

Research practice, countercolonial epistemology and the production of indigenous knowledge on Human Rights Education

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze research practices in graduate studies, focusing on a countercolonial epistemological perspective and the production of knowledge by Indigenous educators on Human Rights Education. Through narratives of experiences within the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE), at the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), both in epistemological studies and in research conducted in the territory of the Guajajara people in Maranhão. We highlight as methodological approaches the use of Cartography and cultural circles for data production by indigenous educators, which incorporate Guajajara cultural elements such as singing, maraca (rattle), body painting, the bow and arrow, and the Indigenous storytelling as epistemic tools for reimagining Human Rights Education. Like a rhizome, this knowledge engages in dialogue with Indigenous authors among others who contribute to discussions on Human Rights Education. The research process itself reveals traces of Human Rights Education, shaped by an Indigenous perspective that is decolonizing and countercolonial. It affirms the strength of knowledge and power circularity among Indigenous peoples, the communal and collective dimensions of knowledge construction, and a nomadic, inter-, pluri-, and transversal perspective in research approaches.

Keywords: research practice; epistemology; Indigenous knowledge; Human Rights Education.

1 Introduction

This article provides a brief analysis of research practices in the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE), at the Federal University of Piauí (PPGE/UFPI), specifically in research line 3, which deals with “Education, Diversity, Differences, and Inclusion,” prioritizing, in the cartographic process, research conducted with indigenous peoples, from a countercolonial epistemological perspective, making theoretical and methodological shifts in the production of knowledge with indigenous educators in the search for clues that enable the construction of a culture of human rights. Thus, we aim to analyze research practices in graduate studies, addressing the countercolonial epistemological perspective and the production of knowledge by indigenous educators on Human Rights Education.

The theoretical basis of this work is composed by current epistemological studies of ethnic-racial relations conducted by Krenak (2022), Kambeba (2020), Munduruku (2017), Baniwa (2022), Kopenawa and Albert (2015), among other indigenous theorists who enable connections with the field of Human Rights Education. In alignment with this, we use cartography inspired by the studies of Deleuze and Guatarri (1995, 2010) and Kastrup and Passos (2014), mapping the experiences of indigenous educators from the Cana Brava Indigenous Land in the state of Maranhão, specifically of the Guajajara ethnic group.

This article presents a narrative of experiences lived in a decolonizing teaching practice in graduate studies. The studies of countercolonial epistemologies, which permeate the teaching methodology and inspire new scientific productions, thus reverberate in the curriculum, opening space for dialogue with the main categories of analysis. Cartography is subsequently presented as a methodological approach, allowing research to walk alongside the community and the production of indigenous knowledge. The following topic is dedicated to the voices of indigenous educators who, when educating on human rights, recreate meanings, valuing their narratives and data creations, describing methodological procedures. At the confluence of these movements, the text finds rest in its final considerations, reminiscent of someone's journey returning to the river after traveling along its banks.

2 Decolonizing graduate research practices

In Brazil, the processes of drafting and implementing official guidelines and directives for graduate courses with regard to epistemological perspectives and studies have been shaped as a battleground for ethnic and racial social movements and groups of intellectuals and academics fighting for the inclusion of this theme in higher education and postgraduate studies. This has been changing, albeit in an initial stage, the way science acts in relation to traditional peoples, breaking with the Eurocentric and exclusionary bias of its paradigm, which is responsible for the practice of epistemicide (Carneiro, 2023) that rendered traditional indigenous and Afro-descendant knowledge as inferior, excluding it from the field of science. Thus, Carneiro (2023, p. 109) states that "[...] with each moment of democratization of access to education, the mechanism of raciality is rearticulated and produces shifts that update racial exclusion".

These attempts to decolonize science in graduate studies have taken place through insurgent research practices that include Brazilian authors and cultures subalternized by the dominant paradigm and who discuss epistemological studies that challenge a countercolonial analysis of cultural, social, and ethnic issues, creating an intersectionality of class, race, gender, and other fundamental demarcators in the defense of human rights and Human Rights Education.

It is important to recall recent achievements, such as Law 12.711/2012, which established a quota system in higher education, although it is still a palliative measure in terms of equitable and equal conditions of access and permanence for indigenous and quilombola peoples, even after the 2023 reformulation, which changed affirmative action policies in graduate studies for black, brown, indigenous, and quilombola peoples (Law 14.723/2023). However, the intention of this article is not to address affirmative action policies, but to narrate experiences in graduate studies that present some epistemic gaps in favor of the studies of traditional peoples.

It is also imperative to acknowledge that the proposal in this study to overcome epistemic barriers appears paradoxical, given that it aims to integrate two historically distinct and contradictory fields: indigenous knowledge and Human Rights Education. This raises the need to affirm the difference between human rights as a hermeneutic, polyphonic field historically constructed from a Eurocentric approach and at the service of the dominant coloniality project, which has segregated and created abysmal forms of thinking (Santos; Meneses, 2010), thus constituting a consolidated structure of violence and violation of human rights themselves, and understanding them as universal in their principles, without the inclusion and world perceptions and worldviews beyond the Eurocentric and dominant epistemic border.

According to Panikkar's studies (2004), it is possible to challenge the universalist perspective of human rights, one of the reasons for that being the very idea that no concept is universal, that it is only valid where it is conceived. Panikkar's criticism (2004) calls for an intercultural approach to human rights and urges us to consider the following:

This is a fundamental problem in Human Rights Education, as the idea that underpins Human Rights culture cannot be intoxicated by the idea of universalizing single values, as occurred with the Eurocentric and Cartesian perspective (Silva, 2022, p. 109).

