

# Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Optional Theme  
Theory of knowledge 2022

Mimi Bick

24 September, 2020

# Agenda



Introduction  
Personal and  
pedagogical



TOK framework and KQs  
to analyze  
Indigenous Knowledge Systems:  
Scope, Perspective, Ethics

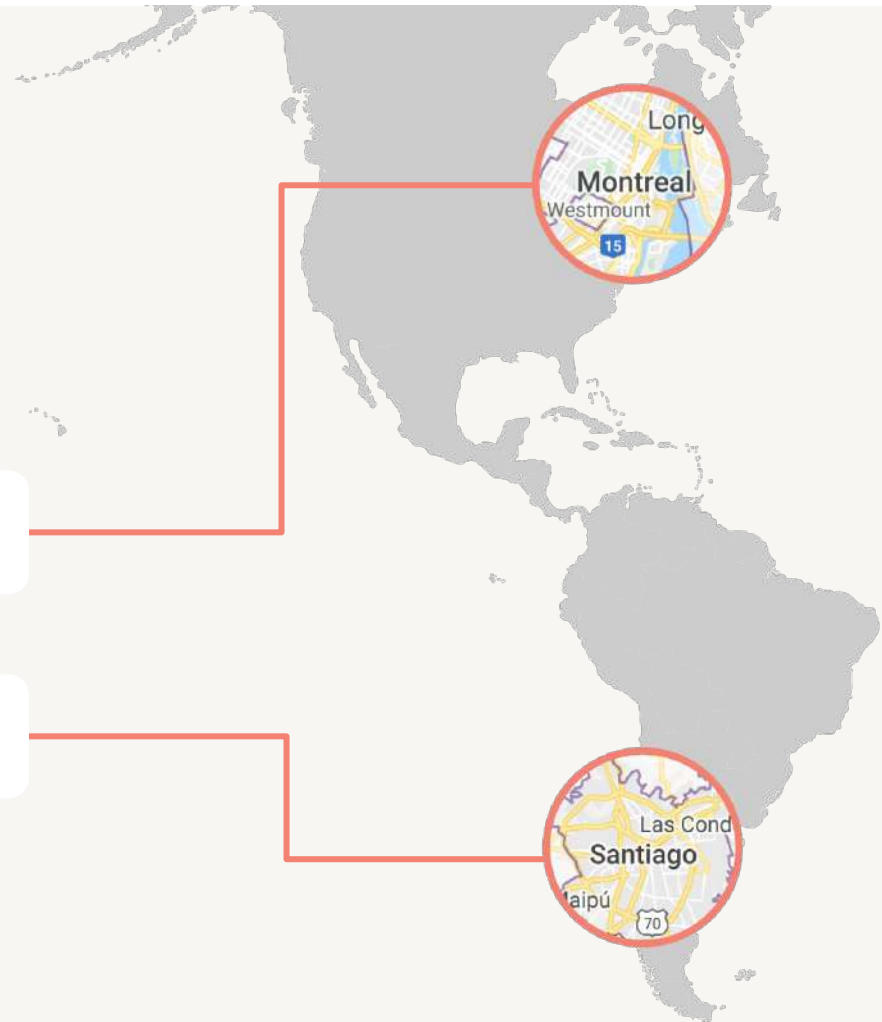


Final suggestions  
on lesson design

# Who am I?

Born in **Montréal, Canada**

30+ years in **Santiago, Chile**



# Why this optional theme?



Visibility



Invisibility



Visibility



Invisibility

## IB mission statement

- The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

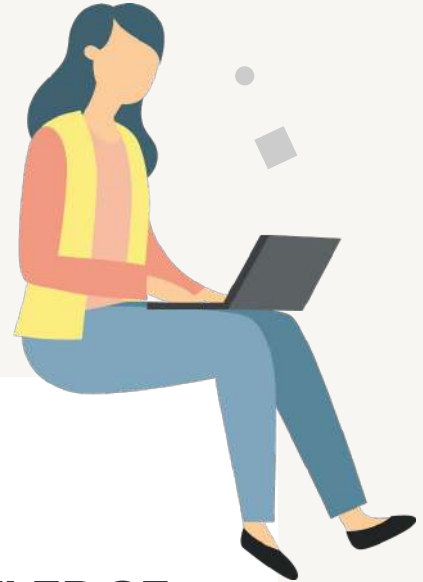
## United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

- Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures.

