

**“The production of knowledge is always a collaborative task and never solely a product of the individual.” Discuss this statement with reference to two areas of knowledge.**

This title stipulates that individuals cannot produce knowledge only by themselves - rather they must always be in collaboration with other knowers or knowledge. ‘Collaboration’ can be initially defined as working with another party to produce or further knowledge, which may vary depending on the Area of Knowledge. The ‘individual’ at first glance implies a singular knower in any given situation, while the ‘production of knowledge’ suggests the generation of new knowledge as a product or through process-related knowledge. The prompt acknowledges that knowledge can be produced by individuals, but not without collaboration. As such, through the AOKs of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Arts, this essay aims to investigate how both collaboration and the individual may be defined within these AOKs, and how interactions between them produce knowledge.

In the St. Elias Mountains of Northern America, Tlingit and Tagish communities live on glacial fields, using annual cyclical repetition of stories and songs to transfer cultural identity and knowledge. The stories place ‘human-like’ characteristics on the glaciers, which are considered sentient within this culture, and are used to explain periodic glacial surges (Lejano et al). These stories are a collaboration of knowledge from different knowers, with observations from caribou hunters mingling with anecdotal evidence from tribal elders to create a cohesive narrative that is then collaboratively retold by storytellers and respected elders, who work together to produce knowledge that is preserved for individuals within the community. Within indigenous knowledge systems, knowledge is often produced and preserved through generations - from elders to newborns - through the memory and imagination of storytelling, forming a core aspect of communal and cultural identity. These stories contain established spiritual knowledge and understandings of the natural world, demonstrating how intergenerational collaboration is clearly rooted within this AOK, which allows existing indigenous traditions and knowledge to be preserved, and further understandings about the world to be produced.

While knowledge within IKS is clearly produced and preserved as a result of millennia of collaboration with elders, other tribe members and nature, one must acknowledge that individual understandings of cultural foundations can still be produced by any member of an indigenous community. Some stories told by the Cree people are designed for the education of children (Lejaon et al). Individuals learning for the first time will produce process-based knowledge in the form of questions, thoughts and interpretations of the stories. The act of engaging with this knowledge produced specifically for members of indigenous communities can be considered completely individual, even though they occur as a result of engaging with the cultural framework of pre-existing indigenous knowledge.

For millennia, indigenous knowledge has often been insular, up until the introduction of colonialism and the eventual mingling between indigenous and non-indigenous scientific knowledge. Coastal Aboriginal Australian groups have documented changes in sea levels for thousands of years, independent from 'Western' scientific documentation. Over 21 groups report information confirmed to be linked to post-glacial sea level rises (Reid et al). After this indigenous knowledge was cross-verified with 'Western' knowledge of sea level and climate change and discovered to align with non-indigenous science, it was able to 'collaborate' with 'Western' science to form a deeper understanding of climate change through validation by non-indigenous scientists. Representing an unintended convergence between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Natural Sciences, this draws into question the nature of collaboration within this RLS - does the cross-verification of knowledge in this scenario constitute collaboration? Here, collaboration to produce knowledge appears to be more indirect, as it wasn't deliberate or intentional, but rather coincidental that these interpretations aligned. Within this context, 'collaboration' seems to suggest shared intention rather than coincidence, meaning the production of indigenous knowledge might only exist within indigenous communities.

Though indirect collaboration is one form of collaboration within IKS, knowledge can still be produced individually in this AOK through intuition and sense perception. When tribe members

hunt for sources of food, for example tribes found on Papua New Guinea, individual reactionary knowledge as a response to external stimuli is constantly being produced, with individuals using their senses to process their surrounding environment. The individual ability to identify animal sounds, various hunting strategies or knowledge of weaponry is largely lost to non-indigenous communities, and has become almost unique to those in indigenous knowledge groups. Even if this knowledge originates from previously received collaborative knowledge, such as the knowledge of hunting techniques - this is still individual knowledge. Arguably, these independent observations from the individual are a form of reactionary knowledge, which does not involve collaboration with other knowers, proving that the production of knowledge is not always collaborative within IKS.

