




SEEKING MINO-PIMATISIWIN (THE GOOD LIFE):
A PHOTOVOICE RESEARCH PROJECT



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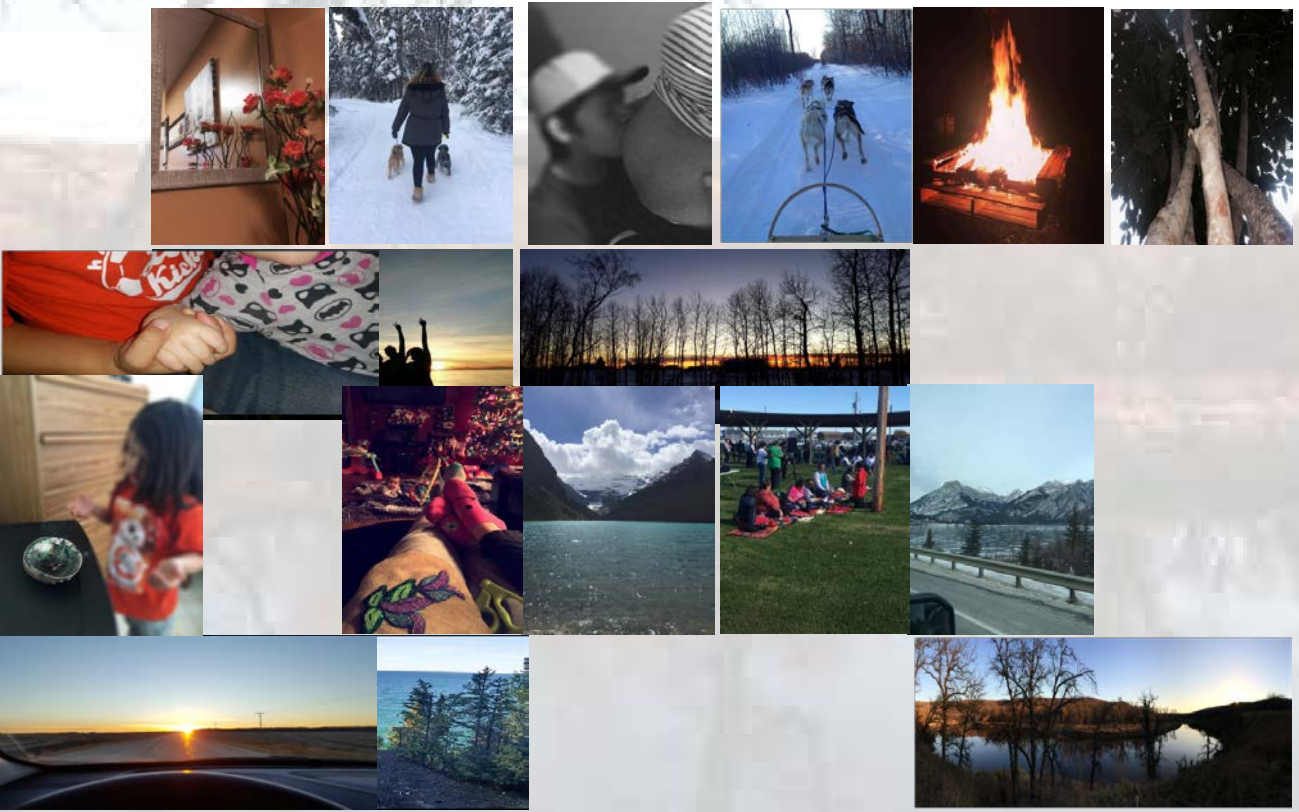
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Social Sciences and Humanities
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PREFACE

This booklet, *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin (The Good Life): A Photovoice Research Project*, is the second photovoice research project aimed at celebrating Indigenous youth success in Manitoba and organized by a group of Indigenous youth leaders from around Manitoba and researchers from Brandon University. The project was sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Brandon University, and Vale.

Photovoice research is a community-based participatory research process that combines photo images and personal narratives. The focus of this photovoice research project is the Indigenous worldview of *mino-pimatisiwin*, the on-going process of seeking the good life by living a balanced life that comes from the interconnection of physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.

In this project, Indigenous youth from the community of Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN), Manitoba, and the Indigenous youth leaders use photos and stories to talk about seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* (the good life) through their eyes.

Commented [CR1]: What about Norway House?

SEEKING MINO-PIMATISIWIN (THE GOOD LIFE)


There are many ways of spelling and pronouncing *mino-pimatisiwin* depending on the dialect. Examples include *mino-pimatasiwin*, *minobimaatisiwin*, and *mino-pimatiziwin*. 'The good life' translated into Dene is *honso aynai* and *tokatakiya wichoni washte* in Dakota.

A widely recognized symbol in Indigenous culture is the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel has been used to express many relationships that can be conveyed in four; one of these ways is the four aspects of well-being—emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual. There is no absolute version of the medicine wheel, and it is utilized and interpreted differently among Indigenous people. A universal trait of the medicine wheel is that all elements are interconnected and influence one another. The medicine wheel incorporates the interconnectedness between the four aspects of well-being and the concepts within them. These concepts include wholeness, balance, relationships, harmony, growth, and healing.

The concept of *wholeness* maintains that each element of the medicine wheel is a part of a single whole.

We can only understand one part of the medicine wheel if we understand how it is connected to all other parts. This requires *balance*. In order to achieve balance, one must not only pay attention to each part but also the connections between.

These connections between are also known as *relationships* in life.




When we nurture and respect all of our relationships, including our relationships with others and ourselves, we are able to achieve *harmony*. Peace, respect, and sharing in our relationships allow us to grow as human beings.

Growth is a lifelong process that involves developing the body, mind, heart, and spirit. It is this movement towards the center of the medicine wheel that allows us to embrace all the concepts (e.g., wholeness, balance, relationships, and harmony) within it and to be in a place of healing.

Healing is not just referring to recovering from an illness or fixing a problem; it is a journey and something we work towards every day throughout our whole lives. As a communal culture, healing for Indigenous people not only involves the individual but also the community and family.