You do NOT need to be an expert

A little research

Relevant resources



**A TEACHING PLAN**

**KNOWLEDGE *always at the centre* KNOWLEDGE**

# Treatment and focus will depend on your context

## Low Visibility

- **Facts from history class in elementary school**
- **Generalizations and stereotypes from dominant culture**
- **Use of indigenous words in dominant language**

## High Visibility

- **Personal identity, family ties**
- **First-hand experience**
  - Attend or witness a demonstration for or against building a pipeline conflict
  - Identify with indigenous cause by flying a Mapuche flag on Independence Day in Chile or signing a petition for or against an indigenous land claim
- **Exposure to “hot” conflicts in the media**

## Framework: Scope

“This element focuses on exploring the nature and scope of the different themes and areas of knowledge.”

Other **systems** your students have studied: solar system, environmental system, political system, digestive system, etc.

### Characteristics

- Interdependent elements
- Changes to one element effect functioning of the system
- Elements act together as a whole
- Whole is greater than the sum of its parts
- IKS: are sometimes called “holistic”; “holistic knowledge”

# Indigenous knowledge systems

- Specifics of each element depend on indigenous group. BUT
- These five elements are common to IKS: unique
- Logic or glue: All beings are linked together in multiple and interdependent ways





# Framework: Scope

## Knowledge Question:

In what ways does the loss of indigenous languages (or cultures, lands, communities, cosmologies) signify a loss of knowledge? A loss of knowledge to whom?

Selk'nam, Tierra del Fuego, Chile.



# Framework: Perspectives

“This element focuses on the importance and influence of perspectives and context. This includes reflection on the students’ own perspectives and what informs them, as well as how different people or groups view or approach knowledge in the different themes/areas of knowledge. It also includes reflection on historical perspectives and how knowledge changes over time.”

## Knowledge Question:

“What values and assumptions underpin IB’s use of indigenous in the title of this Theme?”

# Framework: Perspectives

## Knowledge Question:

What values and assumptions underpin the use of other terms?

- Indian
- Injun
- American Indian
- Native
- Aboriginal/Aboriginals
- First Nations
- First Peoples



Still from Michelle Latimer's film (2020) based on Thomas King (2013). *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*.

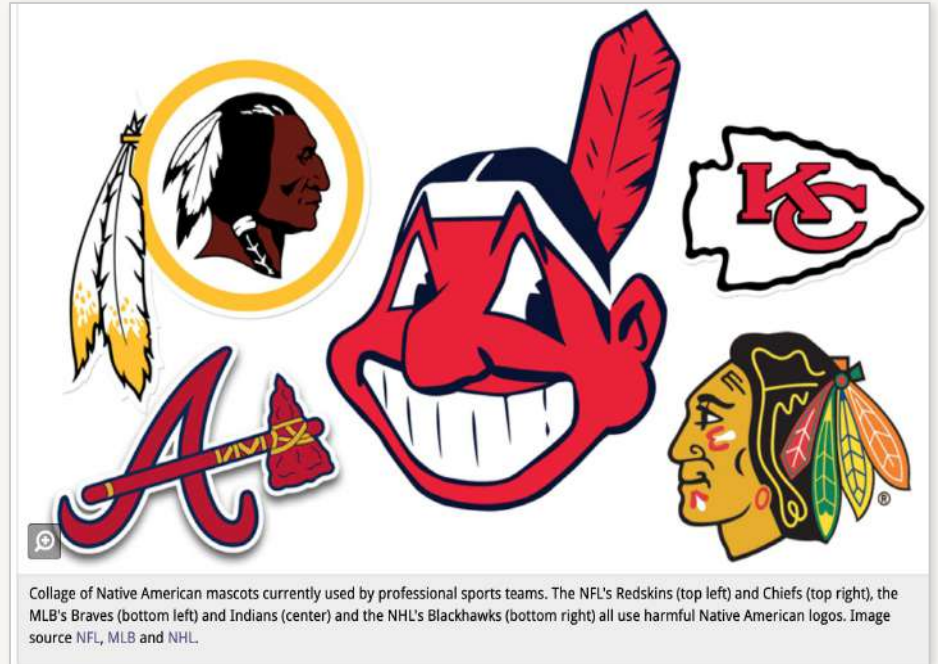
# What's in a name?

