CHAPTER 1*

Teaching Inclusive Authorities:

Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Framework for Information Literacy in Native Art

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Embedded in the frame Authority is Constructed and Contextual is an important social justice theme: that "authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority," and that there are "biases that privilege some sources of authority over others."[1] These short sentences encapsulate an important idea that we as librarians need to expand on and teach more fully and inclusively. Often when we teach this frame, the communities that define authority are solely Western communities: academia, government, business, etc. While who and what counts as authority in these communities differ, they are all based on Western systems of knowledge and ways of knowing. It is imperative to look at authority cross-culturally, to examine and consider authorities based on other cultures' ways of knowing, because the systems of knowledge that construct authority are cultural artifacts rather than universal truths. When librarians teach only Western authority, we are complicit in perpetuating a hegemonic concept of authority that only recognizes one way of knowing, one system of knowledge. This dominant authority

is marked by specific and exclusive indicators: peer review, scholarly journals, PhDs, etc. Alternative knowledge from other cultural contexts are not eligible for these markers of Western authority and are therefore all too often excluded from consideration, from credibility, and from scholarly discourse, impoverishing the conversation and perpetuating inequity. How can we teach learners to value many kinds of knowledge and evaluate multiple authorities in a richer system of knowing?

This question is inherently difficult to answer because in order to effectively teach the concept, we must ask students to understand several interlocking concepts. Students need to understand knowledge systems and their resultant conceptions of authority. The idea of multiple culturally constructed authorities fits many of the requirements of a threshold concept. Although just one part of this frame, it is more discrete and coherent than the frame as a whole. Once understood, it changes the way the learner views and understands authority. No longer is it a neutral arbiter of quality marked by a few key indicators, but a result of culturally specific knowledge systems. Realizing that the ultimate goal is moving students to an understanding of this threshold has fundamentally changed how I teach authority. Students cannot just follow a formula or go through a checklist to determine authority; instead, they require cultural knowledge and understanding. As an art librarian, I see the need to embrace teaching a more inclusive authority, especially in classes that deal with the art of other cultures.

In this chapter I will specifically explore teaching multiple authorities in indigenous art, where the culture that created the art varies drastically in knowledge practices from the culture now interpreting that art. When researching the art of non-Western and indigenous cultures, the concept of multiple culturally-constructed authorities becomes crucial to creating inclusive scholarship and interpretations. Researchers that only use Western markers of authority to evaluate information will find a one-sided perspective because academic sources are most often written about these communities rather than by them. Reliance on Western authority effectively silences the voices of indigenous people who made the artwork under study, who used it in their rituals or daily life, and whose traditions that art belongs to. Under this Western hegemony, interpretation of native cultures is denied to members of that culture and reserved for those with Western authority. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith so searingly recounts in the introduction to her book, the Western monopoly on interpretation is incredibly painful to indigenous cultures: "It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us… It appalls us that the West can desire, extract, and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas…."[2] This sentiment should spur us as librarians to

fight against colonialist constructions of authority that deny voice and agency to indigenous peoples, and to teach the validity of indigenous perspectives.

The differences between Western and indigenous ways of knowing means different traits are seen as markers of authority. According to Barnhardt and Kawagley, native knowledge systems are often based on long histories of accumulated experiences with the world. The particulars and specifics of this knowledge are related to the whole as native knowledge is often holistic and interrelated. This knowledge is passed on through stories, demonstrations, and trial.[3] Mastery depends on practical application of knowledge and indeed is tested through everyday survival: "Knowledge is something you do; not a pre-existing tool independent of the person holding it, nor of the uses it might be put."[4] This can be contrasted with Western knowledge, which is typically compartmentalized, taught in detached and decontextualized settings, and indirectly measured with tests rather than judged based on one's ability to put that knowledge into practice.[5] Thus, in traditional native knowledge systems there is respect and trust for inherited wisdom, often communicated through an oral tradition, and for knowledge that has proved its utility in everyday practices. There is respect for stories that connect the particulars of knowledge to holistic worldviews, values, and life ways. Knowledge is collective, evolving in a community of users, knowers, and actors. Authority is not conferred via systematic processes of Western bureaucracy, but rather through community decision making and respect for the knowledge and authority of elders.[6] It's important to point out that both knowledge systems have advantages, that they reinforce and fill in gaps, rather than one being superior to the other. But because of these differing systems, indigenous knowledge is often kept out of traditional academic publications because it lacks the markers of authority librarians so often teach: credentials, peer-review, or citations to the written record; it instead relies on the wisdom of elders, community agreement, and oral tradition. However, there is still much common ground in how both traditional and Western knowledge are built: reliance on observations of the natural world, recognizing patterns, then verifying and predicting.[7] It should then be possible to teach students to value and evaluate information from indigenous authorities.

