

# LEADERS IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

TWO LEADING TEACHERS from Mount Isa travelled to Chicago earlier this term to present their ground-breaking research paper into Indigenous education.

Tammi Webber and Gail Laffin have a collective 33 years of experience working in Mount Isa and are undergoing a research project aiming to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The research is a Townsville Catholic Education initiative that aligns with the mandate to improve equitable outcomes for our Indigenous students by finding the best teaching practices to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their learning.

“The main driver for this research was to give a voice to Indigenous parents and students in relation to what teachers in our Catholic schools need to be aware of and working towards with our students,” says St Kieran’s Catholic Primary School teacher, Tammi Webber.

“Although there is research regarding effective teaching practices for Indigenous students, there is embarrassingly little research or data into what Indigenous people themselves think effective teachers and learning is.”

“This is an opportunity to give the minority a voice in relation to their education, and to bridge cultural gaps in our education settings,” says Gail.

## “WHAT QUEENSLAND INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AND PARENTS SAY ABOUT EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES”

Tammi Webber

Researcher and Good Shepherd Catholic College teacher, Gail Laffin, says more than 30 Indigenous students and families were interviewed as part of the research, which formed a framework into developing indicators for teachers when working with Indigenous students.

“This is a longitudinal study, in later stages we will then use this profile with teachers and Indigenous students across several years to monitor student outcomes. This will be measured across attendance, engagement and achievement results such as NAPLAN.”

Despite the often quoted characteristics of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the plethora of untested ‘good ideas’ in the Australian literature, no systematic and empirically-based research provides any conclusive indication of ‘what works’ in influencing Indigenous students’ learning.



Tammi Webber and Gail Laffin.

“You can tell she is interested in us all. Everyday she lets us know she is interested in my life. She tells us about her life and she’s interested in mine. She wants to get to know you. Not just friendly stuff but making you feel you are important and that you can do alright this subject. In the class she’ll spend lots of time with you and not make a scene about it with the rest of the class. You feel welcome” - Aboriginal student reflecting on his school experience

“Just the way the school thinks of my child, that is what is important. Just to believe they are capable and not to ignore them. You really want teachers to give your child the best opportunity. Not just think that my child will not be a good student. Sometimes I think that teachers have their mind made up right away. On that first day, you want the teacher to be saying (in their actions) that your child is important and has the potential to learn, just like every other child. I think sometimes they say, just another (aboriginal child) that will act up or have learning problems or be bad in the classroom. Just the way (the teacher) might think before they even have a chance.” - Aboriginal Parents.

For further information download a copy of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Plan.  
[www.tsv.catholic.edu.au/our-departments/indigenouseducation](http://www.tsv.catholic.edu.au/our-departments/indigenouseducation)