When individuals are able to grow and heal through the concepts of the medicine wheel, they are able to seek *mino-pimatisiwin*. *Mino-pimatisiwin*, translated to the good life in Cree is an Indigenous concept which can refer to the central goal in life which is to try to live life in balance. It is striving to positively develop oneself and live life in balance through the interconnection of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual process of striving to positively develop oneself. Just as one quadrant influences the next in the medicine wheel, the concepts that we live by in life to achieve *mino-pimatisiwin* will influence one another.



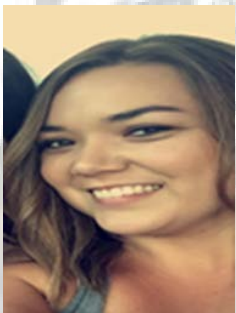
Mino-pimatisiwin is not made up of one person, place or thing; it is a process and cycle of various aspects of your life. While everyone has a purpose in life and actively strives to seek *mino-pimatisiwin*, this journey is unique for each person. As you view the photos and narratives throughout this booklet, we encourage you to keep the concepts of the medicine wheel in your mind and also value the photos and stories that have come from the Indigenous youths' hearts. As Indigenous people, we often do not speak from our minds about research and theory, but rather we share our story from our hearts.

– Jessica Murray and Erin Paupanekis

The authors would like to acknowledge the work of Michael Hart. You can find his article under:

Hart, M. (1999). Seeking Mino-pimatisiwin (the Good Life): An Aboriginal approach to social work practice. *Native Social Work Journal*, 2(1), 91-112.

MEET THE YOUTH COMMUNITY CIRCLE



Jessica Murray is originally from Thompson, Manitoba, and is a member of Norway House Cree Nation Band. She is a Brandon University alumnus who has worked for the Brandon University Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies and the Vital Outcome Indicators of Community Engagement Project for almost four years. Jessica graduated in May 2017 from the Education Specialist Degree in School Psychology Graduate Program at Minot State University. She is very passionate about working with Indigenous people, specifically supporting Indigenous children and youth. She hopes to work as a school psychologist with a focus on Indigenous students and help them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Erin Paupanekis is from Thompson, Manitoba, and is a member of the Norway House Cree Nation Band. She is the proud mother of her daughter, Autumn. Erin graduated from Brandon University with a degree in Psychology in 2013. Since then, she has been working for the Brandon University Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies and the Vital Outcomes Indicators of Community Engagement Project. Erin graduated in May 2017 with a graduate degree in School Psychology from Minot State University. She is passionate about working with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit youth and supports them in their successes.

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Julia Stoneman Sinclair grew up in the northern community of Lynn Lake, Manitoba, and is a member of Misipawistik Cree Nation. She is a mother of two girls, 6-year-old Shaynen, and 1-year-old Naira. She is a Brandon University graduate (Bachelor of Arts – Honours in Native Studies and minor in Sociology) who has worked at Brandon University for four years as an Indigenous Student Success Officer. She has been a part of the Brandon University Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education and the Vital Outcome Indicators of Community Engagement for the past three years. Julia is a vital member of the community volunteering for multiple organizations. She volunteers for numerous events including those with a focus on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women—one of her passions. Her education and research have a focus on community healing through Indigenous Self-Governance. She plans to graduate in October 2018 with her Masters in Rural Development and hopes to continue working for the betterment of Indigenous communities.



Brandee Albert is a young Cree woman from Norway House Cree Nation. Her spirit name is Takwakin Pinesiw Maskwa Iskew from the Knowsew Clan. Brandee is the proud mother of a beautiful daughter and has two dogs. She enjoys life by spending time with friends and family. She loves nature and the beauty of each passing moment. She is currently working in Thompson, Manitoba, as a school counsellor for Waponohk School. Brandee completed her Bachelor of Social Work Degree in 2014 and has plans to continue her education in the future. Brandee has worked with the VOICE Research Project for about five years, both as a Community Circle coordinator and Youth Community Circle member. She has always carried a passion for making a positive difference in the lives of Indigenous children and youth.



Jeremy Sinclair is from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Manitoba, in Treaty 5 territory. Jeremy is a proud father to his son. Jeremy has always worked with children and youth development through educational and political organizations. He has represented his community as Junior Chief in the past and is currently a councilor on Opaskwayak Cree Nation's Chief and Council. Jeremy is a firm believer that in order for us to create the future we desire, it is important to centre our focus and attention on our children and the youth of today.

DEBBIE HUNTINGHAWK, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE KEEPER

Debbie Hungtinghawk is a proud Anishinaabe Ikwe, wife, mother, step-mother, grandmother and step-grandmother. She is a helper/healer who has been walking on her healing journey for 20 years and continues to help people on their own journeys. Debbie is a Sundancer who just completed her fourth year. She walks the traditional way of life and assists Elders in the community. In addition, she organizes women's drum groups, assists in ceremonies, and organizes community walks, such as the Sister's in Spirit walks. Debbie is the coordinator of the Sweet Medicine Singer's drum group, where women in the community can go to for healing. The women's drum group is community-driven and performs at special events, as well as events at schools and hospitals. The group also mentors young women and children who want to learn about the drum and ceremonies.

Debbie currently works at Prairie Mountain Health while also attending Brandon University, majoring in Native Studies and minoring in Gender and Women Studies. Debbie is president of the Brandon Friendship Center and sits on many other committees, such as Aboriginal Day, Sisters in Spirit, Walking with our Sisters, Tipi Tours, and Aboriginal Showcase.

THE PHOTOVOICE RESEARCH PROJECT FOR SEEKING *MINO-PIMATISIWIN* (THE GOOD LIFE)

This booklet is the outcome of the photovoice research project *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin (The Good Life)*. The project was designed by the Youth Community Circle, a group of Indigenous youth leaders.

In addition to telling their stories of *mino-pimatisiwin*, the Youth Community Circle also invited Indigenous youth from Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba to participate in the project.

Mino-pimatisiwin can be described as life in the fullest, in the healthiest sense; the ever-present goal of growth and healing, and includes efforts by individuals, families, communities, people in general, and all life entities (Hart, 2002).

The Manitoba Smudging Protocol describes it as being “implicit in the understanding that all of life is a ceremony; that the sacred and secular are part of the whole; that people are whole beings (body, mind and spirit, and emotion); and that *mino-pimatisiwin* is achieved by taking care of all aspects of one’s self” (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2014, p.3).