It is precisely in an attempt to escape this epistemic trap that we propose to think about Human Rights Education based on the narratives of indigenous educators, in a countercolonial way, in order to be thought about through the lens of indigenous culture, the other side of the cultural divide that has been excluded from scientific practice. Thus, the countercolonial perspective resides in the research movement adopted: inquiring into and thinking about what it means to educate in human rights from an indigenous perspective. We start from the perception that the indigenous place is counter-hegemonic to the model of capitalism, to the project of coloniality, because, as Clastres (1978) states, indigenous culture is a society against the state, a “society without a state is a society against the state” (Clastres, 1978, p. 167).

It is also necessary to state that the category of Human Rights Education, which we propose in our research experiences, should not be confused with Human Rights, as it is, therefore, a sphere that escapes the domain of representation and history that it carries in the field of coloniality. Rather, Human Rights Education needs to be understood as a movement built on the struggle of social movements, on the trajectory of researchers, educators, and activists who understood that the law is not enough to build a culture of human rights. Human Rights Education is, then, the ground for the creation of this new culture, which is still in the process of being built. And it is in this context that the possibility of thinking about this education from the perspective of indigenous knowledge arises.

To think about Human Rights Education in light of traditional peoples – especially in Brazilian culture, whose ancestral constitution involves recognition of belonging to the place of indigenous and African culture – it is to perceive it as an education that operates for the diversities, in the recognition of differences as powers of human creation and education itself. Here, we create an epistemic confluence between these indigenous peoples in the countercolonial perspective of Nego Bispo (Santos, 2023, p. 16), for whom “[...] diversity is not about developing, but about involving,” that is, while the idea of development was based on the colonizing narrative to destroy entire cultures, in the name of order and progress, and which science has always fed on epistemologically as justification, the countercolonial solution lies in a posture of involvement with the Earth, as a cosmological being of right, calling us to think about education with our hearts in tune with the rhythm of the Earth (Krenak,

2022, p. 118). In the research experience with the Guajajara indigenous community, it was possible to verify exactly this:

To answer the call to connect myself with nature and reflect on Human Rights education, I returned to the only state in which I had experienced a culture of belonging, to look at my ancestry and recover this heritage, and to understand my multicultural self. Thus, I understood the importance of decolonizing my mind and connecting with nature, as indigenous peoples believe that nature has a lot to teach us if we are attentive to it. To do this, we are challenged to decolonize our minds from Western culture, so that we can think differently about nature and the destruction caused by humans (Costa; Silva, 2023, p. 739).

By translating this drive into the words above, we bring indigenous culture to create clues for Human Rights Education, as a plan of confluences that flows into the foundation of these two categories: life. Furthermore, we understand that these two speaking places (indigenous culture and Human Rights Education) have not had epistemic encounters because they are always thought of separately due to the cold, dualistic, linear, and positivist nature of science, as if the differences could not be ruptured.

In this sense, it suggests that we think of an in-between place (Bhabha, 2003), that is, a shared and communal space as a possibility for confluencing the rivers of Human Rights Education with indigenous culture and knowledge, in a way that allows for cultural, intersectional, and pluriversal transversality, which also brings us back to Vaz and Ramos' thinking (2021, p. 300):

The notion that the self and the collective are inseparable, interdependent elements that form part of a whole – which is in each individual and also in the collective, in a continuous flow of feedback – should not result in the suppression of pluriversality. It is precisely this meeting of particularities and identities, such as the confluence of river waters, that allows for the completeness and strength of the current, or, in other words, the richness of humanity.

As part of our teaching practice and research in graduate studies, we also strive to create openings, small systemic gaps, by including, in elective curricula, discussions that could provide us with new studies in countercolonial and decolonial approach. We created the following courses: *Special Topics in Education III: Education in Human Rights and Ethnic-Racial Diversity* (2023.1); *Special Topics in Education II: Education in Human Rights, Affirmative Action, and Ethnic-Racial Diversity* (2023.2); *Special Topics in Education I: Education in Human Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies* (2024.1). More recently, we offered *Special Topics II: Human Rights Education, Ethnic-*

Racial and Gender Diversity (2025.1) in the Master's and Doctorate Course of the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Piauí (PPGED-UFPI).

In these studies, a historical recognition was made by prioritizing indigenous, Black, and women's literature and authors who present a decolonizing viewpoint. Innovations were also made in the methodology of the lectures, under the title "Cartographic Lectures," we established workshops of experiences and creations with a nomadic pedagogy, following the river's flow, starting with the reading of the book *Futuro Ancestral (Ancestral Future)* by indigenous author Ailton Krenak (2022), as can be seen in the narrative of master's student Maria Naira's field diary below, who also describes in her text the experience of reading Nego Bispo, an author who works with a countercolonial approach in quilombola communities:

THE ENCOUNTER OF CONFLUENCES

On a sunny Tuesday afternoon, we left UFPI and headed towards the Parnaíba and Poty rivers, right at the point where the two rivers meet and converge. On this cartographic journey, there were: me, Maria Naira; Professor Maria do Socorro; Flávia; Samuel; Zenailde; and the book *Futuro Ancestral (Ancestral Future)* by Ailton Krenak. It was from sharing the reading of Krenak's book (2022) that the word "confluence" became the keyword of our study group. It was a very productive afternoon, we all read the book and presented our reflections. Of all our perceptions, the word that echoed was precisely that. This word is very powerful and fits in different contexts. Furthermore, it gained prominence from a lecture by the marginal thinker, Nego Bispo, a Piauí-based quilombola, who, in one of his lectures, to avoid the vocabulary of convergence or divergence, prefers confluences, where different worlds touch each other [...] . There before us were the two rivers, both born in different places, each with its own distinct water colors, but without conflict, they touch and converge. This word has everything to do with cartography, which aims to make connections. There, our realities as master's students were also connected and confluenced as researchers of such diverse subjects: indigenous people, Black people, young people, and women (Maria Naira, May 9, 2023).

