

Editorial

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When I first began working in the field of First Nations education, I began to hear of something called *mino-pimatisiwin*. Being of Kanien'keha:ka ancestry, my familiarity with the ancestral languages of Manitoba was not strong and it took some time before I began to appreciate what this phrase means. Many who are knowledgeable in the spiritual dimensions of *mino-pimatisiwin* have informed my understanding of what is *the good life*. In working with others on one particular project, I learned that the imperatives associated with *mino-pimatisiwin* could be regarded thusly: "the good life we all strive for to benefit ourselves, our families and all peoples" (MFNERC, 2008, p. iii). These imperatives were further articulated by Michael Anthony Hart (2002) in a discourse that affirms the importance of community-based perspectives on healing and cultural revitalization:

We have to recapture our peoples' language, history and understanding of the world, take and live those teachings which will support us in this attempt to overcome oppression and reach *mino-pimatisiwin* – the good life. On a spiritual level, we must learn and understand the values and beliefs of our people and freely decide those which we will internalize. We must validate these values and beliefs through our spiritual expression and daily practices. (p. 32)

The principal tenets associated with *mino-pimatisiwin* might be best understood not only as it applies to individual contexts but also that of communities as well. Appreciating the importance of relationships that are explored in all dimensions of *mino-pimatisiwin* gives some life to the idea that collective balance, health, harmony and growth, to name a few, are essential to the notion that what is desired is a life that is experienced in it's fullest, healthiest sense. Essential to understanding how such a life might be achieved in contemporary Canadian society might be consideration to the core values

of *respect, sharing, and spirituality*. Although the first two can be readily understood for its application to how we treat one another, other forms of life, the environment, and the issues associated with spirituality might require further discussion in the context of the unique manifestations of spirituality that may be associated with a given community.

Currently, public and First Nations education stakeholders have been witness to the developments associated with *Aboriginal Perspectives* – the manifestations of Indigenous knowledge and experience that may be associated with a particular people or community. Although mention of spirituality, ancestry, tradition and other dimensions of cultural identity are made in the broader discourse associated with the integration of Aboriginal perspectives, larger visions of what is desired for students are sometimes overlooked. An example of a larger vision in this context may be found in the delivery of ancestral language programs; where some might be interested in student performance whilst in primary and/or secondary school, one might suggest that the important litmus for success in ancestral language education is whether or not those students maintain the language in the years and decades to follow.

It is with similar importance that I've come to regard *mino-pimatisiwin*. This long-term goal that many of us have for our families and ourselves may be best appreciated by affirming and celebrating those aspects of our ancestry, languages, and experiences that inform who we are. In this issue of *First Nations Perspectives*, the issues of language, treaty awareness, and our connections with the land are explored with the intention of informing the advancement and improvement of First Nations education in Canada.

REFERENCES

- Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. (2008). *First Nations teachings and practices*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.