

# Utilization of Indigenous Media through a Community-Based MIL Learning As an Approach to Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

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## Situating Personal Experience

During a fieldwork project commissioned by a government agency in Rizal province, I had the chance to interact with the youth in Indigenous People (IP) communities. It became evident that many of them lacked a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. Their limited involvement in cultural practices and insufficient knowledge about their traditions affected their identity as indigenous people which poses a risk to the preservation of their own culture for future generations. To address this concern, it is important to prioritize cultural preservation and provide the community with a deeper understanding of their roots.

With this given scenario, how the concerns on cultural preservation should be addressed, and what ways should be done to significantly help the IP community?

More than just providing them the basic literacy, it is essential to point out the need to provide the community with an understanding of their cultural roots. This understanding begins from appreciating their cultural background and their indigenous way of knowing and seeking things in their community which can also be done if they are involved in a community-based MIL learning through producing their indigenous media.

A community-based approach focused on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) can help IPs to create and share their indigenous media, where they can start fostering cultural pride and knowledge transmission. By utilizing mobile technology and providing training on content creation and editing, the IP community can effectively preserve and promote their unique heritage.

## A Community-Based MIL-Learning

**The Importance of Indigenous Media in MIL.** According to UNESCO, the Indigenous knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual, and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development (Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS), 2022).

Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge towards the education of the IPs is a response to UNESCO's target "to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations" (SDG#4). It is also relative to the Education 2030 Agenda, which states that "all age groups, especially adults, should have opportunities to learn and continue learning in all settings and all levels of education (United Nations, n.d.)."

In consonance with this, Media and Information Literacy enhances the capacity of people to enjoy their fundamental human rights, in particular as expressed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.' As specified by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations "indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, should have equal access to information and knowledge."

This is where the "preservation of indigenous knowledge" among the IPs through Media and Information Literacy will take place as a response.

**Preserving Indigenous Knowledge (IK) through Community-Based MIL Learning.** Media and Information Literacy is not all about educating people about the management of information. MIL is also about maximizing the utilization of media in information and knowledge sharing. In the same way, "MIL should be seen as an essential tool to facilitate intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and a cultural understanding of people," according to the United Nations Alliance of Civilization.

The process of preservation of IK through MIL begins with the introduction of communication technology (a tool for indigenous media) through community-based MIL learning.

My perspective of bringing MIL to the IP community is through organizing a community project that will help immerse the IP community members on how to utilize the communication technology to preserve their indigenous knowledge and to have this information shared with IP members or even with other non-IP community.

We can adapt one of the practices that was initiated by the University of the Philippines Los Banos through the efforts of Dr. Alexander Flor in 2009. In his paper, "KM4D Casebook: Sectoral and Thematic Knowledge Management at the National, Regional, and Global Levels", Dr. Flor discussed how he and his team started the utilization of mobile phones in helping the indigenous people to preserve their indigenous knowledge. Flor (2019), stated that "the future of information and communication technology for development rests upon mobile phones and other mobile devices."

Similar to the approach of Flor in 2009, capacity development training among the IPs can be done to teach the IP community how to use their mobile technology to document their indigenous knowledge.

This concept remains not obsolete considering that it does not require all of the members of the IP community to have cellular phones. At least the community leader or even the IP youth members can be participants. With the advent of communication technology, some of the IPs if not all, are already using cellular phones, and some of the areas I visited when I was doing my community fieldwork have at least access to an internet connection. Although the media utilization and internet connection may be limited, this slim opportunity can be maximized

to make at least some of the IPs involved in utilizing the media for intercultural exchange and promotion of their indigenous knowledge.

In counterpart to MIL, the MIL educators will help the community to be capacitated on how to maximize their mobile technology in terms of video and image production. A series of seminars and trainings to capacitate them should be done from familiarizing them with the device to how they can use this device to capture the videos and images of their indigenous knowledge. From this, they will be trained on how to edit their videos and enhance their photos using their mobile phones and package them as media material.

The procedure may seem technical, but the basic approach to camera capturing and editing will be taught first to the participants. Besides, we already have user-friendly devices and mobile editing applications that are not too complicated to use.

The mentioned approach is a form of introducing to the IPs the indigenous media.

Indigenous Media is owned, controlled, and managed by indigenous peoples for them to develop and produce culturally appropriate information in the languages understood by the community by utilizing indigenous materials and resources, reflecting community needs and interests, visions, and aspirations, and independent from vested interest groups (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2014).

In the 2009 study by Flor, he posited the potential of mobile devices for “participatory content development.” Mobile technology can be utilized in sharing “indigenous knowledge.” Based on this premise, the key concept that emerged from utilizing indigenous media is that “indigenous knowledge should be shared.” By sharing, it has to be properly managed. Thus, the indigenous knowledge management system should be initiated by the community itself through the guidance of other organizations or agencies outside of the community— as for the community-based MIL learning—the MIL educators.

The concept of “sharing and reusing of indigenous knowledge” is based on the idea of “social capital”. As discussed by Flor (2019), “social capital has been defined as the capacity of groups to work together for the common good, or as the ability to draw on relationships with others especially based on trust and reciprocity.”

Hence, utilization and content generation through indigenous media among marginalized communities can bring about social capital among these communities; and that increased social capital would result in increased utilization and content generation leading to a critical mass of users and content providers (Flor, 2019).”

**Inhibiting Factors.** Indigenous media integration for sharing and reusing Indigenous Knowledge is a good concept. It is relevant for the archiving, preservation, and dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge. However, I agreed, that “the concept of open knowledge resources may not be appropriately applied to indigenous knowledge and practices due to several inhibiting factors (Flor, 2009).” Other communities have limited access to ICT; thus, it may affect the good intention of utilizing communication technology concerning the Indigenous Knowledge Management System.

The privacy of the IPs is also a concern when it comes to disseminating the video material for public viewership. Likewise, the commodification of indigenous knowledge in any form has been a concern by many IPs to avoid the exploitation and abuse of their indigenous resources once the videos are disseminated. To avoid such, if permitted by the concerned groups, like the IP groups

and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in the Philippines, the produced materials can be disseminated on various digital platforms like Facebook and YouTube which has a mass reach.

While we consider these restrictions for information dissemination, it does not necessarily mean that the produced video materials will be wasted and left unused after it was developed. The video material can be utilized in schools as instructional material where the topics of indigenous knowledge are incorporated. MIL educators may utilize the developed media material as a form of integrating indigenous knowledge into their lessons. This can help in educating the community about their own culture.

## Conclusion

The utilization of indigenous media through community-based MIL learning will make the IPs more engaged in their IK by nurturing their sense of identity and sense of self as indigenous people. Through this, it will lead to positive self-esteem and a sense of belongingness to their cultural community and heritage.

If the 'sense of self' of the IPs is undermined, the education sector can intervene by strengthening and developing the competencies needed by indigenous learners through the inclusion of IK by localizing and contextualizing the lessons. Through a defined 'sense of self' of the IPs, will contribute to their community's cultural integrity as they continue to interact with other cultures, peoples, and identities.

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