

### **Contributions to Knowledge**

Madeja's impressive contribution consists of bringing stories and string figures relating to Indigenous ecological and food-gathering knowledge together with commentary by scholars, Elders and knowledge holders. He then adds his original interpretations and personal fieldwork within the context of Indigenous worldviews. His interpretations of stories, prayers and string figures are the meat of the thesis. His methods accord with the most recent thinking about how to engage ethically with Indigenous peoples and his discussion makes another contribution to the field. His connections to Indigenous experts enhance the dissertation, and allows him to include previously unpublished information from contemporary oral sources. His many relevant photographs add a helpful visual component.

### **Impact**

This dissertation, as Madeja hoped, will provide other scholars with an account of the most ethical ways to understand the traditional and contemporary worldviews of Indigenous people from what is now British Columbia, particularly those engaged in cultural revitalization and decolonial activism. It adds new material to the literature on stories and string figures. It will be of interest even to those who are closely familiar with his study area because of its careful examination of material he himself has gathered from a variety of Indigenous experts.

### **Coherent Body of Work for a Doctoral Degree**

This thesis demonstrates broad knowledge of Indigenous issues, thinkers, and traditions in Canada. Madeja cites up-to-date and expert knowledge to support his argument that Indigenous knowledge should be regarded with respect, applied to current world problems, and used as a tool of decolonization.

### **Contextualization and referencing the field**

Madeja is extremely well read in the field, not only including sources close to the subject in Canada but referencing Indigenous scholarship from the US (particularly Robin Wall Kimmerer) and Australia. If there is one book I would recommend Madeja read in future, it is US anthropologist Keith H. Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*, which accords nicely with his other source materials.

### **Methods, relevance and use**

Since Linda Tuhiwai Smith published *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999; 3rd ed. 2021) from a Maori perspective, others have produced decolonial methodologies from an array of national perspectives (Guttorm et al, Sami); Madeja is well versed in those from his study area, such as Kovach, 2009; Archibald 2019; and Chilisa 2012.

### **Reporting research results**

I discuss below (and list some related questions) how his position statement might need to be better situated, at least for a North American Indigenous Studies audience. In other respects, his argument is thoroughly documented and integrated.

### **Writing**

Madeja's writing is very correct. However, his sentences are often long and abstract. Academic writing can bog readers down, and any dissertation that is going to become a book, as I hope this one will, needs a more streamlined style. I commend him, nonetheless, on producing a very clean manuscript, apart from some spacing problems (to avoid some of these spacing issues, if it is allowed, I would not right-justify the text).

### **Revisions**

I am unfamiliar with conventions around the format of Polish academic dissertations, so if any of my suggestions for reordering material conflict with these, of course I withdraw them.

*Abstract:* I would move the Abstract to the front of the document, where it serves to help readers understand what the thesis contains.

*Glossary:* I would not begin with a glossary; in my experience, these are placed towards the back of texts and include foreign and technical terms for the most part. Thus, I would keep the names of Indigenous nations and places in the glossary, but move the more general terms such as Indigeneity, Indigenization, Indigenous Spirituality, Indigenous Worldviews, Mythology, and Sacredness into the Introduction, where they could be inserted with very little rewriting. These two suggestions are a matter of rearrangement rather than revision.

*Map:* The map should be larger if possible: it's hard to read. And it might be useful to include a separate map of Coast Salish territories, because several of the nations under consideration (Musqueam, Squamish, and others) are lumped together under Coast Salish on this BC map. See here for a possible map: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Coast-Salish-territory-indicating-many-of-the-groups-mentioned-including\\_fig1\\_261943301](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Coast-Salish-territory-indicating-many-of-the-groups-mentioned-including_fig1_261943301).

*Position Statement:* To introduce oneself at the beginning of any intervention is protocol for the groups Madeja is referencing, and he uses this protocol to support his self-introduction. One names one's parents, community and nation, at least. However, the length and detail of this statement introduces a secondary argument which requires better framing. I do not have any specific suggestions for rewriting here, and my comments might best apply to a future book project. The first few questions I list below concern the issues this position statement raises for me.