We as a Youth Community Circle felt that this project should be a celebration of life. We have accomplished many things in the last



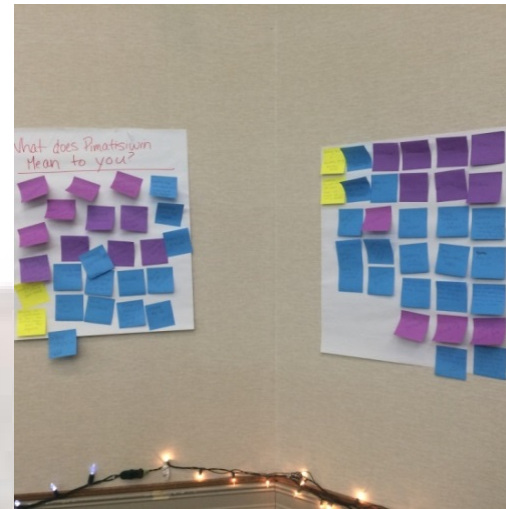
Youth participating in an ice breaker activity which showed our connectedness with one another.



few years that hopefully will bring great change for Indigenous youth. We hope this last project will provide the reader with some insight into *mino-pimatisiwin* and encourages others to self-reflect on what it means to them. Photovoice was selected for this research project because it enabled the participant researchers to determine the subject of their photographs and to describe the meaning in their own voice (Castleden, Garvin, & HUU-ay-aht First Nation, 2008).

The uniqueness of these stories and photos presented in this booklet reflect the thoughts and actions of the everyday lives of these Indigenous youth as they seek *mino-pimatisiwin*. Most importantly, these thoughts and actions are much more than materialistic possessions or money. For example, family is an integral value held by Indigenous people, and it consistently emerges from these photos. Many of the stories and photos represent pride in Indigenous culture and respect for tradition. Valuing the connections one makes is also an important value to many Indigenous people, and these Indigenous youth describe the significance of maintaining connections with friends, family, and Mother Earth.

Jessica Murray's photo *Holding onto Our Family* depicts the importance of looking past hardships and appreciating the positive in your life, such as your family. Similarly, one



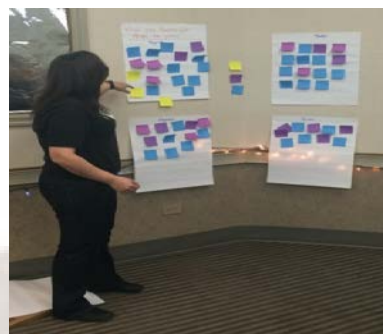
Brainstorming ideas of what seeking mino-pimatisiwin means to the participating youth during the mino-pimatisiwin workshop.

individual's photograph entitled *Clearwater Lake* describes the beautifulness of our love for other humans.

Jeremy Sinclair's photograph *Teaching Our Children* and Julia Stoneman- Sinclair's photograph *Keeping Traditions Alive* are reminders to hold onto our cultural identity and pass the teachings onto the next generation. Erin Paupanekis' photograph *Riverbank* and Admarie Singh's photograph *Being Connected to Mother Earth* speak to our appreciation of and connection with Mother Earth and all she has to offer.

The diversity of what living the good life means and what it feels like was brought to life through the photographs taken by Indigenous youth who participated in this project. The *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin (The Good Life): A Photovoice Research Project* is a chance to celebrate the positives and remind ourselves to take time to appreciate the beauty that is all around us.

– The Youth Community Circle



Mino-Pimatisiwin meanings categorized into the four corners of the Medicine Wheel.

KNOWLEDGE KEEPER'S MESSAGE

Thank you to the youth in this year's photovoice project. The young adults in this project were successful in capturing the essence of mino-biimaadizwin in their photos through their perspective. The Indigenous perspective of mino-biimaadizwin is about connection, connection to the Creator and Mother Earth. Through their photos, you can see the connection through the land, family, culture and traditional knowledge. They captured the sacredness of Mother Earth in their photos. Life is sacred; Mother Earth is sacred. Through these photos, they captured the beauty of her in the mountains, sunsets, and even at home with family.

Mino-biimaadizwin is about simple, tranquil moments. The photovoice participants were able to explore where one is at peace with oneself and with the world around them. Mino-biimaadizwin is about achieving healing perspectives. The youth were able to capture the essence of guidance and direction through the blessings that the Creator has put on our paths. Walking the good life as we learn to grow and be mindful of all the goodness that surrounds us at this stage in life where we just understand about where we came from, where we are going, finding our identity, and moving forward to leave healthy footsteps and to fulfill the purpose in our lives.

– Debbie Huntinghawk, Knowledge Keeper

MINO-BIMAADIZIWIN (MINO-PIMATISIWIN): TEACHINGS FROM A KNOWLEDGE KEEPER

Anishinaabe mino-biimaadiziwin (mino-pimatisiwin) in traditional teaching means living a good life. It means to live life to the fullest as a human being; living and existing in a healthy and balanced life. Such teachings have been available to us since the beginning of time and have not changed. They may seem somewhat different in various communities, but the goals they achieve are essentially the same. The teachings show that life is a gift and that everything existing must be in harmony and balance. In addition, they teach us about maintaining a balance of spirit. We have a choice to lead our lives in a chaotic manner or on a path of traditional values and teachings.

Anishinaabe mino-biimaadiziwin is a learning and teaching philosophy of how to live life in a good way. Anishinaabe mino-biimaadiziwin relates to the traditional teachings of the Medicine Wheel, which remind us to live in balance mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Furthermore, there are seven sacred teachings to help us to understand Anishinaabe *mino-biimaadiziwin* concepts:

Anishinaabemowin: Speaking the language

Anishinaabe inaadiziwin: Being or behaving

Anishinaabe inendamowin: Our way of thinking

Anishinaabe gikendaasowin: Our way of knowing

Anishinaabe ishigewin: Our way of doing

Anishinaabe enawediwin: Relating to the Spirit/spiritual

Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan: Our responsibility to the Land

We must return to the teachings, continue on this 'Road to Knowledge' in order to learn who we are as Anishinaabe people and discover the beautiful way of life that has been given to us by the Creator.