Other authors such as Acosta (2016), Lélia Gonzales (2020), Kambeba (2020), Munduruku (2017), Baniwa (2022), Kopenawa and Albert (2015), and bell hooks (2022) were used frequently in our lectures, given that the aim of our practices was to express other ways of educating that resemble the education of traditional peoples, observing the possible confluences between indigenous peoples' ways of educating, with their knowledge and experiences, and Human Rights Education. With the cartographic lectures, we held meetings and discussions of countercolonial authors who show us that the academic and research journey is directly connected to everyday life and nature, with the research itinerary itself being a geophilosophy, in which the

researcher and the research ground are from the same field of immanence, flows of the earth's intensity (Deleuze; Guattari, 2010).

So although it is a methodological approach that emerged with European authors, Cartography expresses an anarchy towards the dominant Eurocentric paradigms, in a bias of minor literature (Deleuze; Guattari, 2017), that is marginal and politically representative of cultures that have been historically subalternized and excluded by the power of science and education. It is in this sense that we insist on introducing the literary studies of Ailton Krenak and Nego Bispo into graduate programs, a minor, marginal literature that, until recently, would have been unthinkable to conceive of as an author to be studied. To take this path means to be part of a movement of resistance and countercolonialism against the epistemicide naturalized by colonialist epistemology.

As in the indigenous communities' education system, we sit in a circle by the river. It is in these conversation circles that knowledge flows. We learn from experience, given that, among indigenous peoples, while some go into the river to fish, others stay on the banks, drawing life lessons from that process. It is common in these conversation circles to share ancestral knowledge, such as how to help each other pull in a fishing net, clean the fish, and roast them. Sitting on the ground, they eat and show that everything is shared. The practice we had by the river with the cartography classes made us realize that the most important thing is to think collectively. "They have an example of a life in which the individual counts less than the collective" (Ailton Krenak, 2022, p. 117).

Decolonizing knowledge and research practices in graduate studies means, first and foremost, decolonizing the academic training and work of professors and researchers. Thus, our research is permeated by worldviews that embrace the cultures of traditional peoples and our ancestry. In the following field diary entry, from researcher Samuel Carvalho's travels, we see his perception of research practice being enriched by studies based on indigenous and African epistemologies:

[...] we see ourselves as a river that allows itself to open narrow and wide paths of debate, in murky and crystal clear waters of assimilation, of pure calm and turbulence when necessary, crashing against the rocks and boulders of restlessness. All this to flow and fall into a waterfall of reflections. To this river I attribute my scientific research, its course translating not only the results of my research object, but I see it as the fabric of my research process, in which there will be moments of clarity, missteps, and ruptures in my thinking, in my actions, in my opinion, in my subjectivity, in my narrative, and in my personal

growth. Krenak invites us to discuss ancestry, a gift for indigenous peoples and such a common word in our vocabulary to refer to what belongs to the past. But what if ancestry is not just the past? Krenak challenges us to understand that ancestry is the present, as well as the future (Samuel Carvalho, September 4, 2023).

The experiential knowledge of indigenous peoples, contrary to what is commonly believed, is essential to the practice of research aimed at social transformation. It also plays a crucial role in bold educational practices that are still under development, such as Human Rights Education. According to Candau and Sacavino (2003), both science and Human Rights Education share a common thread: life itself. This understanding resonates with the ancestral knowledge of indigenous women of the forest, brought to light by the poetic words of Kambeba (2020, p. 116), when questioning the place of indigenous peoples in the university:

The worldview I learned in the village is what I carry in my soul. It is my identity. A deep time, a fertile river, a powerful tale. A resistance that I want to show in feathers, bracelets, headdresses. And the city demands mercilessly, but what can I do if the university does not allow me to be? Pataxô, Mura, Kambeba, Guaraní. We must deconstruct and allow for interculturality, and respect for diversity in this house of knowledge. Because in my university-village, where the river flows freely, the researcher will not suffer [...].

It is relevant to our discussion to highlight that indigenous peoples are ethnically and socioculturally diverse populations in Brazil and, although they are not at the center of national attention yet, in recent years these peoples have been gaining ground in this scenario, albeit in a modest way. In this article, we are therefore challenged to briefly present the cultural uniqueness of the Guajajara indigenous people, a traditional culture that we have brought in as a device for thinking about Human Rights Education, which is the result of research experience in the Masters in Education program. Given the limited number of pages required for an article, we have focused on presenting a research experience with indigenous peoples in Maranhão, although there is also cartographic work with traditional peoples from quilombola communities in Piauí, mapping the griot women in their matriarchal oral traditions in the construction of practices, knowledge, and affections, in accordance with the approval of the national research ethics committee (Comitê de Ética na Pesquisa - CEP), Opinion No. 7,759,295.

Before we delve specifically into the field of indigenous research, it is worth reiterating that our work in the research line 3 of the Graduate Program in Education at UFPI has been marked by studies, research, and practices that confluence toward

a countercolonial perspective. As an institutional policy, we have taken part in research projects on the Evaluation of Affirmative Action Policies in Graduate Programs at Public Universities in Piauí, mapping the reality of the inclusion of quota students in the Master's and Doctorate programs at these institutions, aiming to improve the provision for this ethnic and racial diversity in graduate programs.

Other recurring practices can be mentioned, such as prioritizing publication in scientific journals validated by CAPES (Brazilian federal agency for support and evaluation of graduate education), books, and working with this subject in extension projects, such as Project Coordination in partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Education and the secretariat of continuing education, literacy, diversity, and inclusion (SECADI/MEC), the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), with support from the Graduate Program in Education (PPGED), the Brazilian network for Human Rights Education (ReBEDH), with support from the foundation for culture and the promotion of research, teaching, extension, and innovation (FADEX) and the state and municipal secretariat of Basic Education, with the implementation of the course *Training in Human Rights Education: a cultural transversality of basic education in Piauí*, registered under CP07/2024-CCE-188-NVPJ/PG, which resulted in the book *Human Rights Education: a cultural transversality in basic education in Piauí*, published in 2025. The countercolonial perspective was emphasized in the training experiences, methodology, and productions, and this practice alone is sufficient material for a specific article.

