Eziko: Sipheka Sisophula. Nguni foundations for educating/researching for sustainable development

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Abstract

We hope that this presentation provides educators, researchers, and students with a sense of cultural foundations of Indigenous and Western ways of knowing that serve to open up intellectual and intercultural dialogues that go beyond oppositional, divisive, and polarizing discourses that have characterized the colonial/apartheid eras within the academy. Throughout this discussion we illustrate that around eziko and Gama exist the spirit of connectedness, humility, and respect that affirm diverse stories participants bring, and validate new knowledge they co create. Therefore, to those wedded to the European/Western culture and science, we hope that this article will provide deeper insight and appreciation of the ancient knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples. What all of us need in the new era is a mutually beneficial bridge and dialogue between Indigenous and Western scientists and educators. This article and our other work of the same genre constitute the first step.

INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, I take the position of relational self, whose life is intertwined and interdependent with the lives of other indigenous people in my village and in other indigenous communities. Although indigenous peoples are not a homogenous group, as reflected in their diverse cultures and languages, they are finding that they share a common set of life principles expressed in a ‘theology of place, which while focused specifically on each group’s space, it also extends to include all of nature’ Cajete (1999, 5–6, italics mine). This shared principle fosters a sense of being together, a belongingness and interrelatedness with the land and nature. The very concept ‘indigenous’ is derived from the Latin root indu or endo, which in turn is related to the Greek word endina, which means ‘entrails’. ‘Indigenous’ therefore, means a shared sense of being so completely identified with land, place, people, and nature that one reflects their very entrails, their insides, their souls.
A closer English translation might be, we are the offspring of the earth; we are the people of the ashes that remain around the hearth (iziko); we are the children of Africa.

This is where I find and locate myself so the discussion that follows is not about me or about my story. Rather, our (indigenous peoples’) shared stories of interdependence and interrelatedness, and a struggle to create the process (eziko) around which our voices and presence might be heard in higher education and in research projects. Throughout the process of sharing our story, I take an inclusive position and refer to ‘we’ or ‘our’ instead of ‘I’ or ‘my’. Eziko: sipheka sisophula—Eziko for short (a full discussion of this process comes later in the article) also lends itself to an inclusive, integrative, and relational process as indicated in the collective prefix ‘si’, or ‘we’, rather than the individualistic prefix ‘ndi’ or ‘I’. In this discussion, we use eziko to indicate interactive/participatory learning/research processes and practices around which to engage participants in the activities of sipheka (we cook), sisophula (and dish out). As used in this article, eziko is a metaphor for life, healing, education, and training. Iziko on the other hand denotes a fire-place or space.

Our goal in this discussion is to first open up learning/research process (eziko) around which to engage in dialogue that unravel and demystify philosophical foundations that ground indigenous ways of knowing, and that inform and explain research within an indigenous perspective. Eziko also provides learning and research practices for intercultural and intergenerational dialogues. We realize that alongside existing approaches to learning, and to conducting research, there is a need to include culturally situated, contextually appropriate and place-based processes that are rooted in Nguni foundations, and that bring different approaches to the discussions around poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and other social malaise that are a threat to African/indigenous communities in Southern Africa. Eziko, therefore frames- participatory action learning and research around sipheka sisophula everyday processes and practices within the Nguni homestead. At another level, sipheka means (we train and groom), and sisophula, (we send back to the communities) to foster a co-engagement in programmes that are relevant to local concerns. Practices within this framework provide culturally situated co-engagement activities that deepen an understanding of education/research within an indigenous perspective that is situated in a relationally socio-ecological space. This is significant because indigenous ways of teaching, learning and of conducting research have historically been devalued and marginalized within the system of education and society at large. Key to attainment of sustainable development, which is often reflected in the quality of life of communities and that
of their surrounding environment, is the understanding that learning, teaching, and research processes must first be rooted in the local/regional languages, cultural practices and spiritual values that resonate with the worldview and philosophical foundations of a specific ethnic group. Second, because South Africa is a multilingual and multi-cultural society, these processes must also draw on other ways of knowing that exist at the national level. In addition, because she is part of the global network, she must also learn from Western, Maori, Aboriginal, etcetera, ways of knowing and knowledge construction.