Certainly, indigenous cultures are not the only groups who are excluded from Western authority, especially in art history. Patriarchal histories and systems often keep women out of the conversation. The emphasis on scholarly and analytical approaches in the Western tradition frequently devalues the embodied, tacit knowledge of artisans because it is often based on tradition and physical skill. Looking at the art of indigenous cultures, we should not be surprised that there are intersectional biases. Indigenous artisans are often women of color, whose voices are frequently silenced and ignored. The knowledge of craftspeople has special resonance in indigenous knowledge systems.

Native artisans' skills are passed down, applied in everyday situations, and what they make is tied to ways of living but also intimately related to spiritual systems. Knowledge is made, embedded in, and carried on through the baskets, songs, rituals, and other art forms of the native culture.[8] The importance of this knowledge and the array of factors lining up against its inclusion in scholarship only makes it more vital to proactively ensure the voices of native artisans are heard and given the credence and authority that they deserve.

The frame of Authority is Constructed and Contextual is an important but imperfect tool for incorporating indigenous authorities into library instruction. The first important point made by the Framework is that "Experts understand that authority is a type of influence recognized or exerted within a community."[9] From this quote, the conclusion can be drawn that authority is a relative, culturally constructed concept. But the frame does not seem to fully embrace the implication of this assertion: that no one type of cultural authority is natural or superior. While there may be a hierarchy of authority among communities within the same culture, once there is a cross-cultural comparison, hierarchies become colonializing and culturally supremacist. Western systems of knowledge devalue information from culturally diverse authorities. Despite the frame's insistence that experts understand multiple types of authority, it does not recognize that they also have incentives to protect and police the boundaries of their authority. This makes it difficult to move information from an indigenous source to an academic arena, where that information is not considered authoritative.

The frame also implicitly recognizes a certain kind of authority as important and marginalizes other kinds: "Experts know how to seek authoritative voices but also recognize that unlikely voices can be authoritative, depending on need."[10] Here, certain voices are always authoritative, while marginalized voices can (in unlikely situations) be authoritative if there is a specific need for it. This begrudging recognition should be rejected, especially in native arts, where indigenous views should be considered as, if not more, authoritative as academic ones. Indeed, in many cases, indigenous knowledge is more authoritative, especially when it comes to the making and uses of art objects. One disposition of learners outlined in this frame is that they "question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews."[11] Although this disposition has good intentions, it is unclear what it means by "traditional," but by pairing it with "diverse ideas" it implies that this traditional authority is somehow non-diverse and "others" any additional and diverse worldviews. The conclusion we must draw is that the Western conception of knowledge is the traditional default, despite the existence of indigenous knowledge traditions, whose origins predate the academic tradition by many hundreds of years. It sets up a dichotomy: there is the default Western academic knowledge (which needs to be questioned) and

other diverse knowledge (whose value is generally unrecognized). Despite the Eurocentric phrasing in this disposition, the frame importantly shifts evaluation from being carried out entirely in a Western framework to the possibility for considering different conceptions of authority. It is also a reminder to be wary of positioning one kind of authority as the default. It points to two core ideas: that there are multiple authorities that are each cultural constructs (and therefore none are natural) and there are benefits to seeking out multiple authorities.