Therefore, within Indigenous Knowledge Systems, it is evident that collaboration with other knowers to produce and preserve cultural knowledge and understandings of the natural world is an integral part of knowledge production. However, individual knowledge can still be produced through reactionary and procedural knowledge of cultural indigenous practices, whether interpreting existing collaborative knowledge in the form of stories, or processing sensory information. This suggests that individual knowledge revolves around the physical application of indigenous knowledge, eg. through hunting, while collaboration is largely dependent on the shared sense of community omnipresent within indigenous knowledge. On the whole, the primary method of production and preservation of knowledge is through collaboration between different social groups within a hierarchy.

The nature of collaboration in producing knowledge within the Arts can also be considered. Humans of New York is a photo blog created by Brandon Stanton with the intent of photographing 10,000 New Yorkers (“HONY”). The project evolved into an extended photojournalistic series when Stanton began conducting interviews with the subjects of his photographs. We can see that individual knowledge can be produced in the arts through responses to surrounding society, as the evolution of Stanton’s project was inspired by the environment of the city around him. Furthermore, Stanton has a unique photographic eye: an

artistic flair for capturing raw human emotion that manifests itself as intuitive knowledge of the Arts. Knowledge produced as a product of the individual could therefore be thought of as a collection of experiences, memories and emotions that is then manipulated by the knower to form concrete artistic knowledge. Individual artists within this AOK have personalised creative processes, proving that it is possible for knowledge to be produced by individuals without collaboration.

However, responses to art existing art, or knowledge of how to *produce* art still requires an interaction with existing knowledge. This could be considered indirect collaboration - in photojournalism, Stanton still had to learn how to use a camera, or how to edit photos in post-production, in order for any artistic product to be created. A photographer's audience, who can each be considered individuals, would not be able to produce opinions about photographic or artistic knowledge if the photos didn't exist in the first place. Any judgements of art are another form of collaboration that heavily influences whether the produced knowledge is considered artistic or not. Responses to existing art and technical knowledge of artistic methods both constitute different forms of collaboration. Within the Arts, there seems to be a more complex exchange of knowledge between the artist and an audience that can be considered collaboration.

To attempt to further examine the scope of collaboration within the Arts, the definition of collaboration can be limited to 'direct collaboration': two knowers making the conscious decision to work together to produce knowledge. For example, within theatre, mime is an art form that requires interactions between the artist and an audience in order to be considered art. Without both the audience and the artist agreeing to suspend their disbelief and actively engage with the actions the mime is portraying, mime would be a series of random, meaningless movements. Theatre appears to be particularly reliant on collaboration, perhaps due to the immersive nature of live performance. The collaboration between two groups of knowers within this form of theatre proves that in this scenario, individual knowers could not independently produce artistic knowledge, and therefore the production of this type of theatrical knowledge could not exist without collaboration.

That said, individual artistic knowledge can result in the production of collaborative knowledge. If a photojournalist creates art with the intention of sharing with other knowers for feedback or publishing, the sharing automatically produces new knowledge for both knowers, a form of direct collaboration. Photojournalists also need to collaborate with their human subjects, whether to produce the photo or be inspired, as without a subject, knowledge in this discipline of the arts could not be produced. This implies that an artist has some level of control over the degree of collaboration during the production of knowledge in the Arts. The intent behind the artistic knowledge therefore changes the type of collaboration resulting from the art, and the art itself changes the extent to which knowledge is collaborative.

In conclusion, 'collaboration' can be 'direct' or 'indirect', with intergenerational interactions and the preservation of tribal knowledge constituting collaboration in IKS, and direct interactions between the artist and other knowers outlining collaboration in the Arts. To fully answer the title, one must recognise that the individual knower can always produce knowledge in these two AOKs. Individuals produce knowledge without collaboration by responding to external stimulus and applying practical indigenous knowledge, or by exercising intuitive artistic flair. This individual knowledge can produce further knowledge through collaboration with other knowers. Collaborative indigenous knowledge is primarily cultural or about the natural world; knowledge in photojournalism and theatre extends beyond creating art to technical, process-based knowledge, and encompasses the inextricable relationship between an artist and their audience, illustrating the ability for both individuals and collaboration to produce knowledge in different contexts.

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