In order to situate our field of analysis of cartographic research with indigenous peoples and the production of knowledge to think in terms of Human Rights Education, it is crucial to provide some data on the indigenous population in Brazilian territory, delving into the Guajajara territory. According to the latest IBGE (Brazilian institute of geography and statistics) census in 2022, the number of indigenous people in Brazilian national territory corresponds to 1,693,535 people. The 2022 census also revealed a total of 274 languages spoken by indigenous people belonging to 305 different ethnic groups, which represents only approximately 10% of the population that existed at the time of colonization. Maranhão is the state where only a few ethnic groups have survived to this day, such as the *Krikati*, *Kanela*, *Guajajara-Tenetehara*, and *Gavião*. Of these, the Tentehar-Guajajara account for at least 32,000 people in their demarcated Indigenous Lands, not counting approximately 15,000 indigenous people living outside the villages in various cities in Maranhão and other states in Brazil.

According to the 2022 census conducted by IBGE, Maranhão is the third state in the Northeast region with the largest indigenous population, with 57,214 indigenous people of various ethnicities, 72.93% of whom were living on indigenous lands. The Cana Brava/Guajajara Indigenous Land, where this research was carried out, is the most populous in Maranhão and the eighth largest in Brazil, covering the cities of Jenipapo dos Vieiras, Grajaú, Barra do Corda, and Amarante. In terms of legal gains, in the early 1990s, their lands were demarcated and approved, covering approximately 137,000 hectares, according to indigenous leaders in this region, who claim that there are between 80 and 100 villages, most of which are located along the Federal Highway - BR 226.

One of the gains achieved by indigenous peoples was the recognition of the traditional peoples and communities category, through Decree No. 6,040, dated February 7, 2007, which defines them as culturally distinct groups that recognize themselves as such, have their own forms of social organization, occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations, and practices conceived and transmitted by tradition. The legal framework that resulted in this recognition was the 1988 Constitution (Brazil, 1988, Chapter VIII, Article 231), when indigenous peoples achieved, among other rights, the right to include their values, beliefs, languages, and cultural and ancestral knowledge in school education.

From a Human Rights Education perspective, Candau (2012) asserts that the fight for human rights has been driven by the search for equality among all human beings, and it instigates the need to reiterate the indigenous issue as an essential field of this education. This has provoked numerous policies to guarantee equality among all people, exposing the multiple inequalities that we need to overcome in order to ensure the realization of human rights, a reality that is still very distant, especially when it comes to groups that are excluded, marginalized, and discriminated against by society.

Regarding the Tentehar people, there are several ways of writing the ethnonym of this social and cultural group. The terms do not differ much from each other, with one or two phonemes usually added, and sometimes an accent mark. The first ethnographic studies conducted by Wagley and Galvão (1955) used "Tenetehara" to refer to this people. Tentehar is linked to a broader self-identification, as it is divided

into two ethnic groups: the Guajajara people and the Temb  people. These are two peoples who identify themselves as Tentehar and speak a language that descends from the Tupi-Guarani linguistic trunk. However, this study will only focus on those known to anthropologists and Maranh o natives as Guajajara. According to Gomes (2002), the term “Guajajara” was given by the Tupinamb  people of S o Lu s Island and is translated by the Tentehar themselves as “owners of the headdress”.

3 Cartography as a research practice from countercolonial perspective

The method used to achieve these research aims was based on the qualitative approach to cartography that stems from Deleuze's philosophy (1995; 2010) and adaptations of this approach in Brazil, particularly by Kastrup and Passos (2014), which enabled us to shift and align ourselves with the experiences of educators who are from indigenous territories. Cartography presents itself as a flow of intensities that come together, diverge, bifurcate, create curves, and transverse thoughts like traced maps, in a continuous and rhizomatic movement (Costa; Silva, 2024).

In Deleuze's words (1995, p. 43), the rhizome “[...] connects any point to any other point, it cannot be traced back,” because, according to this philosopher, the rhizome “is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion”. This is how cartographic research works: it has no beginning and no end, but rather a means by which, like a rhizome, it grows and overflows, forming linear multiplicities. Cartography in the research process constructs dimensions, but also lines of flight, deterritorialization, and decolonization.

Regarding the countercolonial perspective in research, cartography's methodological approach effortlessly connects with Nego Bispo's countercolonial vision (Santos, 2023) and redefines the fight against colonialism not as mere resistance, but as countercolonialism, through which he explains this category based on indigenous culture:

The indigenous peoples lived in Brazil within a polytheistic cosmological system. They lived cosmologically integrated, not humanistically. Then came the Portuguese with their humanities, and they tried to apply them to the cosmologies of our peoples. It did not work. Thus, countercolonialism emerged. Countercolonialism is simple: it is when you want to colonize me and I do not accept that you colonize me, it is when I defend myself. Countercolonialism is a way of life different from colonialism (Santos, 2023, p. 36).

Colonialism seeks to dominate, domesticate, and impose, in every way possible, the project of transforming everything into a manipulable object, commercializing even cultures and bodies. On the other hand, countercolonialism, according to this author, is a simple, everyday act: it is refusing to be colonized, it is a form of defense. It is the struggle for the active defense of traditional and community ways of life. When Nego Bispo proposes this epistemological and political shift that saw indigenous peoples as living in harmony with the cosmos rather than from a notion of humanity centered on the individual, he shows that indigenous peoples did not see themselves as superior or separate from nature, but as part of a connection, a network of relationships between humans, non-humans, and spiritual entities. As Ailton Krenak asserts, "[...] we-river, we-mountains, we-earth. We feel so deeply immersed in these beings that we allow ourselves to leave our bodies, this anthropomorphic sameness, and experience other ways of existing" (Krenak, 2022, p. 14).