Teaching authority with this degree of nuance is challenging in a typical one-shot library instruction session. We want students to broaden the perspectives they consider, develop a more inclusive concept of authority, and be able to evaluate diverse sources of information. Teaching this threshold concept will often require working closely with the course instructor in order to hook into class themes and assignments. Clearly, there is little point of discussing alternative authorities if the instructor will accept only academic sources and has little interest in broadening the perspectives they would like students to consider, so it is key to identify instructors whose values, interests, and course objectives align with exploring this concept. Hopefully, in classes on indigenous arts this will be rare. Rather, instructors are likely to be teaching students about indigenous world views already. Indeed, it may be that understanding native world views and the profound impacts they have on understanding and interaction with the world is a threshold concept for indigenous studies. Talking to instructors about threshold concepts and how the library can be a partner in teaching indigenous ways of knowing can be a good way to propose a collaboration. The library session can then both reinforce and expand this concept, and students will already be primed and ready to apply the idea of native world views to evaluating indigenous authority. Thus, together the instructor and the librarian can help students step through this threshold of understanding world views, while also making progress on understanding the constructed nature of authority. Teaching inclusive authority may also be bolstered by many art history students' awareness of debates over the Western canon, the Eurocentric narrative of the development of art, as well as moves to add "non-Western" art into art history. Knowledge of this historical pattern of exclusion and the default positioning of the Western is transferable to concepts of authority.

Ideally, a library session will allow students to think through ideas about authority themselves via guided exploration and discussion. Given some prompting through worksheets or questions, students are certainly capable of reaching many of the important conclusions on their own. They may readily recognize the importance of indigenous points of view, the different kinds of information they get from these voices, and realize they need to evaluate these sources using different criteria. Students may be able to come up with

some of the ways of researching indigenous knowledge, including finding articles written by indigenous people or in indigenous magazines, finding interviews, seeking out oral histories, or, depending on the nature of the project, conducting their own field research. This last option, however, can be problematic due to the colonial history of research on indigenous peoples.

While we want to encourage students to seek out indigenous voices, there are problematic dynamics that come into play when researchers go to indigenous people for answers. Linda Tuhiwai Smith lays out the connection of research to colonialism and imperialism, and the pain and hurt research has caused and continues to cause indigenous peoples.[12] To ameliorate this painful dynamic, it is vital to ensure that research empowers native voices rather than exploits them. Native ideas should not be treated as raw materials needing packaging and analysis by Western scholars before they constitute authoritative knowledge, but as inherently authoritative. It is also important to recognize that indigenous voices can come from many places, especially the all-too-common exclusion of Western-educated natives because they are not considered to be writing from an "authentic" indigenous perspective.[13] One important notion for researchers seeking indigenous voices is the idea of "reporting back," that there should be information reciprocity, cooperation, and mutual benefit.[14] In most cases, students at the undergraduate level should be relying on already available indigenous perspectives, rather than conducting original research. Indeed, the library session can help students avoid making these mistakes by teaching students how to find indigenous voices in various formats, from articles to oral histories. It will still be important to discuss and be aware of the issues inherent in research on indigenous communities, so that students accord indigenous voices appropriate respect, dignity, and authority.

Teaching that Authority is Constructed and Contextual has to be more than teaching learners how to evaluate and identify scholarly articles. Such learning objectives only skim the surface of the frame and indeed do not reflect the core idea of varying cultural authorities. Classes should get students to grapple with multiple ways that different cultures and communities construct authority, as well as the ways the West systematically marginalizes and trivializes alternate forms of authority. Teaching academic authority on an equal footing with indigenous knowledge can help demonstrate the concepts embedded in this frame. There are quite a few potential learning objectives for teaching inclusive authorities.

Here are some possible learning objectives for teaching indigenous authority in art history:

- Students understand that authority is constructed based on cultural systems of knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Students understand that indigenous authority is different from but not less than Western conceptions of authority.

