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THE INTERCULTURAL CURRICULUM OF THE AKWĒ INDIGENOUS SCHOOL OF TOCANTINS FROM A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to propose a reflection on the construction of a critical intercultural curricular proposal, by means of a decolonial perspective, for indigenous education, in particular the one which occurs at the Wakōmēkwa School,¹ in Riozinho Kakumhu community, of a Xerente Indigenous People from Tocantins, a state in Northern Brazil. We start from the legal milestones, which regulate Indigenous School Education at the federal and state levels, and we have adopted, as a theoretical and methodological support, authors who think the indigenous school curriculum in a critical intercultural perspective, such as: Albuquerque (2014), Diniz; Coast; Diniz (2011), Muniz, (2017), and Santos (2010). From a field research, using the conversation wheel technique with indigenous teachers who work at the Wakōmēkwa School, we have realized that it is possible to stimulate school agents to think in the decolonial perspective, in order to break with the colonized knowledge, based on a critical reorientation of citizenship, democracy, human rights, humanities, economic relations and their practices in society.

Keywords: Intercultural Curriculum. Akwē Indigenous School. Decolonial Perspective.

O CURRÍCULO INTERCULTURAL DA ESCOLA INDÍGENA AKWĒ DO TOCANTINS EM UMA PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é propor uma reflexão sobre a construção de uma proposta curricular intercultural crítica, por meio de uma perspectiva decolonial, para a educação indígena, em especial, a da que ocorre na Escola Wakōmēkwa, da comunidade Riozinho Kakumhu, Povo Xerente do Tocantins, estado da região Norte do Brasil. Partimos dos marcos legais que regulamentam a educação escolar indígena no âmbito federal e estadual, e adotamos, como suporte teórico-metodológico, autores que pensam o currículo escolar indígena na perspectiva intercultural crítica, tais como: Albuquerque (2014), Diniz; Costa; Diniz (2011), Muniz, (2017) e Santos (2010). A partir de uma pesquisa de campo, utilizando a técnica de roda de conversa com professores indígenas que trabalham na escola Wakōmēkwa, percebemos ser possível estimular os agentes da escola a pensar na perspectiva decolonial, a fim de romper com o conhecimento colonizado, a partir de uma reorientação crítica do que seja cidadania, democracia, direitos humanos, humanidades, relações econômicas e suas práticas na sociedade.

Keywords: Currículo Intercultural. Escola Indígena Akwē. Perspectiva Decolonial.

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¹ The Wakōmēkwa Indigenous School, of the Riozinho Kakumhu Community, located in Tocantins, was the locus of the field research.

1 INTRODUCTION

Initially, Indigenous Education in Brazil was part of the colonial project, regarded as a plan for civilization of the indigenous (THE DIRECTORY OF THE INDIANS, 1757). Subsequently, it was part of the nation-building projects - the Nation-State and the National-State, which conceived the integration of the indigenous people into the unified national society. All of them relied on the school, under the concept of unifying, monolingual, monocultural and monoepistemic civilizing education, conceived by the dominator.

The twentieth century and the Republic were already advanced in the 1970s, through Ordinance no. 75/N, of 72 (BRASIL, 1972), the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), and the Statute of the Indian - Law no. 6.001/1973 (BRAZIL, 1973), a bilingual and intercultural indigenous education policy begins to be built, through the agreement between FUNAI and the Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL). According to Pimentel da Silva (2008, p. 108), with this indigenous education policy, conceived as “bilingual teaching of civilization”, this teaching is a transition strategy for the acquisition of Portuguese. In summary, in the same way as in previous missionary schools, indigenous languages continue to be used as a support for the teaching of Portuguese. It is, therefore, about the coloniality of power in education, by maintaining the coloniality of the school curriculum for the indigenous school.

The idea of this article is to reflect on the construction of a critical intercultural curricular proposal, by means of a decolonial perspective, for indigenous education, in particular, the one which occurs at the Wakõmẽkwa School of Riozinho Kakumhu community, XERENTE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE from Tocantins, located in the municipality of Tocantínia, state of Tocantins. As a theoretical and methodological support, we rely on legislation that supports indigenous education in the country, as well as authors who study the indigenous school curriculum in a critical intercultural perspective, such as: Albuquerque (2014), Diniz; Coast; Diniz (2011), Muniz, (2017), and Santos (2010).

