Lessons From Developing a Framework For Tsilhqot’in Epistemology

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- Introduction
- Context
  - Hybrid Indigenous methodology
- A Tsilhqot’in epistemology framework
- Some application of the epistemology framework
- Conclusion
Who Am I?

- Indigenous woman from the Yoruba tribe of West Africa
- Brought up within the ancient Yoruba paradigm of ‘Omoluwabi’
- Live within the traditional territory of the Southern Carrier people
- Work with Aboriginal communities in Central Interior BC

INTRODUCTION

Western Philosophies

- Western legislations and policies govern resource development on Aboriginal lands
- Epistemologies of Indigenous peoples are typically unknown or marginalized

CONTEXT
Why Develop a Tsilhqot’in Epistemology Framework?

- Language revitalization project which required the development of culture courses - 2012
- Resource development within Tsilhqot’in territory and associated EIA – 2010, 2012
- Xeni Gwet’in Court case

CONTEXT

How: Indigenous, Afrocentric, and Western

- Data collection and validation using Indigenous methods
- Grounded theory for analysis and framework generation

HYBRID METHODOLOGY
A Tsilhqot’in Epistemology Framework

- Culture course development with members of Tsilhqot’in Language group - 2012
- Community interviews for resource development EIA - 2012
- Participant observation at community gatherings – 2012
- Content Analysis of Court Case and 2010 EIA documents

METHODS

Applied Yoruba Afrocentric Ways

- Elders as knowledge keepers
- Indigenous ways of knowing
- Pre-colonial ways in colonial societies
- Oral history & traditions, sacredness and spirituality
- Understanding of cultural context
- Indigenous ways: Relationships, accountability, respect, reciprocity, relevance
A Tsilhqot’in Epistemology Framework

“We as First Nations struggle every day to keep our identity and cultural values. In losing Elders, we lose important traditional knowledge about our culture and connection to the land. Once the last of our Elders has passed on, what do we have left to carry on our cultural beliefs? And more importantly, what do we have left to teach our children? What is left is the land itself, the water, the trees, the fish, the animals, and the stories that connect them.” (CEAA 2010, 164)
A Tsilhqot’in Epistemology Framework

**Sadanx**
- Seasonal activities
  - Hunting
  - Fishing
  - Gathering
- Legends

**Yedanx**
- Same seasonal activities, same locations
  - Legends and stories
- Tools

**K’andzin**
- Same seasonal activities
- Same geographic locations
- Same legends and stories
- New tools
- Western rules and regulations

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“We get more help from our ancestors when we pray where they used to live and do our ceremonies there. We understand better where we, as Tsilhqot’in People, come from, our history, our situation, when we go to where our ancestors lived.”

(CEAA 2010, 2637-2638)
Geographic Location = Native Space

VALUES

- Cultural & Self identity
- Security
- Health

- Spirituality
- Knowledge
- Benevolence

- Cultural stability
- Interconnection
- Stewardship

- Sustainability
- Kinship
- Sacredness

(Kunkel 2014)
Indigenous epistemology is relevant today

FRAMEWORK APPLICATION

Tsilhqot’in Epistemology: “It’s our culture, our lives”

Unique landforms and rock formations authenticate legends and stories - Sadanx

Vehicles for transmitting the culture; Landscapes are cultural mouthpiece - Yedanx

Pilgrimage sites and connection to the ancestors - K’andzin

Archives of the past, preserved for the present and future generations - Sech’itziqi

(Kunkel 2014)
Conclusion

A framework to understand Tsilhqot’in values and the stories that connect the people to their Native Space

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- Background picture was taken at Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) within Tsilhqot’in land in August 2012.
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