It is important to note the distinction in our use of ‘indigenous ways of knowing’ and ‘indigenous knowledge systems’ (IKS) in this discussion. We use the verbal form indigenous ways of ‘knowing’ to describe indigenous epistemologies, rather than the noun ‘indigenous knowledge systems.’ The former emphasizes that indigenous ‘knowing’ is not a thing to be discovered or made explicit out of context, and stored in journals, from where it might be recovered for later use. Rather, this ‘knowing’ arises around processes and practices of relating to and interacting with the voices of ordinary people in conversations, through culturally and linguistically situated, and interactive activities embodied in eziko: sipheka sisophula.

It is also important to note that our conception of indigenous ways of knowing in this discussion is by no means a romanticism and, a nostalgic yearning for the long gone past, nor a movement to go back to the ‘caves’ and ‘bushes.’ Neither is it a rigid understanding of culture as static, archaic, exclusionary, and frozen in space and time. Cultures, including indigenous cultures, are dynamic, adaptive, and have evolved over time to integrate other ways of knowing. Only those aspects of indigenous knowing that are relevant and functional; that will contribute to the psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual development of families and communities; and that will advance science and technology in society must be revitalized and retained. Therefore, we propose the integration of the indigenous world view and philosophy to foreground our projects as a reaction to approaches that have been predominately Western and orientated within a modernist conventional wisdom. Such approaches not only fail to provide truly multi-and intercultural spaces for dialogue, teaching, and for research in a manner that embraces authentic cultural diversity, but also fail to contribute to education for sustainable development. It behooves us at this point to provide a brief history of education in the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa. We can only be able to determine a future that is built on new foundations and authentic cultural and linguistic diversity, when we are able to articulate the present, and able to remember the past.
PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE APARTHEID ERA

When any group within the larger society significantly dominates other groups, its cultural and philosophical foundations that reflect particular values, ways of knowing and processes of knowledge construction become the accepted methods in higher education and within the larger society. These perspectives become so deeply embedded in the culture of learning, teaching, and in the methods for conducting research that they are typically seen as natural or appropriate norms, rather than as historically, politically, and culturally evolving social constructions. In South Africa in the colonial and apartheid eras, this was the case with regard to the philosophical perspectives in which the institutional knowledge, and the general system of education of the modernist state were rooted. The philosophical underpinnings of education can, for example, be traced to the influence of Fundamental Pedagogics which as a dominant philosophy of education, was responsible for reproducing and maintaining the ruling social and political ideology, namely, Christian National Education. Fundamental Pedagogics promoted what Higgs1997, 11, calls ‘a state of unreason’, by instilling a spirit of exclusivity and intolerance; and an unwillingness to accommodate divergent perspectives and points of view within the discourse of education during the apartheid era. Furthermore, Taylor (1993) is of the opinion that Fundamental Pedagogics was more about socialization than philosophy, and more about instilling passive acceptance of authority than to provide students with the conceptual tools necessary for creative and independent thought. Obviously, such a narrow utilitarian view of education, as a process of socialization, emphasized the maintaining of particular cultural and social norms in order to provide the necessary homogeneity for social survival and political hegemony entailed in the system of apartheid.

During this era, the Fundamental Pedagogics of Christian Nationalism were taken for granted and widely accepted and taught as the only legitimate orientation for meaningful ways of knowing. Scientists and scholars alike perpetuated the belief that the scientific knowledge that students from all backgrounds acquired at the university level was inclusive because it was based on the ‘universal’ (from where university is derived) values, mores, and beliefs. Contrary to this belief, one did not have to get to the university level to realize that what was taught at different levels of education, that is, what was embedded in the curriculum, pedagogy, and the language used in the classroom, was grounded in the colonial/European culture. Given this cultural orientation for teaching and learning activities, very little was drawn from other ways of knowing -grounded in the indigenous tradition and worldview. Historically, western science has thus been credited with the only valid protocols for knowledge construction in higher education. (Although there has recently been some slow changes in a few universities, I must add). Indigenous science has thus often been discounted and discredited as non-scientific, because it is rooted in the story of the people that is expressed in oral tradition, art, mythology and spirituality.
FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN WAYS OF KNOWING