2 INDIGENOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION IN TOCANTINS

According to Silva (2020, p. 7), an anthropologist and research professor at the Federal University of Tocantins, nine indigenous peoples live: the Akwẽ-Xerente, Mehin-

Krahô, Pahin-Apinajé, Iny-Javaé-Karajá-Xambioá,² the Krahó-Kanela,³ Āwa-Avá Canoeiro⁴ and Apyãwa-Tapirapé.⁵ The author also states that “all of them, despite the dominant representations, are fundamentally singular. Their cosmological perspectives and their social organization differ significantly.” The peoples referenced in the documents of the Secretariat of Education, Youth and Sports of the state (SEDUC)⁶ are: Krahô, Khahô Canela, Xerente, Apinajé, Karajá, Javaé and Xambioá.

Presently, hundreds of communities of these indigenous groups can be found, distributed in the six regions of the State, with officially demarcated lands (Fig. 1), with Tocantínia being the town with the highest number of indigenous concentrations. According to information from the Special Indigenous Sanitary District (DSEI-TO), the population of the Xerente reservation in the region currently accounts for 3,842 indigenous citizens.

Each community has its own social and political organization (MUNIZ, 2017). With regard to languages, the results of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (BRASIL, 2010) census show that all communities maintain and make use of their mother tongue. The Portuguese language is used only in contact with non-indigenous people, representative members of the government, researchers and sporadic visitors (BRASIL, 2012).

Next, Figure 1, by Daniel Rêj Krahô, presents the ethnological map of indigenous peoples in Tocantins.

² According to Silva (2020, p. 12), there is no consensus among scholars from the Karajá group that Karajá, Xambioá and Javaé are distinct peoples. According to Giralдин (2002, p. 127), the native attribution is defined by the position of each group in relation to the Araguaia River. Those who occupy the southernmost region are called the “people from above” (The Karajá), with the “people in the middle” being the Javaé and the “people from below”, the Xambioá.

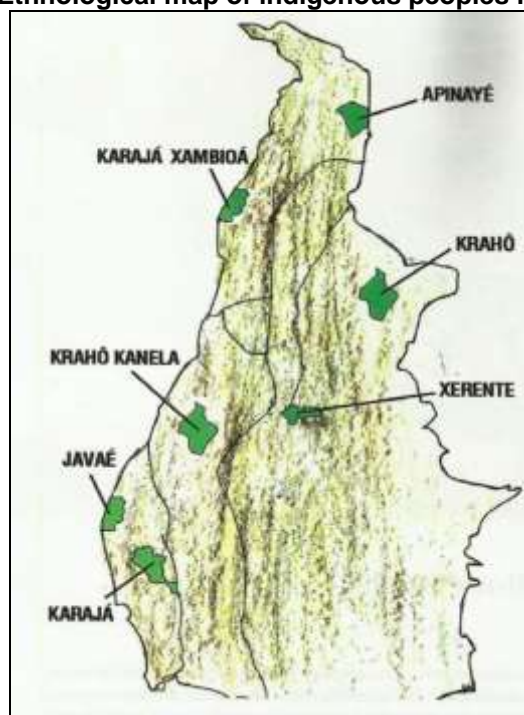
³ INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL. Available at: <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Krah%C3%B4-Kanela>. Accessed on: Jun. 10th, 2020.

⁴ INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL. Available at: <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Av%C3%A1-Canoeiro>. Accessed on: June 15th, 2020.

⁵ INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL. Available at: <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Tapirap%C3%A9>. Accessed on: Jun. 15th, 2020.

⁶ BARBOSA, Cleide Araújo. **Indigenous people from the state of Tocantins**. Available at: <https://central3.to.gov.br/arquivo/274586/>. Accessed on: Jun. 15th, 2020.