For Krenak (2022), entities of nature are like living beings, with whom we establish an emotional, spiritual, and existential relationship. The body is not a prison, but a channel, like a river overflowing into other forms of being. Leaving the body also means leaving the human ego, ceasing to be a "mere human" to become a river, a forest, a mountain. It is not about living with nature, but about being nature. This view diverges from the Eurocentric conception of humanity.

To assert that cartography can be a countercolonial methodology is to perceive it through a line of thinking that, although conceived by Europeans, anarchizes European positivist Cartesian science. It seeks to articulate dimensions of a holistic worldview of knowledge. Deleuzian thought is a geophilosophy, that is, a way of thinking in tune with the rhythm of the earth that connects with Krenak's language and can also be linked to the Latin American indigenous concept of "corazonar," which is to think about science from the heart, a science of the senses (Santos, 2019).

One of the confluences of cartographic research and indigenous ways of life is the nomadic nature of the cartographer, producing an effect of self-knowledge and self-transformation in the researcher, who understands the act of researching as a path, an itinerary that, under the immanence plane, is inhabited by the world and the territory of research. As is said by researcher Zenilde Costa, co-author of this article, in her process of decolonization during her master's research in the Guajajara community and her studies of countercolonial epistemologies:

At the time, I was totally influenced by Eurocentric Christian teachings and did not realize that that culture did not need help, in the colonial sense that we could save them, although it took me a long time to discover this. Under the Eurocentric bias that I was taught, it seemed that we were the only ones who produced knowledge. They were more likely to learn. My experience tells me something completely different. I was, in a way, changed. I received help in the sense of understanding my own existence, culture, place of speech, and belonging, because “[...] heeding the call to be one with nature, I returned to the one state where I had known a culture of belonging [...]” (hooks, 2022, p. 28), “[...] while I came to understand the importance of decolonizing my mind” (hooks, 2022, p. 60). I dedicated approximately seven years of my life to indigenous causes, as a literacy teacher, living with them on a daily basis. Within their communities, I learned what it means to live a life in its simplicity and entirety. After that time, I returned to my hometown, Teresina, Piauí, but inside me, everything I see, say, hear, and feel is that I have a very strong connection with indigenous culture (Costa; Silva, 2023, p. 738).

In order to understand the methodological approach used in the research process, particularly regarding how knowledge sharing in the village strengthen Human Rights Education, we describe the research practice below. We worked with Cultural Circles, which also draw on the contributions of Paulo Freire (1987), precisely because it is an approach in which data production occurs collectively, in the face of real-life problems, with interventional dimensions of engagement and cultural belonging, given that cartography seeks to intervene in reality. “It is to transform it in order to understand it” (Kastrup, 2014, p. 16), giving voice to the variety of research tools and resources that are specific to indigenous culture. It is, as already announced by the authors:

[...] the very act of researching as a fundamental process of decolonization in this methodological approach to qualitative cartography. Alongside the nomadic researcher, we walk with the cartography with which we had the experience of letting ourselves be touched, traversed, and affected by the problems of the place of indigenous culture, producing the transformation of oneself and the world into small particles, given the collective nature of production, from microphysical and insurgent essays on other ways of living and educating in human rights, which expresses the formative character of the method from a decolonizing perspective. This made it possible to overcome the barriers of indifference built by the colonization process, that led to genocide and rights violations by capitalist domination and the epistemicide carried out by the dominant Eurocentric paradigm that shaped our view and our way of educating (Costa; Silva, 2024, pp. 13-14).

Thus, in the process of producing research data on indigenous knowledge in Human Rights Education, we asked indigenous educators to form pairs, which they themselves named in their native language and gave meanings to, namely: the Zawató Circle (a bird of the same species as the hawk, known by the indigenous people for its speed and agility), they were responsible for creating a song in their indigenous language; the Wiriri Circle (swallow), responsible for creating the Maracá; the Wyrahu

Circle (hawk), responsible for creating the bow and arrow; and the Zawixi Circle (tortoise), responsible for creating indigenous painting using genipap and an indigenous folk tale. Once the Cultural Circles were formed, each pair chose the device they would create for a few minutes. After each circle worked on the production of an artistic and cultural device that expressed the meaning of Human Rights Education based on indigenous teaching knowledge, they answered the guiding question of the research both in their diaries and through video and audio recordings that were used for later transcription.

4 Indigenous educators' knowledge and Human Rights Education

This section presents some of the results of the research with Guajajara indigenous educators, showing the steps taken. We reiterate that the qualitative cartographic approach was considered the most appropriate for capturing the collective narratives and experiences of indigenous educators and enabling us to achieve decoloniality, in a way that made the researcher's learning process with indigenous culture and education clear. Eight indigenous educators participated in this research, with whom we conducted "Cultural Circles" inspired by Freire's theory (1987) to produce data, focusing on the circle of culture, which, strictly speaking, is not taught, but rather learned through the reciprocity of consciousness.

In the context of Indigenous Education, we observe that indigenous peoples have a strong connection with nature. To speak of this education is to recall experiences from childhood in the village. It means knowing how to listen to and respect elders, listening for hours to birdsong in order to imitate their sounds, following animal tracks, walking in the forest without crunching leaves, learning about nature's traps and medicinal herbs, as well as learning how to extract dyes from nature to paint personal objects and make crafts from seeds and fibers found in the woods, in a relationship of interdependence between humans and nature. Among the Guajararas, memory is constantly evoked and recreated, but it is in the present that memories and things forgotten acquire meaning, and it is in the present that ancestral knowledge is recreated through the words of those who transmit knowledge, generally older members of the community, also recognized, according to Poli (2023), as the "guardians of memory".