Stage 1 teachings: Name-giving, moss-bag teachings, smudge, prayer, and songs.

Stage 2 teachings: Puberty and rites of passage, fasting, male and female roles.

Stage 3 teachings: Ceremony, fasts, feasts, healing medicines, and traditional law.


Stage 4 teachings: Guides and balancers, roles of Elders, performers of ceremonies, in the right to call upon ceremony, the right to speak and correct balance.

Stage 5 teachings: All levels of life teach about the passage home.

As Aboriginal People, we are blessed with many ceremonies, such as sweats, fasts, vision quests, teachings of traditional law, age-grade teachings, traditional medicines, traditional healing practices, feasts, traditional meals and spirit plates, smudging, the power of listening and traditional listening skills, and the protocol of life-givers on their cycle.

Our traditional knowledge is passed on through our ancestors, and—as told by our Elders—are important to the future of our people. *Mino-biimaadisiwin* is the connectedness that we have to the Land, all living things, and to each other. This is the strength that has been passed on through the generations in revitalizing and sustaining our way of life and our languages.

Knowledge keepers are traditional teachers who use the following skills: ceremony, guidance, traditional healing, age-grade teachings, and prescription of traditional medicines.



Ceremonialists possess traditional knowledge to perform certain ceremonies.

Traditional healers use treatments that are holistic. They have the powers to explain the unknown. There are protocols for accessing their services, utilize old-time offerings.

There are also different types of helpers who also have different protocols for accessing their services.

UNDERSTANDING MINO-PIMATISIWIN A NON-INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

I am not an Indigenous person nor do I have a deep knowledge and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. As a result, it has been a challenging process for me to try to understand the meaning of mino-pimatisiwin. As a long-time educator and practically-minded academic, I started this project with the view that *mino-pimatisiwin* was an overarching term for a basket of individual personality attributes such as persistence, resiliency, self-efficacy, connectedness, and mental well-being. Over time, I came to understand that my interpretation of mino-pimatisiwin came from a narrow, Euro-centric perspective.

Commented [CR5]: Karen, the wording somehow sticks out for me...maybe "...in this world" would sound better?

As I struggled to uncover the meaning of *mino-pimatisiwin* through these photos and narratives I came to appreciate that while *mino-pimatisiwin* includes individual attributes, its meaning is much more. I have come to understand that *mino-pimatisiwin* embodies the social and spiritual values that we need to keep us on the path of living a 'good life'. These values sustain and support our physical and mental health, our relationships with family and friends, our sense of community, and our connection to the land. Finally, *seeking* mino-pimatisiwin (the good life) implies that we are also striving for the good life throughout all of our life stages.

Commented [CR6]: Are the italics intentional?

- Karen Rempel

ADMARIE SINGH
THE VALUE OF THOSE
AROUND YOU

Sometimes people are taken for granted and are unappreciated for the influence they have on someone's life. It is important to recognize the people that are there for you through the highs and lows of life. As we seek *mino-pimatisiwin*, we learn to value others, whether or not they do the same for us. We learn to share gratitude, respect, and care for others because things can change at any given moment.



As I took this picture, I thought, "I am grateful to be surrounded by people." This photo expresses my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin* because it represents having people in my life that I can depend on. It is safe to say that people come and go, but I think that it is important to appreciate our time spent with them. There is a Japanese saying that says, "One time, one meeting," which means that an encounter may happen only once in a lifetime. It reminds us to treasure every moment, for it may never reoccur. We should appreciate the time we have with those we value in our life.

ADMARIE SINGH

BEING CONNECTED TO MOTHER EARTH



“We are Earth people on a spiritual journey to the stars. Our quest and our Earth walk is to look within, to know who we are, and to see that we are connected to all things. There is no separation, only in our mind.”

Lakota Seer

The connection we have with Mother Earth is powerful and can help us reach *mino-pimatisiwin*. I try to connect to Mother Earth every day by learning more about my community’s history, culture and traditions, and by trying to share my knowledge with younger generations.

Just recently I went for a nature walk with youth from my home community, and I captured this sunset. I took this picture because, along the walk, I felt like I was on my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin* through my interaction with Mother Nature. I wanted a reminder of how important she is to us and why we respect the Land in our culture.

Indigenous scholar James Dumont stated that mino-bimaadiziwin carries the significance of movement or following a road or path (bimaadon mikana) and character in terms of behavior or way of conducting oneself (inadizi) meaning “the behavior or conduct of a person as he or she moves through life’s changes cycles.” (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011, p.446)

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NICOLE DUCHARME

SELF-LOVE

Self-love is a foundation of seeking mino-pimatisiwin because it is one of our most important relationships—the relationship we have with ourselves. The strength of our other relationships is equal to the strength of the relationship we have with ourselves. The saying “love your neighbor as you love yourself” is expressed in different ways. Often it is misunderstood as only loving others, but if you look a little closer and think a little deeper, you will notice that its very centre is about loving yourself.

I took this picture of flowers in front of a mirror because it represents the beauty you need to find within yourself. The flowers represent you and all of the wonderful different qualities you have. To be beautiful means to just be yourself. You do not need to be accepted by other people; you only need to be accepted by yourself; once you do this you are on your way to *mino-pimatisiwin*.



Mino-bimaadiziwin are given to Anishinaabe people as their original instructions from the Creator. Included in these instructions and teachings is the conceptualization of the individual as having a spirit, heart, mind, and body and therefore capable of connecting, feeling, thinking, and acting, which lead to healthy relationships with the self and others

(Bell, 2016, p.7).


NICOLE DUCHARME

STAND TALL

Stand tall and be proud of who you are. Everyone is unique like a tree, and we all have our flaws like a tree; however, trees always look very confident. In order to seek *mino-pimatisiwin* (the good life), we need to take silent advice from the trees and embrace our uniqueness and flaws to become confident individuals.

I took this picture because so many of us need to be reminded of these important factors in our lives. Being confident in ourselves helps us keep motivated to live a holistic and healthy life and to pass on positive vibes to one another. We are seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* when we are proud of who we are.





Mino-pimatisiwin (literally means “the good life” in Cree) is the realization/acquisition of healing, balance, and life-long learning.