## Redskins, Redmen, Chiefs, Braves, Squaws...

### Sports teams and mascots: tribute or stereotype?

Some team names and mascots (logos) are being reconsidered.

- Multi-million \$ franchises
- Controversial, contested since at least 1970s
- Changing values and assumptions



Collage of Native American mascots currently used by professional sports teams. The NFL's Redskins (top left) and Chiefs (top right), the MLB's Braves (bottom left) and Indians (center) and the NHL's Blackhawks (bottom right) all use harmful Native American logos. Image source NFL, MLB and NHL.

# Analysing Perspectives

## A Class Activity

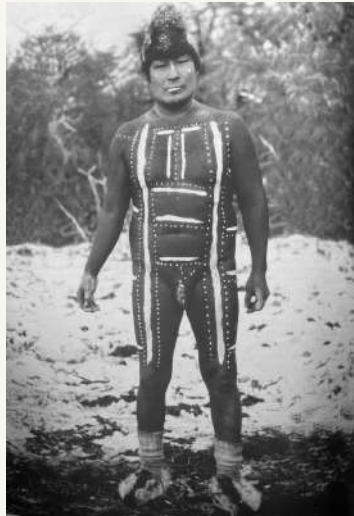
In small groups, students choose a contentious mascot/team name and investigate its history. Instruction: Collect information from a variety of sources (newspapers, videos, testimonies) including the perspective of indigenous individuals and groups and positions taken by the franchise, team, university and other interested parties. Analyze sources using the categories below.

1. Selection of information and ideas	2. Values	3. Emotions	4. Sources of knowledge	5. Assumptions	6. Implications for action
<p>What seems to matter most to the people who hold this perspective?</p> <p>What facts, ideas, issues, actions or events do they consider most central and relevant?</p> <p>Are there others, possibly vitally important to people holding a different perspective, that this group ignores almost completely?</p> <p>Do they explicitly reject or deny the knowledge claims of another group?</p>	<p>You can figure out the values of a group in part from what they select as important, but you need to look more closely at what else they say.</p> <p>Do people who hold this perspective express beliefs about what choices are best in practical terms, or most moral in ethical terms?</p> <p>Do they suggest what outcomes would be best (and for whom)?</p>	<p>Do the people holding this perspective seem to be emotional about it – perhaps afraid or angry?</p> <p>Do they express a sense of belonging to a particular group, or a dislike or distrust of another group?</p> <p>Is there emotional colouring in their choice of words?</p>	<p>Where do the people who hold this perspective gain their information on the relevant issue?</p> <p>Do they trust a particular leader, or expert(s), or organization(s)?</p> <p>What media do they follow?</p> <p>Does their source of information, like their values and emotions, seem to be characteristic of an identifiable group?</p>	<p>Although assumptions may come before all of the other components here as people build their knowledge or form an opinion, it is useful to tackle them last in your analysis.</p> <p>Pinning down assumptions is often the hardest part of an analysis because people do not usually state what they consider to be totally obvious.</p> <p>But can you identify any background beliefs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumptions that are basic values, even if not explicitly expressed.</li> <li>• Assumptions about what is fact, such as generalisations about people.</li> </ul>	<p>Do proposed actions arise as reasonable consequences of all the other components of perspectives identified here?</p> <p>Is it possible that the desired outcome actually preceded the arguments put forward, and that the people were motivated to fit their thinking to a decision they had already made?</p>

# Framework: Perspectives

## Knowledge Question:

How might differences in their worldviews create challenges for collaboration between scientists and holders of traditional knowledge? [From anthropology to environmental science]



Photos: Martin Gusinde (1923), Austrian ethnographer and priest.  
Source Chapman, Anne (2002) Fin de Mundo: Los Selk'nam de tierra del fuego. Pehuen.