Therefore, we can say that oral tradition and memory are powerful tools for the preservation of these ancestral knowledge and practices. Indigenous ancestry “[...] is a connection and interaction with the dynamics of the primordial world that enables the continued experience of the principles and values of the early days of the world and humanity.” (Baniwa, 2022, p. 266). When ancestry is evoked, it affirms cultural permanence and ethnic identities. For this reason, education in indigenous villages begins at an early age and does not follow classroom standards. The village itself is a large school, an open-air laboratory, the sacred territory that must exist.

In this sense, the experiential knowledge passed down from our ancestors must be preserved because it is an ancient practice. Indigenous education, through a combination of knowledge, is transmitted in various ways within the village. It is an education that takes place through life in motion and everything that surrounds it. That is why it is called *Mother Education*. “[...] We are glued to the Earth's body, when someone pierces it, hurts it or scratches it, they disrupt our world.” (Krenak, 2020a, p. 114). The Guajajara do not teach culture, they talk about it and experience it in a dialogue between worlds. It is like interculturality, which is an attitude that depends on a process of development; it needs to be felt in order to be experienced throughout the life of every child, young person, or adult.

Indigenous peoples teach our colonizing and colonized society a great deal, and these teachings remain present whenever someone arrives in the village. However, what are we doing with this knowledge? The territory of indigenous knowledge is sacred, but it is not always respected; this violation undermines the continuity of ancestral memory and history. To allow others to enter and impose their culture and values is to allow the territory of knowledge to disappear; to allow this violation is to accept the extinction of indigenous culture.

We entered the indigenous community following a process of ethical and dialogical negotiation with the research participants, after the authorization by agencies responsible for research on indigenous lands: the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Brazilian National Indigenous Peoples Foundation (FUNAI). With authorization from both agencies, as well as from the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), in accordance with Opinion No. 6,046,100, we entered the indigenous community on the day we had previously scheduled for the research. During the meeting, the informed consent form (TCLE)

was read and explained collectively, in agreement with all participants, while respecting everyone's pace and understanding, each participant signed the form individually, after ensuring full understanding of their rights, guarantees, and the role of research in their lives and in the community.

It is important to point out that choosing the Cultural Circle as a research technique is also a way of expressing the democratic principle and guaranteeing human rights in research, something that is also part of the indigenous way of life, as it shows an indivisible dynamic between the research method, the local culture, and the type of education that is sought. In fact, the indigenous way of living in circles and in relationship with nature is already a way of educating about human rights. We can observe this in the notion of florestania presented by Ailton Krenak (2022) in discussions, enabling us to think about human rights and the right to land.

In his book *Futuro Ancestral (Ancestral Future)* (2022), Ailton Krenak highlights the difference between the term citizenship, “which is part of the repertoire,” so to speak, of the “white” man (Krenak, 2022, p. 75) and florestania, which is a term that arises in a regional context, coined by Brazilian Amazonian rubber tapper and environmentalist Chico Mendes, “at a very active moment in the social struggle of the peoples who live in the forest” (Krenak, 2022, p. 75). Currently, this concept has been revisited and expanded by indigenous thinkers such as Ailton Krenak.

For him, florestania is a way of life connected to the earth, water, and the cycles of nature, in contrast to the modern, urban, and colonial model of citizenship. Thus, human rights and the right to life and belonging come together in the same dynamic, in which the ideas of citizenship and florestania go hand in hand, but differ in their view of collective life, the former built on a Eurocentric perspective, the latter on forest knowledge. Some communities that inhabit the planet, such as indigenous peoples, quilombola peoples, and riverine communities, understand the importance of sharing life and land, and “the only centers that still consider that they need to stay attached to this land are those that have been somewhat forgotten on the edges of the planet, on the banks of rivers” (Krenak, 2020b, p. 21). We need to understand that the earth is our mother and see it as a priority and not as property.

This reflection is necessary for our understanding of indigenous peoples as forest peoples who offer us other possibilities for thinking about notions of citizenship and human rights through community life, in order to raise the need to learn from their

knowledge. Thus, based on the guiding question: "Which indigenous peoples' teaching knowledge can empower human rights education?" We asked them to form pairs to create Cultural Circles as described in the previous section. After each circle worked on its artistic and cultural devices, they answered the guiding question of the research both in their journals and through video and audio recordings. For this article, we selected only two groups: the Wyrahu Circle, responsible for archery, and the Zawixi Circle, responsible for creating indigenous body paintings.

Regarding archery skills in the context of indigenous education, livelihoods in the village come from water and land, fish, birds, and various animals. To this end, various instruments are used and carefully crafted by the indigenous people themselves with creativity and strategy to attract the animals that will be captured. The Wyrahu Circle worked with the "bow and arrow" device to think about Human Rights Education. The bow and arrow are considered important and traditional instruments used by different ethnic groups in our country. They are instruments made with care, with resources extracted from nature. The lessons they learn as children, for example, how to handle a bow and arrow, require a lot of strength and skill.

Figure 1 – Making of the arrow



Source: Author's archives, August 9, 2023.

Figure 2 – Making of the bow



Source: Author's archives, August 9, 2023.

In the oral narrative of a Guajajara educator, working with a bow and arrow means:

So, bows and arrows aren't just for decoration. The bow can't be made of just any wood; it has to be very strong and sturdy, so it doesn't break easily. This one is made of purple wood, string, and feathers. This is the arrow; it's not made of just any wood. It's an indigenous weapon, part of our culture, used by our ancestors. Nowadays, we also use bows and arrows. This one can kill wild animals, it is useful for fishing and other things. The Tãmuz (meaning "the elders" in the Tupi-Guarani language) left it to kill large animals such as deer, peccary, and even jaguars it would kill. When we pull it, it does not break, it goes as far as it can and has strength. When you release the arrow, it flies up to 100 meters. The tip is hard and does not break easily. It can break a rock and pierce a wall, so this is our weapon. The string can break, but this part of the wood does not break so easily. The feathers on this bow represent the hunter, together with the bow. For example, we teach a child to use this weapon, it will mean a lot to them, first because they are indigenous, this is their weapon. But they won't use a bow this size, theirs will be smaller and won't have these feathers, because only hunters use these feathers. The child does not get to use every weapon, everything has a rite of passage, boyhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Likewise, women have a rite of passage (Junior Guajajara, 2023).