Figure 1 - Ethnological map of indigenous peoples in Tocantins



Source: Albuquerque (2014, p. 40)

By interpreting data on education in the indigenous communities of Tocantins, based on the documents presented by the Development Department of Indigenous Education (GDEI/SEDUC), it was detected that in the indigenous ethnoregions (Fig. 1), there are 98 units distributed in 111 communities. In some communities, schools have extensions, annexes to the mother school, which are school offices to facilitate student access. In all, there are 18 (eighteen) educational extensions connected to indigenous schools. The extension is ruled by the same management and staff of teachers of the related school. They are extension classes of the mother schools that are in operation. SEDUC⁷ thought about this structure because of the impossibility of providing school transportation services to all communities.

In Tocantins, discussions on the implementation of policies for the provision of indigenous school education began in 1998, through Law no. 1.038, of December 22nd, 1998. The document deals mainly with the State Education System and the school organization. In art. 18, § 3, indigenous communities are guaranteed regular Elementary Education using their mother tongues and their own learning processes. Article 42 highlights the State's priority in offering school education to indigenous societies, whose programs should be developed with the participation of communities, organizations and

⁷ SEDUC. Available at: <https://seduc.to.gov.br/site>. Accessed on: May 26th, 2020.

representative entities. Art. 43 also guarantees bilingualism, striving for socio-cultural diversity.

The Law also provides in the articles 44 and 45 specific financial resources to develop the activities as foreseen in the document, according to the pedagogical proposals of the school project, in addition to the permanent training of indigenous teachers (TOCANTINS, 1998). This Law was revoked by Law no. 1.360, of December 31st, 2002, however the texts remain, only the numbers of the articles have been changed. The State Education System allocates specific resources, provided for in the budget allocations of SEDUC,⁸ and counts on the counterpart of the Federal Government, through resources from the Budget Program destined to the States.

According to Muniz (2017), there are records that projects for indigenous education started before the Agreement between the Federal University of Tocantins, the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), SEDUC, and the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), in April 1991. In 1989, the Federal University of Goiás, in partnership with other agencies from the state of Goiás, developed research to map the sociolinguistic situation of the indigenous peoples of Tocantins. Muniz (2017) states that these data contributed to the educational project for the indigenous peoples of Tocantins, serving as a reference for current projects.

The first training course for indigenous teachers, linked to the project, started on August 20th, 1991 in which 38 teachers from the 37 communities of the Karajá, Javaé, Xambioá, Xerente, Krahô and Apinajé peoples participated (MUNIZ, 2017). Thus, SEDUC sought to establish guidelines and rules to regulate indigenous education for the state of Tocantins such as the creation of the State Council for Indigenous School Education (CEEI-TO),⁹ in 2005, by decree no. 2.367, of March 14th. CEEI-TO was designed to deliberate, discuss policies, programs, implementation and supervision of actions related to the provision of Indigenous School Education (TOCANTINS, 2005).

Resolution no. 78, of June 20th, 2007, deals with the instruction of processes for the creation and regulation of indigenous schools in the State of Tocantins, preferably in indigenous lands, for the provision of Basic Education, which are authorized, accredited

⁸ The SEDUC Indigenous Education Development Management has informed us, during an interview, that the amount received from the Federal Government is destined for continuing education, material acquisition, both construction and expansion of school premises.

⁹ The Council, a consultative and deliberative body related to SEDUC, is comprised of 23 members, two of each indigenous people in the state; three representatives of SEDUC, two from the State Education Council, one from the Association of indigenous teachers; a FUNAI representative; one from the Nacional Health Foundation (FUNASA); one from the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT); one from the Ministry of the Education (MEC) and one from the Indigenous Missionary (CIMI) Indigenous Missionary Council. No member receives compensation for taking part in the board. SEDUC defrays the expenses incurred by counselors when they commute from communities in order to attend meetings.

and recognized by the state education system. In compliance with Law no. 9.394/96, schools must be specific, bilingual and intercultural (TOCANTINS, 2007).

On September 3rd, 2009, with Law no. 2,139, which provides for the state education system, it was guaranteed, in art. 17, that Elementary Education must take place with a minimum duration of 9 years, and its offer must be mandatory and free, ensuring indigenous communities use their mother tongue and their own learning processes. In art. 47, it guarantees the offer of educational modalities, including indigenous school education. It also provides, in section III, Indigenous School Education, within the possibilities, a bilingual and intercultural Elementary and Secondary School, respecting socio-cultural diversity.

