



FIMI
INTERNATIONAL
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WOMEN'S FORUM

GUIDE TO INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) | 5th Edition | 2024



Guide to Intercultural Research and Methodology

The goal of this guide is to share the fundamental ideas of our Intercultural Research Certificate Program, and to explain the steps to apply for the program, taking into account the epistemologies and methodologies rooted in the Indigenous researchers' own cultures.

What is Intercultural Research?

- 01** It's a process that seeks to gather evidence about topics that impact people's lives in our Indigenous Communities.
- 02** It nurtures the construction of theory and methodology, and thus allows us to offer an investigative look into Indigenous Women's experiences and current situation.
- 03** It promotes actions to defend our individual and collective human rights as Indigenous Women and Communities.





What does this kind of research consist of?

It asks the researcher to be critical, both looking outward and inward at our communities. It asks us to engage in dialogue, and for our research to be participative, relevant, and respectful to the culture and our own principles. Intercultural research is characterized by collectivity, and is applicable to diverse geographic contexts.

Why is Intercultural Research important?

Intercultural Research is a political action of decolonization, resistance, and bravery on the part of Indigenous Women, Communities, and Indigenous Peoples on a global level. It aims to recover and collectively construct ancestral knowledge systems, and ways of life such as Indigenous economies, productive processes, food sovereignty, health, and education, as well as spirituality, our own forms of organizing our communities, and the application of justice. It also implies the revitalization of our original languages, and the recovery, safeguarding, and defense of lands, as well as of natural resources and territories. All of this is the foundation for exercising our collective rights to self-determination, self-government, and autonomy as Indigenous Communities and Peoples. **(Lorena Lopez, 2023).**

In the words of an Indigenous Researcher:



"The experience of doing Intercultural Research for me has been an exercise towards the decolonialization of knowledge. It questions the hegemony of Western knowledge. The patriarchal and hegemonic way of thinking harms us, because it traps us in one limited way of understanding the world. It hinders us from finding solutions to the problems faced by our communities from an Indigenous perspective, based in our own cosmovisions, including confronting the violence against Indigenous women.

(Intercultural Research Manual, FIMI 2013).



Intercultural Research by Indigenous Women seeks to make visible our views and voices about the realities that exist in our communities. It gathers evidence which can be used to substantiate contributions and complaints, and build knowledge which can be used by the community, and for public policy, among other benefits.





Intercultural Methodologies

An intercultural methodology is comprehensive and respectful, encourages collaboration, and recognizes and values the diverse forms of knowledge that are present in our Indigenous Communities and among our Peoples.

Intercultural methodologies come out of the dialogue between traditional practices (such as dances, songs, weaving, massage, and midwifery, among others) and conventional methods (such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, and maps, among others). Our goal is to gather evidence that reflects the realities of Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

Research led by Indigenous Women is successful in recognizing and using methodologies rooted in their respective cultures. This happens as they preserve and put into writing the meanings and reasoning that underlie Indigenous worldviews. The dances, songs, weaving, massage, plant wisdom, midwifery, and other similar practices are forms of knowledge and methodologies practiced by Indigenous Cultures. It's essential to honor them and recognize them adequately as such.

We can think, for example, about the grandmothers who, in their Indigenous languages, share knowledge for the wellbeing of the whole community. The way in which they pass on their wisdom is through their own methodologies, for example through song, advice, myths, and legends, among others. Recognizing and honoring these methodologies is a fundamental part of the Intercultural Research process. This gives us the chance to name our realities, defying the power dynamics that tend to invisibilize and marginalize Indigenous Peoples' knowledge.





What are the elements of an Intercultural methodology?

An Intercultural methodology includes the following fundamental elements:

- 1. *Consent and a Collective Approach:*** It's based on the free, prior, and informed consent of the community, and embraces a collective approach. It seeks the active collaboration of all who are involved, recognizing the importance of including diverse voices in the gathering of knowledge.
- 2. *Collective Ownership and Protocols:*** It establishes clear protocols for the use of the information collected, and guarantees the collective ownership of such information. This honors the principles of sharing and caring for the community's knowledge, for the benefit of future generations.
- 3. *Recognition of Ancestral Knowledge:*** It values and respects ancestral knowledge, integrating and intertwining traditional knowledge with modern research methods. It recognizes the richness and depth of knowledge passed down through generations.
- 4. *Understanding Community Dynamics from Indigenous Epistemologies:*** It seeks to understand community dynamics from our own perspectives and epistemologies as Indigenous Peoples. This implies a change in the research approach, considering values, worldviews and knowledge systems in an integral way.
- 5. *Use of Indigenous Languages:*** During the research process, the use of one's own language carries great importance. This transcends simple literal translation, since language transmits the essence of each culture in a profound way. Linguistic diversity is valued as heritage that enriches humanity.
- 6. *Nonlinear Concepts of Space and Time:*** This approach looks at space and time from a nonlinear perspective, considering how these concepts are viewed by each community. This implies respecting and preserving traditional ways of conceiving time and space, contributing to the decolonization of these concepts.

