# SOWING SEEDS OF WISDOM:

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE



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## INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE



Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK)

#### Sowing Seeds of Wisdom: Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge

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#### **OHÉNTON KARIWATÉKWEN:**

#### WORDS BEFORE ALL ELSE<sup>1</sup>

"We who have gathered together are responsible that our cycle continues. We have been given the duty to live in harmony with one another and other living things."

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for the people gathered here, that everyone is at peace here where we live on earth...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for Mother Earth. She has given us everything we need to live in peace...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for the food plants. They help us when we're hungry...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for fruits and especially strawberry, the head of the berry family...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for the grasses. Some we use as food and some as medicine...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for water; the rivers, the lakes, the oceans, and that clean water keeps running all over the earth. It keeps our thirst quenched...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for fish. They give us strength so we don't go hungry...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for medicines, that they still help us when we are sick...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for wild animals, that they still help us when we are cold and hungry...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for the trees, especially maple, the head of their family, that it still creates sap as the Creator made it to do...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for the birds, that we still hear the nice singing that they bring, especially the head of the bird family—the eagle is its name...now our minds are one.

We bring our minds together as one and give thanks for our grandfathers the thunderers, that they make new waters...now our minds are one.

<sup>1</sup> This was the Thanksgiving Address delivered by the women and children of Kahnawà:ke during the opening ceremony of the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge on November 28, 2022 held at the Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission (KEDC), Kahnawà:ke, Quebec, Canada. The Language Nest agreed to have this version published for this book. The thanksgiving address can also be accessed at https://akwesasne.travel/our-stories/thanksgiving-address/

#### FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

ABN African Biodiversity Network AIPP Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CBMIS Community-Based Monitoring and Information Systems
CEPA Communication, education and public awareness

CHIRAPAQ Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú

COD-ILK Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge

COP Conference of the Parties
CPK Co-Production of Knowledge

CSIPN Centre for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North

DKK Dap-ayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera

FPCI Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena

FPIC Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

FPP Forest Peoples Programme

GBF Global Biodiversity Framework

ICE Institute for Culture and Ecology

IDIL International Decade of Indigenous Languages
IIFB International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity

IIN Indigenous Information Network ILK Indigenous and Local Knowledge

IK Indigenous Knowledge

IKH Indigenous Knowledge Holders

IKSPS Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Practices, and Spirituality

ILED Indigenous-Led EducationILK Indigenous and Local KnowledgeILO International Labor Organization

IMPECT Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand

IPs Indigenous Peoples

IPBES Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

IPLC Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

IPRA Indigenous Peoples Rights Act

KEDC Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission

Language Nest
LBO
Local Biodiversity Outlooks

NBSAPS National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

NCF Ngaatho Community Foundation NGO Non-Government Organization **PASD** Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development PIKP Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines

SAGUIBIN-LN Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta-Dumagat-Remontado sa Pagtatanggol at Binabaka ang

Lupang Ninuno

Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation SALT

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

SNS Sacred Natural Sites Sotz'il Asociación Sotz'il

SPA Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta

Traditional Knowledge TK

UN **United Nations** 

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples UNDRIP United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization **UNESCO** UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**WIPO** World Intellectual Property Organization

### **GLOSSARY**

#### **Biodiversity or Biological Diversity**

The variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems (Convention on Biological Diversity, Art. 2).

#### **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

The CBD is an international, legally binding treaty enforced on December 29, 1993. It covers biodiversity at all levels: ecosystems, species, and genetic resources. Its three main goals are (1) the conservation of biological diversity, (2) the sustainable use of its components, and (3) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. (Convention on Biological Diversity)

#### Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8(j)

Each contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate "subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices."

To implement these provisions, the Working Group on Article 8(j) adopted a Program of Work that provides Indigenous Peoples and local communities the means for their active participation in the achievement of CBD objectives.

#### Custodian

A custodian refers to communities, peoples, individuals, and other entities who are responsible for maintaining, using, and developing traditional knowledge and cultural expressions according to customary laws, community values, and other practices.

#### **Customary Law**

Customary law includes customary worldviews, principles or values, rules and codes of conduct, and established practices that are enforced by community institutions and can have sanctions attached. They come from natural resource use and are locally recognized, orally transmitted, and adaptable to present conditions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Protecting Community Rights Over Traditional Knowledge: Implications of Customary Laws and Practices (Key Findings and Recommendations, 2005-2009), https://www.iied.org/14591iied

#### **Folklore**

Folklore is the "totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community." It reflects a group's cultural and social identity and orally transmits their standards and values through language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture, other arts, etc.

#### Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

FPIC is a right of Indigenous Peoples guaranteed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. "Free" means there is no coercion, intimidation, or manipulation. "Prior" implies that consent has been sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities. "Informed" implies that information is provided regarding the rationale, scope and limitations (i.e., affected locality of areas; likely economic, social, cultural, and environmental impact; potential risks and benefits), duration, and concerned personnel and procedures in the implementation of any proposed project or activity. "Consent" implies there is consultation among and active participation of interest-holders and there is the option of withholding consent.

#### Heritage

Heritage is the legacy from the past, what is lived today, and what is passed on to future generations. It includes tangible, intangible, and natural assets of a group or people.

#### **Indigenous Knowledge**

*IPBES definition:* A cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. It is also referred to by other terms such as: indigenous, local or traditional knowledge; traditional ecological/environmental knowledge (TEK); farmers' or fishers' knowledge; ethnoscience; indigenous science; folk science.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Indigenous People(s)**

Indigenous peoples are those, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Public Domain**

The state of belonging or being available to the public as a whole, and therefore not subject to copyright.

As defined by WIPO: In the context of traditional knowledge, some knowledge is considered secret, sacred, and an inalienable part of indigenous cultural heritage from time immemorial to time unending. Thus, putting traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions into the public domain would violate the confidential character of many intangible, sacred, and secret elements which belong to the living heritage and would accentuate the deterioration and illicit appropriation of cultural values. Indigenous peoples and local communities might, therefore, argue that the definition of the public domain needs to accommodate a number of different worldviews with regard to the sharing of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See www.ipbes.net/glossary-tag/indigenous-and-local-knowledge

<sup>3</sup> See "1981: Martínez Cobo Study," Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html

<sup>4</sup> See Note on the Meanings of the Term "Public Domain" in the Intellectual Property System with Special Reference to the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions/Expressions of Folklore (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/17/

Existing intellectual property mechanisms cannot fully respond to the characteristics of certain forms of traditional knowledge, namely, their holistic nature, collective origination, and oral transmission and preservation and are thus not able to fully protect all forms of traditional knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Sacred Sites**

Sacred sites encompass areas of special spiritual significance to peoples and communities.

#### **Sacred Natural Sites**

Sacred natural sites are sites where nature, the divine, and remembrances come together in special combinations that are particularly meaningful to a community, society, or people, relating to these sites as their points of origin, the realm of their ancestors, the abode of their deities and nature spirits, their destinations of pilgrimage and worship, and overall, as the embodiment of their spiritual beliefs.<sup>6</sup>

#### Sui Generis

Translated from Latin to mean "of its own kind" (unique or peculiar). The term is used in intellectual property law to describe a regime designed to protect rights that fall outside the traditional patent, trademark, copyright, and trade-secret doctrines.<sup>7</sup>

#### Sui Generis Regimes

Sui generis regimes are existing legal mechanisms, which can be part of intellectual property systems. These systems have been modified to accommodate the special characteristics of TK and TCEs like folklore, providing Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other beneficiaries with intellectual property or similar protection against the misuse and/or misappropriation of their TK and TCEs, and/or distorting or culturally offensive uses.<sup>8</sup>

#### Sustainable Use

Sustainable use is the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations. (Convention on Biological Diversity, Art. 2)

#### **Traditional Knowledge** (See Indigenous Knowledge)

#### **Traditional Medicine**

Traditional medicine is the totality of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures. It is used to maintain health and well-being as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve, or treat physical and mental illnesses through plant, animal, and/or

INF/8), 17th Session of the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore in Geneva on December 6–10, 2010, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo\_grtkf\_ic\_17/wipo\_grtkf\_ic\_17\_inf\_8.pdf

See Intellectual Property Needs and Expectations of Traditional Knowledge Holders: WIPO Report on Fact-Finding Missions on Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge (1998–1999), https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/tk/768/wipo\_pub\_768.pdf

<sup>6</sup> See Sacred Natural Sites: Guidelines for Protected Area Managers, https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/9201

<sup>7</sup> See WIPO Key terms related to intellectual property and genetic resources, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions, https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/resources/glossary.html#43

<sup>8</sup> See WIPO Compilation of Information on National and Regional Sui Generis Regimes for the Intellectual Property Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions January 18, 2022, https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/resources/pdf/compilation\_sui\_generis\_regimes.pdf

mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques, and exercises applied singularly or in combination.<sup>9</sup>

#### United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

UNDRIP is the universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world elaborating on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as these apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples (i.e., their lands, territories, resources, and self-determination).

<sup>9</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO) traditional medicine strategy 2002–2005, https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/WHO-EDM-TRM-2002.1



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Frequently Used Abbreviations	iv
Glossary	vi
Table of Contents	xi
Introduction Joji Cariño   Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK)	1
Location Map of Experience Papers	12
CHAPTER 1: Learning by Doing	15
Keeping Alive the Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples of North Siberia and the Russian Arctic through Tradition and Innovations  Polina Shulbaeva   Centre for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN)	16
Hin Lad Nai: Model Community for Good Practice in the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge through Generations in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ph.D   Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)	25
CHAPTER 2: Vibrant Musical Heritage	37
The Salidummay Experience: Indigenous Youth Creatively Interacting with Their Cultural Heritage and Music Tradition in the Cordillera, Philippines  Judy Cariño-Fangloy   Dap-ayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK) - Salidummay	38
Taki Chaninchay: A Legal and Artistic Experience of Revaluation of Yánesha Songs in Perú Álvaro Ocampo   CHIRAPAQ, Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú	47
CHAPTER 3: Education and Learning Through Indigenous Schools	57
Bi-Culture Education: The Experiences of Indigenous Alternative Schools in Northern Thailand Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ph.D.   Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)	58
Transfer of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Practices, and Spirituality in the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta, Philippines  Marvin Astoveza   Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta-Dumagat-Remontado sa Pagtatanggol at Binabaka ang Lupang Ninuno (SAGUIBIN-LN)  Florence Daguitan   Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity Program, Tebtebba Foundation	63
Boosting ILK Transmission through Indigenous-Led Education: The ILED Network Experience Caroline de Jong   Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)	69

#### INTRODUCTION

Joji Cariño Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK)

## I. Background to Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge

The Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK) came together in 2016 as a global network for the purpose of renewing and promoting traditional knowledge, wisdom, and practices as central solutions to contemporary social and ecological crises.

Composed of organizations with long histories of engagement with United Nations processes for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights, we seized the opportunity with the newly established Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to strengthen the vital place of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) in this global knowledge-policy platform.

We are diverse centers committed to nourishing traditional cultures, knowledge, and values in different regions of the world. Each center has its own distinct activities and strengths and by coming together, we could support each other towards strengthening indigenous and local knowledge holders and experts in their place-based and context-specific work.

In addition to actively contributing to knowledge-policy platforms at multiple scales, the following functions were identified as strategic and urgently needed programs within our network and communities:

- Intergenerational transmission of knowledge
- Participatory action research on priority issues identified by communities
- Cultural exchanges as deep reservoirs of mutual learning amongst ourselves
- Communication, education, and public awareness activities on Indigenous and Local Knowledge

Topping the list of activities to be carried out by the network was a cultural exchange and sharing of experiences on intergenerational transmission of knowledge amongst network members to be held in 2022.

The learning and transmission across generations of Indigenous Peoples' cultural heritage is of critical importance amidst rapid global change. How are we keeping alive our diverse philosophies, values, skills, knowledges and practices as cultural foundations for the continued resilience and adaptations amongst our people and communities? What challenges do we face? What methods do we use and what lessons have we learned? How can we further strengthen learning and education amongst Indigenous Peoples and local communities? With these questions in mind, each center agreed to write an experience paper to be presented during the workshop. Great anticipation was felt by all participants upon the realization of the global workshop which was hosted by the Mohawk at Kahnawà:ke, Quebec, Canada on November 28-30, 2022.



Members of the COD-ILK during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge on November 28-30, 2022. 

LOU DARRIET

#### II. The Opening Ceremony and the Workshop Program

Mothers and children from the Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest warmly welcomed the participants to the workshop through a short recital of the Ohénton Kariwatékwen: Words Before All Else. Derived from a traditional ceremony among the Mohawk, it is now the practice to open gatherings by giving greetings to the natural world. On this occasion, this was accompanied by showing pictures of the natural world as they were acknowledged: The People, Earth Mother, the Waters, the Fish, the Plants, the Food Plants, the Medicine Herbs, the Animals, the Trees, the Birds, the Four Winds, the Thunderers, the Sun, Grandmother Moon, the Stars, the Enlightened Teachers, and the Creator. In the address, each verse ends with "Now our minds are one." This final phrase of each section helps join people together in a common goal.

This Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address and Greetings to the Natural World also serves as the basis of the curriculum of the Language Nest in their indigenous education program. A closing prayer wished for a peaceful meeting and that everything would go well for all participants during their days in Montreal, Canada. Mohawk Elder Kenneth Deer also graced the opening ceremony by sharing a short message wishing all the best for the workshop and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 15. He was also impressed with the brief visual presentation by the Language Nest. A simple token was presented and given to Kenneth Deer for his support in facilitating the hosting of the workshop at the offices of the Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission and other services during the workshop in the community.

A rendering of Ohénton Kariwatékwen: Words Before All Else is presented as an appropriate opening to this publication, also capturing the spirit of the global workshop held in Kahnawà:ke.

#### **III. Workshop Presentations and Experience Papers**

The workshop program was carried out over three days of face-to-face discussions and online contributions, focused on panel presentations by members of the COD-ILK on their various experiences on intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Other members gave their reactions to these presentations, followed by overall reflections and general discussions on what was learned from the presentation. After the workshop, members of the network were invited to complete the writing of their experience papers for publication. Some network members who were unable to attend the workshop also submitted their experience papers for inclusion in this report. This publication brings together a collection of articles authored by knowledge bearers and experts from Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations. These articles are organized into chapters bringing together complementary themes.

#### **Chapter 1 - Learning by Doing**

Two articles from the Tomsk region in Siberia and the Russian Arctic and Hin Lad Nai village in upland Thailand highlight a fundamental indigenous pedagogical approach of learning by doing. Children and young people are given significant agency and responsibility for their own learning and personal development while navigating different dimensions of their social and ecological worlds and by actively contributing to the collective endeavors of their family and community. As they experience living in their territories by looking, observing, participating, and doing, young people grow into their relationships and roles as members of their cultural community and the natural world. This approach to learning shows a working together of the intelligence of nature and the intelligence of culture, sometimes described as the inextricable links between biological diversity and cultural diversity. In these examples, learning traditional knowledge as well as new knowledge is done as a strategy to ensure the survival of the traditional body of knowledge and the community into the future.

"Keeping Alive the Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples of North Siberia and the Russian Arctic through Tradition and Innovations" narrates how traditional knowledge among the people of North Siberia is being transferred under different yet connected transmission systems: (1) in the ancestral or home territory, through traditional ways beginning in childhood; and (2) in the urban resettlement areas where innovative ways and means are employed for and by Indigenous Young People. The children's early involvement in home and community activities grants them a head start on a lifelong learning and practice of their traditions which, in adulthood, they are expected to pass on to the next generation. This life cycle approach is what sustains traditional life and intergenerational learning among the Indigenous Peoples in Siberia and the Russian Arctic.

The paper "Hin Lad Nai: Model Community for Good Practice in the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge through Generations in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand" details the knowledge transmission processes in rotational farming. Rotational farming, developed through time by the Karen People, encompasses the community's conservation know-how integrating cultural values and practices in cosmology and spirituality. Forming the backbone of the community's natural resource management system, it has been proven in the locality as the most suitable farming practice in biocultural resource management.

By employing traditional educational methods and adapting to new ways of engaging the younger generation, the Karen People of Hin Lad Nai are securing their rotational farming knowledge and practice for the years to come. The traditional way of teaching and learning emphasizes learning by doing. It applies observation, guidance from parents as well as elders, and full participation in the day-to-day activities at home, in the farm, forest, and community life. As learning is intentional, it is integrated into the community's rituals, festivities, songs, stories, and daily interactions.

Hin Lad Nai leader Chaiprasert PhoKha has given a name to the totality of learning that's happening in the community—The University of Nature—explaining that Our University of Nature follows the stream of self-reliance in contrast to the universities of today, which, in general, follow the stream of capitalism. Indeed, we saw that graduates with Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate degrees have ended up unemployed and disappointed. In comparison, graduates of the University of Nature do not lack work and hence would never be unemployed, disappointed, or dependent on anyone. We would once again be able to take pride in ourselves.

#### **Chapter 2 - Vibrant Musical Heritage**

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 11 states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature."

Chapter 2 of this report features two narratives about the creative revival of ancestral musical traditions among the Igorot peoples of central Cordillera region of the Philippines and the Yánesha/Amuesha peoples in Perú.

"The *Salidummay* Experience: Indigenous Youth Creatively Interacting with Their Cultural Heritage and Music Tradition in the Cordillera, Philippines" recounts youthful encounters with the deep and rich living cultures of remote mountain communities fighting against the construction of four large hydroelectric dams along the Chico River. The firm self-determination of the Kalinga and Bontoc peoples expressed vibrantly in their music reverberated in a cultural resurgence among the Igorot youth in Baguio City and beyond. As recalled by the author:

This paper focuses on a 6-year period when a community of Indigenous Youth grappled with their identity as heirs of a rich but endangered cultural tradition. The years 1991 to 1997 saw the founding of the Dapayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK), an alliance of cultural groups in Baguio City. It was a time of intense effort and creativity which resulted in a body of work including five full-length musical theater productions and four music albums. Performances reached wide audiences through mobile theater, concert tours, and shows in small and big venues.

Though this experience happened decades ago, it has never been documented in writing. It has never been fully shared with the younger people who chose to carry on the work and has remained only as fond memories of those who were involved. This experience paper attempts to capture from fading memories the learnings, events, innovations made, and present reflections as these past events are revisited today. It delves deeper into the creative interaction of Indigenous Youth with their musical heritage, particularly the traditional salidummay, which resulted in the rejuvenation of the salidummay and Indigenous Cordillera music.

The second article "*Taki Chaninchay*: A Legal and Artistic Experience of Revaluation of Yánesha Songs in Perú" talks us through a venturing into the realm of intellectual property rights and the "othering" of traditional cultural forms and expressions of Indigenous Peoples. Earlier documentation and recordings of indigenous music, art and literature have made these publicly available, raising issues in relation to concepts of public domain and copyright law. Today, indigenous creativity remains undervalued with Indigenous Peoples not sharing in the benefits from mainstream music and creative industries as currently framed under intellectual property rights instruments.

The Taki Chaninchay project (translated as "revaluation of singing") consists of recording traditional songs towards their transcription into the musical score and later arrangement in an instrumentation for vocals and piano. The goal is to transcribe in written music and individualize through the arranger those

songs that currently do not have a specific author because they are associated with a collective group, the Yánesha Indigenous People. With this strategy, the arranged song can be owned by a Yánesha representative association, and they can decide how it is to be used and generate agreements with others regarding its use. At first, the transcription and musical arrangement could only be done by a musician trained in writing music as long as he or she respects the spiritual and aesthetic character of the original music. However, it would be optimal if, with subsequent projects, a traditional musician could be trained to write the transcriptions and arrangements.

#### Chapter 3 - Education and Learning through Indigenous Schools

Chapter 3 covers four experiences of establishing Indigenous schools and Community Learning Centers among the Karen in Northern Thailand, by the Agta of Catablingan in General Nakar town in Quezon Province, by the Mohawk People in Quebec, Canada as well as the experiences of various communityled education initiatives by partners of the Indigenous-Led Education (ILED) Network. It highlights the initiatives by Indigenous Peoples around the world towards creating Indigenous Schools and transforming mainstream educational systems that have systematically failed generations of Indigenous children and youth through programs of cultural assimilation.

Diverse methods are used in Karen communities to provide for culturally responsive education. These words from the Karen Elder Jorni Odochao guide the bi-cultural approach of indigenous education practiced in the Hin Lad Nai School, Maw Wa Khi School, Mae Yod School, Khun Win School, and Huay Kung School, all in Northern Thailand: "Young peoples need two wells, that is, one behind them and one in front of them, meaning they need two kinds of knowledge, traditional and new or modern knowledge."

The traditional method is based on ritual performances to mark Karen peoples' passage through the cycles of life—during birth, on a couple's wedding day, and funeral rites. Ritual knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next and continually performed by Elders and adults in the community. Similarly, knowledge transfer in rotational farming follows the seasonal cycle through which various rituals are performed with participation of family members. These include ceremonial rituals and instructional tools such as storytelling to impart beliefs, customs, as well as techniques in rotational farming. The second system of knowledge transmission utilizes innovative methods and approaches with the aim of bridging learning in the formal and non-formal education systems. The culturebased curriculum for Karen students was researched, designed, and implemented in the pilot schools supported by indigenous organizations and NGOs. The methods of knowledge transfer may be direct or indirect, technical or natural, with traditional methods particularly promoting spirituality and values, all reflecting the wisdom of the Elders.

Marvin Astoveza, one of the author's of the experience paper on the Sentrong Paaralan ng Mga Agta (SPA) in the Philippines, expounds on the philosophical approach of the SPA, stating that:

Education does not end in school nor in the number of years completing school. It continues in one's relations in the community. And so, it is important that we always remind ourselves that all matter is interrelated, all nature gives life, and all nature is alive. . . . Education is not separate from daily life, rather it is rooted in everyday life in the community. The ancestral domain is the school where relationships are lived, that is, in relations with others in the community and with human beings in general, with the spirits that are also caring for it, with the ancestors, and with the future generation . . . SPA aspires to be a place of learning wherein education molds children into having strong characters capable of carrying on their Indigenous heritage of culture and wisdom, caring for their ancestral domain, firming up the resolve to seek as well as advance knowledge, participating in community life, and holding on to their belief in the Great Creator.