Given that the diverse peoples of the world have differing worldviews, culture, and language that invariably influence the way we come to know, understand, interpret, and tell our stories as we see, hear, feel, remember, and participate with one another within this cosmology. According to Kawagley (1995, 7) ‘a worldview consists of the principles we acquire to make sense of the world around us. Young people learn these principles, including values, traditions, and customs, from myths, legends, stories, family, and community rituals. It is a summation of coping devices that enable its possessors to make sense of the world around them, make artifacts to fit their world, generate behavior, and interpret their experiences.’ Western scientists who argue that there is no such thing as indigenous worldview, and a way of coming to know and to construct knowledge, state vehemently that science is essentially a Western construct (see Reagan, 1996). While they agree that indigenous people embrace ancient indigenous knowing, however, to them this knowledge is not scientific, because it is not rooted in the Cartesian paradigm. This argument maintains that indigenous knowledges and wisdoms are essentially based on superstition with no scientific foundations. Another major issue that arises in the process of determining whether indigenous worldview and science have legitimacy or not within the academy, is undoubtedly based on the assumption that indigenous traditions, cultures, and languages are inferior to European traditions, therefore, have no place in higher education. On the other hand, others insist that research must be objective, culturally and politically neutral, and value free, and not influenced by those with institutional power. The counterargument is that nothing scientists do is divorced from their cultural backgrounds, the values they embrace, as well as the political climate under which systems of knowledge or reality are generated. The following chart illustrates foundations of cultural differences in ways of knowing, and of knowledge construction.

Foundations of cultural differences in ways of knowing – epistemology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic groups</th>
<th>Axiology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Logic</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIGENOUS PEOPLES Of the Americas &amp; Around the World</td>
<td>HUMAN MULTIVERSE</td>
<td>AFFECTIVE ACTIVE</td>
<td>CONCATE NATE</td>
<td>PANTHEISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The highest value lies in the balance of relations between humans, other beings and spirits of past, present and future</td>
<td>One knows through symbols, art, imagery, metaphor, dreams, mythology, and participation</td>
<td>All elements and beings of the Multiverse are linked together</td>
<td>All sets are dependently in terrelated in the harmony and balance of the Multiverse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### People of AFRICAN descent & AFRICANS in the Diaspora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Affective Active</th>
<th>Diunital</th>
<th>Ntuology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Nature</strong></td>
<td>The highest value lies in the interpersonal relationship between humans and nature</td>
<td>One knows through symbols, imagery, art, rhythm, dreams, mythology, and participation.</td>
<td>The world is a union of opposites</td>
<td>All sets are interrelated through human, nature and supernatural networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Group</strong></td>
<td>The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the Group</td>
<td>One knows through striving toward the transcendence</td>
<td>Nyaya</td>
<td>The world is conceived holistically with human perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Object</strong></td>
<td>The highest value lies in the object and the manipulation of objects</td>
<td>One knows through reason, logic and objective science</td>
<td>Dichotomy</td>
<td>Either/Or Subject/object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Model is adapted by Goduka and Ganoe (2003) from Nichols (1976).

Thus, as this chart illustrates, sources of knowing and interpreting nature, and the explanations of natural phenomena are rooted in the worldview, culture and basic philosophies of a particular ethnic group. To some scholars these foundations, that is, the rationalistic/dualistic-orientation that is grounded in the European and empirical-positivist worldview on the one hand, and the relational/ecological orientation that is rooted in indigenous and participative worldview on the other, suggest a divisive, oppositional, and polarizing discourse, and should not be brought up in lectures, seminars and workshops. Such an accusation often comes from both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars. This debate was brought up as a reaction to the presentation on ‘Foundations of cultural differences in ways of knowing,’ (Goduka and Ganoe 2003), at the *International Forum on Integrating Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Education*, at Central Michigan University in 2003. What does each orientation entail? Is there a meeting ground for the apparent opposites, that is, western and indigenous ways of knowing? The following section provides a brief sketch of each and a proposed meeting ground.

### The Rationalistic/Dualistic-Orientation and The Modern Worldview

The project of modernity signaled the end of feudalism and absolutist authority, legitimated by divine rule, and announced the beginning of the modern state. The
modernist view of the world is said to have begun with Rene Descartes (1596–1650). He divided the cosmos into matter and mind (or spirit) and suggested that science be applied to matter and mind (spirit) to theology. This duality became a cornerstone of modernist perspectives that shaped Western understandings and knowledge creation processes. The division of knowledge and faith marked modern culture, and developments in sciences with emphasis on a detached and objective search for facts. The development of scientific thought, the exploration and ‘discoveries by Europeans of other worlds, the expansion of trade, the establishment of colonies, and the systematic colonization of the lands of indigenous peoples in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries are all facets of the modernist project (Smith 1999).

