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Kichwa Peoples' Approach to Queer Ecology and Its Implications on Queer Ecopedagogy

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Abstract

"This paper explores the intersections of Kichwa cosmology, queer ecology, and decolonial thought to propose a transformative approach to queer eco-pedagogy. By centering Indigenous epistemologies and relational ontologies, it challenges the anthropocentric and heteronormative binaries present in Western environmental and educational discourses. Kichwa cosmology perceives the Amazon as not a passive resource but a social entity governed by reciprocal relationships. The concept of Kawsak Sacha (Living Forest) and the amus (forest spirits) resist Western epistemological hierarchies and offer an alternative to the exploitative nature/human dichotomy. This relational perspective aligns with queer ecology's critique of static, heteronormative understandings of nature and underscores the need for eco-pedagogies that reject colonial binaries.

Queer eco-pedagogy emerges as an educational praxis that deconstructs these binaries and fosters an embodied and decolonial learning environment. By integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, it reclaims land-based education as an act of resistance against ongoing epistemicide and settler-colonial violence. This paper argues for five key strategies to decolonize and queer environmental education: reconnecting with the land as a relational entity, decentering anthropocentrism, queering pedagogical frameworks, valuing embodied knowledge, and engaging in collective activism.

Drawing on Indigenous feminisms, ecofeminism, and decolonial critiques, this paper situates queer ecology within broader struggles against colonial capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy. It asserts that the oppression of queer identities, womxn, and Indigenous Peoples is deeply tied to the exploitation of land and nature. As movements like the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance and the environmental struggles in Türkiye illustrate, land is not just territory—it is identity, history, and pedagogy.

By incorporating Kichwa knowledge into queer eco-pedagogy, this paper calls for an educational model that resists colonial extractivism, embraces fluidity and interdependence, and reimagines environmental ethics through queer, Indigenous, and decolonial lenses. Finally, it argues that education must move beyond the classroom, serving as a tool for collective empowerment, environmental justice, and the decolonization of knowledge."

Keywords: queer ecology, queer eco-pedagogy, decolonize pedagogy, kichwa cosmology, embodied knowledge