The notion of bilingualism and interculturality in the indigenous education policy, built from the 1988 Constitution and the Law Guideline and Bases of National Education (LDB no. 9394), 1996, breaks with the colonialist conceptions in force until then. Indigenous languages are conceived and taught as languages of knowledge and equitably to the Portuguese language. It is a program of sociolinguistic and epistemic insurgency of indigenous peoples, that is, an epistemic project for the indigenous peoples of Tocantins, which started in the late 1980s.

By Municipal Law no. 411/2012, from Tocantínia-TO, published in April 2012 and sanctioned in August 2012, the Akwê-Xerente language was officially launched in the community. For Baalbak and Andrade (2016), such action can contribute to the maintenance, development and revitalization of indigenous languages. With the approval and official publication of the law, the legalization of the co-officialization of indigenous languages takes place, which enables the formalization and circulation of other linguistic knowledge in the region. This has a positive impact on school education in the region, since the municipality will have to review its educational policy, due to the mandatory use of language in the educational system, as well as in the media and public service.

Silvino (2012) points out that, with the approval of this law in Tocantínia, the municipality becomes the fourth in Brazil to adopt this initiative. In this way, institutions that offer basic public services, especially those that involve the health area, such as disease prevention and treatment campaigns, will also have to carry out them in the Akwê language. In addition, in the educational area, municipal managers should support and encourage the teaching of the Akwê language in schools and in the municipality media. This initiative enables official recognition and respect for Akwê-Xerente culture and language in the region.

3 REVIEWING THE CURRICULUM OF THE WAKÕMËKWA INDIGENOUS SCHOOL

The Wakõmëkwa Indigenous School, located in the Kahumku-Riozinho community, adopts the SEDUC curriculum because it does not yet have a specific one from the community. Elementary school students in the early years, until 2018, had five (5) Portuguese classes per week and five (5) indigenous languages; two (2) classes of indigenous knowledge and one (1) of Art. In the final years (6th and 7th grades), by the time of the classes, it was found that, during the week, there are five (5) classes in Portuguese, three (3) in Indigenous Language, two (2) in Indigenous Knowledge and one (1) of Art. For the 8th and 9th grade, there are four (4) classes of Portuguese, three (3) of Indigenous Language, one (1) of Indigenous Knowledge and one (1) of Art. At Education of Young People and Adults (EJA), there are four (4) classes in Portuguese, three (3) in Indigenous Language, two (2) in Indigenous Knowledge and one (1) of Art. In high school there are three (3) classes in Portuguese, two (2) in Indigenous Language, two (2) in Indigenous Knowledge and one (1) of Art.

In the curricular structure presented by the SEDUC GDEI, since the beginning of this year, there is the inclusion of one more Indigenous Language class per week, matching the number of Portuguese Language classes. With the change made, the elementary school classes had one more class of Indigenous Language, in relation to the Portuguese Language. For these classes, the workload of the Indigenous Language course is the same as that of Mathematics: 1,200 hours in total.

Indigenous teachers who work with the Portuguese Language report that the number of Portuguese classes is not enough to prepare students to enter university, nor to guarantee their rights and survive with non-indigenous society, given the current circumstances, in which they relate at all times with other peoples and languages. Consequently, in addition to being an epistemic barrier, the second language becomes an obstacle for these students in continuing their studies. Teachers report that the failure and dropout rate of students who go to the city to study is high, and one of the reasons is the difficulty with the Portuguese language.

Figure 2 shows the current headquarters of the Wakõmëkwa State Indigenous School.

Figure 2 - Current headquarters of the Wakõmẽkwa State Indigenous School



Source: xxxxxx (2019, p. 24)

The Pedagogical Political Project (PPP) produced by the school team, still under construction, shows that school actions must be developed according to the Akwẽ worldview, based on their values, which are: respect and preservation of Akwẽ culture, citizenship, partnership, collective action, respect for the individual and Akwẽ ethics. This is the starting point for Akwẽ indigenous intercultural education.