The hunting practice among Tentehar happens throughout the year and, according to Wagley and Galvão (1949, p. 59), "whenever they go to the fields, they take their bows and arrows," and the manufacture of arrows should only be taught to boys after puberty. On one occasion, while watching a Guajajara indigenous man making an arrow, I began to wonder why he took so much care and attention to detail. One of the things that caught my attention was the way he carefully chose the feathers to put on the end of the arrow. He chose the thinnest ones with the brightest colors. When I asked him why he used those criteria, he told me, "The feathers serve to give the arrow balance." It was the feathers that provided perfect balance to the flight of the arrow, so that it could hit its target, given that the helical arrangement of the feathers gives the arrow a rotational movement when shot. I found this to be a great lesson. Thus, we understand that, from the perspective of indigenous peoples, everything needs balance.

In the cultural circle named Zawixi, we worked with the device "graphism", or indigenous body painting, as the technique of data production. The knowledge of graphism¹ represents indigenous spirituality and identity, which are forms of communication among native peoples. For indigenous peoples, there is a graphism for all life events: birth, rite of passage to adulthood, marriage, death, etc. Therefore, indigenous body paint cannot be confused with tattoos. They help us understand the

¹ Graphism (also known as indigenous body painting or graphics) are ancient forms of communication among indigenous peoples. In indigenous culture, there are painting patterns for all rites of passage from birth to adulthood

knowledge that each people brings, which allows us to redesign, catalog, and decipher traits, keeping ancestral memory alive and up to date. Graphism does not belong to a single individual, but rather forms part of the identity of a nation, regardless of where the individual lives, whether in a village or in the city. It is an art form that, when made visible, conveys information that is essential for understanding a nation's way of life.

Genipap represents protection and it is used in cultural moments, this painting, specifically, is used in the coming-of-age ceremony, not today, but used by our ancestors, it is not only used exclusively by the Guajajaras. Other peoples also use it in different cultural contexts, as a form of expression and in war paintings, according to their specific traditions (Junior Guajajara, 2023).

In this regard, Kambeba (2020, p. 14) states that “[...] the indigenous body is a large canvas or book on which fundamental knowledge for the visual and oral communication of a society is written”. If the skin is a canvas, drawing a painting is territorializing that body with fundamental information that will convey what that person feels or wants to say. Indigenous body paintings carry responsibilities, channel energies, affirm potentialities, and strengthen the body and soul of those who wear them, as long as they know their meaning and have respect. It is understanding that “[...] we live in a world where we need to value particularities without harming the collective and its projects. Experiencing differences within the community is essential, it is necessary, and required” (Boakari, 2022, p. 225).

The “Zawixi Circle²” worked with indigenous body painting as a device to think about Human Rights Education, as an attempt to learn other ways of educating. For indigenous peoples, graphics and painted skin, in addition to providing aesthetic beauty, empower indigenous culture and carry the mission of being a means of continuing a legacy.

² In the Tupi-Guarani language, Zawixi means tortoise. This animal represents resistance and resilience, and the patterns on its shell are used as designs for paintings, mainly on the arm.

Figure 3 – Creation of indigenous body paint



Source: Author's archive, August 9, 2023.

Figure 4 – Indigenous body paint



Source: Author's archive, August 9, 2023.

From this perspective, face painting consists of highlighting the mouth with delicate strokes, formed by lines and dots that outline the lips. The emphasis on facial painting relates women to the agouti, as it is a clever animal. In the narrative below, the indigenous Monalena includes temporal, ancestral, and identity markers, bringing empowerment to “being a woman” in indigenous culture. Indigenous graphism, in addition to serving as protection for the physical body, also establish a balance of the spirit and teach us a lot about where they came from and where they belong:

This painting is used at “young girl” ceremonies and this painting he did on me is exclusive to the Guajajara people. It is a very sacred moment in the young girl's ceremony, it is when she becomes a woman. This painting is used on the face, to show other relatives that she is becoming a woman, that from that moment on she can follow her own path in life. Study, get married, or choose to remain single, for example (Teacher Monalena Guajajara, 2023).

This specific painting, used by the Guajararas in the rite of passage for indigenous girls called “festa da menina moça” (young girl's party), features in its lines characteristics of the agouti, as it is a clever, fast animal that does not allow itself to be easily caught or deceived, showing that this is how these indigenous girls should be, and that, from this ritual onwards, they become women with the same cleverness and agility, who have the right to choose their own lives and futures, and these moments of decision are sacred. Some indigenous graphics carry in their lines the vital power of nature, evoking the presence of the tortoise, the snake, the grasshopper, the agouti, and the jaguar; others emerge from the fluidity of water or the living texture of tree bark.

In this symbolic composition, indigenous peoples recognize their graphics not only as an aesthetic expression, but as a collective heritage and locus of belonging, where memory, spirituality, and identity are intertwined.

The body painting can be understood as a second skin: just as a snake renews itself by shedding its skin, indigenous people transform themselves with each inscription. Each graphic constitutes a new symbolic layer, carrying meanings and values that transcend the individual body. For this reason, it is not permanently fixed on the skin, as its mutability accompanies the message that is to be conveyed. Each stroke carries a unique meaning, pointing in different directions and paths. They are marks that inscribe the space-time of indigenous peoples, living narratives that, when drawn on the body, make room for history itself to speak.