(Deer & Falkenberg, 2016, p.2)

ANONYMOUS

TRANQUIL MOMENTS

Enjoying Mother Nature is one of the best getaways. After all the negative things I have been through, being somewhere with someone whom I adore and love so much makes me happy. I felt I was seeking the good life (*mino-pimatisiwin*) while I listened to the waves hit the rocks, watched my nephew smile non-stop, and admired the beautiful background of the clear blue water—I felt completely connected at that moment. I felt connected to Mother Earth, to someone I truly love, and to myself. As I let the tranquility of this moment put my mind at ease with positive thoughts, I appreciated the peaceful moment with someone who has a special place in my heart, and I feel myself seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*.

I took this photo while I was at Clearwater Lake with my nephew and my heart was at ease. This moment made me realize how precious and beautiful life is and how unbelievably lucky I am to call this little boy my nephew and the town I live in my home. It helped me appreciate what I have, which I believe is what we all need on our journey to *mino-pimatisiwin*. I will always love this picture because it reminds me of our connection to nature and the love we have for other humans.



Mino-pimatisiwin (literally means “the good life” in Cree) is the realization/acquisition of healing, balance, and life-long learning. The realization of the good life, particularly for First Nations peoples, may be reflected in the following principles (Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird, 2008, pp. 134- 135):

Commented [CR8]: Exact same statement was cited on page 24 with a different source (Deer & Falkenberg, 2016).

- The concept of wholeness is about the incorporation of all aspects of life and the giving of attention and energy to each aspect within ourselves and the universe around us.
- Balance reflects the dynamic nature of relationships wherein we give attention to each aspect of the whole in a manner where one aspect is not focused on to the detriment of the other parts.
- All aspects of the whole, including the more than world, are related and these relationships require attention and nurturing; when we give energy to these relationships, we nurture the connections between them. Nurturing these connections leads to health while disconnection leads to disease.
- Harmony is ultimately a process involving all entities fulfilling their obligations to each other and to themselves.
- Growth is a life-long process that involves developing aspects of oneself, such as the body, mind, heart, and spirit in a harmonious manner.
- Healing is a daily practice orientated to the restoration of wholeness, balance, relationships, and harmony. It is not only focused on illness but on disconnections, imbalances, and disharmony.

Commented [CR9]: Is this correct? Should this read: “including more than the world?”

Mino-pimatisiwin is the good life or life in the fullest, healthiest sense. Mino-pimatisiwin is the goal of growth and healing, and it includes efforts by individuals, families, communities, and people in general, in fact, all living forms, including the more than human world.

(Deer & Falkenberg, 2016, p.3)

ANONYMOUS

BRIGHTER DAYS

Even on the brightest days, there can be one dark cloud, but what is important to remember is that you are always going to make it through the tough times stronger than ever. At the end of the light, there is always something greater waiting for you.

I took this photo because I was going through one of the most devastating stages of life. I was on my way to be with my brother who was on life support, and I kept thinking and wondering what was going to happen next. While I drove, I realized you go through things for a reason. You have to go through many difficult things in life, and that was one of the many I would have to go through. To get to the end of the sunset where it is beautiful and shiny, you sometimes have to go through a rough storm. This picture speaks to me in many ways; it captures nature, the way the sun glares at the end, and the incredible beauty it showcases. It taught me that to get the best you sometimes have to go through the worst. This is the journey of *mino-pimatisiwin*.



JESSICA MURRAY

HOLDING ONTO OUR FAMILY

There are many realities these days that make our lives difficult. We look around, and we often see struggle and despair all around us, whether it be in our community or the world in general. Sometimes it is very trying to look through the hardship, but I feel it is extremely important that we do. Seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* to me is loving and holding onto our family. It is looking at the positives, nurturing our children and youth, and persevering through the negative to seek the good life.



I took this photo of my niece and nephew holding hands because it represents family and youth. It represents keeping our family close and never letting them go. I truly feel that my family is the most important thing in my life and it is what makes my life good. As long as I have them, I am truly happy.

JESSICA MURRAY

LIVING IN THE MOMENT



Our world can be so busy and hectic at times. We have many stresses, obligations, and commitments that sometimes make enjoying the life we are living difficult. We often do not stop to really appreciate our life and all it has to offer. I think in order to seek *mino-pimatisiwin*—we need to slow down, enjoy every moment, and appreciate all the joy and beauty that life has to offer.

I took this photo while I was at Lake Louise. I was caught in the moment of enjoying the beautiful landscapes and scenery. It was breathtaking. I wanted to capture one of these moments so I could keep it, look back at it, and remind myself to not take these moments for granted.

