

# Earth & Space Project-Based Professional Learning Community



## Imagine a Pair of Boots Conversation Prompt

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Project-Based Professional Learning Community Kickoff

## Ivan Coyote, “Imagine A Pair of Boots”, from their collection of short stories entitled, A Slow Fix.

Imagine a pair of boots. A sturdy, well-made, kind of nondescript pair of boots. They are functional enough, but kind of plain. Imagine that you live in a country where every citizen is issued this one pair of boots at birth, and that there are no other footwear options permitted by law. If you grow out of or wear through the soles of these government-issued boots, you may trade them in for a new pair, always identical to your old ones. Imagine that everyone you know wears these very same boots without question or complaint.

Now imagine that your right foot is two sizes bigger than your left one. No matter what you do, one boot will chafe, and the other will slip, and both will cause blisters. When you mention your discomfort you are told that odd-sized boots are forbidden, because they cause confusion and excess paperwork. It is explained to you that this footwear system works perfectly for everyone else, and reminded that there are people in other countries who have no boots at all. You are beat up in grade three because none of the other kids have ever seen feet like yours. The teacher tells you that you should probably just learn to keep your boots on. Your parents blame each other. You end up wearing an extra sock on your small foot to compensate, and never go to swimming pools.

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Your feet sweat profusely in the summer and you always undress in the dark. You hate your feet but need them to walk and stand up on. You hate your boots even more. You dream of things that look like sandals and moccasins, but you have no words for them. You learn things will be easier for you if you just never talk about your feet. One time on the bus, you spot a guy with the exact same limp as you, but you pretend not to see him. He watches you limp off at your bus stop and then looks the other way. You can't stop thinking about the man with the limp for weeks. You are nineteen years old and until that day on the bus you thought you were the only person in the country who couldn't fit into their boots.

# Conversational Prompts

- 1. What parts of this story resonate with your own personal or professional experiences?**
- 2. Does this story remind you of anything?**
- 3. How can storytelling support the DEAI work you're engaged in with your team and community?**