

Mino-Pimaatsiwin: A Journey Towards Reconciliation and Systemic Change

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CAMERON - Embedding Learning in Culture

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This mixed methods, action research project, Mino-Pimaatsiwin, was a collaboration among university researchers, the staff of a rural Canadian K-6 school, and members of an Indigenous community, working on systemic educational change. Mino-Pimaatsiwin is an Ojibwe term for life in the fullest, healthiest sense. With the knowledge that building students' self-esteem and resiliency skills may impact their academic, physical, and mental well-being (Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007) and that weaving culturally and traditionally relevant material and stories into the curriculum can not only strengthen students' resilience, but also increase their literacy skills (Jackson & Heath, 2017), the team made a collective decision to weave Indigenous perspectives throughout the school and to measure its impact on student cultural connectedness and self-esteem and belonging. Survey findings indicated most Indigenous elementary students feel connected to their culture but less accepted for who they are. Self-esteem and belonging increased over the project period, with the greatest increase in students' level of comfort in approaching their teachers. The survey items with least agreement were, I can make friends easily, I am good at my school work, and, I can do things well. School staff identified these areas would be the top foci for students in the upcoming year. To decrease the success gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students requires reforms in teaching methods, curricular material, teacher dispositions, and school-community relations. This Mino-Pimaatsiwin project is a small step on journey towards reconciliation and systemic change that may serve as a model for others.