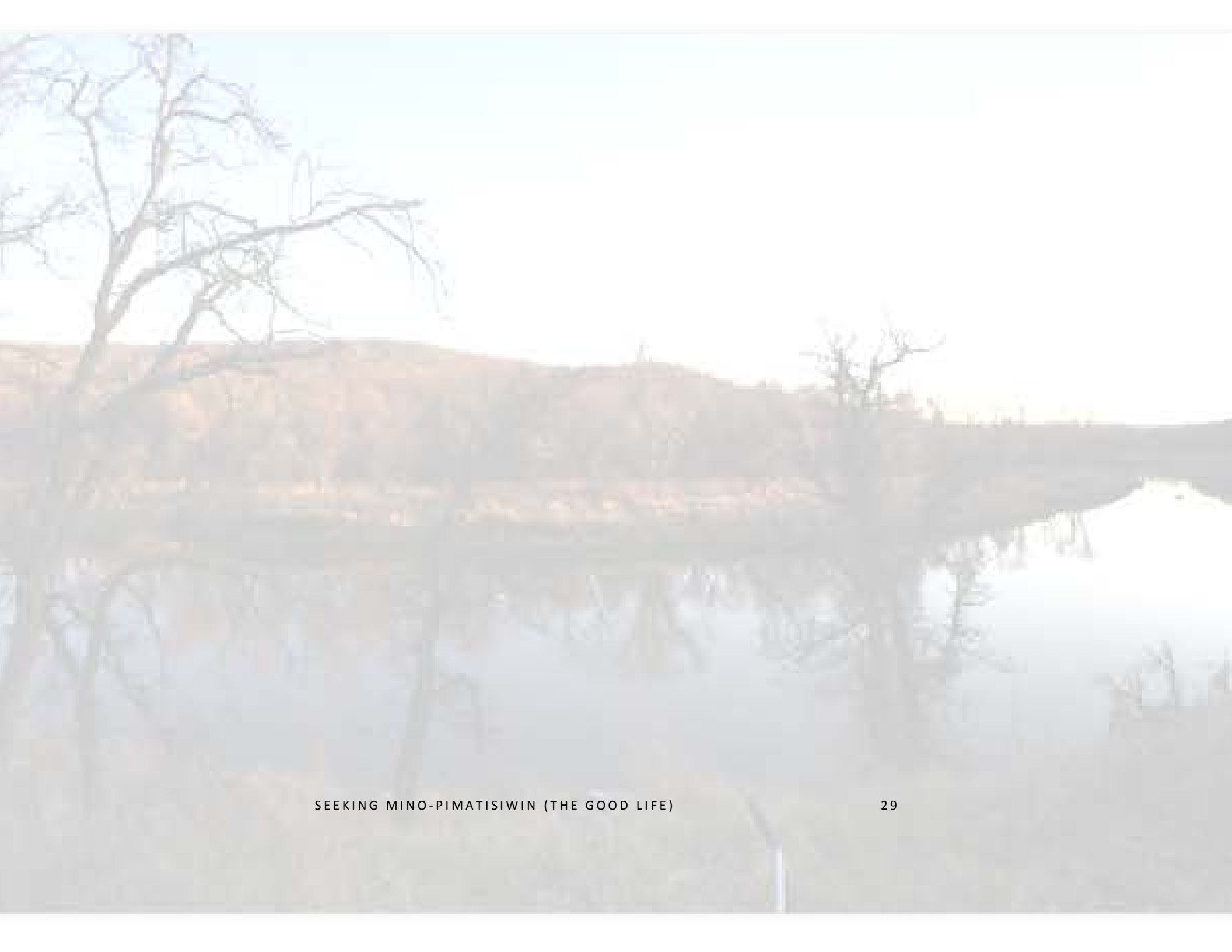
JULIA STONEMAN-SINCLAIR

TRUE HAPPINESS

Our dogs are like family to us. By running our dogs, we are able to come together as a family while also taking part in a practice that the generations before us have done. We are keeping our culture and traditions alive. This picture represents my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin* (the good life) because it reminds me of where I come from and my family that I love.

This picture represents my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin* because it illustrates the true happiness that comes from going home up North and being with my family. It reminds me of spending Sundays together, cooking food by the fire, and taking turns running the dogs. Enjoying life and spending time together is what seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* means to me.







JULIA STONEMAN-SINCLAIR

KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE

Keeping traditions alive is exactly what seeking the good life means to me. It is being with my children in the comfort of our home while we share stories and pass along the teaching of beading that I learned from the women in my family before me.

In this picture, my older daughter and I are sitting together on the couch visiting while she watches me bead. At that moment, I felt truly happy and wanted to keep that moment forever. This picture represents my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin* because it celebrates the connections we build with our children and the connections to culture and tradition we hope to teach and embed within them.

BRANDEE ALBERT

MOTHER DAUGHTER BOND



My daughter is my inspiration and motivation on my journey of *mino-pimatisiwin*. She has always given me strength and determination to build a solid foundation for her so she also can have a bright future. My family is my life. My family has taught me the most important value I treasure, which is love. Growing up, I have always appreciated the unconditional love of my family. My family has also taught me the values I hold. My family is my past, present, and future.

My daughter is my blessing, my motivation, and my inspiration. She is my purpose. I will continue to share my knowledge and support her as she continues on her journey in life, and most importantly, share the beautiful unconditional love between parent and child.

My friends are important to me. As I continue my life journey, I have recognized the need to keep friends in my life that share my similar views on life. My friends have positive impacts on my life that are filled with camaraderie, love, and support. My family and friends, and the sense of security and a bright future for my daughter are what contribute to *mino-pimatisiwin*.

I took this photo because this is seeking the good life to me. It shows my family, my daughter, and our two dogs. We enjoy our quality time together with our walks in beautiful Mother Nature on a cool, crisp day in Northern Manitoba.

BRANDEE ALBERT

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

My community is the foundation of my life. It holds my family and friends. It holds my past, present, and future. My culture, traditions, and spirituality have also positively impacted my identity as an Indigenous Cree woman. It shapes my values, morals, and beliefs. I use the seven sacred teachings—respect, love, humility, truth, honesty, courage, and wisdom—for guidance. I embrace my spirituality by attending ceremonies and by learning from our Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers. Elders have always encouraged young people to learn about their history, culture, traditions, and language by saying, “You have to know who you are to get to where you want to go.”

I took this picture because to me it encompasses my journey to the good life. This picture was taken at Sea Falls, 30 km from my hometown of Norway House. The water reminds me that I am from the Fish Clan. The season reflects my spirit name, Autumn Thunder Bear Woman. The eagle reminds me to stay grounded and humble as it swims in the river. I have learned the importance of Indigenous knowledge and teachings. This guides me on my journey to living a good life—*mino-pimatisiwin*. The teachings I have gained have taught me the importance of love (as represented by the eagle) and the need to be kind, caring and sharing in all I do. My spirituality allows continued growth and connection with the Creator and all of life. It allows me to live my purposeful life.



ERIN PAUPANEKIS

RIVERBANK



Some of today's generation is losing the opportunity to be out on the Land. Technology is having a greater influence on our youth than ever before. Sometimes seeking the good life is as simple as watching a sunset on the riverbank. Getting lost in the beauty of nature is part of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*.

I took this photo near my home. This location is pretty secluded out in the hills, called the Souris River Bend. I felt extremely relaxed and at ease being there with my family and a few friends, without our cell phones and other technology. The river was so calm as the sun went down and I could not think of anything for a while other than life is good right now.