The ILED Network is a growing global network of collaborating grassroots and support organizations promoting Indigenous-led education. Current members include organizations based in India, Philippines, Thailand, Panama, Peru, Costa Rica, Uganda, Kenya, and the Netherlands. The Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is among the founding members of the Network. ILED aims to address underlying problems, particularly with children and the youth, of deteriorating levels of well-being and resilience manifested in the increasing loss of Indigenous knowledge and language and the widening cultural gap among generations, attributed to the current systems of formal education which do not align with Indigenous children's cultural heritage. Another major concern relates to the chronic underfunding and invisibility of education and cultural grassroots initiatives.

The Network has identified three functional areas in promoting ILK transmission: resource mobilization, mainly through small grants supporting grassroots Indigenous-led education initiatives; organizing and supporting networking, knowledge sharing, and exchanges; and raising awareness and visibility of Indigenous-led education initiatives.

The work of the Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest and Kahnawà:ke Cultural Center in Quebec, Canada is an inspiring story of a Mohawk community initiative to teach their endangered language to their children. Starting out as an effort of a few parent volunteers, it has grown into a full-blown program using creative and child-friendly ways of teaching that makes learning effective and fun. The program also emphasizes the role of parents, especially mothers, in transmitting knowledge not only about their language but also about their heritage of living off the land and their environment.

#### Chapter 4 - Renewal of Indigenous Knowledge through Research

Chapter 4 documents the unfolding of two participatory research processes undertaken with Indigenous Peoples—one a community action research project conducted in the Philippines and another in the Arctic region. Both experience papers provide details about the different stages in the research process, highlighting principles, methods, and lessons learned along the way. Research projects that mobilize the reservoirs of IK among community members and practitioners of traditional occupations such as small-scale mining and reindeer herding, provide the critical evidence to make decisions aligned with indigenous values and long-term sustainability. Considerations about the research design and approach must be suitable to the needs and requirements of the communities concerned—providing adequate time and space for community members to decide the directions and next steps in the research process. Both articles highlight some underlying principles and methodologies leading to successful research collaboration.

The paper on "Revitalization and Transmission of Pidlisan Indigenous Values through Community Action Research on Small-Scale Mining in Mountain Province, Philippines" presents how indigenous values, cultural practices, and technologies were shared and transmitted during the research process of monitoring and reviewing the implementation of community rules and safeguards regarding small-scale mining among the Pidlisan Tribe of Sagada, Mountain Province. Prominent among the community rules that were deeply discussed were: "no use of chemicals," "no work on obaya," and "no drinking and gambling in the mining site." The use of mercury, poisoning of rivers and some rice fields of downstream villages, is considered a crime against nature and people and was banned.

Obaya is when people are prohibited to go to the forests, rivers, sacred sites, and farms not within the settlement areas. Obaya is declared during the performance of rituals to end or start a major community activity (e.g., different stages of the rice production cycle, time to celebrate weddings, for house construction and repairs, and also during rituals for the dead and disasters such as burning of a house). . . . These traditional holidays provide spaces privacy for the spirits of forests, farms, sacred sites or free them from human disturbance. . . . Gambling and drinking as anti-social vices can break family/clan relations and can cause public disturbances.

The Saami Council experience paper, "Engaging Sámi Reindeer Herders in the Co-Production of Knowledge in the Arctic," passes on guidance and lessons learned on the co-production of knowledge, where Indigenous knowledge holders engage with scientists in an equal and equitable manner to produce knowledge for best possible recommendations for decision-making. Two case studies on climate impacts and on indigenous stewardship of wetlands ecosystems illustrate the Saami Council's approach to co-production of knowledge, including testing it out in different ways. The traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples was recognized as an important component of the Arctic Council since its inauguration in 1996; and over the years various ways of engagement with Arctic Indigenous Knowledge holders have been used, ranging from own driven projects, text boxes in larger assessments, separate chapters in assessments on Indigenous Peoples, to mention some. The main intention is to be recognized in the outcome recommendations and thus influence decision-making in the Arctic states. Engaging with IK through research and co-production of knowledge is now part of the work of all four of the Saami Council's administrative units: the Arctic and Environmental Unit, European Union Unit, Human Rights Unit, and Cultural Unit.

## Chapter 5 - Empowering Methodologies for Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge

The three articles in Chapter 5 bring us back to community-based methodologies that empower intergenerational transmission of knowledge, values, and spirituality. An important aim of the global workshop was to share methodologies used by members of COD-ILK in advancing community education and learning. The experiences from the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Ngaatho Community Foundation (NCF) in partnership with the Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), and the Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation (SALT) demonstrate how fundamental issues of importance to communities such as relationships with land, territories, and natural resources; sacred natural sites; traditional governance systems and renewal of indigenous spirituality can be studied and strengthened through empowering methodologies such as community-led production of educational resources, ecocultural mapping, and holistic community visioning and planning of collective actions.

The article "Let's Go Back Home: A Collaborative Creation of a Comic Book for the Transmission of Karen Indigenous Knowledge in Northern Thailand" by AIPP describes a wide-ranging and interactive learning exchange process to produce an educational resource for young people in the form of a comic book. The process of empowering Indigenous community members to make decisions on the comic book's content was powerful. They were involved in decisions related to the story's flow, selection of comic characters, tone of the language, languages in which the community story would be written and shared, finalization of the artist and writers, and using the knowledge produced in the local curriculum to transfer knowledge to the younger generation. Close attention was given to capturing and reflecting Karen indigenous values, knowledge, and practices on rotational farming, thus evoking pride and belonging to ancestral lands and culture. In the rotational farms of Mae Yod village, more than a hundred different kinds of edible plants are found. It is mostly the Indigenous Women who are involved in most of the steps in rotational farming, such as selecting seeds, choosing the farm plot, planting, weeding, digging, monitoring the growth of the plants, and storing seeds. The everyday lives of the villagers are portrayed in the comic book in a story that is truly their own. Its publication in three languages—Karen, Thai, and English—enhanced its overall usefulness for many readers, bringing heartfelt and far-reaching positive responses from young people, community members, teachers, and traditional authorities. The organizations facilitating the production of the educational resource also felt they had gone back home as they were welcomed as members of the participating communities.

NCF in partnership with ICE started working with communities in the Masinga region of Kenya in 2013, aiming to revitalize the sacred relationships between people and nature with a focus on protecting the system of sacred sites in the area by sustaining the ritual cycle, bringing back indigenous seeds

and associated cultural practices, reviving the dried-up springs, mobilizing and educating people, and collaborating with other knowledge systems. Traditional elders guided this work with men elders leading in ritual practice and women elders leading in the revival of the traditional seed system.

The experience paper "Eco-cultural Maps and Calendars as Tools for Recuperation and Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in Masinga Region, Kenya" highlights two important tools eco-cultural maps and eco-calendars—that have aided the journey towards cultural recuperation and transmission of ILK. Eco-cultural mapping is a participatory process that aims to reveal the deep geography, the cultural vision and meaning of the territory, by visioning maps of the ancestral past, maps of the present, and maps of the future. These maps are critical in uniting the wider community to hold a collectively agreed vision of the social and ecological relationships interacting in their territory over time. Eco-cultural calendars enable a holistic understanding of life by linking the reality of time and space in a natural and cyclical way. Since ancestral times, the sky and the movement of the celestial bodies have inspired humans to understand the dynamics in nature. These aspects are brought together in the eco-cultural calendar: an outer circle shows what is happening in the cosmos with the celestial bodies (stars and the moon, etc.). The next layer is what is happening in the ecosystem, followed by the circle showing what is going on with domesticated crops and livestock in each season. The inner layer shows the human rituals and ceremonies. This calendar illustrates the relationship between the cosmos and the humans across time and space. As Gathuru Mburu shares:

The development of calendars is a continuous process which stimulates community analysis and research. In Masinga, the community has gone over the process several times with the aim of ensuring a strong and inclusive process which would lead to collectively elaborated calendars. This in turn ensured that a deep understanding of the dynamics of the territory (past and present with the vision of the future) was achieved before the calendar was done. From this calendar, the community was able to zoom in on specific aspects such as indigenous crops or the ritual cycle. This facilitated more detailed research, analysis, and planning by the community themselves.

SALT is supporting an exemplary process of present-day revival of indigenous spirituality among the Tharaka People. It has been conducting intense community dialogues towards revitalizing traditional cultural ways over the past decade. SALT is now evolving diverse strategies for the revival and revitalization of indigenous knowledge and practices for community and ecosystem resilience. Activities are conducted to bring the Tharaka community and their leaders together for dialogue with the aim of asserting their bio-cultural rights and autonomy.

The article "Asserting Bio-Cultural Rights and Autonomy through Cultural Festival & Spiritual Gathering in Tharaka, Kenya" provides an insight into African indigenous spirituality as underpinning the renewal of relationships between people and nature. In this paper, SALT shares the details, impact, and lessons from its first Tharaka Annual Spiritual Gathering, Pilgrimage and Cultural Festival held on October 12 to 15, 2023. It was a divine process initiated by the local community and led by the elders to re-connect people of Tharaka with themselves and with the wisdom and worldview of their ancestors.

#### Chapter 6 – The Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge

The members of the COD-ILK global network are each carrying their own distinct activities in different countries and regions of the world. Among the overall objectives for the establishment of the COD-ILK, one is to support each other towards strengthening Indigenous and local knowledge holders and experts in their place-based and context-specific work. Cultural exchanges amongst Indigenous and local organizations and knowledge holders are a deep reservoir of mutual learning and these need to be purposely organized and funded. This chapter focuses on the distinctive work being carried out by five network members: Indigenous Information Network in Kenya (IIN), the Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena (FPCI) in Panama, Asociación Sotz'il in Guatemala, Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP), and Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) which have been fostering intra- and inter-community exchanges as well as knowledge sharing across diverse knowledge systems.

IIN has been establishing Indigenous Knowledge Resource Centers, primarily catering to 13 place-based indigenous partner communities in Kenya. These resource centers are physical spaces where members of Indigenous Communities can come together to share their knowledge, experiences, and stories, fostering a sense of belonging, strengthening cultural identity, and promoting intergenerational dialogue.

Indigenous Women have played an active role in establishing and managing many of these centers, significantly empowering them as central actors in their communities. Multiple functions are carried out in these knowledge centers, including as Gathering Spaces for Cultural Exchange; Venues for Knowledge Sharing and Education; Community Archives; Language Preservation; Skill and Craftsmanship Development; Intergenerational Learning Platforms; Restoration of Indigenous Trees; and as host to the Viva Girls Program. The Viva Girls Program facilitates mentorship for adolescent girls and boys by young university graduates and other experts who share their experiences and advice to common challenges such as peer pressure, drugs and substance abuse, sexual and reproductive health rights, mental health, and illnesses. Indigenous Women are active in training the girls about their roles, including participation in traditional ceremonies and learning traditional practices like beadworking.

FPCI has seen significant results with respect to the recovery and strengthening of Guna knowledge, institutional strengthening and budgetary support from their traditional authorities and their engagement with local-global policy platforms on IK. Activities towards recovering and strengthening Guna knowledge have resulted in a curriculum to be implemented in the Felix Esteban Oller College in Yandub and the Cacique Olotebilinguiña Institute in Usdub, linking Elders, young people, and women in knowledge transmission. Institutional strengthening activities have resulted in the creation of the Institute Masar Ibegun Galu dedicated to the research, promotion, rescue, and education on the Guna Peoples' culture and knowledge. For the operations of this Center, Guna authorities provided the land and an allocation amounting to two percent of the community budget. Activities to share IK have resulted in partnerships formed with government institutions, indigenous organizations, and research institutions at the regional and international levels as well as the publication of educational and information resources on Guna Indigenous Knowledge.

In Guatemala, one distinctive contribution is the establishment of Observatories of Time and Space. This is an initiative being promoted by Sotz'il, through synergy between IK (Mayan Calendar, Mathematics, Astronomy, Architecture), western knowledge and modern technology (weather stations) towards affirming validity of IK as a science. This experience paper highlights how this traditional model, through a systematic work design, experimental method, socialization at the level of the Kaqchikel volcanic chain and at the national level, promotes integral development solutions for Indigenous Peoples. These include agriculture; environment; use, management, and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity systems; early warning processes to avoid, prevent, reduce risks to climate, seismic and socio-natural disasters; and improves the response capacity of communities through their own institutions in direct coordination with relevant local actors and state institutions. These same topics are covered in the many reports and publications produced by Sotz'il, which are used in their training programs and capacity strengthening activities for multiple actors. Sotz'il is an important contributor to national strategies to address climate change in the country.

Keeping alive indigenous wisdom animates the work of PIKP in Baguio City, Philippines. The *ba-eng*, Ibaloy home garden, is a central focus of its work highlighting contributions of Indigenous Peoples to sustainable cities, including sustainable food production for families. By documenting the traditional livelihoods and practices embodied in the *ba-eng*, the initiative also aims to transmit the wisdom of Indigenous elders to young people and to the general public. Since its inception in 2020, the initiative has undertaken diverse activities, achieving the following outcomes: publication of the book *Welcome to our* 

Ba-ëng\*! (\*Ibaloy home garden), partnership with the Ibaloy platform Onjon ni Ivadoy, expansion to three ba-eng learning sites, development of a trainer's training module, seed exchange among practitioners, and facilitation of an online community group, Ba-eng home gardens for food. Five episodes of youthled video productions were created conveying guidance by Elder Vicky Macay on growing essential Ibaloy food crops—coffee, taro, sweet potato, and flowering petchay.

The closing article is shared by ICE, a network member established in response to a clear need in Kenya to promote the inherent and natural role of culture in environmental and resource management. ICE works with communities to rediscover the significance of local knowledge and naturally endowed resources in improving livelihoods and conserving the environment. As a result, communities can take control of their own development and break free from the cycle of poverty. The work of ICE in Kivaa region, Kenya presents an important case for the revitalization of socio-ecological landscapes for protection of people and nature. It is also a good case for understanding the contribution of IK to ecosystems conservation today as promoted by various global environmental conservation undertakings including the CBD and IPBES.



Group photo during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge on November 28-30, 2022. 

 LOU DARRIET

#### IV. Ways Forward: What We Have Learned

The final session of the workshop asked participants to share what they learned from the exchange of experiences and their related proposals for future work. Among the talking points were the central role that members of the network have played in supporting intergenerational transmission of knowledge in each of their places of work. It was enriching to learn about significant and diverse success stories around revival of indigenous languages, cultural reaffirmations, community dialogues and mobilization, collaborative research, and establishment of numerous community learning centers. There has been a surge in the production of multi-media educational resources, curricula, field guides, and training courses. Traditional learning approaches, new education tools and methods, as well as modern technologies are being used with good outcomes from the work. Further successes in the future will require focused efforts towards institutional strengthening, fundraising, and expansion of the network. Strengthened collaboration with other networks and initiatives of Indigenous Peoples would also greatly advance this work.

Creative approaches that are appealing to children and youth and which empower them as integral members of the community were considered as very important. The creation of comic books was considered quite interesting. Culture, knowledge, and livelihoods are closely interlinked in thinking about the futures of Indigenous Peoples. The vital role of Indigenous Women was underlined; and their contributions need to be highlighted and supported. In this regard, activities and programs around strategic communication, education, and public awareness are also important functions to be addressed.

Discussions on ways forward for the future were linked to the agreed strategic functions and areas of collaboration agreed by members of the global network of the COD-ILK. These are:



All participants expressed great happiness and deep appreciation for the holding of the workshop, which strengthened the bonds of friendship and solidarity among the members of the COD-ILK.

## **LOCATION MAP OF**



	COUNTRY	LOCATION
1	Canada	<ul> <li>Kahnawà:ke, Mohawk Territory, Quebec</li> <li>Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission (KEDC), Quebec</li> </ul>
2	Guatemala	Maya people of Guatemala (specifically, Kaqchikel and K'iche', Q'eqchi' and Mam regions)
3	Kenya	<ul> <li>Kamba community, Machakos County,         Masinga region, Eastern Kenya</li> <li>Machakos County</li> <li>Maasai communities, northern, central and southern Kenya</li> <li>Pokot County</li> <li>Rendille community, Cushitic sub-ethnic community of Marsabit County in Kargi,         Korr and Laisamis, Northern Kenya</li> <li>Samburu County</li> <li>Tharaka Nithi County, Eastern Meru Region</li> <li>Waata community, Marsabit, Isiolo and         Tana River Counties</li> </ul>

4	Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russian Federation	Sápmi: Territories of the Sámi
5	Panama	Guna Yala
6	Perú	Yánesha / Amuesha territory, Pasco, Huanuco, Junin, Peruvian Amazon
7	Philippines	<ul> <li>Baguio City, Benguet Province</li> <li>Catablingan, General Nakar, Quezon Province</li> <li>Pidlisan, Sagada, Mountain Province</li> </ul>
8	Russian Federation	Indigenous Peoples' territories of Siberia and Russian Arctic (specifically Vasjugan Wetlands; and Tomsk Region)
9	Tanzania	Maasai territory, Northern Tanzania

## **EXPERIENCE PAPERS**



10 Thailand	<ul> <li>Hin Lad Nai Public School in Chiang Rai; Khum Mae Yod Public School in Chiang Mai; Bann Huay Kung Public School in Maehongson Province, Northern Thailand; and Maw Wa Khi Community School and Khun Win Community School in Chiang Mai, Thailand</li> <li>Hin Lad Nai, Ban Pong Sub-district of Wiang Pa Pao District, Chiang Rai Province, Northern Thailand</li> </ul>
	Northern Thailand
	<ul> <li>Mae Yod, Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai</li> </ul>
	Province, Northern Thailand

ILED Networ	k
Costa Rica	Bribri communities near border with Panama
India	Kattunaickan, Cholanaickan and Paniya
	communities in Nilambur region
Kenya	Sengwer Berur in Kabolet
Netherlands	Amsterdam
Panama	Felix Esteban Oller and Olotebilinguinya School
	in Narguna and Ustupu communities, Guna Yala
Philippines	Negros Occidental Province, Western Visayas region
Thailand	Morwakhi Learning Centre, Nong Mon Tha
	County, Northern Thailand
Uganda	Kigaando, Bulera, Rukiinga, Kibasi, and
	Bunnyonyi villages in Kibasi Parish, Kabarole
	District, Western Uganda





## **LEARNING BY DOING**

Universities are commonly understood as places of knowledge. They say that people who enter the university will gain knowledge while people who are not able to enter the university do not have knowledge and thus do not have any education. In the real world, however, knowledge is everywhere. People from all races of humanity are equipped with the ability to live their lives, a natural indicator that people come with a body of knowledge that enables them to survive, and that each human race has a body of knowledge of its own.

#### **Keeping Alive the Traditional Knowledge of** Indigenous Peoples of North Siberia and the **Russian Arctic through Tradition and Innovations**

Polina Shulbaeva | Centre for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN)

#### MAP OF SETTLEMENTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF NORTH SIBERIA AND THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC





CSIPN is a non-governmental organization working to protect the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Siberia and the Russian North and Far East. It is the leading organization working on Indigenous rights in Russia, which provides informational, educational, expert and legal support to a range of representatives of Indigenous Peoples. CSIPN is also the only organization of Indigenous Peoples of Russia that has special status and gained accreditation from UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNEA, FAO, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), among others.

Website: http://www.csipn.ru/

#### Introduction

Living in the 21st century can be overwhelming with the information, knowledge, and new technologies that modern society offers. Western science and educational systems promote an approach to development that relies on rapidly changing innovations, resulting in the disregard of traditional knowledge. Often, traditional knowledge is branded as unscientific, backward, or obsolete. This is despite the fact that the knowledge systems of the world's Indigenous Peoples have been proven to be effective in the conservation and sustainable development of nature and resources in general. This fact has been proven by thousands of years of practice. These knowledge systems have only been recognized by the international community after decades of lobbying by Indigenous Peoples. Traditional knowledge systems can become the basis for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other international goals such as "life in harmony with nature."

Amid globalization and urbanization, Indigenous Peoples have their own methods and techniques for keeping their traditional knowledge systems alive and transmitting these through generations. These methods are best suited to the conditions and territories where they live. However, the transfer of traditional knowledge within indigenous communities can be challenging and is hampered by new regulations or "optimization" of territories. Many Indigenous Peoples have left their territories, moved to cities, and lost touch with the land. Those who remain are completely dependent on their knowledge and its transmission to future generations.

This paper narrates the traditional knowledge transmission in two different systems, namely (1) the transmission done from birth in the land of the ancestors, and (2) the use of new technologies for Indigenous Youth in urban centers.

#### Transmitting Traditional Knowledge through the Cycle of Life in the **Land of the Ancestors**

For the peoples of Siberia and the Russian Arctic, the biggest layer of traditional knowledge is transmitted through the practice of traditional activities and traditional use of natural resources.

The traditional uses of nature such as indigenous crafts and trades are closely linked with the history of peoples and their spiritual world. The history and places of habitation of each people and their local groups are diverse. As such, the traditional knowledge of each separate group is unique, and connected with the peculiarities of a particular historical and geographical landscape.

A certain set of traditional knowledge associated with the use of natural resources and culture, spiritual practices, and landscapes of each Indigenous People or inhabitants of certain isolated settlements is formed since childhood, from the earliest days of life.1

For example, the Indigenous Peoples of Siberia and the Russian Arctic consider it very important to start transmitting traditional knowledge and practices literally from the birth of a child. Immersion of a child in the environment of traditional knowledge starts from birth; otherwise, it is impossible to survive in remote and sparsely populated areas or nomadic settlements under extreme weather conditions.

Therefore, a small child constantly observes and fully participates in the daily activities of adults and learns various practical skills. For example, children of the reindeer herders of the Russian Arctic learn

Значение традиционных знаний для устойчивого развития коренных народов: пособие по сбору, документированию и применению традиционных знаний для организаций коренных народов. Ольга Мурашко, 2007



A child needs to immerse in the landscape of traditional knowledge from birth to be able to survive the nomadic settlements under extreme weather conditions. 

VIACHESLAV SHADRIN

to cook food, make household utensils, process skins, sew clothes and shoes, make narts<sup>2</sup>, harness reindeer and dogs into narts, and make traps and fishing tackles from their very childhood because the child is considered a full member of society regardless of age. Children are talked to seriously and are involved in both the activities and decision-making processes. For the most part, the children decide for themselves with the guidance of family, relatives, and elders. From childhood, a sense of responsibility for one's actions and decisions is developed. This is nurtured to prepare and direct the children to future development in accordance with the changing conditions of life.<sup>3</sup>

Older relatives and neighbors tell the children about the habits of animals and birds and the properties of medicinal and edible plants. They take them into the woods to pick mushrooms and berries and take them to go hunting or fishing. Through these activities, children learn to distinguish edible from poisonous mushrooms, learn how mushrooms can be processed, and receive instructions and tips for their use as medicine and for the feeding of wild animals, among others.