Notions about the ‘Other,’ were recast within the framework of modernity and Enlightenment philosophies. Consequently when the enlightened scientific foundations of Western research were discussed, the indigenous foundations were ignored, because to acknowledge their contribution, was to recognize indigenous people as human beings, rather than sub-human. As stated by Bazin (1993), most Europeans and their institutions could not even imagine that other people could ever have done things before or better than themselves. To them (Europeans) the objects of research have no life force, no humanity, no spirit of their own, no voice, therefore, could not have made an active contribution to world civilization. Based on this assumption, indigenous Asian, African, American and Pacific forms of knowledge, technologies and codes of social life which began to be recorded in some detail by the seventeenth century, were regarded as ‘new discoveries’ by Western scientists. These discoveries were commodified as property belonging to the cultural archives and body of knowledge of the West.

For those of us whose education was/is steeped in these western traditions, irrespective of whether one was in the College of Human Ecology or not, (as was the case with me, at Michigan State University in the US) the positivist worldview was an integral part of our training. This view held a belief that science is separate from everyday life and the researcher is the subject within a world of separate objects. According to this perspective mind and reality are separate: the rational human, drawing on analytical thought and experimental methods, comes to know the objective world. This is a contested part of the modern worldview based on the metaphor of linear progress, absolute truth, and rational planning.

THE RELATIONAL/ECOLOGICAL-ORIENTATION AND THE POSTMODERN WORLDVIEW

While the division of knowledge and faith, and discoveries of the ‘new world,’ marked modern culture, development in sciences with emphasis on a detached search for facts, led to the recent intellectual struggle for a new postmodernism world view. The idea of evolution suggested that the world is not so much a creation as a creating. The widening acceptance of Einstein’s theory of relativity in
As a movement, postmodernism is influencing a wide range of disciplines, including art, architecture, literary criticism, and social sciences. In his review, Gergen (1994) traces the roots of the movement to Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1963) in which it is proposed that language has meaning through its connections with social practices, not through its reference to an external reality: ‘To use a word accurately, is to use it within the rules of culturally specific language games, in which games are embedded within broader cultural forms of life. It is not the word as it is that constitutes our callings but the relationships in which we participate’ (Gergen 1994, 413). Gergen was tracing the movement through Rorty’s (1979, 413) work in which he was asking philosophers to cease to look for transcendent truth and ‘to begin to participate pragmatically in the broader dialogue of society’ and through the writings of Foucault (1978) and Derrida (1953) who probe how knowledge and power are inescapably intertwined.

Consisted with a postmodernism worldview, the relational/ecological worldview takes up a position regarding notions of rationality; the norm; linear time, ethic of competition, authoritative and objective methods that are rooted in the European culture and tradition, and perpetuated through the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm. Based on an indigenous standpoint:

- there is no objective basis for science, objectivity in research is neither possible nor desirable;
- research methodology, curriculum and pedagogy grounded in rationalist paradigms are simply one way of constructing and transmitting knowledge;
- art, spirituality, science, fantasy, ‘dreaming,’ iintsomi – mythology, legends, magic, and superstition are alternative models of knowledge construction and transmission with equal claims of respectability;
- all reality is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, and one kind of reality is as good as the other, as far as it serves to steer and sustain those that hold it to be of value, engaging the risk that arises as it plays out in the contexts of their developing lives as a community;
- there is no standpoint or perspective that is superior to another. The literary tradition is not superior to the oral tradition, rather they complement each other. In addition, the oral tradition serves as a legitimate method to articulate feelings and thoughts that have been repressed by the denial and rejection of subjectivities and other ways of knowing.

The relational worldview on which eziko sipheka sisophula project is grounded in an ecological interdependence, and an intergenerational spirituality constitutes an -interrelatedness and interconnectedness amongst humans and our social and
environmental milieu. In other words, the situated perspective that informs eziko includes gaianism or deep ecology. According to Zimmerman (1989), deep ecology is founded on the notion that all systems of life on Earth are interrelated and interconnected. To deep ecologists the idea of anthropocentrism – human-centeredness – is a misguided way of seeing things. They maintain that an ecocentric attitude is more consistent with the nature of life on earth. Thus instead of regarding humans as something completely unique or chosen by God, they see humans as integral threads in the fabric of life. They hold that we need to develop a less dominating and aggressive posture towards our Earth if we and the planet are to survive.