- Students question the Western system of authority as default or natural.
- Students can identify and explain the different markers of authority in Western and indigenous cultures.
- Students seek out native voices and can articulate how and why native understandings of art are different from Western interpretations.
- Students are aware of the colonial nature of research on indigenous cultures.

It will be difficult to teach all of these learning objectives in a typical one-shot session, where it may be competing for time with other learning objectives. However, if an entire class session can be devoted to this frame only, its goals might be for students to begin to understand indigenous perspectives, for students to explore the differences between academic and indigenous knowledge, and to understand the importance of these alternate viewpoints. For the University of Colorado Boulder's World Art Studies II class, the second semester survey, I worked with the professor and teaching assistants to integrate these concepts into a unit on Maya art. Each of the five teaching assistants (TAs) dedicated one of their recitation sessions to discussing indigenous knowledge and the Authority is Contextual frame. They based the session on a lesson plan and worksheet I designed, and this structure built on the "train the trainer model for information literacy" instruction we have in the art survey classes.[15] First, the students were assigned to read a scholarly article about Mayan art. In the discussion session, students watched a video interview with a native artisan. TAs set up these as two concrete examples of different kinds of knowledge and used a worksheet to guide students in thinking about these issues. First, teams of students filled out a matrix (Chart 1) to compare indigenous knowledge to scholarly knowledge. A completed matrix was given to TAs in order to facilitate assessment, but not to students. Interestingly, students struggle with answering the questions in regard to scholarly knowledge just as much as for indigenous knowledge. While it can be helpful for students to already be familiar with Western sources, this is not necessary, and, in fact, a lack of entrenchment may make this a particularly good moment to address the question of authority. The exercise helps students understand scholarly discourse, but does not present it as the only place authority is vested.

Students then work through three further questions:

- What are three clues or ways that you can tell that a source is scholarly?

  This question is not necessarily tied to understanding indigenous knowledge, but to reinforce the ability to identify scholarly sources.

- How might you gather indigenous or practitioner knowledge? How might these methods avoid problematic researcher/indigenous subject dynamics?

  This question asks students to think about how they could get indigenous perspectives, while asking them to recognize issues in doing indigenous research.
- Do you think that scholarly and indigenous knowledge are compatible? Why or why not? What might be some of the barriers to indigenous knowledge being valued in a scholarly context?

  This question is particularly important. It asks students to think about how indigenous knowledge is excluded from scholarly discourse. Working through this question with students can be used as formative assessment by gauging how well students can articulate the differences and barriers. Then the instructor can add or modify important points that were missed by the students.

Finally, student groups were asked to explain or describe a work of art from an imagined scholarly or indigenous perspective. Groups were assigned alternating perspectives, and then one group from each side was asked to present their description. This task allows students to be creative, practice presentation skills, and use role-playing to imagine themselves in the shoes of an academic writer or indigenous artisan. This activity can be used to assess whether students demonstrate an understanding of the divergent ways these two groups interact with art. I would expect to see students who grasp the divergent interactions with art presenting a construction of an academic perspective using visual analysis, jargon, and references to academic theories, while those presenting the indigenous perspective should reference use, tradition, and religious or cultural significance.

In many cases, a full session focusing on indigenous authority may not be an option. However, it is still certainly possible to introduce students to indigenous voices in a one-shot session. This might mean folding indigenous voices into a larger context of various competing voices on native art. For example, for a native North American art class, the professor was concerned with student reliance on Internet sources, especially Wikipedia and gallery websites. Because of this concern, it made sense to incorporate various voices and their modes of communication, one of which would be native peoples. So in this class, students worked in groups to fill in a matrix where each row contained a different community that communicates about native art, and students answered a series of questions about information from that community (Chart 2). Each group was assigned one row and had to report out their answers. These reports are an opportunity for assessment, where the instructor can stress important points and correct mistakes. This approach has both

advantages and drawbacks. We were able to cover many of the communities that communicate about native art, discuss different information creation processes, and have students recognize different types of authority, while addressing the professor's initial concerns about students' overreliance on the web. This approach of connecting a broader understanding of the threshold concept to a professor's specific concern can be an effective vehicle for beginning a conversation with faculty and students. However, one drawback to this approach is that most of the communities covered were Western and draw on the same knowledge system, reducing the time to focus on the threshold concept and differences in authorities created by multi-cultural ways of knowing. This can be partially remedied by explicating and drawing contrasts between the various Western authorities and indigenous authority, as well as spending additional time on native authority.