ERIN PAUPANEKIS

THE BEAUTY OF TRAVELLING

To have the ability to travel is something that not be taken for granted. To some people, when hear the word 'travel', they might think of escaping exotic islands or flying off to a different country. Travelling can be as simple as going for a drive through the landscapes near one's home or driving province over to view the mountains. Being able to brings me a sense of harmony. It can give us a different outlook on life when we are not feeling and help us see the beauty and simplicity of our country. This sense of harmony is vital on my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin*.

I took this photo because I am a big fan of mountains and the West Coast of our country. This photo was taken as I was traveling to Banff, Alberta, with my family. It was a great experience that I was glad I got to share with my daughter, as it was her first time seeing mountains. I believe the water at the base of the mountains added that much more beauty to this photo—almost like a reflection of the mountains staring down at themselves. I feel very fortunate to have the ability to see parts of our country that I love. These opportunities to travel and be with my family are what I need to seek *mino-pimatisiwin*.



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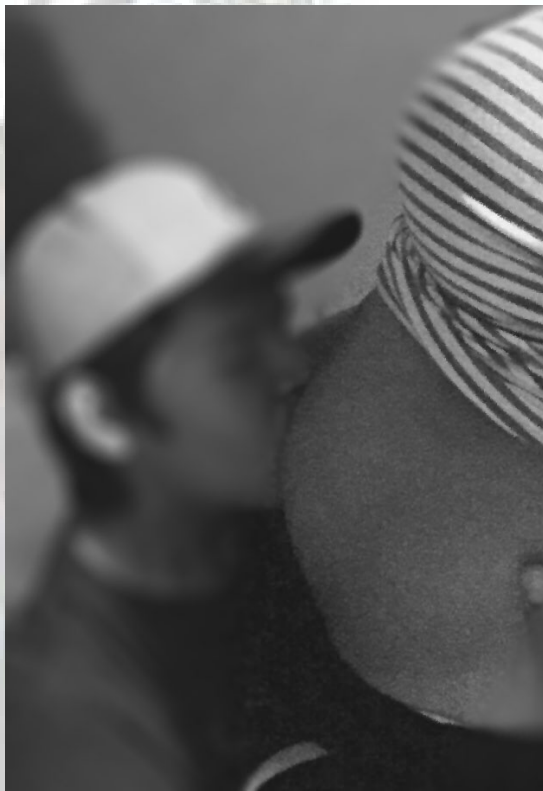
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GORDON NIQUANICAPPO

STAND BY ME



Some seek fortune to obtain that good feeling deep in your heart. Some seek fame. Others look for a sense of belonging to another human being. Seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* means to have someone beside you when no one else will stand next to you. Waking up to my family every morning is what is important on my journey to *mino-pimatisiwin*.

The picture I chose not only signifies family but also depicts total harmony and blissfulness. The kiss on my fiancé's pregnant belly represents not only my happiness of becoming a father but also my unwavering commitment to my family. It shows that no matter how hard the going gets, our family will always unite and thwart off negativity aimed towards us.

GORDON NIQUANICAPPO

THE WARMTH OF THOSE WE LOVE

I have lost count of how many times my fiancé and I looked at each other and said, "We should have a fire and call up some friends." Without friendships and the hardships we have overcome in this life with our friends, we would not even begin to know what the words *mino-pimatisiwin* mean. Sharing experiences and good times with family and friends is what contributes to *mino-pimatisiwin* to me.

I chose this photo because the fire signifies the warm feeling I get when I am surrounded by friends and family. It makes me so happy to enjoy time with friends and family and appreciate the life that we are living. The fire also signifies the simplicity of the good life. We often don't need much to live the good life, just a fire and people we love.