Thus a relational/ecological worldview highlights a circle of relationships we experience with one another and among families and communities; with the immediate and distant biological and physical ecology surrounding us. Within a relational process, humans receive from each other and from nature; and give back to each other and to nature. We are thus all receivers and givers in co-dependent existence. Mutuality and reciprocity are the orientating intergenerational principles of our co-existence. Whenever there is reciprocity, there is relationship, and whenever there is a symbiotic relationship, survival is the outcome (Kumar 2002). Relationships such as these are caring for each other and nurturing of the earth, because ultimately there is no distinction between Earth and human beings, where our natures as we relate with each other and our surroundings are sustained and sustainable. Our survival (Earth and human beings) is therefore, intertwined and bound to each others.

This worldview is also described as holistic, feminine, experiential, and participatory (see Reason and Bradbury 2001). The assumption in a relational worldview is that our world does not consist of separate elements, but is built on relationships among humans, and between humans and the natural environment which is a source of our livelihood. We participate in our world, so that the ‘reality’ we experience is a co-creation. In the process of this co-creation, we become increasingly aware of the damage we are doing to the planet’s ecosystem and note the resultant sustainability crisis, and see that a collective participation is an ecological imperative. The participative metaphor is particularly apt for eziko processes. As we participate in co-creating our intergenerational worlds, we are already embodying and breathing beings who are acting together for the benefit of our families and communities. This worldview requires us to be both situated and reflexive, to be explicit about the knowledge created within inquiry as processes of coming to know, serving the democratic ethos, practical orientation of eziko. Therefore, the division, dichotomy, and polarization often voiced by modern scholars have no place around eziko, as engaging practices and intercultural learning occur, with room for diverse perspectives being brought into the process. Thus, eziko creates spaces where experience and differences meet, and where the diverse worldviews, cultures and languages participants brought into the discourse are respected, affirmed, and validated. In his Chapter on ‘Marrying Indigenous and
Western Science through Environmental Education,’ O’Donoghue (2004, 180) offers examples of cases in which ‘indigenous knowledge interacted with Western science in environmental matters’. This chapter and some of his work on indigenous ways of knowing support the process and practice entailed in the eziko project.

Having contrasted Western and Indigenous worldviews, the question often posed is: Which is better? And which is right? In reality neither one is better nor right, because used together they engender unity-in-diversity, as each carries situated ways of knowing shaped in the realities of our individual experiences. It is notable that many scholars and scientists are noting how indigenous ways have been overlooked and ignored, and need to be engaging within the curriculum, teaching and research methods. This also means that science teachers at primary, high school and university levels must learn to include and be more receptive to situated ways of knowing that are grounded in the indigenous perspectives, as expressed in the oral tradition, art, mythology, and spirituality; that take into consideration the subconscious and intuitive; even possibly, incorporate elements of the metaphysical. However, the challenge for teachers in South Africa and around the world is to learn ways of engaging indigenous ways of knowing and processes of knowledge construction (science) in the curriculum and in pedagogy within the systems of education that are rooted in the Western traditions and scientific thought. Science teachers have generally adopted an either/or attitude. Most science teachers view an indigenous explanation of natural phenomena as non-scientific because they do not always fit the Western scientific framework. Since the 19th century, the goals of education have been to replace ‘primitive beliefs’ of indigenous children with the ‘modern ones.’ To this day, such goals have not changed and they are still an integral part of a hidden curriculum at the lower and higher levels of education.

WHAT IS EZIKO AND HOW IS IT USED IN THIS DISCUSSION?