4 HOW TO THINK OF A DECOLONIAL CURRICULUM FOR AN INDIGENOUS SCHOOL

The curriculum contains and performs a curriculum policy. In this sense, a curriculum is always cluttered with power and which produces varied effects on society, the publishing market, at school and in the professional environment, as it requires updating training and modifying attitudes and attitudes. Thus, “curricular policy, metamorphosed into curriculum, ultimately effects a process of including certain knowledge and certain individuals, excluding others.” That is why the curriculum is, rather, a policy, because it also “[...] produces the subjects to which it speaks, the individuals it challenges. The curriculum establishes differences, builds hierarchies, produces identities.” (SILVA, 2010, p. 11-12).

At the Wakõmẽkwa Indigenous School, most of the few teaching materials available at the school are in Portuguese. Some of them that were produced in the mother tongue were developed by religious missionaries. They find it difficult to produce, write in Akwẽ and in Portuguese “which is in memory”, says a teacher. For the fulfilment of a bilingual

and intercultural education, there is an urgent need for didactic material in the mother tongue.

Teachers at the Wakõmẽkwa Indigenous School state the importance of preserving indigenous culture. However, we found that in school activities, indigenous culture is symbolized as a representation or as a demonstration. During the field research, in one of the conversation circles, one of the teachers stated that:

Akwẽ culture is the social organization of an important people, which is specific and differentiated. What characterizes are the clans, the custom, the dance, the singing, the haircut that is not nearly there today (mohawk). We will teach without body painting, we use Portuguese, we speak five words in our language and ten in Portuguese. It is necessary to maintain the culture.

The indigenous school is the space for the protection, encouragement and dissemination of knowledge of the cultural traditions of the people, mainly due to the effect it can have on society. In this sense, inserting themes about cultures and their traditions can enable the construction of a new history of Brazilian education, in which different languages and ways of being can produce a new subject and, thus, revolutionize the educational system.

Consequently, educational indoctrination with a strong Fordist structure, regulatory control, universal language, as the only and valid language, could thus leave the scene. Relationships could become expressive and meaningful experiences for all involved, seeking to overcome ethnocentrism, and an extremely technical and productive education. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship between different knowledge is proposed, in a dialectical process: “Teachers need to work on culture to preserve and maintain. The school is the place. Teachers teach, but do not practice,” said one of the school’s teachers.

When questioning the rigor and hardness of the official school curriculum, opening the discussion for the insertion of new practices, theories and knowledge about different places that make up the global, science and daily life, the hardness and lightness of the curricular subjects, new the possibilities of doing education are constituted, mainly when thinking about the processes that involve the territory, the deterritorialization,¹⁰ and the reterritorialization. A rhizomatic perspective of curriculum allows an alliance with official disciplines, opening up to the new, to come, to the educational process, to the new

¹⁰ In the process of deterritorialization, “The new environment operates as a type of detonator. Their relationship with the new resident is manifested dialectically as new territoriality and new culture, which interfere reciprocally, changing in parallel both territoriality and culture; and changing the human being.” (SANTOS, 2010, p. 598).

territory that deterritorializes State science and the hard curriculum of the official school (DINIZ; COSTA; DINIZ, 2011, p. 325).

The notion and the consecutive construction of a curriculum take place in the midst of the daily experiences of people, communities or societies. For this conversion to happen, it is necessary to have some phenomena within the scope of teleology that the curriculum can provide in relation to the context of the reterritorialization of a culture. Therefore, we start from the historical processes of territorialized or deterritorialized culture.

As part of the task carried out in conjunction with the school's teachers and administrative management, we propose to the research participants the development of activities for recording the impressions collected during the conversation rounds. There was also the intention of stimulating creation, by revisiting the memory and history of each one, with their people and tradition. These activities were important for the organization of data and reflection of each one, based on common and individual experiences.