The practice of stating one's research position is valuable, and accords with the feminist ideas of situated knowledge (Butler, Haraway) and standpoint theory (Harding), as well as Indigenous standpoint theory (Nakata) all of whom theorize this practice more generally. These theorists intend to counter the illusion of an objective, universal "God's-eye view" constructed by (mostly white male) scientists, philosophers and other academics. The discussions of Upper Silesia as an indigenous region also fits with the idea of "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty, 2000). It is

innovative to regard Europe as colonizing its own minority populations as well as overseas territories, at least from a North American Indigenous Studies perspective. This audience is unfamiliar with the idea that these European populations could be seen as indigenous (if not Indigenous). In support of the argument about subnational minorities, The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1998) and the *Atlas Linguarum Europae* (1975 - 2007) might be cited.

p. 42 [Boas' and Hunt's] research was done under political pressure to recognize Indigenous people's rights but also under a growing environmental movement . . . ] I cannot speak to Hunt's motives, but Boas, for all his anti-racism, did not think Indigenous people would survive—they were vanishing and his mission was to preserve their culture. The first signs of Canadian political pressure to recognize Indigenous rights came after WWII with revisions to the Indian Act, and this was a result of persistent Indigenous activism. Nor was there a “growing environmental movement” in Canada when Hunt and Boas were at work in Alert Bay. Boas died in 1942 and most people would date any “environmental movement” in BC to the founding of Greenpeace there in 1971.

p. 47 Dwayne Donald, not Donald Dwayne

p. 79 “Two-eyed seeing” is based on a widely known tale-type called Eye Juggler, where the trickster loses his eyes and has to borrow new ones from various animals or make replacements from berries or pitch. Mention this? Without the story, two-eyed seeing could be seen as simply another term for binocular vision.

p. 80 Madeja sees carefully “listening to and reading the actual research material” as resulting from Indigenous teachings—this practice is an ideal of Western research too! I do have problems with some mainstream notions of research, but I do like its insistence on accuracy, use of data and examples as evidence, careful citation, and respect for colleagues, even if some of these practices are scanted for various human reasons.

p. 103 Walter Ong is not Indigenous and indeed has written some problematic things about “oral cultures,” although his work is not without interest.

### **Overall Recommendation**

The dissertation meets the standards required for a doctorate.

**Questions for Oral Defence** (I realize these are too many to raise in one defence, so they are in declining order of importance. The number asked can be left to the examining committee.)

You talk about the “indigeneity in Eastern/Central Europe, more specifically in Upper Silesia” (p. 20), and imply that you have an indigenous (but not Indigenous?) identity as a Silesian. You also talk about internal colonization(s) and other hardships suffered by those now living in

Poland who have such a minoritized identity. How similar are these experiences to those of Indigenous people(s) in Canada?

Settler-allies in North America, at least, would never claim to be Indigenous, because this self-positioning would make them eligible for benefits intended for those categorized as Aboriginal under the Constitution Act, 1982, and situate them under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. If they made such claims, they would be condemned as frauds or “white wannabees.” Indeed, scandals have arisen around such claims, e.g. by writer Joseph Boyden and filmmaker Michelle Latimer. Does your self-positioning avoid these concerns?

Do you distinguish the “spiritual essence” of Silesia (p. 22) from the German idea of *Volksgeist* formulated in the Enlightenment?

“The Jealous Husband” is a pretty gruesome story, and resembles other stories where an Indigenous woman is killed for infidelity, such as the Cree story “Rolling Head”—Could you comment on the misogyny here?

Almost half of Indigenous people in Canada live in cities, often far from their ancestral territory. How does this affect their relationship to land and Indigeneity?

You state that you can use some stories in an ethical way because they have been in the public domain for a long time (p. 36) or are published (p. 88). The legal notion of “public domain” is Western and the “domain” it is referring to is arguably mainstream white society. Are there reasons to be cautious in using such stories?

You talk about hybridity and third space (around p. 25) —are you taking these terms from Homi Bhabha? You also talk about having a “transcultural” position. Does this term come from Mary Louise Pratt? Is transculturalism different from hybridity, and if so, how?

You state that “Indigenous stories hand in hand with *kota* string figure patterns, featuring supernatural characters, serve as a sort of instruction manual imparting precise guidelines and advice” (238). Are string figures and stories the *main* method of instruction in these matters?

What does *G'ilakas'la* mean?

Margery Fee  
18 September 2023