For example, Selkup children from settlements in the Vasjugan wetland have been learning the types of mushrooms, their properties, and their collection period since their childhood. As early as 2 to 3 years old, Indigenous children are regularly involved in picking wild mushrooms and berries. Children learn to walk through the swampy bogs and remember the peculiarities of walking on the peat bog territories. In practice, children are trained to navigate swampy landscapes, learn to walk in safe areas, and avoid dangerous paths just by noting the difference in the color of the trees, grass, and the smell of water.

Narts are sledges attached to reindeers and dogs and used for transportation in snowy landscapes.

Как воспитывают детей ненцы и ханты. Жизнь маленьких оленеводов | Факты. Youtube video







The photos show different activities where children can participate.

ARCHIVE OF CSIPN

Aside from teaching children how to distinguish edible from poisonous mushrooms, adults tell and show them which season a poisonous mushroom can be used for food and what actions must be taken to remove the poison from the mushrooms, such as soaking them with salt water and changing the water for three to five days. While hiking in the swamp, the indigenous adults tell and show children the types of mushrooms and how they can be used for medicine such as for maintaining and boosting immunity and for emergencies such as treatment of tuberculosis and festering wounds.

Through dialogues and leading questions, the children learn a huge chunk of knowledge, not only about the nature that surrounds them and the traditional knowledge that goes with it, but also about ceremonies, rules, and rituals associated with specific wild species growing or living in their territory.

Adults always convey the main rules of life like the following:

- Do not take more than necessary.
- Do not destroy poisonous mushrooms, plants, and reptiles as they are medicines for animals.
- Protect and preserve your territory.

While studying the seasonality and variety of mushrooms and berries, an indigenous family smoothly leads the children to the study of the traditional calendar and features of each natural period, and features of certain areas. The children are immersed in certain phenomena such as the arrival of birds, the migration of wild moose, moose calving places, wolf migration routes, etc. In winter, children study footprints in the snow to understand which animals came to their territory.

The study of traditional food systems through the commune with nature and practical exercises is very important as it helps in the holistic understanding of biodiversity, spirituality, the traditional calendar, and the rules of conduct in the forest, on the water, in the swamp and nature in general.

By roaming with parents and with a reindeer herder, children learn the roaming route and see the traditional sites and sacred places of their kin. By participating in a ritual or celebration, children learn the customs of their people. Usually, all of the festivals and ceremonies are connected with traditional economic activities and the change of seasons—seasonality of reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing. By participating in the festivals, children bond with other people close to them; they see, hear, and remember the songs, dances, stories, and rules of ceremonies of their people.

All these experiences make up the children's building blocks of traditional knowledge. When the children enter adulthood, their own impressions and discoveries will add up to those they learned from childhood, which they will then pass on to their own children.

Traditional knowledge in everyday life is transmitted by the method of showing and storytelling. There are no written rules, but transmission is consciously and constantly done orally. Therefore, the knowledge changes and is enriched throughout generations.

In accordance with the changing conditions of life and displacements (relocations due to the closure of villages), some things are gradually forgotten and something new appears. Many tales for children have an educational character that is guided by the principles of mutual respect, helping each other, respect for elders, etc. The common theme appearing in the stories is that:

You cannot survive in the North by yourself. Live together and help those who are in need before they reach out to ask for help.

The Selkup Indigenous People have a rule which is one elk for five (5) families.

One elk can be caught no more than once a year, and the meat is divided evenly into five families. If the family has elderly members who can no longer lead a traditional lifestyle or people with disabilities, the family is allocated more meat, as well as useful internal organs that increase immunity such as raw liver, bile, etc.

Also, after the appearance of the first ice on the lakes, male family members including children and the elderly gather to fish. At this time, children learn traditional anti-parasitic medicine. Raw bile is carefully removed from the fish and swallowed whole in the form of a small capsule pouch. After the first ice, the bile of lake fish secretes a special enzyme that does not cause discomfort to the human stomach but kills all possible parasites and prevents their appearance for the year ahead.

In the publication entitled The Importance of Traditional Knowledge for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples, author Olga Murashko recounted the different ways of transferring traditional knowledge and, as a rule, this depends on the economic activity of a particular people:

- Knowledge of ways of using natural resources and forms of economic activities of Indigenous Peoples and ethnic communities related to reindeer breeding and other northern forms of breeding of local and aboriginal breeds of domestic animals; fishing; river, lake, and sea trapping; meat and fur hunting; vegetable gardening; and gathering knowledge of wild plants;
- Knowledge of the territory with biological resources, the composition of populations of domesticated and wild animal species and properties of cultivated and wild edible and medicinal

plants, system of seasonal and spatial location of stationery and fishing settlements, camps, nomadic routes;

- Knowledge of features of economic development of different parts of the territory and naturalclimatic zones:
- Knowledge of the traditional system of self-management and economic organization that provides long-term use of renewable natural resources and transfer of ecologically and ethnically significant information: traditional economic calendar; methods of catching, collecting, and processing products; skills in making tools and household items; trade bans, the system of exceptions from the economic turnover of the territory as sacred; prohibited zones; forms of distribution of land and products; home crafts.

Herders and reindeer breeders also have invaluable knowledge. They know the traditional methods of animal breeding, migration routes, the dangers that await the herd during migration, and how to avoid them. They know when and where to move the herd across the river; how to avoid avalanche hazards in the mountains; how to behave during blizzards; and much more.

Residents of each settlement know the peculiarities of flora and fauna of their area. The species of plants and animals are often preserved endemic, rare and characteristic only of the area. They know the secrets of how to prepare and preserve the products for long-term storage.

They mastered the traditional technologies of processing hides, stone, wood, and birch bark, making various household utensils and artistic products. Moreover, residents know sacred places around their settlement area.

In summary, the traditional calendar; methods of catching, collecting, and processing products; skills in making tools and household items; trade bans; respect for sacred sites, prohibited zones, forms of distribution of land and products, and others comprise the traditional culture of peoples of the North still being practiced today as proven by knowledge transmission from generation to generation.

Through constant participation in daily activities, Indigenous children learn songs, stories, and ceremonies and facilitate learning from birth to adulthood. All knowledge is collected and passed to the next generation: A life cycle that sustains learning and life in the community.

#### Transmitting Traditional Knowledge through the Use of Modern Technologies among Urban Indigenous Youth

For several reasons, Indigenous children and youth relocate and live in large urban settlements or district centers, large cities, and are cut off from their historical territory of residence. As such, a special and challenging work is to link these young people to their roots.

It is easier and simpler to work with a small child compared with young people who have already formed their opinions about the world and have formed their life priorities and vision for the future. It may be a daunting task but transmitting traditional knowledge among this group cannot be disregarded because it is as important as the work being done in ancestral territories. New methods and modern technologies can facilitate the transmission work.

It is important to keep in mind that any amount of knowledge gained enriches the consciousness of a person and helps form awareness and depth of attitude towards the world as a whole. The "basket of knowledge" taught to children from birth in their ancestral territory may not all be transmitted among the urban Indigenous Youth, but it is necessary to help them gain the amount they can take.

The organization called the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Tomsk Region, which is part of the Russian COD-ILK, is doing a good job in navigating the challenge in traditional knowledge transmission among the urban Indigenous children and youth in the city of Tomsk and its surrounding areas. Through their work with the Department of Languages of the Peoples of Siberia (DLPS) Tomsk State Pedagogical University, they began to attract indigenous students from universities and other educational institutions of Tomsk city. They organized city festivals and weekly meetings to learn the native language and culture through the platforms of the DLPS, and eventually organized their own.

Gradually, the organization began to involve young people in creating a website; holding lessons and workshops for children from city schools and kindergartens; organizing and holding exhibitions and festivals; participating in scientific and practical conferences; creating video tutorials, etc. In these activities, the organization provided all the necessary equipment and organized skills training. Through their involvement in the above-mentioned activities, the children and youth gradually learn their culture, rituals, and rules of conduct, including their native language. The youth worked with the archives of the 19th and 20th centuries and the archaeological repositories of local history museums to speak at scientific conferences. Today, the youth have formed the City Indigenous Youth Organization, which is headed by those who started this movement almost 10 years ago.

Most of the city's Indigenous Youth are subconsciously drawn to topics and issues about the forest and nature in general. They are happy to join in meetings, including informal ones where youth can drink tea, discuss, speak about the events, and participate in planning future master classes, ceremonies, and conferences. Little by little, they immerse themselves and get interested in learning more about their traditional knowledge.

The said organization conducts meetings with elders where they learn through memories and interesting stories. They also conduct learning sessions on how Indigenous Peoples can contribute to solving modern environmental problems, not only through sustainable interaction and maintaining ecological balance, but also through maintaining and developing a system of environmental monitoring and communitybased monitoring.

For example, Selkup youth from the cities of Tomsk and Moscow united and created a series of films about climate change, and subsequently opened a YouTube channel where you can now watch how indigenous school children from different cities discuss this topic with classmates, passers-by, elders, etc.



(Left) A Tomsk Selkup Indigenous youth speaking about climate change in a YouTube video.4 (Right) A youth from Moscow Selkup school discussing climate change in another YouTube video.5

PHOTOS CAPTURED FROM YOUTUBE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqDvSkK3G\_I

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dboi06fOyUo

Now, with two organizations working together, namely the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Tomsk Region and the City Indigenous Youth Organization, they disseminate among other urban Indigenous Youth what they have learned about their indigenous heritage through various activities. They show films, give presentations, and sit and discuss various topics on environments and traditional knowledge over tea. For example, they talk about the use of traditional knowledge in monitoring populations and migration routes of wildlife, for the conservation of species diversity, including wetland plants, mushrooms, and berries. Through these, they encourage other urban Indigenous Youth to join them.<sup>6</sup>

Today, the urban Indigenous Youth can speak with confidence with the elders and organize lessons in their native language. These children have never heard of their native language before, but having been actively involved with the city organization, they not only learned their native language but also discovered the culture and traditions of their people.

Indigenous Youth made a series of YouTube lessons on learning the Selkup language. The series is led by two representatives from the City Indigenous Youth Organization and the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Tomsk Region: an Indigenous Youth and an elder respectively. The young man leading these lessons did not speak the Selkup language until he became actively involved in the work of both organizations.



The photo on the right shows a YouTube video<sup>7</sup> made by the youth. It is a lesson on "Native word learning the Selkup language: 

At first, the youth may be shy, but gradually they take pride in their people and their knowledge. Then they begin to participate and take a very active part in every activity through which the traditional knowledge, ceremonies, and rules of their people are transmitted.

Challenges of knowledge transmission among urban Indigenous Youth remain, but there are good examples of young people returning to their villages after receiving traditional knowledge education in the city. They returned because they did not lose connection with the land of their people. In fact, the connection was strengthened in the city.

For example, when they learn about their traditional attire, they learn the meanings of the colors, elements, patterns, and combinations. In studying the traditional attire, the youth can also explore nature, animals and their sacred meaning, the traditional calendar, traditional economic activities, and even the territories of specific families through ornaments.

It is noteworthy that it is the urban Indigenous Youth who think more about the issue of intellectual property and the protection of culture and traditional knowledge. This is facilitated by education, information, and a different rhythm of life.

Here is a website link where everyone can see various informal activities being done for and with the city's Indigenous youth: https://tomsk-indigenous.com/?p=

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHuEMXdqs4Q



An Indigenous Woman teaching the urban Indigenous Youth about their traditional knowledge. • PICTURES OF ACTIVITIES OF THE UNION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE NORTH, TOMSK REGION | ARCHIVE OF CSIPN

Armed with traditional knowledge, the city youth can identify which stores sell the so-called "fake" culture—things with elements of ornaments, indigenous patterns, traditional teas, or medicinal compounds, which are sold under the name of "indigenous prescriptions" without Free, Prior and Informed Consent and equitable benefit sharing with the bearers of knowledge. National legislation does not allow for the protection of such knowledge and cultural elements including spiritual or secret knowledge for Indigenous Peoples.

There are also Indigenous Youth activists who are interested in this issue and are collecting information and maintaining a list of "fake" products and companies manufacturing said products. The city youth and the Indigenous Youth activists can help each other to confront the issue and help their people.

There are also downsides to traditional knowledge transmission among urban Indigenous Youth. Sometimes young people come and leave, losing interest or not finding the importance of studying their native culture and their people. Some participants rarely appear in activities because life in the city is moving at a fast pace. Young people need to study and work. Oftentimes, travel takes a long time.

The practice has shown that young people in the city strive to communicate in their own ways regardless of their lack of skills in simple face-to-face communication outside the internet. Young people are often surprised to discover a completely different world outside their own. Through participation in events and the use of modern technology, young people develop an interest and reach out to absorb all the knowledge they can access.



Indigenous children posing for a photo during a learning session with Indigenous elders. 🗖 POLINA SHULBAEVA/CSIPN

# Hin Lad Nai: Model Community for Good Practice in the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge through Generations in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand8

Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ph.D | Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)





PASD aims to create networks among Indigenous Peoples on the issues of rotational farming and natural resource management and to establish education systems and an official curriculum for the Indigenous Peoples, which integrates local knowledge. Another aim is to promote the Karen traditional agroforestry methods—both the technical and cultural dimensions—in a mutually beneficial relationship with forest biodiversity and food security.

Website: https://pasdthai.org/

IKAP-MMSEA (Indigenous Knowledge and People in Mainland Southeast Asia) has worked with the author in preparing this document.

#### Introduction

This paper presents the good practice in Hin Lad Nai which ensures that the knowledge and wisdom are effectively passed on to the young generation in the community. It includes traditional ways of teaching and learning that have been used for generations, as well as new ways of teaching and learning that are appropriate to modern times, including the use of the formal education system.

The community of Hin Lad Nai is found in the Ban Pong Sub District of Wiang Pa Pao District in Chiang Rai Province. Located around 130 kilometers from Chiang Rai City, it straddles the national forest reservation area and the Khun Jae National Park. It is on a hilly forest through which flows more than fourteen streams. Of the community's total land area, 3,110 hectares is forest cover and approximately 570 hectares is agricultural land.

Rotational farming forms the backbone of the Hin Lad Nai community's natural resource management system. Developed by Karen people through the centuries, the technique embodies the wealth of Karen knowledge and wisdom in farming. It encompasses technical know-how in conservation, cosmology, spirituality, values, and culture. It has been proven to be the most suitable mechanism for sustainable biocultural diversity management in the area (SwedBio and Pgaz K' Nyau Association for Sustainable Development, 2016).



Indigenous Youth learning rotational farming. 

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#### Traditional Ways of Learning and Teaching Indigenous Knowledge

The traditional way of teaching and learning indigenous knowledge emphasizes learning by doing. The method uses observation, guidance from parents and elders, and active participation in the full range of day-to-day activities in the home, community, farm, and forest. Learning is intentional and integrated into the conduct of rituals, festivities, traditional songs, storytelling, and daily interactions among members of the community. A village elder, Htane Cau Tei, recounts his childhood experience,

"When I was a child, we went with the adults to clear a field. We saw them clear the field starting from the bottom to the top so that the tree trunks would easily fall flat on the ground one on top of the other. So when we burned the field, the fire burned strong which is a better way of sending flames into the heart of the field. Letting the fire burn well produced much charcoal and ash fertilizer and rice and vegetables grew well. This knowledge has come down to us over many generations from our ancestors. We concluded that everyone clears a field using this method. Nobody clears a field from the top."

The knowledge of rotational farming is not only passed on through word of mouth but also by doing. Preecha Siri, Hin Lad Nai's elder (69 years), said,

"Do not ask questions. If you do, you will not learn properly. But when you observe the work for yourself, you are more likely to pay attention. When you ask too many questions, you won't be able to acquire as much of the know-how as desired or required."



Elders showing the students the stages and rituals involved in rotational farming is done. 

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#### **Learning the Rituals**

In rotational farming each stage and each season is accompanied by ritual. Learning through rituals catches the interest and attention of the children and youth who like to participate in rituals. There is a lot of celebration and festive food, especially meat, which they do not get to eat very often. While participating in festivals they practice the prayers and actions and little by little become more proficient, eventually resulting in a deep transfer of knowledge contained in the various rituals.

In the ritual of clearing the swidden, the performance starts at the stage of "striking" the swidden and sowing the rice. The leaders of the ritual are a young man and woman whose parents must still be living, and who have been chosen beforehand by the owner of the rice field. They are the new generation who shall soon receive the knowledge. This learning method is intended for young people joining work groups for the first time. The chosen young man and woman must undergo practical learning and training including drills. Adults are not part of the selection as they have already acquired knowledge of the ritual. Nor are children, because it is not yet their time nor is it urgent for them to learn the rituals. Htane Cau Tei says of the ritual,

"When everyone is gathered in the swidden, the 'striking' of the field commences. The owner of the field then asks the young man and woman to begin the ritual of 'striking' the field and sowing rice. The ritual leaders must be young people because we believe they are the best to do so in making the field very fertile and productive."

#### **Learning Rotational Farming**

Young men and women are considered a very important part of the labor force in rotational farming. They come into working age cheerful, in high spirits, full of stamina, and with great vitality and reserves of energy for the various work activities ahead and struggles involved in each stage of swidden work. The efficiency and efficacy of rotational farming work would deteriorate without their participation. As such, the youth play a very important role in the transfer of knowledge. As the generation that will inherit the traditional way of life, they must learn primarily from their mothers and fathers. One 16-year-old says of the experience,

"In the season when swiddens need to be cleared, about 30 of us would form ourselves into (Maz dauv Maz kax) a labor exchange group. We would burn the swiddens, put up fences, clean and strike the swiddens, sow rice, weed, and harvest. We learned how to accomplish the tasks in rotational farming from our mothers, fathers, and the other adults we worked with. We would ask for their help in the things we had difficulty doing or did not understand. They tell us, 'Help us in the farm work, and at the same time we will show you how it's done.' We learned by working alongside them. In time, we were able to complete the tasks by ourselves."

For young people, hands-on participation in rotational farm work enables an atmosphere conducive to learning. It presents an opportunity that they must take advantage of while they are at that age when there is eagerness for learning. Indeed, the young men and women are doing just that. They also want to work the swiddens every day because they can be with their friends. Gatherings such as these provide the young people with much-needed fun time and they learn to sing the *hta*<sup>9</sup> together.

#### Learning the Wisdom of the Ancestors through Literature

The following proverb is an example of the Pgaz K'Nyau<sup>10</sup> people's traditional literature which also includes poems and folktales.

> If you drink the water, you must take care of the water, If you eat from the land, you must take care of the territory, If you eat the frog, you must take care of the cliff, If you eat the fish, you must take care of the swamp.

The proverbs convey general instructions concerning the value of producing food for subsistence, which is consistent with what rotational farming promotes. Apart from the production of what is just enough, they also encourage non-extravagance, self-reliance, mutually beneficial relationship between humans and nature, cooperation, compassion, and aid to disadvantaged persons such as widows and orphans. They also promote respect, obedience, reverence, and humility about the supernatural.

Hta, on the other hand, are short poems utilized in rotational farming as a tool of instruction. Mr. Preecha Siri shares how hta has become a way of life,

"My parents and community elders composed *hta* from inspiration, that is while contemplating and interacting with their environment. They would recite a hta when they heard the call of a wood pigeon or a sauf gauz. 11 They would say a hta in response to whatever they encountered. They chant and sing the hta. We learned the hta while trailing them. Today, we can still recall most of them."

Hta is a Karen traditional song that can be sung and chanted as a poem. Hta is a body of knowledge on various aspects.

<sup>10</sup> Pgaz K'Nyau (Sgaw Karen) is a term for themselves which means human being.

<sup>11</sup> Sauf gauz is the Barbet dog breed that is bred as a marsh or swamp game retriever.

#### **Example 1**

Whenever you miss me, go to the swidden and you will see the wood pigeon who is my spirit. Whenever you miss me, look at the *hauf wau*, 12 look at the yellow hauf wau leaves (I once picked). Mother goes to the fallow but does not take wrapped rice with her, guess when mother will be back. Going to the fallow I see the hauf wau flowers, not meeting you I cry bitterly.

The poem communicates the love and attachment that Karen people have for one another and for nature. It engenders love for the swiddens and resting fallows, the various food growing in the swiddens, and the forest, and care for their natural environment in a sustainable manner.

#### **Example 2**

If you go to the fallow, do not cry, the tree stumps will put out new shoots and sprigs. The light shining from a star illuminates the seif kwaiv coj<sup>13</sup> tree and the coxcomb in the fallow too.

As with the first example, this hta hints at the different states of nature in the swiddens, as when in a reviving state to prepare for the time when seeds will be planted again. As such, clearing a swidden must not be understood as destroying it. In rotational farming this is a necessary step in sustaining swiddens toward continually producing new life. Clearing preserves the natural process of change and flow that ensures new life will grow from the burnt stumps of trees, and soon after, new shoots and sprigs will be seen throughout the swidden. In the sky, the stars are witness.

Folktales, as with proverbs and hta, are part of the Karen people's literature. These are usually recounted in the evenings before bedtime. Elders would entertain children with their stories which are filled with lessons passed on from ancestors. The following tale has been told by Mr. Preecha Siri to his children:

<sup>12</sup> Hauf wau is a well-known spice/herb from rotational farming and used as a symbol of Rotational Farming and its products.

<sup>13</sup> Seif kwaiv coj a well-known local tree with red, soft leaves that people can use to see and know that the fallow land is fast generating.

"Once upon a time, there was an orphan who was not permitted by the king to clear a field that he was farming. He then sought a new place, clearing a piece of land on a rock. He cultivated it into a field, caring for it well.

One night, an elephant ventured into the field and ate all the rice plants. The infuriated orphan ran after the elephant into the forest. He was not able to catch up with it, but he saw that one of the elephant's tusks had fallen out on the ground. The orphan took the tusk with him and started on his long way back to his home. When night came, he decided to sleep on the roadside using the elephant's tusk as his pillow. When he woke up, he was surprised to see food around him. He did not know that Nauj k'hsau mai,14 the woman of the tusk, had let herself out from the tusk to prepare the food for him.

Puzzled at the occurrence, the orphan went to see the village shaman. The shaman instructed him to go about his day's work as usual and the mystery behind the gift of food would be revealed when he returns home. He did as the shaman told him. Returning home after working in the field he found a woman inside his house. She told him that she was Nauj k'hsau mai who had prepared the food for him.