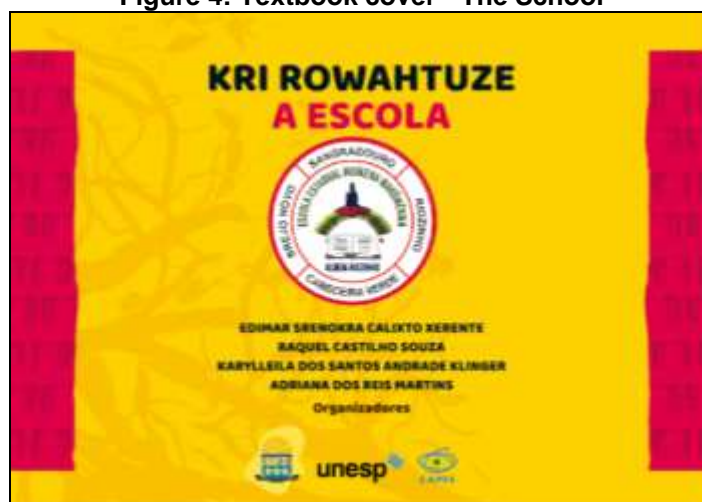
In each thematic meeting, the participants developed the following activities, considering the following contents:

- 1) School - the participants produced a text about the meaning of school and teaching in Xerente culture;
- 2) Importance of the school - the participants made drawings that represented the school from an individual perspective, describing the importance of the school in a text in both Portuguese and Akwẽ;
- 3) Teaching Art in indigenous schools - right after the discussions and the sharing of impressions about what Art is, what it is for and why Art in school, the group was asked to register indigenous Art-Akwẽ, their senses and what Art is for the school. Then, the participants made a free drawing that depicted the indigenous Art-Akwẽ.

The texts and drawings of these activities became project proposals for the elaboration and production of two bilingual teaching materials for the school. The first one was entitled: KRI ROWAHTUZE - THE SCHOOL (Fig. 2), published in 2019. The second, WDÊ NNÂKRTA HAWIMHÃ ROKMÃDKÃ MNÔ - CULTURE AND ART AKWÊ-XERENTE (Fig. 3), published in 2020.¹¹

¹¹ This material has not yet been delivered to the school, due to the current circumstances of Pandemic COVID-19.

Figure 4: Textbook cover - The School



Source: Xerente *et al.* (2019, cover)

Figure 5 - Textbook cover - Culture and Art Akwê-Xerente



Source: cover of the work by Xerente *et al.* (2020)

All teachers were part of the elaboration, rewriting, revision of texts and translations. The participants chose the order of the information to be displayed in the materials and they were responsible for the approval, completion and layout of the didactic material, before editing and printing, together with the chiefs and elders of the communities belonging to the school.¹² The materialization of this material represents an important step for the construction of a decolonial intercultural pedagogical practice in the school and in the community, as well as for the development of a curricularization also in the decolonial

¹² The formatting of the teaching material and its printing was made possible because it was planned to use financial resources from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) made available to the Dinter Doctoral Program in Arts UNESP/UFT for this purpose: product production, dissertation results: responsibility and social insertion.

intercultural perspective. This is the beginning of an Akwẽ indigenous school education by Akwẽ.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discussion about interculturality has been treated at the legal level, but indigenous school education has been thought and proposed by non-indigenous people, who do not really know the reality of indigenous peoples. For this reason, these laws are considered as indigenous policies, different from indigenous policies from indigenous to indigenous. These actions are being reflected and defined for the creation of an indigenous curriculum in the perspective of decolonial interculturality.

We perceive an intention by the state government of Tocantins to develop an education with an intercultural conception, however, the legislation itself is built in the perspective of coloniality, by non-indigenous people. This has maintained colonial values in management, curriculum and school. Evidence of the state's coloniality is in the provision, by SEDUC, of several didactic materials in Portuguese and almost nothing in the Akwẽ language at the Wakõmẽkwa School.

The subjects Indigenous Language, Art and Culture and Indigenous History and Culture are designed to keep culture present in the school environment, serving as an instrument for the preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices. They are the disciplines that can most contribute to the development of the intercultural perspective in the indigenous curriculum, but there are still few advances in actions and effective projects in the decolonial perspective.

One approach would be the creation of a program for the production of teaching material and the development of specific curricula and programs. This is based on activities developed by a content team within the scope of the State Department of Education, in partnership with regional education boards, higher education institutions and school units, ensuring the definition and elaboration of specific content for each people, with the purpose of strengthening the mother tongue and socio-historical/sociocultural practices according to Tocantins' State Project of Education (PEE/TO, 2015).

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