When students understand that authority is constructed and contextual, they realize that there are cultural systems that create authority, that important information can come from multiple different authorities, and that understanding is enriched by listening to voices from various cultures. Despite its problematic construction, the frame can help librarians teach a concept that is so important for rectifying the exclusion and marginalization of non-Western voices in academia. Indeed, it is increasingly untenable to do otherwise. Teaching only the Western construction of authority suggests that these sources are the only authoritative sources for information and Western criteria are the only criteria with which to judge authority. Librarians should not be complicit in the hegemony of Western knowledge practices, and instead should contribute to a diverse and inclusive conception of authority. We can be allies to native voices, helping them to be recognized as the experts they are. We should want learners to hear and value native stories and explanations, not to assume that all that can be known about these objects can be found in Western texts. Instead, they need to understand that "each object contains memories of the person who made it, the knowledge of how to gather and prepare materials, the prayers and songs, the philosophies and metaphors for making sense of the world."[16]

CHART 1.1
Matrix comparing indigenous and scholarly authority

	Scholarly Knowledge	Indigenous Knowledge
How or in what form is this knowledge disseminated/ communicated?	Books and scholarly articles	Oral tradition, interviews, apprenticeships. Passed down through tradition, training, and stories.
What kind of people are considered to be authorities in these spheres of knowledge? What qualifies them to be authorities?	Scholars, professors, others with PhDs. Qualified by study/ education/research	Elders, religious leaders, master artisans. They are qualified by their years of experience, expertise, role in the community, and respect of community.
Who's the audience of this knowledge?	Other scholars	Community members, tribe members, trainees
What is the purpose of this type of knowledge?	Explain and interpret art from a scholarly perspective. Apply academic theories to art. Analyze cultures and their history through their art.	Pass on traditions and explain art in a way meaningful to the community. Knowledge of how to use art in traditions, rituals, ceremonies. Knowledge of how to create art via traditional techniques, motifs, etc.
How is each type of knowledge useful in interpreting and understanding art?	Get theory and analysis, get archival research, get art historical perspective	How the community views and uses the art. How the art was created. The art's meaning to the community.

CHART 1.2
Matrix for comparing the output and authority of various communities who communicate about indigenous art.

Communities	Who is considered an authority in this community and why?	Through what means do each of these groups communicate?	For what purpose or needs would you use information from this community?	Pros of using information from this community:	Cons of using information from this community:
Wikipedia					
Gallery					
Museum					
Indigenous					
Academic					

Notes

1. Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, February 2, 2015, http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.
2. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 1.
3. Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Alaska Native Ways of Knowing," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2005): 8–23.
4. Christopher Jocks as quoted in Deborah Doxtator, "Basket, Bead and Quill, and the Making of 'Traditional' Art," in *Basket, Bead and Quill*, ed. Janet E. Clark (Thunder Bay, Ontario: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1996), 12.
5. Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt, "Education Indigenous to Place: Western Science Meets Native Reality," 1998, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED426823.
6. Ibid.
7. Barnhardt and Kawagley, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Alaska Native Ways of Knowing."
8. Doxtator, "Basket, Bead and Quill, and the Making of 'Traditional' Art."
9. ACRL, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.
13. Ibid., 13–14.
14. Ibid., 15.
15. Alexander Watkins and Katherine Morrison, "Can Only Librarians Do Library Instruction? Collaborating with Graduate Students to Teach Discipline-Specific Information Literacy," *The Journal of Creative Library Practice*, February 2015, http://creativelibrarypractice.org/2015/02/27/can-only-librarians-do-library-instruction/.
16. Doxtator, "Basket, Bead and Quill, and the Making of 'Traditional' Art," 14.