The orphan married the woman and they became very wealthy. His wealth paved the way for him to become a king. He became one of the well-loved local kings, having ruled justly and cared for his people, especially the poor, widows, and orphans."

# New Ways of Teaching and Learning Indigenous Knowledge

To make learning and the transfer of knowledge effective and relevant to modern contexts the Hin Lad Nai community explored alternative methods and avenues that complement its traditional ways of teaching and learning. The community discovered that while traditional methods of transfer emphasize learning by doing, such as through observation and practice, new methods emphasize classroom and text-based teaching. In the school system, lectures are now the standard method of teaching. As a result, students have become too comfortable with the method such that they have difficulty learning unless knowledge is presented to them this way. Nonetheless, parents, community elders, and leaders of Hin Lad Nai have started to use this method as well.

Notetaking is found to be another effective learning method drawn from modern education. Miss Naw To, a young woman from the community, says taking notes helps her in recalling details. She adds that if she relied solely on memory and mental recall as her parents and grandparents did, she would not be able to remember all that was taught her:

<sup>14</sup> Nauj k'hsau mai is the name of the woman in the legend, meaning "Miss elephant's ivory."

"Learning how to read and write in *Pgaz K'Nyau* as well as Thai helps us put in writing the things we want to memorize and remember, such as our hta, folktales, and proverbs, names of herbs and the variety of plants in the swiddens, the rules, and so forth. A friend who is interested in hta and folktales came to visit my grandfather and asked him for some folktales and hta. As soon as he reached his home, my friend recorded them in an exercise book throughout the evening, filling up five or six pages, and drawing illustrations for the folktales as well. He has been doing this for several years now and has a lot of recorded materials in store."

#### Learning Indigenous Knowledge in School

Hin Lad Nai is host to one public primary school. Following the Ministry of Education's Order that schools introduce a local curriculum incorporating the community's body of knowledge, the Hin Lad Nai community took the opportunity to push for the integration of rotational farming and traditional natural resource management lessons. In support of this and to raise awareness about their community and its indigenous culture, the school initially assigned Fridays for wearing *Pgaz K'Nyau* clothing. Also, on Friday afternoons, community elders, mothers, fathers, and other adults come to school to educate students about their culture and knowledge in natural resource management and rotational farming. Mr. Chaiprasert PhoKha, a leader, says of the experience,

"We go to the school on Friday afternoons to teach. Today, there are more than ten of us who are handling these classes. We teach the students how to read *Pgaz* K'Nyau and write using lix wa. 15 Besides this, those who have some special skill or knowledge would go to the school to teach that, such as sword dance, hta, herbs, folktales, forest trees, the good vegetables, rotational farming, and the rituals."

#### **Learning in Youth Camps**

At the beginning of the hot season in March, when the formal schools are closed, the youth who have left to study or work return to the village. This is the best time to gather all the youth of the village in the annual youth camps. The contents of the learning at the youth camp emphasize natural resource management, soil, water, the forest, and the rotational farming of the community. There is also content on related culture and customs: hta, musical instruments, sword dance, Pgaz K'Nyau language, proverbs, and so on.

Sometimes, outside speakers are invited to come and speak on various topics of relevance to the community, such as the Constitution, the Forest Law, the draft Community Forest Bill, the Education

<sup>15</sup> Widely used Karen script adapted from the Burmese alphabet.

Law, policy of the government towards highland communities, and so on. Thus, local knowledge and new knowledge are learned as a strategy to ensure the survival of the traditional body of knowledge and the community in the future.



A Karen elder teaches the students about the plants in the rotational farm.

**♠** PASD

Mr. Chaiprasert PhoKha shares, "Whatever they want to know, we share our knowledge with them or arrange for them to learn it. For example, they asked about the advantages and disadvantages of rotational farming, so I shared our actual experience in our struggle to assert our right to practice rotational farming, and how we answered the questions of the RFD<sup>16</sup> District Office Officials, viz.

Official: You say that rotational farming is good. Just how exactly is it good? You clear the

forest and burn it, don't you?

Chaiprasert: I would like to ask you in the same way, you say it is not good, just exactly in what

way and how is it not good?

Official: You cut down trees that are about this big, don't you? You burn them, don't you?

Then all the trees die, don't they? Isn't this called destroying the forest?

Even if the old trunk does not actually grow again, they put out many new shoots, Chaiprasert:

and the trees and various kinds of vegetables need the charcoal and ashes to grow. The charcoal and ashes are good because we do not have to put chemical fertilizers. The trees have better immunity. If I cut down small trees about this size, do they send out new shoots or not? If you plant a tree, in a year it will grow about this much, and will it put out new shoots? But if I cut down a tree it will send out many new shoots, won't it? What you say about me destroying the forest is incorrect. If you look at the reality of it over seven years of regenerating the forest, the number of tree varieties increased greatly, the number of varieties of wild animals increases greatly, and the old swiddens became places for nurturing

different kinds of wild animals.

He listened and then sighed.

Official: Oh, I really thought you were destroying the forest, but it isn't so.

Chaiprasert: It's the same with the water. You say rotational farming destroys the water or

causes the water flow to be reduced or polluted, but in reality, we have no problem in taking the water from the bottom of the swidden to drink and use. However, can you take the water coming out of your house and garden to drink and use?

Official: Oh, I see then what I said before wasn't true!

<sup>16</sup> Royal Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

When the young people heard about my experience, it helped them to understand better what the merits of rotational farming are. When they had understood that, then I took them to see a real rotational farming swidden, and they were able to see in person what we had told them."



Karen youth listening to their elders as they explain the details of rotational farming. 

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#### "University of Nature": The Institute of Learning Knowledge for **Self-Reliance**

In Hin Lad Nai, the children and youth, and all villagers should be proud of themselves. They must love their homeland, the natural resources, the soil, water, and forest. They must love the knowledge embodied in their culture, their customs, and way of life in order to be self-reliant.

They must not become obsessed with the 'stream' of materialism and consumerism, the 'stream' in which dependence and reliance on others are constantly necessary, which is prevalent in society outside the village.

Mr. Chaipasert PhoKha said, Hin Lad Nai village has begun to present itself in a new way which is easily understood by the children and youth, also by the wider society outside the village. They have named the totality of the way of learning of the community the "University of Nature."

Universities are commonly understood as places of knowledge. They say that people who enter the university will gain knowledge while people who are not able to enter the university do not have knowledge, and thus do not have any education. In the real world, however, knowledge is everywhere. People from all races of humanity are equipped with the ability to live their lives, a natural indicator that people come with a body of knowledge that enables them to survive, and that each human race has a body of knowledge of its own.

Mr. Chaiprasert PhoKha has presented his way of thinking on this to the children, youth, and people of his village, Hin Lad Nai, as follows,

Coming back to study our own body of knowledge, we came to see that it does not matter if we had not studied in the formal educational system. We feel that we are able to be happy with the way we are. Now, as graduates of the University of Nature, we want to strengthen the stream of self-reliance once again.

We recite this hta in our village so that we can take pride in ourselves,

Do not praise the land of others, do not praise the villages of others, The prosperous land and villages of others, They have had to buy with the sweat of their brow, Let us look after and restore our own region of villages, So we will have clothes to wear and rice to eat forever.

The *hta* is interpreted as follows:

Hold fast to the way of life that we love, that we care for and worry about. Care for the forest, the water, the soil, the swiddens, and the fallows. Take good care to protect against fire, so that the natural resources will be with us for a very long time, and our village will be secure and safe in the times of our children and grandchildren.

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SwedBio and Pgaz K' Nyau Association for Sustainable Development. (2016, November). Mobilizing traditional knowledge, innovations and practices in rotational farming for sustainable development (Stockholm Resilience Center: Report). https:// swed.bio/reports/report/mobilizing-traditional-knowledge-innovations-andpractices-in-rotational-farming-for-sustainable-development/

#### Collective Reflections From the 2022 ILK Global Workshop

The transmission of knowledge between the elders and the youth in some communities has been weakening. The papers presented show ongoing examples of knowledge transmission from the elders to the young through reviving practices of indigenous ways of learning by doing which may have been declining in some communities for several reasons. Their continued vibrant practice underscores the crucial role of children in the community. In North Siberia and the Russian Arctic, the process of transmission of knowledge allows children to be part of decision-making processes even at a very young age. In Hin Lad Nai, the youth are introduced early on about the challenges and difficulties as well as the wisdom of rotational farming.

The experience papers show important aspects of indigenous life as integral parts of transmitting knowledge and skills through learning by doing.

First is the extreme importance of language in strengthening the cultural identity of the youth, enabling the direct transmission of the cosmovision of Indigenous Peoples.

Second is spirituality. Indigenous spirituality may not be very well understood because of prevailing religious complexities in communities. One of the points needing more discussion is how to strengthen spirituality without conflicting with other religions in the community, which we find to be quite difficult in our Mayan communities. However, in the case of Hin Lad Nai, the majority of the communities have their traditional beliefs and there is no problem about religion. Some are traditional and some are Christian, and even among Christians, they like to know about culture, so conflict is not present. There may be confusion but not major conflict.

Third is the medicinal and nutritional values of biodiversity. The experiences shared from North Siberia and the Russian Arctic show how knowledge of health and traditional plants is understood and transmitted. In Hin Lad Nai, knowledge of traditional plants is used as markers for the health of the land and planting seasons whereas indigenous herbal medicines are not much used because there are hospitals in the community. But in serious cases where hospitals are unable to do anything or to find cures, they go back to traditional practices which result in improved health.



# VIBRANT MUSICAL HERITAGE

This was a young people's initiative. It was fueled by their youthful energy and enthusiasm. It was grounded on the indigenous heritage of wisdom and creativity. It was inspired by the communities fighting to defend their ancestral land and ways of life. It was in collaboration with the generations of creative men and women of earlier times.

- Judy Cariño-Fangloy | DKK - Salidummay

# The Salidummay Experience: **Indigenous Youth Creatively Interacting with Their Cultural Heritage and Music Tradition in the** Cordillera, Philippines

Judy Cariño-Fangloy<sup>1</sup> | Dap-ayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK) - Salidummay





The Dap-ayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK) was founded on July 1991 during the aftermath of an earthquake that wrecked Baguio City. It is an alliance of cultural organizations and individuals united by the call to "Safeguard the Cultural Heritage" (Tawid Salakniban).

To hear more of the Salidummay songs, see the following links:

https://www.youtube.com/@Salidummay-DKK

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdOkdRrwi6376FD22u7sQGUVMSvkvHKKa

Judy Cariño-Fangloy is the founding Chairperson of DKK and the Musical Director of Salidummay from 1991 to 1997.

#### Introduction

This paper focuses on a 6-year period when a community of Indigenous Youth grappled with their identity as heirs of a rich but endangered cultural tradition. The years 1991 to 1997 saw the founding of the Dapayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK), an alliance of cultural groups in Baguio City, and its steady growth through the years. It was a time of intense effort and creativity which resulted in a body of work including five full-length musical theater productions<sup>2</sup> and four music albums.<sup>3</sup> Performances reached wide audiences through mobile theater, concert tours, and shows in small and big venues.

The content of the productions were the raging issues of the day confronting indigenous communities, such as large-scale mining operations using open-pit mining methods on ancestral lands, the construction of a large hydroelectric dam threatening communities along and below the Agno River, and militarization of remote villages in the Cordillera countryside.

Our first major production was Panagsubli, a musical play depicting the return of Indigenous People to their village which suffered devastation from military harassment and attacks. This was performed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines during the first National Theater Festival in 1992. It was also performed during the Cordillera Day celebration of the same year and would later be invited to be mounted in other locations including several venues overseas.

This production set the level of aesthetics for which we strived, that which the local indigenous communities would identify with, but would also be appreciated by a broad audience and be acceptable to the standards of mainstream art circles. While we brought into focus the invisible realities of the Indigenous People in those days, the power of art to transform and touch people's hearts and minds bridged the distance and helped build a connection with the audience. This demanded high levels of energy, creativity, and attention to detail, which required the effort of many people collectively working together to achieve the best possible output.

Stories, music, drama, dance, and visual images amplified the voices and struggles for the defense of ancestral lands, life, and the right to self-determination. It called for unity among all Indigenous Peoples in the Cordillera, and the support and solidarity from the rest of the Filipino people.

Though this experience happened decades ago, it has never been documented in writing. It has never been fully shared with the younger people who chose to carry on the work and has remained only as fond memories of those who were involved. This experience paper attempts to capture from fading memories the learnings, events, innovations made, and present reflections as these past events are revisited today. It delves deeper into the creative interaction of Indigenous Youth with their musical heritage, particularly the traditional salidummay, which resulted in the rejuvenation of the salidummay and Indigenous Cordillera music.

<sup>2</sup> Uwawi 1993, Balintaugan 1993, Balitok 1994, Panagsubli 1996, and Tak-oy ti Umili 1997

Dongdong-ay 1992, Aannak ti Kordilyera 1993, Elallay 1995, and Gangsa 1997



Chico River. CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE (CPA)

#### **Prologue**

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Kalinga and Bontoc tribes living along the mighty Chico River were fighting to put a stop to the construction of four giant dams that threatened to drown their villages. At the height of this struggle, Macli-ing Dulag, a Kalinga leader was killed in his own home. This awakened sympathy and support from various sectors across and beyond the Cordillera region, and mobilized people from the media, academe, religious groups, and Indigenous Youth and students to join fact-finding missions and to show their support and solidarity for the indigenous communities.

As young students back then, we joined these visits to the affected villages along the Chico River. We traveled long distances through rough roads, walked narrow mountain trails, and crossed hanging bridges over the Chico River to reach the villages. We were struck by the amazing scenery and culture that was untouched by modern influence: the stone-walled rice terraces; their homes built in compact clusters which provided a sense of security; the black native pigs running free in the village; and the elders carrying their grandchildren on their backs while the mothers were busy working. The elders and women were clothed in their traditional hand-woven garments.

Both men and women wore tattoos. The elders' tattoos hinted of their warrior tradition, as these were badges of honor and bravery in battle.

These visits were valuable experiences which awakened us to the Indigenous Peoples' rights and struggles. They introduced us to indigenous wisdom and creativity. We discovered and were amazed by the traditional musical heritage: the gong rhythms to which the community danced, the uggayam<sup>4</sup> and ullalim<sup>5</sup> of the elders which eloquently articulated their commitment to fight for their land, and the salidummay songs which expressed unanimous agreement and solidarity. Below are lyrics of a salidummay which greeted our bus on one of our first trips to the area.

Uggayam is a traditional melody among Abra and Kalinga indigenous communities chanted individually during community occasions. The uggayam is delivered spontaneously and the melody depends on the chanter's creativity.

Ullalim is also a traditional melody among Abra and Kalinga indigenous communities sung individually during community occasions. This particular melody is also used to tell local epics such as the story of a warrior called "Banna" and his female counterpart, "Laggunawa."

(People of) Pasil, Chico, Tanudan (rivers) Let us all move forward, ay ay Ay ay salidummay Ay ay salidum salidummay

What a great loss if we do not fight for Our ancestral land, ay ay Ay ay salidummay Ay ay salidum salidummay

All of these were powerful calls that challenged us to take part in the growing Indigenous Peoples' movement. A major takeaway from those early visits was that we, as Indigenous Youth, were heirs to a rich cultural tradition, and we were duty-bound to learn, safeguard and play an active role in the continuing evolution of this heritage.

#### Cordillera Indigenous Art and the Salidummay

Indigenous art goes back as far as can be remembered, passed on through generations to the present day. It includes creative expressions such as folktales and stories, songs, instrumental music and dance, and also functional art such as stonewalls, house and village design, weaving and woodcarving. It is a representation of the collective identity, shared knowledge, wisdom, and memories. Indigenous art is not static but continues to evolve over time.

Salidummay melodies are part of the musical heritage of the Kalinga, Bontoc, and Tinguian indigenous tribes of the Cordillera. They are passed on from generation to generation and are shared with neighboring villages and guests in peace pact ceremonies, weddings, and rituals.

Salidummay melodies are created with only five notes of the pentatonic scale. These five notes are used not only in the salidummay but also in other traditional vocal and instrumental Cordillera music. The pentatonic scale is also the standard for tuning the gongs, the nose and mouth flutes, the bamboo pipes, and the bamboo and wooden tuned percussion instruments.

Salidummay is an everyday song. Unlike ritual songs, there are no restrictions or required preparations for it to be sung. The salidummay is participatory. It is structured to elicit community participation. The song has short stanzas followed by a chorus with the words salidummay, elalay, ay ay, and the like. These words do not have any particular meaning and are akin to the tralala of Western songs. Joining in the chorus is a sign of agreement with the message.

Salidummay is open to improvisation and collaboration. The lyrics are mostly composed spontaneously, on the spur of the moment, to share a message. There are unwritten patterns which guide improvisation, such as rhyming patterns and a meter of seven to eight syllables per line. Following these guidelines, anyone may join the song by improvising a line or two, which will then be responded to with a chorus.

New lyrics for *salidummay* are composed to fit the occasion, such as welcoming guests to the village, telling a story, or simply to accompany daily chores. During the anti-Chico dam struggle, many salidummay songs were composed to express their protest and opposition to the government project. These songs called for the unity of all tribes and villages to defend their homeland.

Traditionally, the *salidummay* was performed very simply. There was no accompaniment with instruments and was a simple vocal piece sung in unison.

The spread of modern Western music through radio and modern technology has an effect on the transmission of traditional music to the Indigenous Youth, who are cultivating new tastes in music and overall lifestyles. The salidummay and other indigenous songs and music deserved to be heard and to be passed on to the younger and future generations.

On the bright side, *salidummay* by its very nature is flexible and open to improvisation, collaboration, and innovation. It was this openness and flexibility that paved the way for the initiative to rejuvenate the salidummay. It was in learning and understanding the traditional salidummay that we built our confidence to explore its potential and dared to be creative and innovative.



Both photos above were taken during the performance of the theatrical play Uwawi in 1993. 

DKK ARCHIVE

#### Making Music with the Ancestors

When interacting with a musical tradition, we need to pay respect and give due credit to the countless generations of men and women who collectively produced this body of work. The beating of the gongs and drums are believed to call the spirits of the ancestors. Thus, when we create music with the use of these instruments, sing the ancient melodies, and introduce innovations, we are, in a sense, collaborating and making music with the ancestors.

When mixing the old with the new, we must listen well so that the indigenous voice is not drowned out by the modern sounds we introduce. There must be a balance such that the new blends well with the ancestral sounds in the co-created music.

In our earlier efforts, we wanted to be faithful to the simple rendition of the *salidummay* in the villages and took care not to make big changes in our interpretation. In later albums, we decided to inject more of our own musical tastes and ventured into more complex musical arrangements. We introduced harmonization and experimented with vocal arrangements. We learned different traditional gong rhythms and used these in arranging the songs; we used other types of traditional instruments, including drums, flutes, pipes, and tuned bamboo percussion instruments like bamboo tubes and zithers.

It took careful consideration before we decided to use the guitar. We had to be mindful of the pentatonic scale of the salidummay. We experimented with open tuning, adjusting the pitch of some strings, in order to have chords which complied with the pentatonic scale. We learned to use the guitar in ways that kept it in the background and allowed the traditional instruments to be more prominent.

The innovations happened one step at a time. For example, the use of gongs in the musical arrangements started with learning how to hold and play the gongs, one gong rhythm at a time, and playing it along with the song. We had to learn how to modulate the sound of the gongs, and to amplify the softer sounding instruments like the nose flute and the jaws harp.

All these innovations gave a more upbeat and youthful sound to the salidummay. The rejuvenated salidummay received positive feedback and appealed to young and old. It helped make Indigenous Youth aware and proud of their identity. More importantly, the music opened the door for Indigenous Youth to learn more about their heritage and culture.

The release of the *Salidummay* albums brought in invitations for live performances in various locations such as community plazas, fallow rice fields, university auditoriums, and gymnasiums. Performances were also done in theaters in Manila and overseas, reaching a broad audience.

However, it was in the mountain villages that the salidummay performances were most fulfilling because these were occasions to bring back the salidummay to their places of origin and where we were able to interact with the people and receive immediate feedback. The newly arranged salidummay were warmly received, which was made clear with the community participation in singing the salidummay choruses and spontaneously getting up to dance to the upbeat rhythms.

At the peak of the initiative there were many other cultural activities going on, such as community and children's theater, visual arts, and workshops for Indigenous Youth who wanted to learn about their cultural heritage.



Uwawi is DKK's musicaldance-drama narrating a story of a Kalinga village that fought against a gigantic Chico dam project during Martial Law. The story unfolds as a mother sings a lullaby to her son.

**DKK ARCHIVE** 

#### Reflections

This was a young people's initiative. It was fueled by their youthful energy and enthusiasm. It was grounded on the indigenous heritage of wisdom and creativity. It was inspired by the communities fighting to defend their ancestral land and ways of life. It was in collaboration with the generations of creative men and women of earlier times.

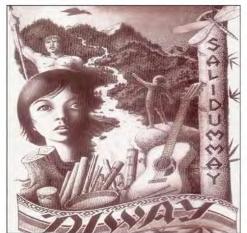
After revisiting this period, a question comes to mind: What made this initiative work? Some salient lessons come up. It is striking that these are all practical teachings integral to indigenous wisdom. Perhaps, as we immersed ourselves in the culture and artistic tradition, the spirits of our ancestors were present and provided blessings and guidance.

#### 1. A creative community

DKK members were a diverse mix, some hailed from remote villages where they learned their culture, others grew up in town centers or in migrant communities in the city. Still, others were city-bred with no opportunity to learn even their native language. This diversity allowed a healthy learning exchange among the members. Each came with their own set of skills, knowledge, and strengths. And each found a role to play. Aside from creative roles there were technical tasks such as sounds and lights, meal preparation, bookkeeping, and driving. When planning trips and performances, we connected to our extended families and communities to provide accommodations and help arrange the performances. It was the collective effort that made things possible.

#### 2. Learning by doing

Most members had no experience in the performance arts. It was in the DKK that we explored and developed our talents in response to the urgent needs in front of us. For many, it was their first time to perform before an audience, but in time, they gained confidence. Timid voices grew stronger and more expressive as songs were rehearsed and sung before audiences. Playing the gongs and musical instruments became easier and natural after many sessions of rehearsals. There were many opportunities to perform the newly learned skills with invitations to join weddings, conferences, and cultural nights with other organizations.