JEREMY SINCLAIR

RESTORING BALANCE AND HARMONY

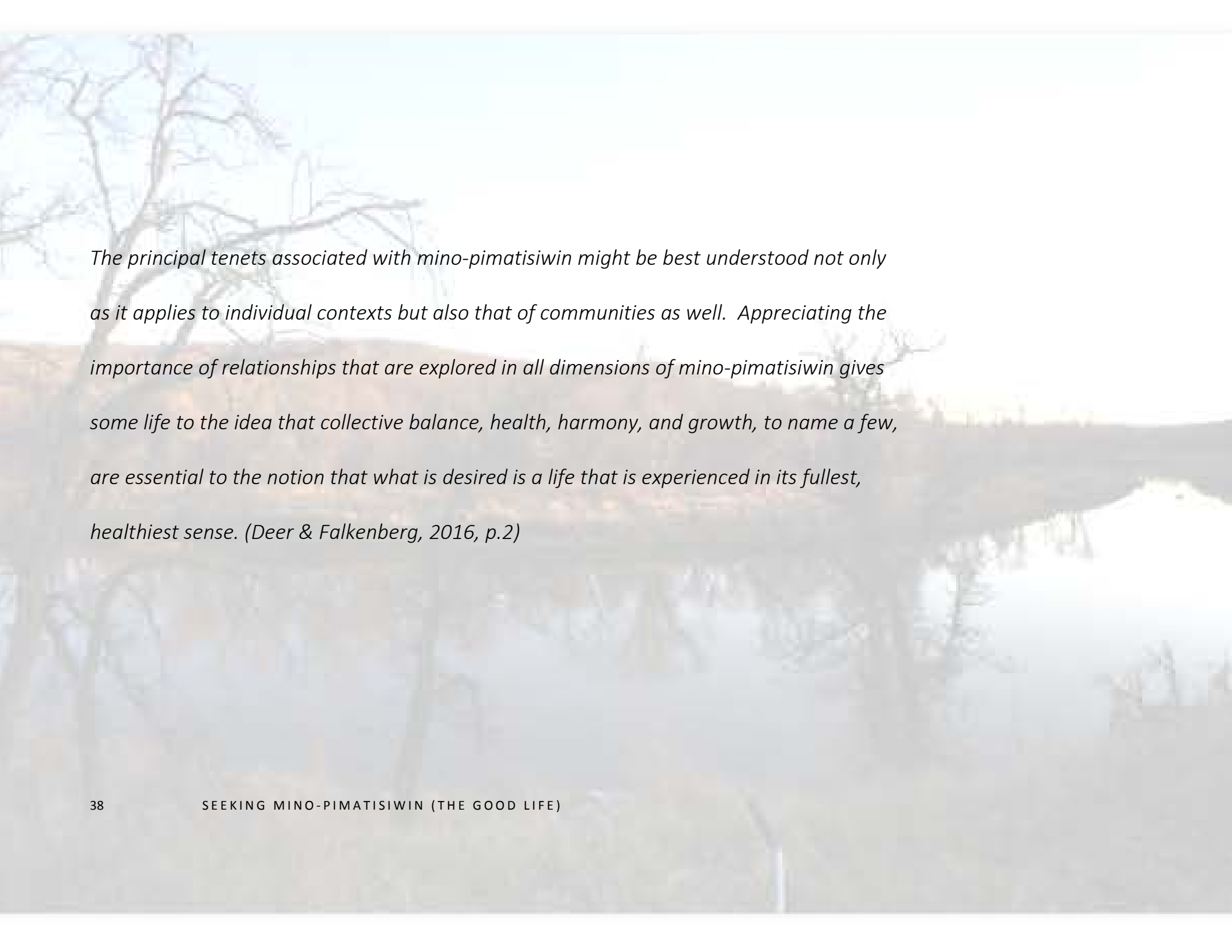


When we express our love and respect for all the members of our communities, we are building a nation that will live harmoniously. Living in a harmonious and united way allows us to work towards living a good life for all people within our communities. When we succeed in this responsibility, we are guaranteeing that our children and future generations will continue seeking a good life—*mino-pimatisiwin*.

I took the photo during our newly elected Onekanew and Onushekawuk (Chief and Council) inauguration ceremony. I was fortunate to have been elected into our Onekanew and Onushekawuk to represent our membership at the government level. This particular ceremony was the first time in our history of Opaskwayak Cree Nation that we conducted a ceremony in this fashion. In the picture, we see traditional

people from our community: Elders, men, women, two-spirited, and youth. It is not captured in the photo, but we also included the members of the Church in our community to participate in this historic ceremony. Our goal for conducting the swearing-in ceremony this way was to be inclusive of all members of our community and begin moving forward in a united and harmonious way.

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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 its fullest, healthiest sense. (Deer & Falkenberg, 2016, p.2)

JEREMY SINCLAIR

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN

Seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* is teaching our children about who we are as Indigenous people. We are the first teachers for our children, and they model their actions and behaviours after their parents and adults. When we instill the foundation of our culture and, ultimately, our identity, we are ensuring that we are preparing our children and future generations for a good life.

One of my morning rituals after waking up is giving thanks to our Creator through prayer. After waking up one morning with my son, I conducted a traditional practice of smudging to cleanse our spirits and to give thanks for another day. As I was smudging that morning, my son was observing what I was doing, and it caught his attention. He then quickly came forward and wanted to do the smudging along with me. He reminded me that morning that we as parents have the responsibility to educate our children about our identity as Ininewuk people along with our cultural customs and practices. The more that we educate our children about our identity, the more we are ensuring that we are setting our children up for a good life—*mino-pimatisiwin*.





Core Values of Mino-pimatisiwin

Respect or the showing of honour, esteem, deference and courtesy to all, and not imposing our views on others.

Sharing, including the sharing of all we have to share, even knowledge and life experiences, which show that everyone is important and helps develop relationships.

Spirituality is the recognition that there is a non-physical world.

It is all-encompassing in Aboriginal life and is respected in all interactions, including this helping approach, and is demonstrated through meditation, prayer, and ceremonies that guide good conduct. (Deer & Falkenberg, 2016, p.3)

STORIES OF RESILIENCE

This booklet, *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin (The Good Life)*, contains stories of resilience. Resilience refers to doing well or achieving positive outcomes despite adversity (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012; Kirmayer, Dandena, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). Resilience is often considered an individual characteristic. However, the Indigenous youth contributing to the *mino-pimatisiwin* project challenge this contemporary construct. They draw upon family and community for inner strength and eloquently tell their story of the interconnectedness between individual and community. Their stories tell of the importance of community resilience that includes social capital, physical infrastructure, traditional knowledge, values, practices and narratives of selfhood, and healing to the resilience of Indigenous Peoples; fostering the capacity to adapt to change and recover from adversity (Allen et al., 2014; Ungar, 2011; Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Nicole Ducharme's photos, *Stand Tall* and *Self-Love*, emphasize how it is important to accept yourself for who you are and embrace innate uniqueness as a strength. The story of *Brighter Days* (Anonymous) is a narrative of healing that connects traditional bonds with nature to resilience. Brandee Albert's, *Mother-Daughter Bond*, describes the family as essential to nurturing motivation and inspiration and the foundation for supporting her life journey. In her photo, *Community Foundation*, she shares her story of community culture, Indigenous traditions, and language to strengthen her ability to achieve positive outcomes and *mino-pimatisiwin*.

The story of *mino-pimatisiwin*, as told by the Indigenous youth participating in the project, is a continuous journey that grows stronger by interactions with people along your path. Its strength is derived not only by what people give to you but what you give to others. I am honoured to continue to interact with these incredible young women and men along their life journey.

- Kathy Mosco

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CLOSING STATEMENT FROM THE YOUTH COMMUNITY CIRCLE

This booklet *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin (The Good Life): A Photovoice Research Project* was the Youth Community Circle's way of celebrating the positives in life and sharing our perspectives of what seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* means and looks like to us.

As you look at the pictures and read the stories, we are sure you will notice some commonality as well as diversity; we believe this is the beauty of *mino-pimatisiwin*. There is no concrete definition or meaning of living or seeking the good life, it is a feeling that is within us, and it can manifest itself in beautiful and unique ways. We did our best to capture the journey of *mino-pimatisiwin* through photos.

After examining all of the photos, it was clear that we—the youth—consistently felt that being appreciative of who and what we have, living each day as it comes, and valuing our connections and relationships with friends, family, Mother Earth and ourselves, meant we are seeking the good life or *mino-pimatisiwin*. Also, we as Indigenous youth felt the importance of our traditions and cultures which are vital to pass on to future generations. Looking within ourselves and discovering what was truly important to us was a rewarding and wonderful experience for all of us. We feel that understanding what the journey of *mino-pimatisiwin* means to oneself takes some self-reflection and we encourage readers to take part in this journey with us through looking at our photos and stories.

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