The process eziko sipheka sisophula or ‘gathering around the hearth (iziko) to cook (sipheka) and dish out (sisophula)’, is rooted in the Nguni and other African languages, cultures, and a relational/ecological worldview. Eziko around which the proposed project is being built, articulates Nguni philosophical foundations with an engaged and practical knowing-in-context perspective. Family and community members gather in a circle around eziko to cook, dish out and eat. Thus literally, eziko sipheka sisophula is the space for and processes of preparing and providing food that nourishes and sustains -family members as well as those who have passed on to ancestral spaces. At birth, eziko provides warmth and food for mother and new born. Herbs and other forms of medicine for baby and mother are prepared at this space. At the time of death, this is a space at which family members prepare meals to bid farewell to a member who has passed on. -Within Nguni traditions, activities that occur around eziko are usually performed by women.
At the cultural and spiritual levels, eziko is a learning space around which intercultural and intergenerational dialogues occur in a spirit of connectedness and respect. These dialogues entail the education of children through stories, mythology and legends (iintsomi, izaci, namaqhalo), as well as for performing rituals, cultural and spiritual activities for healing, and for connecting with the ancestors. In indigenous villages/communities, discussions (iimbizo) of significance with the elders; celebrations of the coming of age of young men occur around the courtyard (enkundleni), while discussions around the rite of passage for young women occur around eziko. Eziko thus frames a learning and research context/space within which cultural, spiritual, and healing processes and activities can be understood, analyzed, investigated, and shared with youth and other interested participants. These contexts are thus a landscape of intercultural and intergenerational dialogue in which indigenous elders use oral tradition to share their wisdoms with the youth and other participants.

As used in this project, the power of the fire around eziko is a metaphor for life, healing, survival, education and training in different areas that are presented through intercultural and intergenerational dialogues, and other shared activities. In addition to providing participants with warmth, comfort and food, the fire around eziko is also a space where difference are affirmed, validated, and treated with respect, so that democracy might thrive. Training and sharing of knowledge and skills; and possible areas of research in the following few examples illustrate how western and indigenous ways of knowing can live side by side, and be engaged in the contexts of everyday life around the risks that bring forth problems to be resolved:

- In health and healing of patients with HIV/AIDS, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other diseases that have become common among Africans in South Africa, health practitioners will draw on both the western medicine (oogqira) and traditional/indigenous healing practices (nama-gqira noosiyazi). The emphasis will be on curanderismo because it is centred on disease prevention and holistic healing processes that involve spirit, mind, and body. Curanderismo is also a healing process in which the patient must participate in healing along with family and community members.
- In the areas of farming and agriculture, focus will be on permaculture?a way of seeing and acting in the world which entails the philosophy and principles of understanding how our living planet works, recognizing our ultimate interdependence therein. We will focus on the principle of ‘all things garden’, based on the essential natural reality of life, the continual interaction of plants, animals, and earth at all levels of ecology.
- In the area of architecture and technology, traditional huts known as rondavels and ixhiba, a hut that is built out of branches and thatch by the Hlubi woman of Hlathikhulu in Kwa-Zulu Natal, will demonstrate and emphasize the use of locally available building materials that come from earth. This will consist of
the mixture of straw, clay, soil from the ant-hill, ashes, cow-dung, and water to build the rondavels’ floor and the walls, and thatch for the roof. This building material is an effective way to enhance the health of human beings and that of the environment, and is a good conductor of heat. Outside mud-ovens for baking bread from an indigenous perspective will also be built using the same mixture. Other buildings will be built with red bricks and cement walls with the corrugated iron roof to give participants a flavor from both indigenous and Western ways of architecture and technology.

- In the area of food production, processing and preserving, we will create a context for understanding the deeper nature of sustainability as expressed in the food that people eat. The importance of including a broad and comprehensive program on the food people buy and what they can grow in the communal gardens will be emphasized. Such a program will also include environmental awareness, health, diet, and nutrition and how it relates to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients. Our vision is to create a healthy environment that is based on a healthy culture, and has a potential to promote healthy families and communities. When we eat foods that are indigenous to our lands, and combine healthy diet with the work ethic that enhances our physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, our overall health condition improves resulting in the prevention of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, high blood pressure, alcoholism, and heart disease that are foreign to indigenous communities.

Eziko will thus create a bridge between the ways of the modern world and indigenous wisdoms. Used together, these processes of co-engagement around eziko will foreground efforts to improve the quality of life for humans and that of the environment, and have the potential for sustainable development.