Diway is one of the music albums of DKK-Salidummay. 

DKK ARCHIVE

#### 3. Simple needs, wise use of resources

For the young people involved, there were still no families to feed and care for. Needs were simple and basic, such as food, transportation, and rent for our office. The spirit of volunteerism was high. Organizational income came from the sale of music albums, donations and payments for performances and art works, and production grants. When on performance tours, the local communities welcomed us and took care of our meals and accommodations. We were grateful for the steady flow of support and received these as blessings and encouragement for the work.

#### 4. Seasons

Experience taught us that there was a best time for the various work activities. The busiest time was production season in the first half of the year. It was a time to brainstorm and prepare a major production, do rehearsals, and conduct a series of performances on the way to Cordillera Day celebrations in April. The rainy season in the third quarter was a time to take it easy. This was the time for reflection and workshops amongst ourselves. The Christmas season was time for members to go home to their villages and reconnect with their families and communities. This was a time to be grounded in their culture and to deepen their learning.



Children of the Cordillera (CHICO), a children's group under the DKK performing a theatre play, Balintaugan, in 1993. DKK ARCHIVE

#### **Epilogue**

In 1997, the winds of change blew for the DKK and its members. On the occasion of its sixth anniversary, the DKK welcomed a new phase in the work. Many of the leading members decided to respond to the call for cultural workers to venture out of their comfort zone and work with indigenous communities. As a result, we saw the sprouting of cultural work in various communities and sectors.

There was no intention to disband the DKK. However, moving on to new places and to new work eventually led to the DKK taking a pause. Perhaps it was a good time for many to take a break from the demands of the production cycle that had gone on for six years. Some of us took the opportunity to explore other paths, such as building a family, finding a job, and pursuing other interests.

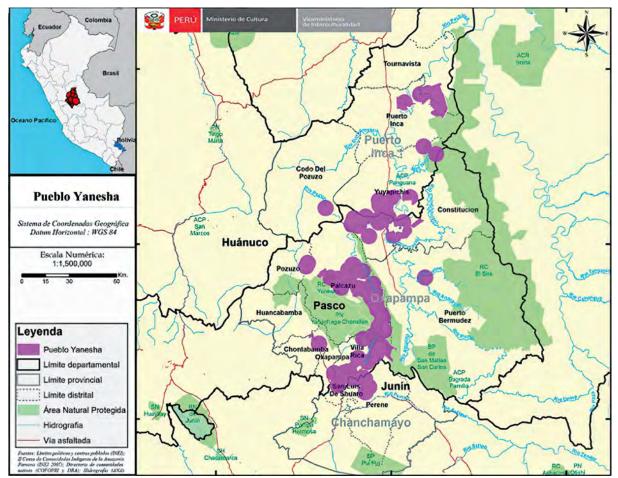
Several silent years for the DKK would pass before a new batch of Indigenous Youth would pick up the banner and continue the effort to safeguard our heritage. But this is another story for the younger ones to share.

This story is by no means a roadmap for Indigenous Youth who are exploring their cultural heritage and artistic tradition. Rather, it is a documentation of our early efforts, using the media and technology available at the time. It is shared to open eyes and to spark imaginations on possibilities when Indigenous Youth creatively interact with their cultural heritage and make music with their ancestors.

And today, the Chico River still flows.

# Taki Chaninchay: A Legal and Artistic Experience of Revaluation of Yánesha Songs in Perú

Álvaro Ocampo<sup>6</sup> | CHIRAPAQ, Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú



Map by CHIRAPAQ



CHIRAPAQ, Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú is an indigenous association promoting the assertion of identity and the acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the exercise of citizenship with a particular commitment to Indigenous children, youth, and women. It is a multidisciplinary team of professionals and activists from the Andean and Amazonian regions who, in fraternal collaboration with indigenous organizations, seek to build a truly democratic and inclusive society that acknowledges indigenous origins and becomes enriched through its diversity of cultures and languages.

Website: www.chirapaq.org.pe

<sup>6</sup> Álvaro Ocampo is an Associate and Consultant in Intellectual Property of CHIRAPAQ.

#### Introduction

CHIRAPAQ, Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú has constantly worked with Indigenous Peoples and has tried to revalue their traditions in a fair and transparent manner also guiding and investigating intellectual property instruments and their relationship with the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. One of the various groups with whom there has been contact and joint work with is the Yánesha also known as Amuesha, an Amazonian Indigenous People located mainly in parts of Pasco, Huánuco, and Junín. Hence, we have a special interest in the artistic and cultural manifestations of these Indigenous People. Yánesha music awakens a particular interest due to the spiritual content of its tunes, both instrumental and the lyrics of the songs, some of them related to how we came from the sky with all nature, created by a kind god.

From a review of the cultural work carried out by various actors on Yánesha's territory, we can highlight the research of the American anthropologist Richard Chase Smith and the Yánesha leader, Espíritu Bautista Pascual. They developed various studies and collections to reaffirm the Yánesha territory and identity. It is worth mentioning the extensive catalogue of stories and music within the Richard Chase Smith Collection, which "comprises 50 sound recordings, compiled during his visit to the Amuesha or Yanesha ethnic group of the Peruvian Amazon (50 hours, 20 minutes)." Likewise, there is a Digital Archive of the Yánesha Memory which consists of "a large Yánesha library, accessible to all the Yánesha and to people with an interest in knowing the Yánesha people. This initiative is the result of a collaboration between the Yánesha people and the Institute for the Common Good."8 These studies classified Yánesha music into categories: Coshamñats, music for feasts in a social context, and private music like Morreñets (vocal) and Achoreñets (instrumental).

Although this implied a great deal of work and collaboration from the anthropologist and leaders of the Yánesha people who rescued music that otherwise could be lost, it was not possible to consider the complex legal implications of making this music publicly available, particularly in relation to concepts of public domain and copyright law, as we will explain in a later section below.

# Indigenous Music in the Context of Perú

The traditional art of Indigenous Peoples in Perú is extremely rich and varied. To a certain extent, it has been popularized by Indigenous Peoples themselves, but a good part of the positioning has been generated by researchers, enterprising artists and/or businessmen outside those traditions. Nonindigenous persons having earlier access to indigenous creations saw these as great sources of cultural wealth, prestige, as well as economic incentives. To a large extent, these aspects are perceived as positive because who would not applaud the investigation, compilation, and dissemination of indigenous designs, poetry, legends, songs and/or dances to preserve, strengthen, and disseminate the culture of a certain indigenous group? However, sometimes the consequences can have counter intuitive nuances as we will go on to exemplify regarding the field of music.

There is a lot of traditional music, mostly Andean, that has been widely disseminated for many years to the point that it is played in various media such as radio, television, patronal feasts, etc. Many Andean songs like harawis, whose author is unknown or where there is no consensus on the determined authorship, could be mentioned. As examples of this dissemination of music, we can mention "Los ronderos" (Pechada o triste, from Cajamarca), a traditional song that is performed by a well-known and regarded folk band named "Los Cholos." There are examples of music traditionally used by Indigenous

IDE PUCP. Instituto de Etnomusicología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú https://ide.pucp.edu.pe/colecciones/ coleccion-richard-chase-smith/. PUCP Ethnomusicology Institute

Archivo digital de la memoria Yánesha (Digital Archive of Yanesha Memory), https://www.facebook.com/Archivo.Digital. Yanesha?locale=pt\_BR

Peoples for their rituals but which are also massively disseminated in documentaries like the harawi from Yaku Raymy ("Water Party") in the documentary "Sigo siendo (Kachkaniraqmi)" from the Peruvian filmmaker Javier Corcuera. We can also mention most of Andean Huaynos that have been adapted in various ways, formats, or genres like the song "Ojos Bonitos" (pretty eyes) a traditional song that was registered by the authorship of a Bolivian singer by the name Ojos Azules (Blue Eyes). However, there are traditional music, transmitted from generation to generation within specific indigenous groups, that do not circulate in wide-ranging media or activities because these peoples take certain precautions and try to keep them in the scope of their daily activities and/or rituals like some Amazonian music (Yánesha, Ashaninka, Aguajún, etc.).

In order to reach the general public or a large group of researchers and/or knowledgeable musicians, it is necessary in many cases for a person to enter the community or communities to have access to the traditional music of the corresponding group/s. For this, the person will express his objectives and will have a fraternal bond with the indigenous leaders. Thus, joint work will be done, oriented to showcase the music of the people. In this scenario, the benefits and difficulties appear in making public what had previously remained in the sphere of the private domain of the communities that are part of an Indigenous Peoples group. The disclosure of traditional music is beneficial for humanity as a whole and for Peruvians in particular, but is this free disclosure and disposal outside the scope of the communities really beneficial for the people who composed the songs or instrumental works? We believe that is not necessarily the case.

### The "Taki Chaninchay" Pilot Project

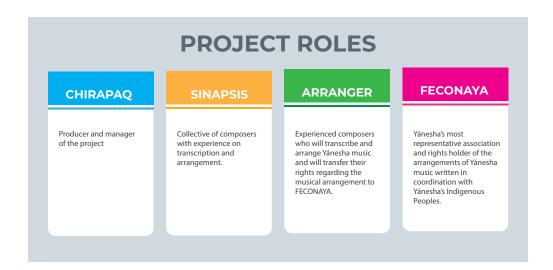


Yánesha men and women dance in a chain in the Community of Santo Domingo, district of Palcazu, province of Oxapampa, in the region of Pasco, Perú on May 2023. 

LUISENRRIQUE BECERRA VELARDE / CHIRAPAQ

The Taki Chaninchay project (translated as "revaluation of singing") consists of recording traditional songs towards their transcription into the musical score and later arrangement in an instrumentation for vocals and piano. The goal is to transcribe in written music and individualize through the arranger those songs that currently do not have a specific author because they are associated with a collective group, the Yánesha Indigenous People. With this strategy, the arranged song can be owned by a Yánesha representative association, and they can decide how it is to be used and generate agreements with others regarding its use. At first the transcription and musical arrangement could only be done by a musician trained in writing music as long as he or she respects the spiritual and aesthetic character of the original music. However, it would be optimal if, with subsequent projects, a traditional musician could be trained to write the transcriptions and arrangements.

In this scenario, through a model contract, the producer or the arranger pays a license for the composition of the arrangements and for their public use in concerts. In turn, the rights become the property of a representative association, in this case the Federation of Yánesha Native Communities (FECONAYA), that will also receive a fee for the utilization of the arrangements. In this particular case, CHIRAPAQ made an agreement with composer musicians from the Peruvian collective SINAPSIS so that they transcribe the music to the score and compose the arrangements.



#### STEPS TO FOLLOW WITHIN THE PROJECT

- 1. Identification of the Indigenous People and most representative association(s): in this case, Yánesha because we have previous agreements for working programs of cultural rights with FECONAYA.
- 2. Make contact with experienced Yánesha musicians (elders) from the area—Native Community of Santo Domingo, Villarrica, Pasco Perú—in coordination with FECONAYA.
- 3. Performance and audio recording agreement, including a payment for the traditional performers.
- 4. Transcription into music notation of the six traditional melodies.

Example: A song dedicated to a traditional bird from the jungle "Gallito de las Rocas" and how the singer tells the bird that he met a person who had woken up in the sky. Performed by an elder musician and sage, Jesús Luis Lopez who sings and plays Carrizo (some kind of pan flute) and Conareñets (music with traditional drums).

#### Conareñets Chemoechorexh Yerrrexh

Melodía original Yanesha transcrita de voz masculina



5. Preparation of the License Agreement for signing with the representative of the corresponding association. This includes that the arrangements will be owned by a Yánesha association.

#### **Model Contract**

#### ACUERDO DE LICENCIA SOBRE MÚSICA TRADICIONAL YÁNESHA

Conste en este documento el acuerdo que celebran, de una parte, CHIRAPAQ CENTRO DE CULTURAS INDÍGENAS DEL PERÚ, con el RUC Nº 20126841699, con domicilio en Horacio Urteaga 534. Of. 203, Jesús María, provincia y departamento de Lima, debidamente representada por su presidenta, la señora Tarcila Rivera Zea, identificada con DNI Nº 25514759, según poder inscrito en la Partida Electrónica Nº 01841157, asiento A00020 de la SUNARP; a quien en adelante se le denominará CHIRAPAQ; y, de la otra parte, FEDERACION DE COMUNIDADES NATIVAS YÁNESHA - FECONAYA, con RUC Nº 20486832828, con domicilio en Av. Leopoldo Krausse Mza. 48 lote. Sn (costado de cementerio, casa madera 1 piso) Pasco - Oxapampa - Villa Rica, debidamente representada por su Kornesha - Presidente, el señor Jaime Alejo Chiihuanco Cuñibo, identificado con DNI № 04340353; en los términos y condiciones siguientes.

6. Melodic analysis and composition of the musical arrangements according to the original intention (for voice and piano). Melodic analysis of the scales, intervals, and intrinsic rhythm of the melody to design a piano accompaniment and subtle treatments of the melody.

#### Adoración a Dios nº1

Melodía original Yanesha transcrita de voz femenina



- 7. Individualization of the arranged work by an author (arranger) but to be transferred to the collective (FECONAYA) with the recognition of the traditional origin.
- 8. License payment for the musical arrangements to a representative association.
- 9. To do a live concert of the music (traditional with elder musicians and with their original instruments and arranged with a singer and a piano player) according to the agreement.

10. From the individual to the collective: Registration of the arranged music in the national record of copyrighted works of the Peruvian intellectual property office INDECOPI. The representative association, FECONAYA, would be the rights holder.

With this scheme, we are oriented to the recovery and return of ownership of the music to the Indigenous People through a musical arrangement that is registered under the ownership of the representative association.

#### A Reconsideration of "Sui Generis" Rights

This pilot project was initiated to address the standard practice in international legal doctrine to name this class of intangibles such as traditional music as "sui generis" elements of intellectual property. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) points out that what makes an intellectual property system "sui generis" is the modification of some of its characteristics to accommodate the special characteristics of its subject and the specific political needs that led to the establishment of a different system (WIPO, 2002, p. 9).

The word "sui generis" refers to something peculiar and/or exceptional. Although we understand the reasons why traditional knowledge cannot be directly included within the logic of Western intellectual property, in CHIRAPAQ we consider that the term "sui generis" is too inadequate because it highlights the legal otherness in which Indigenous Peoples find themselves. This term reinforces the idea that traditional knowledge is isolated from the legal canon of intellectual property just because it is different from Western regulations in some features (Rivera, 2016, p. 393).

In this regard, we maintain that traditional knowledge constitutes intellectual property emerging from the collective human intellect developed by Indigenous Peoples through their historical processes. For this reason, it would suffice to refer to those intangibles as Intellectual Property of Indigenous Peoples.

## Copyright Law and the Public Domain

We think that Yánesha songs could be considered works within the scope of copyright, corresponding to artistic developments of the human intellect which can be original and susceptible to disclosure and/or reproduction. The problem with respect to the protection of a song stemming from ancestral traditional knowledge is that the author or authors who composed it cannot be individualized as this is the product of collective intellects forged from generation to generation. In this case, copyright as we know has limitations since there is a risk of classifying indigenous artistic products as part of the public domain.

Professor Okediji contends that a concept of the open public domain would end up being detrimental to a claim for the rights of Indigenous Peoples in favoring their unrestricted use by private parties. Normally, the public domain is understood as free-for-use resources from which something new can be created. Under this consideration of the public domain, the legal system will deny any form of intellectual property over collective knowledge. This is based on the idea that individual creations enter into the public domain when their period of intellectual property protection expires. However, traditional knowledge or expressions of folklore, due to their very nature, are not necessarily created to be introduced into a free market of goods and services. Traditional knowledge has its own scope of action framed within the cultural practices of each Indigenous People. It would not be proper to speak of expiration in reference to the exercise of an exclusive right in the case of traditional knowledge or cultural expressions of Indigenous Peoples as it does in the rights of an individual author.

#### **Definitions of Terms Under Intellectual Property**

"The term 'public domain' refers to creative materials that are not protected by intellectual property laws such as copyright, trademark, or patent laws. The public owns these works, not an individual author or artist. Anyone can use a public domain work without obtaining permission, but no one can ever own it." (Stanford University)

"No permission is needed to copy or use public domain works. A work is generally considered to be within the public domain if it is ineligible for copyright protection or its copyright has expired. Public domain works can serve as the foundation for new creative works and can be quoted extensively." (University of California)

Article 57. Expressions of folklore are part of the public domain.

Article 2.12. Expressions of Folklore: Productions of characteristic elements of the traditional cultural heritage, consisting of the whole range of literary and artistic works, created on the national territory by unknown or unidentified authors presumed to be nationals of the country or members of its ethnic communities, which are handed down from generation to generation in such a way that reflect the traditional artistic or literary aspirations of a community. (Traditional Knowledge Laws: Peru)

Therefore, in practice, transposing traditional knowledge or cultural expressions called "folklore" into the public domain means appropriating the assets of a specific order (that of Indigenous Peoples, mainly within less developed countries) within another system—the standard or official copyright—which would benefit the economies of the most developed countries to a greater extent (Okediji, 2018).

Considering all the above, it is relevant to point out that many research tasks of compiling music and putting it in publicly accessible repositories end up placing them in the public domain. Although they fulfill the function of conserving music as cultural heritage and acknowledging Indigenous Peoples, such practices submit them to free use given the intellectual property laws of most countries, including Perú. 9 Nevertheless, we consider that there are certain ways in which the music of Indigenous Peoples can be used, covering part of its legal protection.



sopranos, and collaborating from the SINAPSIS group share the stage and the applause of the public with the Yánesha musicians, dancers and singers at the Cultural Center of Spain in Lima, Perú on June 2023.

MARCO GONZÁLES GUILLÉN / CHIRAPAQ

<sup>9</sup> Legislative Decree 822 - Copyright Law.

#### **Beyond Copyright Legislation**

As we have seen, the rules on copyright do not protect traditional indigenous music, which would need an amendment. However, it would be optimal to establish a practical recognition that gives value to this knowledge. It would be worth managing licensing contracts for these contents with the representatives of the corresponding Indigenous Peoples in order to carry out projects that include derivative works in which recognition is made. At the same time as long as this does not affect their traditional practices. The effective value these works may have will be revealed within the framework of a transaction, thus including these goods within a market. Based on these projects, an ethical commercial practice is desired to serve as a precedent to be replicated and confirmed later through law.

#### **Final Considerations**

We have currently finished step 6 of the implementation. We are at the gates of the final terms of the music licensing. Also, we are planning the organization of a concert of Yánesha music. The performance will be held with Yánesha original performers, and with lyrical singers and a pianist in the case of the arrangements commissioned by CHIRAPAQ and written by SINAPSIS.

We expect that this work will be a long-term project and cover the diversity of music from various Indigenous Peoples in the territory of Perú. Likewise, we hope that with the development of the Taki Chaninchay initiative the preservation, revaluation, and dissemination of musical traditional knowledge will be generated within the framework of inclusion within the cultural industries market but always considering the FPIC of Indigenous Peoples. We also hope that with the transcription in music notation and a piano accompaniment, the training of Yánesha's young musicians in written music with their own songs in its original language will subsequently be made possible. Finally, this project seeks to build bridges between the academic musical field and traditional indigenous musical creation, generating fair and equitable recognition of traditional contributions. Finally, from CHIRAPAQ, an active participation is sought in the appreciation of indigenous musical art and an internalization of it through the written musical tradition.

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#### Collective Reflections From the 2022 ILK Global Workshop

The experience papers document the social function of indigenous music as protest and protection. Although taking place decades apart, the Salidummay of DKK and the present work of CHIRAPAQ in safeguarding Yánesha songs demonstrate the means through which music fosters communal bonds and collaboration to record and disseminate indigenous values and experiences as well as assert indigenous rights to land and heritage.

The historical context of the experience paper, "The Salidummay Experience: Indigenous Youth Creatively Interacting with their Cultural Heritage and Music Tradition in the Cordillera, Philippines," was the Martial Law period in the Philippines. Priority development projects of the government, such as the Chico River Dams and corporate logging by the Cellophil Resources Corporation (CRC) were to be implemented on ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples. The Chico dams would inundate the lands of the Kalinga and Bontoc peoples, while CRC would cut the forests, destroy the sources of water, lumber, food, and medicines of the Tinggian people and their neighbors. The term "development aggression" emerged at this time to describe top-down government impositions on Indigenous Peoples.

It was also the time when affected Indigenous Peoples sang their traditional songs such as the *salidummay*, but the content of the songs and chants revolved around their problems brought by these projects and the ongoing people's protests and the call for unified action. Indigenous protest songs and chants were born, and it would become part of the indigenous communities' daily lives. They sang on almost all occasions, around campfires in the communities and even in church services to inspire the people in their struggle for land, life, and culture.

The second article, "Taki Chaninchay: A Legal and Artistic Experience of Revaluation of Yánesha Songs in Perú," talks us through a venturing into the realm of intellectual property rights and the "othering" of traditional cultural forms and expressions of Indigenous Peoples. Earlier documentation and recordings of indigenous music, art, and literature have made these publicly available, raising issues in relation to concepts of public domain and copyright law. Today, indigenous creativity remains undervalued with Indigenous Peoples not sharing in the benefits from mainstream music and creative industries as currently framed under intellectual property rights instruments.

The Taki Chaninchay experience raises many of the difficult questions remaining unresolved with respect to traditional cultural expressions under the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC). WIPO is aiming to adopt a legally binding instrument focused on Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources in 2024 but has not made much progress towards reaching agreement on Traditional Cultural Expressions, including indigenous musical heritage.

Similar to the experience of CHIRAPAQ, Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Perú to promote multiple values arising from indigenous musical heritage, other initiatives among Indigenous Peoples are also asserting greater control over the application and use of indigenous data and IK for collective benefit, including the right to create value from IK in ways that are grounded in indigenous worldviews and realize opportunities within the knowledge economy. The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance are aligned with Article 11 of the UNDRIP asserting: Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility and Ethics.

Going beyond the instrumental recognition of Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property rights for its economic values, how can the rights of Indigenous Peoples to practice and revitalize their traditions and customs and to determine the future manifestations of their cultures be protected and maintained for greater flourishing of people and planet? These are questions actively being explored as Indigenous Peoples find the fullest expression of their inherent creativity linked to cultural heritage.