## Mistrust

- Science and colonialism
- Treatment of individuals and communities as inferior
- Lack of respect for or recognition of traditional knowledge and its holders
- Desecration of indigenous resting places
- Lack of consent

# Framework: Perspectives

## Knowledge Question:

How might differences in their worldviews create challenges for collaboration between scientists and holders of traditional I knowledge?

Natural science (“Western science”)	Indigenous knowledge systems (“Indigenous or native science”)
Premises / beliefs about causality	Entangled and complex web of interactions
Hypotheses – falsifiability	
Observation – laboratory conditions - technology	Observation – holistic, in place
Replication	Experiential accumulation across generations
Self-correcting, provisional status of conclusions	Adaptations
Purpose - control nature	Purpose – sustainability, communal subsistence, health, balance
Analytical	Holistic
Materialistic	Spiritual dimension
Predictability	

# INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE & CLIMATE CHANGE

Thurs, March 30 at 4:30 pm

UFV Gathering Place, Chilliwack campus at Canada Education Park

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE: LATEST GLOBAL FINDINGS

UFV welcomes guest presenters from Snowchange Cooperative, Finland: Tero Mustonen and Kaisu Mustonen.

Learn about the intersection of Indigenous knowledge and climate change through research.

Snowchange has participated in global discussions of climate change, biodiversity, and Indigenous and traditional knowledge issues for almost 20 years.

Based in the village of Selkie, North Karelia, Finland, Snowchange is a network of Indigenous and local traditional communities, including the Saami, Chukchi, Yukaghir, Inuit, Inuvialuit, Inupiaq, Gwitchin, Icelandic, Tahltan, Maori, and Indigenous Australian peoples and communities. This includes connections with the Stó:lō Nation, through a wide-ranging dialogue on co-management, documentation of traditional land use and occupancy, climate change issues, and restoration of traditional knowledge.

For more information about this event, contact [Carol.Dickson@ufv.ca](mailto:Carol.Dickson@ufv.ca)

## SAPIENS



## Who Gets to Study Whom?

According to Pyburn and Wilk, most foreign anthropology graduate students who are trained at U.S. universities are still expected to go home to do their fieldwork, while students from the United States are often discouraged from studying American culture. “Anthropology has come a long way, but we still need to keep the decolonizing project underway because we still have a lot of smelly baggage,” Wilk says.

## APPLY TODAY!

Indigenous knowledge  
and climate change  
\$50,000 fellowship

Closing date: February 1, 2017

- Are you an ambitious Indigenous scholar?
- Are you interested in Indigenous knowledge?
- Do you aspire to find climate change solutions?

If you answered yes, apply today for the Indigenous knowledge and climate change fellowship. Deadline: February 1, 2017.





# Framework: Ethics

## Knowledge Question:

Does all knowledge impose ethical obligations on those who know it?


Having studied and discussed:

- contact, colonization, globalization

Knowing that:

- through active government policy or inaction: “loss” of land, resources, culture, language, community, cosmology = knowledge
- more indigenous children live below the poverty line, lack clean, running water, access to health care, live in foster care
- indigenous women are targeted more than any other group. 12 times more likely to disappear than other women in Canada

And because we know that indigenous knowledge is unique.....



Do I/we have a responsibility to know more about indigenous peoples, to think or do anything differently than in the past? If yes, what?

# Conclusions about the design of lessons on IKS

- Multitude of ways to focus classes and connect to Areas of knowledge, the Core, other Themes
- Need to employ the TOK framework and knowledge questions as anchors in the design of lessons.

\* A double challenge for us with this theme.



Visibility



Invisibility



Visibility



Invisibility

# Resources

## UN and government sources

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf) UN Declaration of rights of Indigenous Peoples

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/undesavoice/feature/2018/04/39109.html> Video about protecting the rights of indigenous people. 3 minutes.

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231> Government of Canada hub for sources on treaties and rights of first nations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8jelcBfUiw> A Mirror Of The Soul (2016). UN sponsored video on what the loss of language means for the Mapuche, Chile's largest indigenous group. 13 minutes.