Examples of Intercultural Methodologies

Below, we present examples of methodologies proposed by Indigenous Women graduates of the Intercultural Research Certificate Program, and Indigenous Women working in academia who used the methodologies to carry out their research.



CASE 1

Tsaywa Samay Cañamar Maldonado, 'Runa Warmikuna Sinchiarinchik: Strengthening Our(selves) As Runa Women' 2020. Ecuador.

Methodology

For the researcher, this embroidery contains words in Kichwa and Spanish that attempt to collect the feelings, thoughts, and actions from the dialogues co-created between six Kichwa Runakuna women within a territory, in Camuendo, located in Imbabura.

"On our path, we named ourselves ñukanchik, runa warmikunaka sinchiarinchik llakita kawsashpa . A simple way to understand that in Spanish would be "Strengthen us as Runakuna women".

We meet to follow our own methodology, shimi rimakun, maki rurakun. That is to say, we weave with our hands while we embroider ourselves, recognizing ourselves on the path of resistance and re-existence as Runakuna women, survivors of gender-based violence, spun and unraveled.

A methodology called shimi rimakun, maki rurakun ran through each of the meetings between the six of us. It's a methodology typical of the Kichwa Communities that literally means the mouth speaking and the hand doing. Contextualizing it with the wisdom of our mothers and fathers, means learning by doing, learning and gathering knowledge, weaving dialogues while working with our hands.

We Runakuna Kichwas learn this methodology from childhood, when our fathers and mothers teach us that we must always take advantage of time working with our hands while conversing with our lips. By dialoguing we are gaining wisdom from our oral traditions that have been transmitted from generation to generation by our grandparents."

Aspects relevant to the Intercultural methodology:

- 01** Naming the methodology in an indigenous language is essential. This highlights that, in the context of this research on gender-based violence, it was crucial to understand and express the Runakuna women's own codes. A moment from daily life inspires the researcher to listen intently.
- 02** "Fabric" becomes a significant methodology for this research. Its goal was to engage in dialogue while we situate ourselves in the thread with which we weave, exploring how it is possible to spin and unravel.
- 03** This methodology allowed the researcher to talk about gender-based violence using Runakuna women's own model. Specifically, their model was based on speaking and doing, which led to a reflection rooted in the practices and knowledge of the Kichwa people. This opened doors to reflect on new ways to discuss issues about Indigenous Women.



CASE 2

Wendi Kuetgaje, ““He Made our Dead Ancestors Rest””: Following the Footsteps of My Grandparents Boracoño & Kuegaji, Survivors of the Rubber Era in the Colombian Amazon.”

Methodology

“I began the development of Indigenous methodologies with the idea of “vision turned without, from a view formed within,” of the indigenous anthropologists of Benites (2015).

Thus, the Uitoto people’s methodologies for transmitting knowledge played a central role in collecting the information. The grandparents shared their words with me and, therefore, they transmitted their memories and knowledge to me within the framework of the habitual feminine and masculine spaces of our community.

Weaving was one of the central vehicles for collecting the information. For the Uitoto people, telling origin stories involves joining different threads of memories about an event. As my father F erayira puts it: ‘Telling the origin stories of the Uitoto people is to unite the fabric of the thread of life.’ For him, the origin stories of the Zomorafue come together in the same thread (J b b ri del Resguardo Maguare, 2022).

Similarly, Corredor (1986, 2018) explains that Uitoto thought considers the world as a living weaving that connects beings containing sensitivity and understanding. This connection is through the linkage between “bodies-baskets-history-creation” that correspond to “bodies of creators who weave themselves with their history”. The basket’s opening is the door to the spiritual concept that helps us recognize the research’s key questions or main problem.”

Aspects relevant to the Intercultural methodology:

- 01 Using basket weaving as the central methodology gave the researcher a chance to dialogue with her grandparents, thus contributing to the reconstruction of her people’s memories.
- 02 By entering into the Uitoto people’s characteristic methodologies, and exploring the feminine and masculine perspectives, the researcher was able to establish a direct link with her own experiences. This approach strengthened the daily life of the community and, at the same time, created a promising space to address topics related to memory.
- 03 This approach draws on a deep understanding of Indigenous Peoples’ own ideas, interpreting them through the lens of their individual and collective identities. In this way, an enriching dialogue is carried out that honors the voices and stories of their people.



CASE 3

Sindy Sisa Cerda, Strengths and Contributions of Kichwa Women in Strengthening, Safeguarding and Defending Ancestral Knowledge Using Intergenerational Processes. Case from Asociación Kichwa de Limoncocha -Ecuador. (2022)

Methodology

The research is of an explanatory type, using a qualitative approach. Its goal is to understand the chosen issues from the emotional and mental worldview of women and men, in a natural environment. It seeks to work with them to strengthen and practice ancestral knowledge, going deeper, while understanding that these topics haven't been explored much in Limoncocha. This research method allows for obtaining information and analyzing it, from a more ancestral and cultural perspective, where the actors are allowed to have a personal stake in it, discussing their own lived experiences.

Aspects relevant to the Intercultural methodology:

01

Integrating an understanding of the emotional and mental worldview of the women and men with nature and ancestral knowledge. This indicates how the researcher proposes deepening the research through a commitment to epistemology.