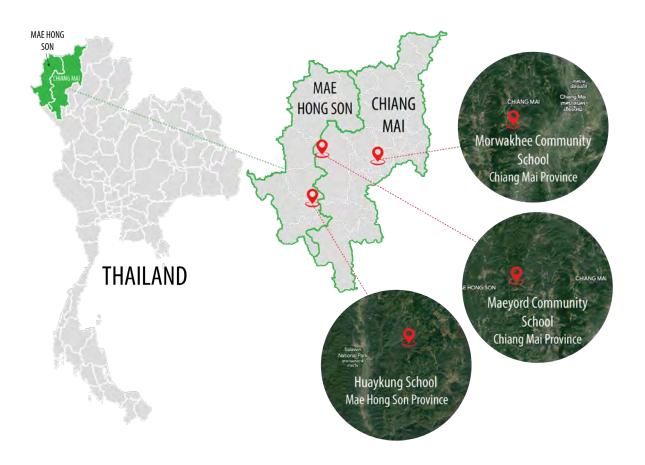
# EDUCATION AND LEARNING THROUGH INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS

Our Elders value education, a system of education that promotes Indigenous culture and worldviews which sometimes differ with views of mainstream society. An example is the view that there are natural objects which for us are alive but to others are non-living things. So our Elders requested the Church to set up a school which is now the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta or SPA.

- Marvin Astoveza

# Bi-Culture<sup>1</sup> Education: The Experiences of Indigenous Alternative Schools in Northern Thailand<sup>2</sup>

Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ph.D.3 | Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)



Among the Karen People, based on their Elder Jorni Odochao, "young peoples need two wells, that is, one behind them and one in front of them, meaning they need two kinds of knowledge, traditional and new or modern knowledge."

Hin Lad Nai School, Maw Wa Khi School, Mae Yod School, Khun Win School, and Huay Kung School, all in Northern Thailand.

Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of PASD and the former Executive Director of Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT).

#### Introduction

The public education curriculum in Thailand has excluded information on the Karen People's history, culture, knowledge, and practices such as those related to their livelihoods. This stems from the Thai Government's policy of integrating the Tribal Peoples into the mainstream Thai population. The policy, in turn, is implemented by public institutions such as government schools through assimilation strategies as indicated in their work plans. In the past five decades or so, implementation of the policy has been very successful, having resulted in almost all indigenous young people embracing the history, culture, language, and even the livelihoods of mainstream Thai People.

From the perspective of their home communities, these Indigenous Youth are deemed to be in a state of confusion over their identity such that they are even ashamed of identifying themselves as indigenous. Although they believe that they are now one of the Thai People, the Government, in fact, still does not recognize them as such. The Thai Government has excluded them, applied double standards on them, and implemented a strategy of marginalization toward them. They are being stereotyped as a problematic group and intrigued as being involved in deforestation, opium production, and a threat to national security. This situation is still a reality for Karen young people. Annually, 90% of those completing Grade 6 or 10 migrate to the cities and urban centers for further study or employment.

In 1994, a tragedy visited the Karen community of Omkoy District in Chiang Mai Province. Six secondary school students returning from the city were found to have committed suicide together. After much reflection, the community concluded that struggles over identity and culture shock from the stress of living in the city had triggered the incident. The tragic event was a wake-up call, prompting a public call for a review and amendment of the assimilation policy in schools. While local authorities, among them the then District Governor of Omkoy District, have stepped up and communicated the concern, there has been no response from the Ministry of Education.

Indigenous organizations led by the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) gathered to discuss the appropriate response to the event. Together with the National Commission on Education, they collaborated on putting together a project design that entails a community research and curriculum development component. Research was conducted in the identified pilot schools, four public schools, and a community school, in Chiang Mai Province. After which, a culture-based curriculum for Karen students was designed. Its pilot implementation was successful but not without its share of challenges. Some of the teachers trained in the curriculum were reassigned, but as nothing was heard from the Ministry of Education of its endorsement at the close of the Project, the four public schools were forced to lay low until eventually they stopped implementing the curriculum altogether.

The participating community school, on the other hand, was able to sustain the project with sustenance from its parent organization based in the community which is also a partner of IMPECT and PASD. The community school expanded implementation into other communities and was eventually recognized and mentioned for its pioneering work as an important player in the national policy framework. This opened the way to the crafting of regulations that would support community schools. Complying with the regulations, the community school changed its name to include the words 'Community Learning Centre' as mandated. Currently, despite the regulations, community schools are still largely sustained by community-based organizations.



Some of the innovative ways of knowledge transmission done in Indigenous schools in Northern Thailand. 

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## Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) Transmission in **Primary Schools**

A diverse number of methods are available in Karen communities in the transfer of ILK. These are categorized under two systems namely, the transmission using the traditional method and transmission using dynamic and innovative methods.

The traditional method is based on the seasonal cycle or the cycle of life. Karen People believe that a person passes through at least three ritual performances in life. The first ritual is done at birth which is celebrated in the community as a holiday. The ritual, Duf Taj Blei (literally, taboo of the umbilical cord), involves the tying of the newborn's umbilical cord around a tree. The second ritual, Duf Htauv Hkof Blei (literally, to eat the pig's head), is performed on a couple's wedding day which is also a holiday in the community. The third and final ceremony, Duf Na Krauv, is performed at a person's funeral also a community holiday. Ritual knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next and continually performed by Elders and adults in the community.

Similarly, knowledge transfer in rotational farming follows the seasonal cycle through which various rituals are performed with the participation of family members. These include ceremonial rituals, and instructional tools such as storytelling to impart beliefs and customs, as well as techniques in rotational farming.

The methods of knowledge transfer may be direct or indirect, technical or natural, with traditional methods particularly promoting spirituality and values—all reflecting the wisdom of the Elders.

The second system of knowledge transfer is more **dynamic and utilizes innovative methods** and approaches with the aim of bridging learning in the formal and non-formal education systems in which the latter is being implemented by Indigenous groups and communities in Thailand with support from indigenous organizations and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The Project supported by PASD and IMPECT in which a culture-based curriculum for Karen students was researched, designed, and implemented in the pilot schools exemplifies the innovative method.

## Methodology Used in the Learning Process and Learning Gained by **Young People**

Today, more and more Karen students are learning back their language. They now can read and write in their language which they learned to do while studying their indigenous food. They are learning back their culture by doing—observing their agroecology system through rotational farming, identifying medicinal plants, exploring the forest through touch, and sampling food made from indigenous seeds and plants.

With help from their Elders and teachers, the youth have started documenting the things they are learning, which they have started sharing widely in community-based workshops and seminars as well as in national events. In these spaces, they expressed the important role that their rotational farming system has in ensuring food diversity and preservation of their herbal medicines and cultural landscape. They have also been awarded for their informational campaigns.

## **Outcomes of Indigenous and Local Knowledge Revival**

Overall, the learning process has improved relations among members of the community. The community's knowledge holders, conscientious in their leadership role, played an important part in guiding the process of ILK revival and transfer. The most important result of this is that young people have gone back to their communities, learned to embrace their identity, and started on the path of confidently becoming productive members of their community. Among the students, they were able to express their hope of seeing the national education policy being amended to recognize and support ILK education in schools in the near future.

The youth were able to showcase actual products they have made as a result of learning different skills, such as woven handicrafts, traditional music and songs, and even seed banking techniques. These events were also opportunities for them to communicate their community's sustainable way of life. Their messages have sparked interest and awareness in neighboring communities where families have also been thinking about how they could get their young people to learn ILK. One of these communities is the Buddhist monks who perceive a spiritual connection to ILK and have since been interested in documenting ILK practice in their own village.



A Karen elder teaching a student on traditional knowledge rooted in rotational farming. 

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## **Continuing Challenges**

Karen youth completing primary education in their home communities need to migrate to urban areas to continue their studies or to work. It is feared that this situation constrains the young people from also learning their traditions and customs. Moreover, culture-based education which supports ILK transmission in schools has not been mainstreamed for the reason that ILK education is not recognized in national policy.

Certain ILK practices are more challenging to learn especially for young people who have not been formed early on in Karen traditions. Performing the hta (traditional poems) in rituals and ceremonies is one example. Karen Elders believe that to become the expected leaders of the community, young people need to be trained in doing good, to be lively and confident in their identity, possess strong ILK perspectives and values, believe in the role of cosmology (or dreams), and be brave in presenting and expressing themselves.

On the other hand, know-how is needed to help Indigenous knowledge holders adapt and develop innovative teaching methods and strategies to the present context. However, resources to support knowledge transmission by indigenous elders are limited. Presently, there is no allocation from government agencies.



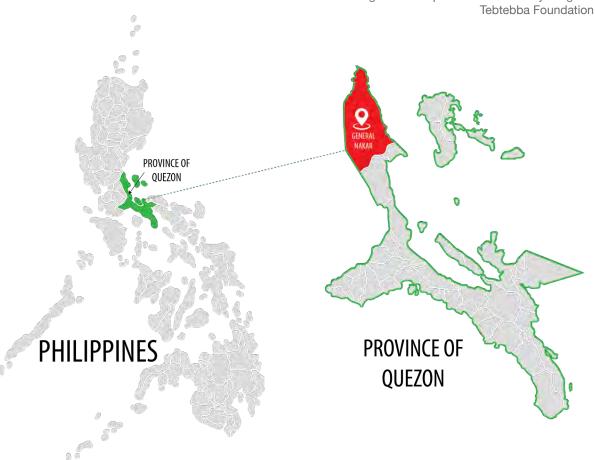
Karen students taking notes of the knowledge shared by their elder. 

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# Transfer of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Practices, and Spirituality in the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta, Philippines<sup>4</sup>

Marvin Astoveza Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta-Dumagat-Remontado sa Pagtatanggol at Binabaka ang Lupang Ninuno (SAGUIBIN-LN)

> Florence Daguitan Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity Program



This paper is developed from the sharing of Marvin Astoveza, SPA Facilitator, of Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta/ Dumagat at Remontado na Binabaka at Ipinagtatangol ang Lupaing Ninuno (SAGUIBIN-LN) or the Association of Indigenous Agta/Dumagat and Remontado Defending Ancestral Domain in the Training Workshop on Strengthening Community and School Cooperation for the Enhancement of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) Implementation held in Sagada from July 27 to 29, 2018 and organized by Tebtebba.

## Introduction

The Philippines is a culturally diverse nation with 110 ethnolinguistic groups spread all over the country. For the first time, in 2010, the national census included statistics on ethnicity, but no official result came out and the population of Indigenous Peoples continues to be estimated at 10% to 20% of the total population.

The Government of the Philippines recognizes the presence and distinct identity of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) in the country. Their rights are enshrined in the 1987 Constitution and further strengthened with the enactment of Republic Act 8371 of 1997 also known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) which contains the four bundles of IP rights—Rights to Ancestral Domains, Self-Governance and Empowerment, Social Justice and Human Rights, and Cultural Integrity. The IPRA further underscores the Right to Education of Indigenous Peoples, with a number of provisions also found in the 1987 Philippines Constitution, i.e., the rights of IPs "(a) to establish and control their education, (b) to receive protection of the State without discrimination, and (c) a mandate for the state to take measures to ensure children of Indigenous Peoples have access to education in their own language and culture" (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021).

In addition, the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 62, series 2011, "Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework" (Villaplaza, 2021, pp. 20-33) provides for adequate and culturally appropriate learning resources and environment for IP learners, among others. The continuing challenge, however, is that the Philippine educational system is still patterned after the American system of the colonial period wherein colonial values, norms, and development models are promoted. When these are prioritized, they "contribute to the unraveling and erasure of indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and ways of life" (Encomienda, 2023). Furthermore, many indigenous communities in geographically isolated areas still lack access to education. It is in this context that many groups started interventions in IP education, among which is the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta (SPA).

# The Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta

Our Elders value education—a system of education that promotes indigenous culture and worldviews which sometimes differ with views of mainstream society. An example is the view that there are natural objects which for us are alive but to others are non-living things. So our Elders requested the Church to set up a school which is now the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta or SPA.

An alternative school of learning, the SPA was created in 1987 by the Tribal Center for Development (TCD) together with the Catholic Prelature of Infanta in Catablingan in General Nakar town, Quezon Province (Mallari, 2012). The mission of SPA is to promote the indigenous culture, knowledge systems, and practices of the Agta People and to address the challenges of discrimination experienced by the community. At first, Church personnel were in charge of its administration, then in 1997, SPA began training local Agta leaders to take charge of the school. Since 2014, the school has been fully managed by the Agta community.

## Teaching Methodologies of the SPA

Long before the arrival of the colonizers in the Philippines, Our Agta ancestors had their own ways of learning and creating knowledge and had their own system of education. With leadership of the Elders, the SPA made the commitment to recreate the ancient ways of learning and knowing. Toward this, SPA crafted teaching and learning methodologies based on indigenous perspectives and practices of the ancestors.

Some of the teaching methodologies pioneered by SPA are:

#### 1. Transmission of Knowledge through Collective Teaching

Teaching our children is done collectively with the tagapagpadaloy (facilitator) cooperating with the Elders, local indigenous experts and practitioners serving as resource speakers. Students are encouraged to learn not only from those in school but from everyone in the community.

#### 2. Education through Experiential Learning

Our ancestral domain or customary territory is the classroom. Education should not be isolated from the realities of the community, rather it should be rooted in community life. The students are taught that they must relate to their ancestral domain which provides for their sustenance and well-being and even serves as their hospital and pharmacy in times of illness.

Guided by parents, facilitators, and experts, the children learn how to get their sustenance from the sea, streams, rivers, and brooks; hunt in the forests; and gather plants for food depending on the season. They are enjoined to participate in constructing a house as well as in the performance of rituals.

Our ancestral domain is an inclusive habitat for peoples, plants, forests, rivers, and water, and with observation, the relationship and interlinkages among these inhabitants and elements will come to light. These are perceptible, for example, in the size of the moon relative to the planting season, in the environment when cared for by people, and in how belief in the spirits relates to the protection of the environment.



The Agta Indigenous People in their learning by doing activities. 

MARVIN ASTOVEZA

#### 3. Community Life Should be Taught and Understood by the Children

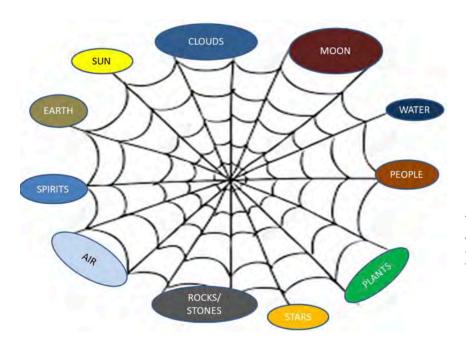
Our Elders had helped design the curriculum with the aim of increasing understanding of community life among the children which is taught based on lesson plans done each quarter. In the first quarter, the children learn about life being rooted in nature so that they will be taught how to fish and to collect shells for food. In the second quarter, they will progress to knowing about forest resources, how to hunt animals, gather root crops, fruit, and other forest products. In the third quarter, the focus is on skills useful in family life, such as building a house, bamboo craft-making, courtship, and marriage. Finally, in the last quarter, learning moves on to the practical aspects of community life, such as participating in debates, social studies, and relating mathematics to real world problems in the ancestral domain, such as when counting shrimp in connection to monitoring marine life, knowing the parts of the human body, and generally, how math can aid a person in understanding phenomena in and around the community through observation. Social studies, on the other hand, grounds the life of the Agta within the Filipino nation, history, and current events, making use of books as well as oral narratives of the life, history, and status of the Agta.

#### 4. Education is to Encourage Different Ways of Learning in Consideration of Age

We believe that people have their own ways of learning. Thus, the children are encouraged to listen to Elders and observe and monitor what is happening in the community, environment, and in the whole ancestral domain. In Grade 1, they start with just observing, listening, and understanding concepts, and as they grow older, move to actual doing and performing.

#### 5. Emphasis on Interrelations of All Life Forms

Our Elders teach that all in nature are interrelated and all life forms as well as inanimate objects in nature are alive. They give importance to transmitting this knowledge, including maintaining harmonious relations with others in the ancestral domain.



The ancestral land of the Agta Indigenous Peoples as illustrated in a spider web. 

MARVIN ASTOVEZA

The banana plant is used as a symbolic example (which is also being used in DepEd schools). The ground or land in which its roots are embedded represents community life; its roots represent the deep history of the land and people; the leaves represent the different fields of knowledge and culture; the fruit symbolizes self-reliance; the flowers represent public service; the trunk represents the ancestral domain. In a web of inter-relationships, the ancestral domain is further illustrated as a spider web that comprises the land, sun, moon, stars, water, air, plants, spirits, and stones.

Education does not end in school nor in the number of years completing school. It continues in one's relations in the community. And so, it is important that we always remind ourselves that all matter is interrelated, all nature gives life, and all nature is alive.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Practices, and Spirituality or IKSPS is at the heart of education in the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta. We believe and assert that our ancestors have their own IKSPS and a system of education long before the coming of the colonizers in which education, knowledge, and skills are acquired by doing, observing how people do things and activities in nature and listening to the Elders who are themselves professors and masters in the matters of their professions.

Education is not separate from daily life, rather it is rooted in everyday life in the community. The ancestral domain is the school where relationships are lived, that is, in relations with others in the community and with human beings in general, with the spirits that are also caring for it, with the ancestors, and with the future generation.

There are practical lessons as well like in the activity in which the children learn to fish and catch food from the river: First, they identify the part of the river to "calm" or reduce water from. Then, together they proceed to "calm" the river by transferring stones from one side of the river onto the other side and blocking off the flow of water, directing it toward one side of the river. When one side of the river has been calmed, they can happily fish and collect food. The children note down their learning and experience in the notebook they always carry with them. And so, they learn the indigenous way of fishing, that is, wading or swimming in the river to catch the fish with bare hands or shooting fish with improvised fish guns made of local materials. They learn by doing with guidance from their parents who have mastered the occupation.

SPA aspires to be a place of learning wherein education molds children into having strong characters capable of carrying on their Indigenous heritage of culture and wisdom, caring for their ancestral domain, firming up the resolve to seek as well as advance knowledge, participating in community life, and holding on to their belief in the Great Creator.

Culture is therefore not what a student does for a class assignment nor is it merely a subject matter to be studied. Culture is lived and practiced. It is the way in which learning happens in the process of strengthening one's personhood.

Education does not end in school but continues in one's relations with family and community. It occurs as one journey in life. Real education embraces the community's aspiration for and worldviews of self-determination.

## Impacts of the SPA

From its establishment up to the present, it has been an uphill climb for the SPA. Its major achievement is in the curriculum crafted with the full and effective participation of experts and knowledge holders in the community, and which has been molding students in the worldviews of their communities. Recently, when the people had to face a great adversary in the Kaliwa Dam Project, graduates of SPA were at the forefront of defending their land and resources, effectively defending their lives. The attitude sharply contrasts with that of those educated in the mainstream. Presently, the youth are organizing themselves to become a stronger voice for greater collective action toward the common good.

Presently offering Preparatory Level up to Grade 10, SPA received its accreditation in 2014 from DepEd. The school remains challenged by inadequate facilities and endowment support for scholarships. In regard to aspirations for higher education among its students, parents have been limited by the everincreasing cost of schooling beyond the community.

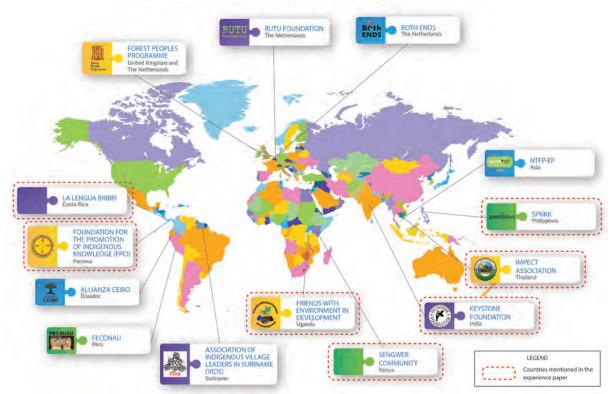
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# **Boosting ILK Transmission through Indigenous-Led Education: The ILED Network Experience**

Caroline de Jong<sup>5</sup> | Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)<sup>6</sup>

## INDIGENOUS-LED EDUCATION (ILED) NETWORK





Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is an international human rights NGO that supports the rights of forest peoples to own and control their lands and to decide their own futures based on respect for their rights, knowledge, cultures, and identities. FPP works at the interlinkages between local-national-regional and global policy arenas, and at the interfaces of human rights, economy, and ecology in support of Indigenous and forest peoples' visions and contributions to the formulation of laws, policies, and programs.

Website: https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/cultural-identity-knowledge/indigenous-lededucation

Email: iledsecretariat@rutufoundation.org or caroline@forestpeoples.org.

Website: https://www.rutufoundation.org/indigenous-led-education-network/ 6

#### Introduction

The Indigenous-Led Education (ILED) Network is a growing global network of grassroots and support organizations collaborating to support and promote Indigenous-led education. Current members include organizations based in India, the Philippines, Thailand, Panama, Peru, Costa Rica, Uganda, Kenya, and the Netherlands. The Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is among the founding members of the Network.

The seed for an ILED Network<sup>7</sup> was planted when founding organizations realized that while they had been meeting over the years to discuss and deliberate on common agendas, they were working on those issues and challenges independently of each other. Common challenges that have confronted the organizations in communities, particularly with children and the youth, are deteriorating levels of well-being and resilience manifested in the increasing loss of indigenous knowledge, language, territory control, and the widening cultural gap among generations. These are attributed to the current system of formal education in which a standard curriculum of prescribed methods in teaching and learning does not particularly align with Indigenous children's cultural heritage. This system of standardized learning fails to account for children entering schools from disadvantaged contexts. For example, children who attended residential schools at a young age have been subjected to cultural discord for far longer.

Further, Indigenous children are prohibited, ridiculed, or even punished for speaking in their mother tongue while they are on campus. Lessons are delivered in classroom settings mainly using text-based forms. In essence, the system's goal is to form and manage school children to attain an education measured in terms of a standard set of metrics of success compatible with life outside their home communities.

The organizations also share one other major concern which relates to the chronic underfunding and invisibility of education and cultural grassroots initiatives. Deemed too small and inconsequential, the chances of governments considering them in their priorities have been persistently low. Likewise, small initiatives many of which are run by community volunteers have difficulty accessing donors, especially international donors, whose funding histories reflect a preference for bigger conservation projects. Lengthy bureaucratic processes and onerous funding requirements which translate to high transaction costs pose significant barriers to entry.