## Use of indigenous iconography, team names and mascots

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/sports/hockey/chicago-blackhawks-stand-by-logo.html> "Amid Pressure, Chicago N.H.L. Team Says It Won't Change Its Name". (2020)

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/blackhawks/ct-chicago-blackhawks-name-change-20200709-gc3hs5bamveo3bxwur3pafu2y4-story.html> "Is the Chicago Blackhawks name and logo as offensive as the Washington NFL team's nickname? It's complicated". Chicago Tribune (2020).

<https://corberconsulting.ca/2018/11/07/whats-in-a-name/> Blog post on McGill Redman name change dispute by lawyer who works in the field.

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/last-year-he-forced-mcgill-university-to-change-its-racist-team-name-now-he-s-vaedictorian-1.12777845> Testimony by indigenous athlete regarding McGill Redman name change.

<https://www.mcgill.ca/principal/communications/statements/decision-about-redmen-name> McGill University official communication of name change to Redmen.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2020/07/08/ending-racist-mascots-and-images/> "Ending the use of racist mascots and images". (2020)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-eskimos-name-change-inuk-critic-1.4401422> "Edmonton Eskimos name an insult to the Inuit". (2017)

<https://archeroracle.org/32504/opinion/oped-nativeamericanmascotry/> "Native American mascotry creates detrimental atmosphere for all races". (2017)

## IKS and sciences

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/09/overcome-decades-mistrust-workshop-aims-train-indigenous-researchers-be-their-own> "To overcome decades of mistrust, a workshop aims to train Indigenous researchers to be their own genome experts". (2018)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1479546/> "Western science and traditional knowledge: Despite their variations, different forms of knowledge can learn from each other", [EMBO Rep.](#) 2006 May; 7(5): 463–466.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-museums-rushed-fill-their-rooms-bones-180958424/> "When Museums Rushed to Fill Their Rooms With Bones". Smithsonian Magazine. (2016)

<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/anthropology-colonial-history/> "Who Gets to Study Whom?" Article about the decolonization of anthropology. (2020)

[https://www.oei.es/historico/divulgacioncientifica/noticias\\_823.htm](https://www.oei.es/historico/divulgacioncientifica/noticias_823.htm) "Aportes indígenas a la sociedad del conocimiento". Article in Spanish on indigenous contributions to knowledge societies. Can use google translate to English.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-science-takes-so-long-catch-up-traditional-knowledge-180968216/> "When Scientists "Discover" What Indigenous People Have Known For Centuries". Smithsonian magazine. (2018)

## Other sources

Chapman, Anne (2002). Fin de un mundo: los selk'nam de tierra del fuego. Puehuén. Santiago.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=DOefFpPpDxk&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=DOefFpPpDxk&feature=emb_logo) Choyün - Brotes de la Tierra (2020). Short animation about climate change especially destruction of territory and forests from a specific Mapuche perspective. In Spanish with English subtitles. 6 minutes.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/09/18/first-contact-problematic-indigenous\\_a\\_23530062/](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/09/18/first-contact-problematic-indigenous_a_23530062/) Newspaper article exposing conflicting views about Contact, a reality show taking participant Canadians into indigenous communities.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-says-canada-attempted-cultural-genocide-on-aboriginals/article24688854/> Declaration by Chief Justice of Canada about cultural genocide. 2013.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2018-cbc-massey-lectures-all-our-relations-finding-the-path-forward-1.4763007> Prize-winning journalist Tanya Talaga explores the legacy of cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada in a 6 part lecture series available as podcasts or in book form.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/07/canada-indigenous-women-and-girls-missing> Testimony and criticism of government inaction regarding violence towards Indigenous women. 2020.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/highway-of-tears> Article about the notorious highway from where many indigenous girls and women have gone missing.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=62&v=mh3gPBmauZg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=62&v=mh3gPBmauZg) Inspirational testimony by Global Teachers Global Prize winner 2017, Maggie Macdonald, about her work in a remote community in Nunavik, Canada. Treats colonization and inter-generational trauma and suicide.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8891904/> Michelle Latimer, Inconvenient Indian (2020). (trailer)



**Thank you!**