According to Kambeba (2020, p. 48), “new graphisms emerge every day because we need to think about future generations, about leaving a culturally rich heritage”. Therefore, the inspiration for new creations comes from harmony with the ancestral universe and, sometimes, can bring to mind characteristics of animals or anything related to nature. In this sense, even if it is the idea of a single person, it becomes an asset for everyone because, as the elders teach, “nothing is mine, everything is ours”. Thus, still on the subject of indigenous painting, Chief Magno pointed out that:

Only the young women who are part of the festival wear this painting. Those who are just participating will wear other paintings, but only the young women will wear this one. So this means that they are the “owners of the festival,” the young women. It is a painting that identifies them (Educator/Chief Magno Guajajara, 2023).

The Tentehar mark the transition from puberty to adulthood for both sexes with a single ceremony. Girls, in particular, undergo this rite of passage when they experience their first menstruation, which usually occurs in early adolescence and serves as a break in time. It is this ritual that indicates that she is no longer a girl, and she is now a woman. For this reason, since childhood, the Tentehar worship the body as an expression of life: in these puberty rituals, the body is even more revered. The young girl's party is, above all, a sacred ritual.

Historically, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, when a woman bleeds, it is a symbol of impurity. In Guajajara culture, this rite of passage triggers the potential of becoming a woman, because when the time comes, this moment is welcomed with joy,

and all the preparations are made in advance and during the first few weeks. These techniques surrounding corporeality bring us back once again to the notion of “manufacturing healthy bodies” described by Tassinari (2007). According to Zannoni (2021, p. 116), this “rite of presentation” serves to expand their external relationships beyond family life.

In this line of thinking, we can observe that women's role, as well as their importance in the community, is constructed from childhood to adulthood. Their value is evident in all rites of passage. Although each indigenous people has its own political organization, ways of life, and division of roles between men and women, in general, women's participation is very important for the development of cultural values within the community, as women's role in indigenous politics takes on great significance. As such, rites of passage are not purely celebratory moments marking a change in age or status, they represent the maturing of that indigenous person.

Among our people, there are paintings that identify things. In the past, when a woman was single, she would draw a “little line” here on her face (he traced a line from his forehead to his chin), meaning that she was single. She would be at the party and everyone would know that she was single because she only had one line on her face. If she had two lines, then everyone would know that she was married. Each painting has a meaning, a reason. So, this one here represents a young woman, we look at it and we can see that this one here is one of the hosts of the party (Educator/Chief Magno Guajajara, 2023).

Magno Guajajara's explanation about Guajajara painting and identity enlightens us on their ways of being, living, and existing. This narrative presents us with paradigmatic values for the Tentehar, such as respect, wisdom, youthfulness, intelligence, and others. The young women mainly paint their mouths and faces with symbols reminiscent of felines; another very common practice is to circle their lips with genipap, elongating them, but they also paint their arms.

Through indigenous knowledge, gender specific values and attitudes, are transmitted, highlighting the differences from childhood to adulthood, while, in the early years of life, they map out the world and provide a kind of roadmap for adult experience. So, if they do not recognize the paths during their childhood, they will later walk through the world as if it were a strange place.

5 Final thoughts

The study and research experiences with a countercolonial perspective in the Graduate Program in Education (PPGED) provided us with the opportunity to decolonize ourselves and understand that we need to learn from indigenous culture about ways of living and educating. This process of decolonization was fundamental to the very way we conducted our research, because we understood the methodological requirements of the investigation through a qualitative approach. As nomads, we walked with Cartography, which allowed us to be touched, traversed, and affected by the local problems, while being changed and keeping other ways of living in mind. This made it possible to break down the barriers of indifference built by the colonization process, which led to genocide and rights violations by capitalist domination and the epistemicide carried out by the dominant Eurocentric paradigm that shaped our perspective and our approach to education.

From a Human Rights Education perspective, the indigenous approach presents us with the community and collective dimension of knowledge production and a performance by the cartographer researcher that breaks down the barrier of cold objectivity that has separated researchers from their research territory, objectivity from subjectivity, as well as insurgent and microphysical possibilities of knowledge and new power relations. In this line of thinking, we can say that the focus of this research was to seek, in the experiential knowledge of indigenous educators, other ways of thinking about Human Rights Education that values life, memory, and ancestry. This is because indigenous culture is alive and we can find it in knowledge, in every corner, in every beat of the maraca, in the movement of the bow and arrow when activated, as well as in the lines and traces of each graphic symbol when painted on the skin.

Indigenous body painting or graphism, in addition to being a means of communication among indigenous peoples, shapes identity and provides essential information for an understanding of the indigenous community's way of life. Body graphism or paintings with green genipap also have much to teach us about ways of educating in human rights, as they help us understand the knowledge that each people brings, enabling today's indigenous peoples to redraw, catalog, and decipher traces, keeping ancestral memory alive and present, given that it is in the lines of each people's different graphisms that they carry their identity construction, their place of belonging.

The bow and arrow are devices of resistance, fight, and strength for indigenous peoples, which teach persistence and bring goals to be achieved. These cultural devices give us the first outlines of a Human Rights Education based on indigenous culture, or even education that shows its plurality and diversity.

Archery education is also a symbol of the struggle for the defense of territory and is used to provide a livelihood. Additionally, it is an education based on resources extracted from nature itself, but without harming it, in a balanced plan of forces and respect for Mother Earth, therefore, it is an environmental education.

Archery knowledge offers us a human rights culture, whose social and community life can be compared to the image of a hunter in harmony with the hunt, which is never an enemy, but is rather part of the same nature in the struggle for existence. This hunter is the subject of his own history, he is free, he does not accumulate, he is nomadic, because he extracts from nature only what is necessary for survival. He respects others as part of his own humanity.

On their bodies, the paintings are ways of affirming collective identity, bringing them together as a group. A body that holds their memories, reclaims their ancestry and their place of belonging, understanding itself as sacred. In balance with itself and Mother Earth, it celebrates its life cycles as rites of passage, and, in the female gender performance, it carries its animals with the cleverness of a swift agouti, which flees from predatory tormentors and exercises the magic of good living. The transition to womanhood is a celebration!

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