Admittedly, dealing with the issues besides lacking national and local policy support has not been easy for the organizations working independently of each other. By joining forces, the organizations realized that they will be in a much better position to raise funds, increase program visibility, speak in a louder voice, and create bigger impact. It was also agreed that Indigenous-led education will be the core program with which their constituents, the Indigenous Peoples and communities could strategically exercise and realize self-determination and cultural resilience. Thus, in 2020, following an exploratory phase, the organizations constituted themselves into the ILED Network which was thereafter launched to the public in January 2021.

#### Structure of the ILED Network

The Network is founded on a horizontal structure of inclusivity, participation, and decision-making. A small steering group provides overall direction of the Network and coordination with members. The Secretariat, based at the Rutu Foundation for Intercultural Multilingual Education<sup>8</sup> in Amsterdam, is equipped with a modest budget to support the Network and its members. Regional Coordinators support the members and activities of the Network. In rationalizing its program of work, the Network stays clear of duplicating and competing with others and instead actively seeks to complement the work of like-minded Networks and initiatives.

See also https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/cultural-identity-knowledge/indigenous-led-education

See also https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/cultural-identity-knowledge/indigenous-led-education

## **Partner Communities and Groups**

The tropical forest regions where the biggest number of invisible and underfunded programs are known to be initiated are the locations prioritized by the Network. Partnerships are built with indigenous organizations and communities including children, the youth, elderly, parents, teachers and other educators, knowledge holders, and community leaders. Enablers which include the media, the academe, donors, and other allies and supporters are additionally sought. The Network also works with primary duty bearers, that is, governments, public institutions, and policymakers.

## **Functions of the Network and Its Approaches**

The Network has identified three functional areas in promoting ILK transmission:

- 1) Resource mobilization mainly through small grants which ensure needed funding of grassroots Indigenous-led education initiatives. To implement this, the Network has determined the following strategies:
  - **Donor education** and awareness of the interlinkages in nature and indigenous culture and the positive impact of initiatives embodying this.
  - Alternative funding enables local initiatives' access to needed resources. The Network's Secretariat has a role in intermediating with potential donors including those that traditionally have not supported small grassroots projects. A substantial amount of the seed funds secured by the Network have been utilized to put up the Small Grant Fund for Indigenous-led education. Eligible projects are nominated by Network members for initial funding of between €5000 to €8000. In the selection process, trust and relationships are also considered. The Network ensures a transparent horizontal process of collective review, decision-making, and giving feedback. Requirements in the application are kept to the essentials and the applicant is assisted by the Secretariat throughout the process.
  - Portfolio management of successful Indigenous-led education projects that inspire donors to give.
- 2) Organizing and supporting networking, knowledge sharing, and exchanges. The Network supports and organizes spaces for learning and networking that benefit its members. The Secretariat provides support in this work through regular communication of relevant news and updates, organizing based on topics requested by members' virtual knowledge-sharing events in which topics could be interpreted live using technologies engaging to the youth and developing learning materials on the linkages in Indigenous-led education, health, and food security.

In addition, the Regional Coordinators assist in preparing and organizing local, regional, and international exchanges. The regional knowledge exchanges on the role of gender in education were supported through the Gender Project launched in 2022 with funding from the Global Alliance on Green and Gender Action (GAGGA). The exchanges were delivered in the form of virtual discussions, on-site learning, briefings, podcasts, videos, and conferment of gender awards.

3) Raising awareness and visibility of Indigenous-led education initiatives. Webinars, dialogues, publications, multimedia, and social media content produced and organized by the Network communicate to donors and the public the value and impact of small-scale Indigenous-led education initiatives. The Network also contributes input to relevant processes and consultations.



ILED initiatives in Thailand (top left), Kenya (right), and the Philippiness (bottom left). 🗖 ILED NETWORK

## **Key Achievements and Outcomes**

#### Small grant funding

Following the launch of the Network's Small Grant Fund in 2022, members have nominated eligible grassroots initiatives for funding. To date, seven initiatives—three in Asia and two each in Africa and Latin America—were awarded, adding to the Network's portfolio of Indigenous-led education models and practices. These are:

## India: Kattunaickan, Cholanaickan, and Paniya communities in Nilambur region

In the three communities, children as young as five leave home to attend residential schools. As a result, they miss out on knowing more about their communities and traditional practices. For instance, the start of the school term coincides with the monsoon season which is traditionally the period in which adults engaged in fishing have the time to teach their children how to differentiate species of fish. To preserve these traditions and practices, the Nature and Culture Collective of the Keystone Foundation built the Community Resource Center and Museum to serve as a venue for communities in the region to celebrate and demonstrate to the younger generations their oral traditions of knowledge transmission and share ideas in sustainable living. These exchanges are held weekly at the Center.



Sumithra, one of the ILED Community Researchers, measuring and describing a community-owned object that is used to collect forest forage and wild food.

▲ ILED NETWORK

## Philippines: Negros Occidental Province in the Western Visayas region

A pivotal factor in the assimilation of Negrito9 school children is attributed to the standardized curriculum of the public education system. Furthermore, learning materials in the language of the Negrito children fall short of the mandate<sup>10</sup> of DepEd. To bridge this gap, Sentrong Pagpapalakas ng Negritong Kultura at Kalikasan, Inc. (SPNKK)<sup>11</sup> developed complementary learning materials for Negrito children with a small grant from the Network. In 2014, it released the bilingual workbook 'Proud to be Agta' for Grade 1 pupils, a first in the country. The workbook introduces learners to the Agta people's history, forest-oriented culture, and their ancestral domain. A follow-up funding will support the development of the illustrated version, which will be written in Agta with Filipino and English translations. It will feature a voyage in photos, children's drawings, recipes, stories, and songs.

In addition, SPNKK collaborated with more than 20,000 Negrito peoples to conceptualize the Mobile Forest School<sup>12</sup> which provides Negrito children with an alternative and culturally appropriate secondary schooling rooted in Negrito worldviews and lifeways.

#### Thailand: Nong Mon Tha Community in Northern Thailand

The mainstream schools attended by children in the community are taught only in Thai and prohibit the children from communicating in their mother tongue. To help the children overcome the situation, the Morwakhi Learning Centre in Nong Mon Tha Community, a project nominated by IMPECT, an ILED Network Member, had been put up as a place for the children, youth, as well as adults to relearn back their "life skills" in indigenous language, weaving, music, dance, and ritual and ceremony.

Collective term referring to Philippines' IPs—Agta, Aeta, Ati, Ata, and Batak—who make their living mainly from hunting and gathering. The Negrito peoples are the oldest indigenous group in the Philippines (Rutu Foundation).

<sup>10</sup> Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as defined in DepEd Order No.16 on February 17, 2012. See https://www.deped.gov.ph/2012/02/17/do-16-s-2012-guidelines-on-the-implementation-of-the-mother-tongue-based-parameters and the supplementation of the properties of the supplementation of the properties of the supplementation of the properties of the propertiesmultilingual-education-mtb-mle/

The national Negrito umbrella organization established in 2016. Its goal is to promote the cultural revival and empowerment of the Negrito communities of the Philippines (People & Plants).

More about the Program at https://www.rutufoundation.org/mobile-forest-school-kick-off/



Children and adults engaged in the culture and environment camp, organized by the Morwakhi community education center.

#### Costa Rica: Bribri communities near the border with Panama

Educational materials acquired abroad are being used by schools to teach children Western lifestyles but teach nothing about the Indigenous children's culture. In the country, the Network connected with Alí Garcia Segura, an ethnologist and professor at the University of Costa Rica born and raised in the Bribri community. His life's mission is transforming his country's educational system into a more inclusive one. With the small grant support from the Network, Ali, collaborating with the communities, has started recording and documenting select traditional languages and knowledge. He also creates educational materials in audio and video formats, particularly to get Bribri children and youth especially those who only have remote access to know more about their identity.

#### Panama: Guna Yala

Schools in Guna Yala are presently ill-equipped for cultural education. This has led to Guna learners becoming disconnected from their culture and traditions. In turn, this is changing community dynamics and increasing incidences of school dropout and crime, among others.

With small grant funds from the Network, the Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge (FPCI) established the Eco-Cultural Strengthening for Young Gunas Program which has been working with schools and communities to address the situation of Guna learners. Science clubs formed through the Program have engaged more than 220 students of the Félix Esteban Oller and Olotebiliguinya Schools in Narganá and Ustupu Communities respectively. Guna Elders and experts train the students on indigenous environmental management using intercultural learning. The trainers will be provided the teaching materials to be developed through the Program.



The photo shows an activity during the Experience Exchange on Gender & Education hosted by the women's organization of Rio Tigre Island in Guna Yala Territory, Panama, on August 2023, with participants from Costa Rica, Perú, Ecuador, and Colombia (ILED network members).

The women exchanged practices of cassava harvesting, food preparation, and especially experiences on traditional medicine for women (childbirth, birth control, sexuality) and shared their life stories and the various forms of patriarchal oppression in their communities and in their family life.

NORMA ZAMORA

### Kenya: Sengwer Berur women in Kabolet

The Sengwer people of Kabolet live in a settlement exposed to environmental degradation, particularly severe soil erosion. What's more, Sengwer children born in the last 22 years grew up unaware of the importance of trees and inexperienced in the traditional skill of growing trees.

Realizing this, the Sengwer Berur women's group who are managing a tree nursery in the community undertook to teach the children the traditional ways of restoring eroded ecosystems. In the first stage of the initiative, with the slogan "growing a tree for my own breath," children are taught to plant trees in the traditional way. In the learning sessions, the women's group, with help from the community elders, also introduced traditional beekeeping and land and natural resource management. One year on, with the seedlings of flowering trees the children had planted now growing, honey production restoration in their community looks promising.

To take stock of progress made, the women's group holds a monthly session with the children, and community elders are invited to teach what they know about conservation and other related topics that were not taught in the school. The women have also been holding Sengwer language classes weekly. They also plan to launch a beekeeping program in the near future.



The Sengwer Berur women group at their tree nursery. 

Sengwer Berur women's GROUP

## Uganda: Kigaando, Bulera, Rukiinga, Kibasi, and Bunnyonyi villages in Kibasi Parish, Kabarole District, Western Uganda

Friends with Environment in Development (FED) initiative in Uganda, the newest Indigenous-led education project to receive small grant funding, aims to support IPs in rediscovering and restoring their identity, values, language, and practices, and connect this to sustainable livelihoods. Initial Project consultations with the Indigenous communities brought out concerns for the continuing degradation of their environment and limitations imposed on their use of their knowledge and language. The Project is also exploring with the communities how Indigenous-led education could counter the impacts of post-colonial education in Uganda.

#### **Networking and Learning**

Knowledge exchange sessions were organized by the Network for its members. Specifically, for Asia and Africa regions, virtual sessions on the role of gender in education were held in November 2022 and for the Latin America region in February 2023. It was agreed that the lessons, insights, and recommendations from the events will be put together in a brief. The Network has also planned to produce podcasts.

Members appreciated the holding of the exchanges which were organized in such a way that they felt safe as they shared about their work and challenges. The spaces were also where members encouraged, inspired, and mutually grew in solidarity.

#### **Raising Awareness**

On August 9, 2022, the Network released its first publication, "Pass It on!", 13 concurrently with the ceremonial launch of the UN 2022-2032 International Decade of Indigenous Languages. It was followed up with an online event launch<sup>14</sup> on September 21, 2022. The key messages of the report are:

- There is a mismatch in the implementation of mainstream education with the protection of Indigenous languages. Mainstream education instead is contributing to the gradual disappearance of indigenous languages.
- Space is needed wherein indigenous culture, language, and oral traditions thrive.
- More funding and support are crucial for Indigenous-led education.
- Promoting and supporting indigenous languages requires a holistic perspective of language, that is, linguistic diversity and vitality are connected to territory, nature, biodiversity, health, livelihoods, spirituality, relations, and knowledge, and takes into account the roles of children, the youth, and women.
- Underlying human rights issues particularly in education need to be addressed. Promotion of indigenous languages will succeed only if underlying human rights violations such as discrimination and gender and power imbalance undermining the continued existence of indigenous languages are acknowledged and addressed.

On December 13, 2022, Network members attended the high-level launch event of the Decade of Indigenous Languages at UNESCO's Paris offices where they turned the spotlight on the messages posed in the "Pass It On!" report. Members also joined the social media global campaign for indigenous languages by posting stories of Indigenous-led education on the Network's Instagram.<sup>15</sup>

On February 21, 2023, in celebration of International Mother Language Day, the Network posted online two short videos expounding on the theme, "Multilingual education: A necessity to transform education." Featuring Ali García Segura of Costa Rica<sup>16</sup> and Pamella Kuto from the Sengwer Berur women's group in Kenya, the messages dwelt on discrimination, linguistic stigmatization, and language elimination in mainstream schools. Ali and Pamela also briefed audiences on their Indigenous-led education projects highlighting the ways indigenous culture, language, and knowledge are being preserved. They then made a call for increased attention and support for similar initiatives. UNESCO featured Ali's speech in its webcast symposium on International Mother Language Day and was subsequently retweeted by the official Twitter account of the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

<sup>13</sup> ILED Network's first report on the role of education in Indigenous languages. The publication contains six stories from the grassroots, multimedia resources such as video clips, songs, and stories, as well as the Network's key recommendations for future policy directions and its perspective of the Global Action Plan for the Decade of Indigenous Languages. More about the report at https://www.rutufoundation.org/ilednetworkpublication/

<sup>14</sup> More about the event at https://www.forestpeoples.org/index.php/en/ILED\_IndigenousLanguagesLaunch\_2022

<sup>15</sup> ILED Network Instagram account @ilednetwork at https://www.instagram.com/ilednetwork/

<sup>16</sup> Downloadable at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L8knQh4LYdd6Kc5bOl38lCjkr1VDKjSu/view



(Top Left) ILED initiative in Thailand. (Bottom Left) This exhibition & display was organized at a local college in Nilambur, where the ILED team working on Community Museums demonstrated how objects & artifacts can be used for sensitization on Indigenous Traditional Cultural Expressions of the region. (Right) Pinky from the Kattunaickan community is demonstrating traditional fishing practices to the children of her village as part of the ILED project and associated documentation. 

ILED NETWORK

## **New Strategy and Plans Moving Forward**

The Network recently adopted a "controlled growth" strategy in which, instead of expanding rapidly, it will deepen its existing work with members and then gradually add a limited number of new members. The strategy will allow reasonable room for trial and error and for the Secretariat to continue delivering the Network's commitments to members.

#### Expanding support to Indigenous-led education initiatives and practitioners

The Network aspires to deepen its support to local Indigenous-led education initiatives and practitioners, particularly its current roster of Small Grant Fund awardees, and gradually expand their number over time. The Network is also exploring organizing exchanges with support organizations, donors, and other potential allies to brainstorm alternative funding and grassroots engagement models.

#### The Indigenous Youth Fellowship Program

The Indigenous Youth Fellowship Program, identified by Network members in 2022 as a priority initiative, is set to select, beginning in 2023, Indigenous Youth who will be given the opportunity to work on Indigenous-led education with communities. The experience is expected to equip the youth with practical knowledge and skills as they are mentored by the local staff of Network members and at the same time help communities shape the direction of their Indigenous-led education initiatives.

The Fellowship grant will cover the time the youth will be spending on Indigenous-led education activities and for their mentoring support. It also includes a budget for field travel, hosting of Indigenous youth-led education initiatives in their home countries, and for organizing virtual meetings with other Fellows to share experiences and learning and build an international network of Indigenous Youth leaders for Indigenous-led education. Experts will be invited to train and further develop the Fellows in related practical skills such as storytelling on digital and multimedia platforms, facilitation, project management, fundraising and grant reporting, and development of pedagogical materials.

#### Networking, knowledge sharing, and exchanges

Committed to continuously learning from each other and taking into consideration that knowledge sharing is an important motivation for members to join, the Network has planned to create more opportunities for learning exchange including field visits to regions, webinars, and online workshops.

### Strengthening coordination capacity in the regions

The Regional Coordinators are the first point of contact for local information and tailored advice and support. They are involved in reviewing work plans, strategies, proposals, scoping for potential partners, donors, and opportunities for collaboration, and in related Network activities such as publications, webinars, and knowledge exchanges. They serve as ambassadors for Indigenous-led education in their respective regions. In light of the current setup vis-à-vis its strategies of controlled growth and program visibility, the Network plans to gradually increase their number to two Coordinators per region and further increase them as Network membership expands.

## Creating more opportunities for storytelling

The Network will endeavor to increase its storytelling activities in support of its awareness-raising and visibility work strand. More multimedia materials putting the spotlight on Indigenous-led education will be created and produced. These would include podcast episodes, feature articles integrating audio-visual material, and serialized advocacy publications. Communication particularly pertaining to strategy and capacity is another area the Network is keen to improve and where new partners will be sought.

# Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge of the Mohawk People of Kahnawà:ke in Quebec, Canada<sup>17</sup>

Ieronhienhá:wi McComber and Karihwáktste Deer | lakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest





lakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest is a grass roots, not-for-profit language nest that has been in operation since April of 2014. lakwahwatsiratátie means "our families are continuing." The Language Nest is a supportive Kanien 'keha language immersion program for parents and children that includes cultural teachings (cycle of ceremonies, planting, cooking, etc.), intergenerational transference of knowledge and language, healthy living and an extended family concept. The program is primarily comprised of parents/caregivers and children ages 0-4 years old but also includes expectant parents, grandparents, and older siblings. The lakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest envisions a future where their people and language flourish.

Website: https://www.iakwahwatsiratatie.com

This paper is based on Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest's presentations during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge held on Mohawk territory in Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Council (KEDC), Quebec, Canada on November 28-30, 2022. The discussion during the reflection and open forum has also been incorporated.

## **Beginnings**

There was a gap in language transmission because of the historical introduction of residential schools for Mohawk children. This blocked the transmission of language to subsequent generations. In 2005–2007, we gathered at the longhouse as a group of volunteers who saw the need to teach the Mohawk language to our children. We conducted an immersion to learn our own indigenous language. We hired a 1st language speaker to advance our knowledge about the language. At that time, we also intended to create a support system, but some changes took place in our lives that caused us to be less active after 2007.

In 2014, we decided to bring back the program and continue teaching the language to our children. We took lessons from how we left things in 2007 and revived the Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest program. To study the feasibility of the program, a survey was conducted to gauge if people in the community were open to it. The survey results showed positive support from the community.

Participants to the program were selected from the volunteers who answered the survey. We came up with a proposal that was approved and implemented for a year. In that one-year program, we took in all levels of speakers. Since the first year of implementation in 2014, the program has been a success. We have now been implementing the Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest program for 8 years.

## Ways of Teaching and Learning

We continually develop and update Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest through our annual evaluation. The program was designed to create a close-to-nature and homey environment for intergenerational learning that will contribute to one's daily functionality. It was set up like an extended home where participants would feel like they are in their grandmother's house having a regular conversation.

We use age-appropriate visuals and materials that are friendly to the children from toddlers, to preschoolers, to teens as indicated in their daily curriculum. Parents participate in the process by joining their children in their activities so that they are both learning in the process. The parents are learning the technical aspects of the language, while the kids are acquiring it naturally.

For the children to learn more about our homeland, we incorporated traditional knowledge on harvesting, seeds, forests, medicines, animals, among others into the curriculum. We give the parents homework to create more personal visual aids by using pictures of their family. For example, they use pictures of their everyday activities like fishing or any livelihood or domestic activities. We ask the parents to bring the pictures and give them time to discuss the activities with the participation of the children.

The mothers implementing the Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest program realized that learning by doing activities in the natural environment of the homeland makes learning more fun and effective.

One of our success stories is a mother who is now an advanced speaker of the language. She is homeschooling her children and grandchildren. Her daughter, who speaks the language, is also helping in teaching the language to her own children. This shows intergenerational transmission of knowledge like learning the indigenous language and the culture attached to it.

To support this work, we put together a proposal and submitted it to the Aboriginal Languages Initiatives of the government of Canada, and it was approved. We also received funding from the Early Learning Childcare Fund. Moreover, we received donations and did fund-raising to further support our program. With this support, we were able to produce resources like flashcards, books with drawings from parents and children, songbooks, and coloring books. We are currently working on a cookbook which is almost ready. For over 10 years, parents have contributed to this work by sharing recipes.

Our program also built a lot of networks with other communities and countries. We collaborated with an artist from Mexico for a puppet show. The puppet show tells the story of a corn, which is one of their staple foods, and how it has been difficult to find corn these days. This story was also made available online.

Our work in Language Nest is such a rich initiative. The name Language Nest connotes a place that is safe and secure, where you really want to go. Students of all generations learning at the same time using various resources and in their own land allows them to learn about our heritage in addition to learning our language. This represents how language relates to everything like food, health, and spirituality.

## **Community Strengthening Identity**

Marion Konwanénhon Delaronde | The Kahnawà:ke Cultural Center

The youth actively participate in the creation of learning materials. With their help, we have produced resources like textbooks, stories, plays, and digital learning resources like video, audio, text, animation, among others.

The elders play a vital role. With their guidance, we are able to create learning materials and resources in the Mohawk language. We seek the advice and feedback of our elders to develop and improve the learning materials, which help preserve language and culture and to celebrate these. To keep the language going, it is important to set the foundation for our children.

Examples of these resources are puppet shows which use the Mohawk language. We are also creating a television show for kids that is rooted in our culture. Recently, we developed a book about birds which started with the idea to make a guide for bird watching in Kahnawà:ke written in Mohawk with an English translation. It was designed to be an easy read like a comic book. The text and photos were adjusted to be more understandable and fun.

## **Discussions from the Open Forum**

What stood out is the roles of different people and generations like the involvement of the parents, elders, and youth. It is usually complicated to address different needs and different age groups.

It is heartwarming to hear that Language Nest operates like an extended family with lots of activities indoors and outdoors, and time spent in the longhouse. It provides a safe atmosphere with lots of attention on learning by doing that is different from a classroom environment where textbooks are the norm. Also, it is encouraging to see the important role of women.

Knowledge is necessary in language. Language is an important medium to transmit knowledge. It is beneficial to know how to involve the community in this kind of initiative and ways of teaching the language where children really learn by doing. Some who are learning English focus on the grammar but are not able to speak English. Activities used by Language Nest are important to facilitate the learning process.

The implementation of the Language Nest program is a simple approach that can be done anywhere. It does not require much know-how about education methodologies. It is reassuring to hear that such a simple but effective methodology can be used in different places, offering hope that programs like this will continue.



Kahnawà:ke women with their children in the natural environment of their homeland.

