

Indigenous Methodology

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In this issue of *Sibirica* scholars from Sakha (Yakutia), Buryatia, Tuva, and Khakassia present their research with a new paradigm in mind: an indigenous methodology facilitated and represented by indigenous peoples in Siberia. This methodology is aimed at bringing together the thinking, experiences, interpretations and interests of the indigenous peoples in cultural anthropology. The indigenous scholars whose work is published in this issue understand their own rich cultural, historical, and intellectual legacy, as well as its contemporary potential. These scholars do not only study their own cultures but also live within the communities, sharing the interests and anxieties of their people. This is why indigenous scholars often are political and social activists who speak on behalf of their own people. Many urgent issues present concerns for the indigenous peoples of Siberia, including industrial development and sustainability, modern challenges that affect cultures in the context of globalization, education and schooling, language development and preservation, and, perhaps most important, ecological transformations that affect the sensitive environments of Siberia. Tackling such significant issues requires partnership and cooperation between scholars from the West and indigenous scholars in their home countries.

One successful example of indigenization of international scientific and educational terminology is the term *sumak kawsay*. The term refers to the concept of the Quechua people and is translated as “a good life.” It implies a harmonious collective development where every person is perceived within his or her own social and cultural community and in the context of his or her native environment. This concept has offered an alternative paradigm of development based on the harmonious relationship between people, as well as between people and their environment. This concept became a reason for recent amendments of the Constitution of Ecuador, which now references the coexistence of society in harmony with nature to ensure a *sumak kawsay*. The Constitution



acknowledges the right of all people to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment that guarantees sustainable development and, thus, a *sumak kawsay*. The Constitution also establishes that the state has a duty to encourage the transmission and regeneration of knowledge to guarantee a good life for every person.

The ideology of scientific colonialism was based on assurance that scholars and travelers had an unlimited access to any source of data, along with the right to export any material or cultural objects and ideas belonging to native communities. Protection of traditional knowledge from misinterpretation and abuse are topical areas for native scholars developing principles of indigenous methodology. This process was supported by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by the World Intellectual Property Organization, with both acknowledging traditional knowledge as the intellectual property of the indigenous peoples.

The supporters of the principles of indigenous methodology aspire to develop strategies for social transformations that will benefit native communities and will engage remote native communities in Siberia in the process of decision making. Many indigenous scholars attempt to introduce notions and concepts from their cultures based on their traditional knowledge and values. Traditional knowledge is in demand by wide spectrum of sciences in connection with the ongoing environmental changes brought on by global warming. Specifically, topical areas that require the expertise of native scholars are changes in flora and fauna, the condition of the landscape, rivers, roads, and infrastructure. As this issue of *Sibirica* demonstrates, the indigenous methodology framework is carried out in many Siberian regions and needs to be expanded further. Setting this framework will provide scholars with an opportunity to develop indigenous methodology as an academic approach, a discipline, and an ideology for the revitalization of the identities of indigenous peoples.

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