

Indigenous Voices Indigenous Research

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The World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) has now published six Journals. The call for papers for the WINHEC Journal, 2010, themed *Indigenous Voices Indigenous Research* was very open. This openness allowed authors to determine what research might be. As a result, a range of very interesting articles have been submitted from those arguing the validity of Indigenous knowledge in the academy, to improved education systems, papers on the importance of local language and language in higher education, a couple on responsibilities through knowledge for country along with a series which point to quite different methodologies and methods also emerge in all other papers.

In essence the Journal is a site where Indigenous authors are able to reflect their knowledge creatively. This is important as this provides the opportunity to not only deconstruct the hegemony of Western knowledge but, radically draw on ancient local knowledge of Indigenaiety to in turn articulate powerfully Indigenous voices and research.

In this way Indigenous voices and research carry not only knowledge but own language, information on country and stories of all forms which reflect fundamental reciprocal connectedness or relatedness into the future. The articles also identify the centrality of ceremonies, songs, dance, metaphors and activities in such knowledge positions. This is the site of the challenging new ground within Indigenous research.

The article *Indigenous Research and Broader Issues in the Academy* sets the scene for this as it documents the purpose of Indigenous research within the Institute of Koorie Education Research Plan while arguing for the validity of Indigenous/Aboriginal knowledge within academia as a response to the University raising concerns over their Academic Freedom.

The second article, while having obvious Canadian First Nation significance, has international relevance as well. The colonial genocidal script had little variation across the world. *From Cognitive Imperialism to Indigenizing the Learning Wigwam* tracks both the historical and the personal vantage points of ‘Cognitive Imperialism’ to the contemporary complexities of ‘Indigenising the Learning Wigwam’. The article has an insightful connection of an historical First Nation standpoint strategically infused by personal account particularly the kokomis’ (grandmother’s) story and later in the paper the story of the author, to reflect an authentic Indigenous way of knowledge transfer, particularly its cyclic narrative.

The next article is of interest to Indigenous nations as it raises the core question of what do we give away in order to be in today’s world. *Matauranga Maori Literacies: Indigenous Literacy as Epistemological Freedom v. Eurocentric Imperialism* is both thought provoking

and challenging article. Representing a broad theoretical base as it interrogates from a Maori and Indigenous standpoint that differentiates between functional, cultural and critical literacy while navigating in a compelling fashion, the argument that functional literacy is basically assimilationist.

Justifying the Choice of Academic Language through the Theory of Science positions the primacy of Indigenous language within the work of academics. Colonisation and dominance happens on many platforms and in the academy a new frontier exists, especially on this point of language. The paper from a Sámi position surfaces the located challenges for the Indigenous researchers, as the Sámi people blanket parts of four different nation states; Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The article also highlights the Sámi belong to the Finno-Ugrian language family and that there are ten different Sámi languages. However, the article argues the inclusion of such languages in higher education is critical.

Addressing the influence of Ogiek education on environmental conservation the fifth article is titled *Contextualising Ogiek's Indigenous Environmental Education through Oral Literature for Sustainable Conservation of Mau Forest, Kenya*. This article locates one back into key areas critical to Ogiek education which is respectful of knowledge held and learned locally for the continuance of all within the environment. This article is highly relevant to many nations across the world as it surfaces and affirms the important role of kin relationships, Elders, ceremonies, stories, metaphors, songs, dances and land practices within educational content, processes and practice within traditional conservation.

The *Effects of Industry on Maori Cultural Values: The Case of the Tarawera River*, as the next article, examines changes in the relationship between three tribes, Te Arawa, Tuwharetoa ki Kawerau and Ngāti Awa and the Tarawera River, due to pollution of the River. This study looks at effects of pollution, not through "naked" numbers but by the ways that pollution has affected people's/communities' cultural and practical everyday relationship to the river. This approach is often overlooked in mainstream studies concerning pollution/environmental issues", one of the referees wrote. The concern expressed by one of those telling their stories ("will our cultural voice be heard?") indicates the Western knowledge and science blindness to these aspects in much research.

The next article *Fashioning our own house: a research journey* is a very rich piece of writing that travels far beyond the confines of journal writing to a place endowed with knowledge and culture. The reader is welcomed by wonderful deep metaphor that sets the tone for the paper. The paper consists of a series of what the West would describe as vignettes. However the rubrics of the paper transcends to more sophisticated platforms. The final paragraphs state "like muka in a whenu, which provide you with a view of something greater than its individual strands". Hence the real essence is inexplicably tied up in interwoven stories delivering more than narrative through a sophisticated tapestry.

The Yoik Opens A Door to Sámi Oral Literature: A Path into Language, Identity and Self-Esteem cleverly captures in a convincing and compelling manner issues of oral language at the Sámi University College particularly around 'yoiking' or chanting. The paper argues yoiking as the core of Sámi culture, as well as an important skill which requires a great deal of knowledge. This knowledge is a nexus that is intricately linked to strengthening of kin relations, self esteem and building up a positive identity of location on many levels.

Hei – Hawaiian string figures: Capturing the Poetic Visions of a People, is an authentic journey inside a rich cultural positioning around Hawaiian traditions of string figure making through which links are drawn to the dance tradition of Hawaiian people. The article surfaces the heuristic experience in learning hei. Moreover the article through exploration and sharing secures genealogical, geographical, biographical, and biological information. From within the personal the author exhorts Indigenous researchers to have some hands-on, breathing and living experience in a cultural activity. This salient challenge reminds the reader of the insidious nature of assimilation. Epistemology therefore calls for mastery of cultural ways of knowing which assists the researcher in understanding other aspects of culture.

The articles have been a privilege to read and consider as this World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) Journal, 2010 has been prepared for publication. In the article *Fashioning our own house: a research journey* Julie Kaomea (2004, p.43) is quoted as follows:

Above all else, indigenous research should be about healing and empowerment. It should involve the return of dignity and the restoration of sovereignty, and it should ultimately bring formerly colonised communities one step further along the path of self-determination. We should think on these factors as they apply to our own research, and if and when we decide to proceed, we should do so humbly, in an effort to serve.

These are fitting and powerful words to bring this section to a close.

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