Similar to eziko, a metaphor for life, healing and survival in the Nguni worldview of Southern Africa, is Ganma, a metaphor of the Yolngu of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia that is described by (Pyrch and Castillo 2001). Ganma captures a situation in which a river of water from the sea (Western knowledge) and a river of water from the land (Aboriginal knowledge) mutually engulf each other upon flowing into a common lagoon where they become one. Upon coming together, the streams of water mix across the interface of the two currents, and foam is created at the surface so that the foam marks the process of Ganma. In this metaphor, the foam represents new kinds of knowledge (see Marika, Ngurruruwutthum and White 1992, in Pyrch and Castillo 2001). Some indigenous cultures believe that water has memory. When the two rivers meet to create Ganma, their waters diffuse into each other, but they do not forget who they are, or where they came from. The meeting of the two waters does not mean that each gives up one’s story, culture and language, therefore, risking losing one’s integrity. Rather, the meeting allows each water to share its story in the spirit of connectedness and respect, and allows each to learn from one another, while
deepening the understanding of who they are, using the ancient ways of knowing they embrace. Both eziko and Gamma allow participants to share their stories, by drawing from their previous knowledge, and what they bring to these spaces to co-engage in the process of knowledge re-, and co-creation. Both metaphors know that the strength of participants comes from their understanding of where they have been which provides the potential for a deeper sense of who and where they are, that is, their socio-ecological ethnic, and cultural roots.

To experience new knowledge as ways of knowing co-created around eziko and Gamma, participants need more than their intellect, or the ability to understand metaphors. To see the red flames of fire, and hear the quiet sounds of foam created by eziko and Gamma respectively, we need to look and see with our shared soul and listen in our hearts. Most important is how mind, body and spirit enable an ‘experiencing’ the power of the fire and the water/foam, rather than the experiences that happen to us as a result of the fire and the foam. The process of ‘experiencing’ can also be felt when we speak and work together as participants in the classroom and in participatory action research (PAR), in which we give, we receive, we unite, and we co-create knowledge as ways of knowing that guide our ways of working in the world and with others. Acts of sharing give us a sense of where we fit in relation with/to others, it strengthens and affirms us as individuals because our sense of who we are and what we can offer is deepened. For both the processes of eziko and Gamma to play out amongst us as indigenous peoples in our living world, the possibility of permeability, the desire for connectedness, and to be penetrated, not just in our heads, but also within our hearts and souls should exist. This requires that we approach our work with the spirit of seeking connectedness and in humility. Humility helps us to grow spiritually, to listen, to share, and to know how to give and how to receive. It helps us to learn to participate in a process of knowledge construction at the family and community levels, a process that can also be integrated in classroom activities and in research projects. The results of which are ‘ours’, rather than ‘yours’ or ‘mine’.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is most comforting to realize that indigenous scholars and other community workers in South Africa and abroad are engaged in projects to defend, revitalize, and to integrate indigenous ways of knowing in the academy, that include knowledge construction, ways of teaching, learning, and of conducting research. They challenge the dominance of Western philosophies, assumptions and approaches to education (see O’Donoghue 2004; Higgs, Higgs and Venter 2003; Odora Hoppers 2000; Goduka 2000; and Reagan 1996); and what research is supposed to be, who has authority to engage in that research, for and with whom (see Pihama 2003; Park 2001; Pyrch & Castillo 2001; Cajete 1999; and Smith 1999). In addition, eziko sipheka sisophula, a situated and situating research process amongst the Nguni resonates with Kuapapa Maori, a proposed research
methodology by the Maori scholars of New Zealand (see Smith 1999) and Ganma of the Northern Territory of Australia (see Pyrch and Castillo 2001). These are also emerging as projects that challenge the status quo within the academy. As processes and practices for knowledge construction, Eziko, Kuapapa Maori, and Ganma therefore, pose sites of contestations and engagement within higher education. They struggle for the recognition, the validation and affirmation of the cultural and relational worldviews of the Nguni people of Southern Africa, the Yolngu of Arnhem Land of Northern Australia, and the Maori people of New Zealand. They assert that indigenous peoples have always been researchers, and have always engaged in theorizing and finding solutions to their problems using their cultures and languages, rooted in their worldviews. What is important to understand in the development of this article is that Western ways of knowing and theories for teaching and for conducting research have been privileged in higher education to the exclusion of others. Indigenous peoples’ ways of knowing and knowledge construction that are rooted in their developing worldviews, values, and beliefs of their ancestors are ignored and often denigrated within higher education. This body of knowledge has been handed down through generations, and although disrupted and disregarded through colonial/apartheid impositions, many ancient and practical wisdoms have survived and continue to inform, inspire, and define indigenous peoples’ relationships with one another and within our cosmologies. Our challenge as scholars, scientists, students, and community workers is to engage in conscious efforts to integrate indigenous ways of knowing in education, research, and in community projects.

REFERENCES


