. a) What is the impact of using scenes from 9/11 to open this documentary? Was 9/11 used to make sure we were interested from the start?
- b) What other scenes could have been shown?
- c) Why did the filmmaker choose these images?
3. a) Define “popular culture.”
- b) What influence does it have on our sense of belonging?
- c) How do multinational corporations like Coca Cola break down individual cultures?
- d) Give some examples from the video of how advertisers work to sell “belonging” to teens.
- Teachers may want to refer also to various PBS video resources. “The Merchants of Cool” is a continuously popular 2001 Frontline PBS TV program that discusses this subject:*
- [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool)*
- More recent programs on related themes can be found by searching websites such as [www.pbs.org/frontline](http://www.pbs.org/frontline). (e.g., “The Persuaders,” “Digital Nation: Distracted by Everything,” “Living Faster: Rewiring Young Brains.”)*

4. Through music and lyrics, popular culture holds up certain ways of being for teens. Examine a popular song for the message it gives about life and relationships. How does it align with your values?
5. Give examples from movies or TV shows which have been helpful to you in the areas of self-confidence and belonging.
6.
  - a) What role has the media played in keeping aboriginal people in “the closet?” How have aboriginal people been portrayed in mainstream media over the years (in television and film)?
  - b) How are Aboriginal people portrayed on their own TV networks, such as APT (Aboriginal Peoples Television)?
  - c) Why is there this difference?
  - d) What changes are being made in mainstream media?  
*Students may want to look at the CBC site for Trailbreakers: <http://www.cbc.ca/trailbreakers/> and its blog “Ten portrayals of Aboriginal people on film and TV in the last 50 years,” which includes the recent program “Arctic Air.”*  
*<http://www.cbc.ca/trailbreakers/main-blog/2012/01/20/top-10-rez-list/>*
7. Jean Vanier’s choice of theme is “belonging.” Choose a theme that you are passionate about (*e.g., Leadership, or Fairness, or Courage or Responsibility*). State your thesis and outline how you would develop a video essay to present your ideas.



*Notes:*

*Notes:*

*Notes:*



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