▲ IAKWAHWATSIRATÁTIE LANGUAGE NEST

## Collective Reflections From the 2022 ILK Global Workshop

#### Innovative and creative ways of learning

The presentation of the experience of SPA in the Philippines ignited a discussion on innovative and creative ways of learning. The SPA experience shows that there are other ways of teaching indigenous knowledge outside the classroom by using traditional ways of learning. Members agree that the methods used by the SPA are effective in the transmission of IK and they need to be encouraged through policy development. There is however a challenge shared by the Philippine participants that while the country through DepEd adopted Indigenous Peoples Education, it is facing a problem in its lack of educational resources to implement the national guideline.

A participant highlighted research regarding the significance of people's early interaction with nature which is important for indigenous communities and for others as well. An example is a study that talks about the good effects of children spending time with nature like going to the farm, which made them appreciate nature and living with nature.

#### Developing learning materials on IK

The participants from the Philippines shared experiences in developing learning materials on IK. The PIKP for instance, had a project in Itogon, Benguet where they came up with educational materials through a partnership with the school, community, teachers, Indigenous People's Organization (IPO) of Tuding, the Indigenous People's Mandatory Representative, and the Local Government Unit. It is called Daddad-at ed Itogon (Storytelling in Itogon) wherein they collect and put together folktales and rituals, among others in a book. The school appreciated the partnership and is now using the book as an educational resource. The challenge, however, is

the painstaking process of getting the book approved by DepEd as an official learning material. DepEd has strict standards, which are too hard to comply with, for developing learning materials. In another experience, the school ended up refusing to submit their materials to DepEd because of the issue of copyright—DepEd maintains exclusive copyright of learning materials.

Organizations from the Philippines are bound to carry out dialogues with the government to influence DepEd to appreciate the educational materials emerging from the efforts of different actors that are useful not only in the curriculum but also in the transmission of IK.

#### Language transmission

The importance of language in the transmission of IK was highlighted by participants. Knowledge, as was succinctly articulated, is contained in language and language serves as an important medium to transmit knowledge. Participants were inspired that community members of all ages are involved in initiatives of language and knowledge transmission in many ways that are effective. Rather than learning the language by learning the grammar, experiences show that methods like that of Iakwahwatsiratátie Language Nest are effective in facilitating the learning process.

The presentations were complementary and at the same time contrasting. Rural versus urban settings provide contexts for learning. Language learning usually happens when people are growing up and learning in different settings. However, the establishment of government schools created a learning divide of having to use one or the other.

What ensued was a robust discussion on the challenges of language transmission. In the case of Language Nest, the imposition of residential schools in Mohawk land created a gap in the transmission of language. A participant shared that in another conference in Hawaii, they were talking about losing their language because of a similar generational gap in transmission. Intergenerational learning needs to examine all generations and how interaction among these generations is happening. It is not easy to transmit knowledge when language is disappearing.

In Guna, there is a 'lost generation' who were schooled in Western education and not in Guna culture. Many children living in the city do not speak the Guna language, which is very important in learning the culture. Many who study in cities do not want to go back to the community.

This is also the case in Thailand where many of the younger generations who studied in the cities choose to become slaves to the system of work and forget about life in the community. A photo story shows the aspiration of a woman elder to educate the young people about their culture and identity and to take pride in their identity including their language.

Despite the challenges, inspiration was drawn from the experiences shared, for instance those of the Language Nest. The generations are working hand in hand in learning the language while simultaneously learning about their heritage. Their methods not only teach children their language and culture but also about peoples' relationships with nature. It is also in a way balancing the knowledge learned by students from school and their cultural home.

#### **Funding for Indigenous Education**

There was a discussion on ways of funding the transmission of indigenous and local knowledge at the local and international levels as well as on setting up communal schools. In Northern Thailand, there are government schools where IK is introduced in the curriculum and they have funds to support elders to teach in these schools. In communal schools, the community supports teachers' salaries because the government does not recognize these as schools but as learning centers. NGOs like PASD and IMPECT in Thailand are supporting these communal schools. For these initiatives to expand to other communities, there is a need to carry out policy advocacy for their recognition.

It was pointed out that the funding issue is diverse and is an important part of a wider conversation. Another raised the point that establishment of small grants allows communities to have long-term security. Another participant reiterated that small grants go directly to grassroots organizations and the need to explore the multi-donor mechanism for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), which can be a way to bring IP perspectives to funders towards decolonizing funding. In this regard, it is relevant to have discussions with donors to raise their awareness of the lessons from different funding mechanisms accessed by IPs.

Synergies are already there and there are overlaps at various levels. For instance, work on the indicator on linguistic diversity and speakers of indigenous languages was discontinued by UNESCO due to the lack of funding. Thus, in the future, more systematic work on monitoring trends in indigenous languages can be done at the local, national, to global levels. Also discussed was the need to invite UNESCO to play their leading role in addressing structural challenges in the IDIL, including the crucial importance of further collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on this issue. It is also relevant to include IPs when talking about synergizing the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) with other processes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plans (NBSAPs).

#### **Identity crisis**

Participants discussed the reality of "identity crises" among young people, some expressing shock about the occurrence of suicide in the presentation from Northern Thailand. The incident was a special case, and it was caused by the strict laws in the community about having relationships, going to the forest, and having no choices. These circumstances caused an identity crisis among the young people. They were confused and could not find a solution to their problems due to limited exposure to the real world. Beyond these reasons, the underlying cause was the education system where the curriculum does not allow learning to take place in the community.

A participant recommended the need for an intergenerational dialogue to take place to bridge the gap and address the issue of identity crisis more flexibly. Having a dialogue with the elders around this issue can be challenging because the elders have different roots and perspectives. Thus, there needs to be a well-thought-out plan to manage the differences through a dialogue.

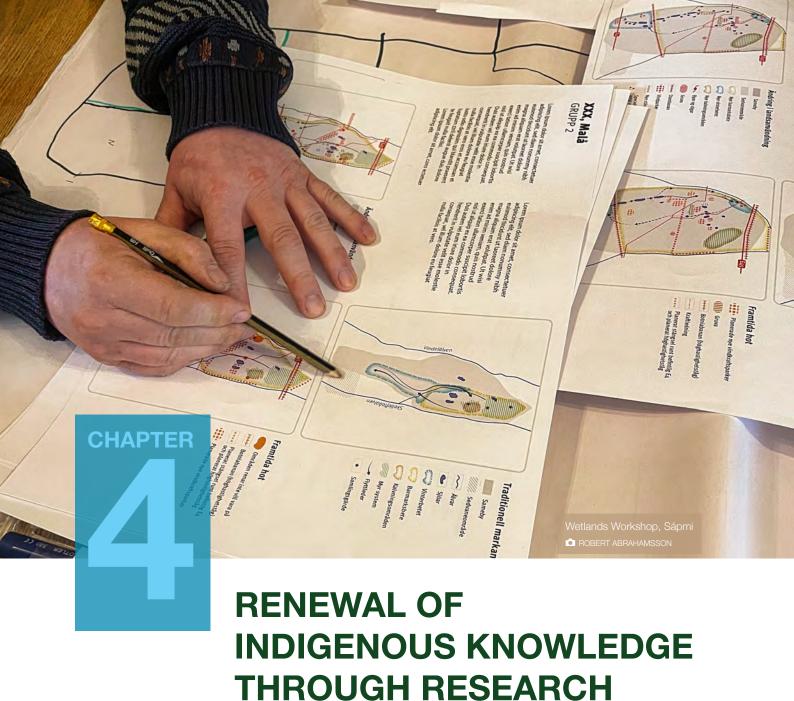
In the Cordillera, there is a way of thinking called Kasiyana which means, there is light at the end of a dark tunnel to help in dealing with problems and help address challenges in mental health.

#### Transformative education

The participants discussed the opportunities to push the agenda of transformative education in COP 15 and beyond. The youth proposed a capacity action plan and part of this is mainstreaming indigenous education. There has to be strong coordination among the youth and other sectors like the academe who are present at COP 15. There is a working group on this and there are opportunities for this in the post-2020 GBF. This is the opportunity to have proposals about transformative education.

There are also opportunities to highlight the efforts of members by integrating these good practices in the plan to have a transformative education like the work of UNESCO in highlighting the importance of language. A participant recommended aligning these efforts with the learning pathways.

For transformative education to advance, values should be upheld and systemic changes are required such as taking steps to eradicate corruption in the management of education budgets.

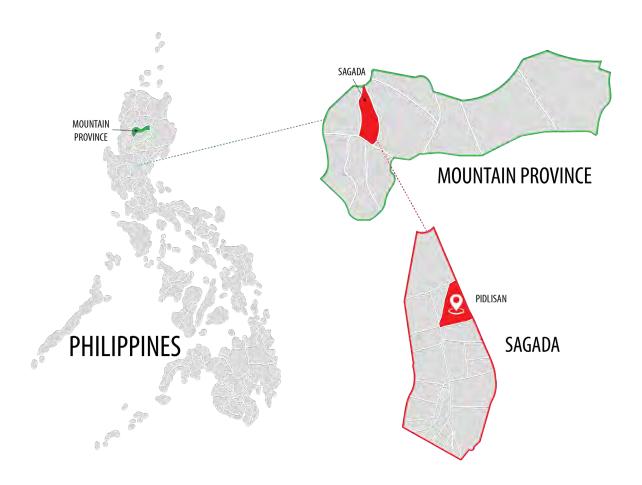


"If science is evaluated by its own peer reviewers internal to that knowledge system, it seems under an equitable system, Indigenous Knowledge would be evaluated by knowledge holders from that knowledge system."

- Wheeler et al., 2020

# **Revitalization and Transmission of Pidlisan Indigenous** Values through Community Action Research on Small-Scale Mining in Mountain Province, Philippines

Florence Daguitan | Tebtebba





The Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity Program of Tebtebba advocates for biodiversity policies relevant to Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD) processes. It works with other Indigenous Peoples' groups to strategize and input on priority issues and concerns such as Indigenous Peoples' rights, indigenous knowledge, free, prior and informed consent, customary sustainable resource use, and access and benefit sharing.

Website: https://www.tebtebba.org

#### Introduction

This paper presents how community-based monitoring and review was operationalized during the study of small-scale mining of the Pidlisan Tribe of Sagada, Mountain Province. Particularly, it looks into how indigenous knowledge was mobilized and guided the research process, and how indigenous values and culture were shared.

#### The Pidlisan Ancestral Domain

The Pidlisan ili or the ancestral domain of the Pidlisan people dominates the northern part of the municipality of Sagada, Mountain Province, Philippines and is located within the coordinates 17°08'N 120°54'E. It has a total land area of 3,902.48 of which approximately 83.23% or 3,248.30 hectares are forest land. It is recognized by the local government unit as the site of the remaining forest frontiers in Sagada, maintaining the largest watershed of pine and mossy forests in the municipality. In the 1960s, the Philippine government divided the area into 4 barangays, Fidelisan (the original settlement), Bangaan, Pide, and Aguid. In 2010, the Philippine Statistics Authority recorded a population of 2,123 in the four barangays of the Pidlisan ancestral domain.

Pidlisan in the early 21st century is dominantly an indigenous community, having sustained their dapay as a center of spirituality, where community rituals are performed and as the center of governance, where the amam-a/dumap-ay (male council of elders who are holders of traditional wisdom) meet to decide on community matters. The people have a strong sense of identity as I-Pidlisan or people of Pidlisan and are proud to be referred to as Igorots, the collective identity of Indigenous Peoples of the Cordilleras. Although weakening, people are continually upholding many customary laws like the indigenous tenurial arrangement, namely: (1) saguday di tribu (land of the commons), (2) saguday di dumap-ay (lands collectively owned by families who belong to one dap-ay), (3) saguday di sinpangapo (lands collectively owned by a clan) and (4) the family lands and corresponding management system.<sup>1</sup>

# A Facilitated Research Of the People, For the People, and By the People

In June 2011, Tebtebba established its partnership with the Pidlisan Tribe of Sagada in response to the verbal request of some Pidlisan women to assist them in assessing the present situation of their ili, or land and its peoples. Both parties agreed to collaborate on a study regarding the status and trends on the wellbeing of lands/territories and natural resources and the people of Pidlisan; they took on responsibilities and tasks to conduct this project. The community would mainly be in charge of mobilizing people to participate in the research process through contributing resources based on their capacities like providing the venues, setting appropriate schedules, identifying key informants on various research topics, acting as co-facilitators, and others. Tebtebba would provide the finances (mainly for lunch when people need to come together in the course of the research process) and be the main documenter and facilitator.

Workshop on Present Land Issues of the Different Organizations of Pidlisan Tribe, May 8, 2012, Pidlisan Barangay, Sagada, Mountain Province, convened by the DAMAYAN organization; unpublished report.

Tebtebba adheres to an integrated holistic approach for Indigenous Peoples' self-determined sustainable development (IHA-IPSSDD)2 that involves community-based monitoring and information systems (CBMIS). The CBMIS refers to the initiatives of Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations to monitor their community's well-being and the state of their territories and natural resources, applying a mix of traditional knowledge and innovative tools and approaches.

This paper will focus on the process of community assessment of the policies on safeguards in relation to their small-scale mining: how knowledge was mobilized to document the history of mining and the policies handed down through oral tradition, and the processes of generating information and doing collective analysis.

From the onset of the project, no elaborate research design was formulated, but there was an emphasis on the use of indicators relevant to Indigenous Peoples (i.e., trends in the state of land/territories and resources, traditional knowledge on resource management, traditional occupations, and customary governance). As the research progressed, the community would determine the next steps, identifying further data/information and knowledge that are needed.

The first research activity gathered representatives of farmers, miners, elders, elected leaders, and women to share the results of their monitoring and observations on what was happening to their ancestral domain. One major finding from the workshop was that the health of all the land uses all over their territory were threatened by the operation of small-scale mining (SSM). Hence, the body resolved to do a focused case study on this matter. It took the Pidlisan community and Tebtebba about four years (June 2011–2014) to complete the community action research on the SSM.

The research methods were a mix of key informant interviews and group discussions complemented by data interpretation and mapping the underground of the mining site. Whenever there were problems to be resolved and which needed more in-depth discussion or further investigation, Tebtebba would step out and community processes and procedures would take place at the appropriate schedule/s of the community. [And when issues are resolved, the research continues and Tebtebba resumes its facilitator role.l

Most of the informants are miners and their leaders (few are pioneer miners who are also elders) and women who have been regularly patrolling the mining sites. Tebtebba staff facilitated the discussions using prepared questionnaires, and the elders and farmers actively participated. Some women and elected officials also posed follow-up questions or clarifying information. Young mothers and a handful of the youth (3-5) came into the process and listened with keen interest. All sectors were mobilized in the analysis and interpretation of data.

## The History of Mining and Changing Values in Pidlisan

"Gold extraction has been part of our traditional occupation but NOT 'usok' or underground mining. Our elders held on to their position of saying no to any kind of mining because this will create deformation on the natural land, which is a disrespect to Kabunyan, the Creator; and will affect the health of our land," emphasized one of the elder pioneer miners.

No one can recall the exact period when gold was first produced from their land, but some estimated that this may have happened prior and up to the 17th century. This is indicated by the "wising," gold jewelry shaped with an outer layer encircling an ovary-like space symbolizing fertility and used as earrings or a necklace inherited from ancestors. Gold ores were gathered from mountain slopes and gold dust from the rivers.

IPSSDD is the integration of human rights, ecosystems/indigenous territorial management systems, knowledge bases (upholds the primacy of indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and practices but open to other appropriate and relevant knowledge systems) in building sustainable economies with special consideration of the gender, intergenerational, and intercultural dimensions of development.

In the 1930s, some able-bodied men of Pidlisan were recruited to work in the corporate mines and small-scale mining in Philex, Sangilo, Lepanto in the province of Benguet. They acquired the knowledge and skills of mining. From the 1960s to the 1970s, miners started their exodus to go back to their areas of origin. By this time, the cash economy was entrenched in the *ili* yet there was a lack of employment opportunities. Some former miners asked permission from their elders to allow mining, but this was denied. Some resumed the collection of ores on the surface and gold panning in the rivers during the off season of farm activities. When gold ore on the surface became scarce, the former miners once again sought the permission of the *dap-ay* to allow mining.

Despite the "no consent" of the elders, some started doing abukay/usok or SSM during the night. These covert operations were discovered by Kapitan Somebang who issued an order to put a stop to such activities. This began the decade-long dialogues and negotiations between the elders and former workers in the mines of Benguet Province. As elders stood firm on their position of "no to usok" the miners started organizing themselves. By 1985, the Pidlisan Miners' Association (PMA) was born with 50 founding members. They underwent a collective negotiation with the elders for the opening of SSM. After a series of dialogues, mining was allowed with regulatory policies crafted by the dumap-ay.

When the elders allowed mining, what they had in mind was artisanal mining or SSM. These types of mining involve subsistence miners who work independently and collectively (as an association). These miners are not officially employed. They mine and pan for gold using their own tools. Artisanal miners are seasonal workers and often work using hand tools.

Up to 1992, mining in Pidlisan like the traditional SSM of Itogon, Benguet relied mainly on manual tools:

- 1. picks, shovels, chisels, pinch bars, sledgehammers, pulleys and ropes (for hoisting) to make their tunnels big enough for a man to enter to economize on labor and timber,
- 2. carbide lamp and miner's lamp to work in the dark tunnel,
- 3. blacksmith blowers for underground ventilation,
- 4. wooden square boxes with wheels (carts) to carry and transport wastes, soil and gold ores, from underground to outside of the tunnel,
- 5. sabak or the use of pans to separate gold dust through gravity concentration,
- 6. mortar and pestle that was changed to a manually operated wooden ball mill and then to a metal ball mill powered by the water flow of the river, which was the most advanced tool at that time.

SSM requires the cooperation of individual miners to work as a collective, adopting the traditional *ubbo* or network of labor exchange groups. Collective decision-making, an aspect of labor exchange groups, was strengthened. Traditional values guided the operation of the mines. Based on their capacities, the miners pool their resources, work together to produce gold, and divide the sale equally and transparently.

Cultural traditions from Itogon, Benguet that reflected Pidlisan values were readily adopted in the operation of the mine. One such value was the sagaok support system among the miners:

Sagaok is the sharing of blessings by opening the gate of a productive tunnel to those who are still searching for the gold vein. The less fortunate miners are welcome to join a productive mine for some days so that they will have something for their families. This means that the lucky miners who have struck gold help fellow miners who still have to find their gold vein. Apart from the genuine spirit of helping other miners, there is also a common belief that miners who extend help to others will be blessed with more.



As an indigenous community, Pidilisan practice collective work for the common good through (top) tree planting a grassland and (bottom) doing the gibo or the repair of an irrigation canal through group work. PIDLISAN TRIBE ORGANIZATION (PITO)

A second traditional value is the sharing of the gold, which is seen as a gift to women and children. Miners intentionally leave some ore for women and children, a traditional practice in Itogon that was adopted by the Pidlisan miners. The ore is gathered by women and processed by the children. Also to be shared is the linang (mineral particles with gold content separated from the gold dust during the extraction process). Women and children are welcome to reprocess the linang, from which they can extract their own gold without having to enter the mines.

Water and gravity concentration was the main method of separating the gold dust from the rest of the debris, a method that is used until today. Around the mid-80s, miners started using chemicals which led to the elders putting a stop to mining for some years. The prohibition of the use of chemicals was then added to the policies. The miners experimented with safer alternatives to chemicals such as soap and the juice from pounded sunflower leaves, which they said was more effective in extracting gold than mercury.

In 1992, equipment such as jackhammers, ball mills, and compressors were introduced. In 1996, a significant change occurred when a financing scheme was introduced wherein a financier would provide the food, materials, and equipment. Thus began the era of mining that was no longer small-scale or subsistence mining.

Hand tools gave way to electric-powered equipment. Cultural practices weakened until eventually the sagaok was no longer practiced. Mine tailings were sold outside the community, leaving less and less ore for women and children. The ubbo group wherein members contributed their own resources and divided their produce equitably was changed into the "kompanya" wherein managers, wage earners, and workers were hired from outside the territory.

The culture of the cash economy seeped into the community. While some retained the fair practices of the traditional ubbo groups, others observed the creeping in of corruption, lack of transparency and exploitation of workers. This was an era when policy implementation became very problematic

#### Review of Community Policies on Mining for Their Continuing Relevance

"We observed that the miners' association need help in ensuring the implementation of policies. So we banned alcohol in the barangay of Fidelisan where the SSM is located, and we persevered and remained vigilant in patrolling the mining site to monitor the implementation of policies of no drinking, no gambling, and no work on obaya or traditional holidays. And if there are violators, we do the *pasaliw* or implementation of sanctions. Such tasks are becoming more difficult." (Quote from the women's sector)

The community agreed to determine if the policies were still relevant in the 21st century. To do this, the reasons behind each of the policies had to be reviewed. However, according to historians, these reasons were not explicitly articulated by the policy makers. The participants agreed to share their views on possible reasons. The input from the participants would be the basis for determining the relevance of the policies in the current context. The results of the collective discussions are shown below.

Table 1: Explanations of the policies and rules in mining as viewed by workshop participants

DOLLOIFO AND DILLED	BATIONALE
To ensure equitable access of resources  1. The mining site is a land of the commons and must not be "privatized".  2. Produce shall be divided fairly according to the contribution/investment of each miner.	For the mining area to remain as land of the commons  So that whoever needs to go and work in the mines will have the opportunity to have work  So that the wealth of the land given as gift by the Creator will not be monopolized by private individuals but shared among the community  Honesty should be practiced and should be strengthened in the SSM operations.
Safeguards for the environment/ sustainability  3. Use only simple tools; no use of power tools and electricity.  4. No use of chemicals was added in the mid- 80s.  5. Mining should not go beyond the delineated mining site, which is located at the lowest parts of the territory. The elders have clearly delineated the limits where people can mine.  6. Distance between adits/tunnels must not exceed 12 feet.  7. Kabagaang or foreigners are not allowed to work in the mines.	Use of simple tools does less damage to the soil and land formation.  Expanding the mining site will create imbalance in the territory and may destroy rice lands and lead to over logging of timber.  Prevent collapse of the tunnels and harm to miners  Foreigners, when permitted access, may do harm to the land; and the customary laws cannot be imposed upon them.
8. No work during the <i>obaya</i> , when people are prohibited to go to the forests, rivers, sacred sites, and farms not within the settlement areas. <i>Obaya</i> is declared during the performance of rituals to end or start a major community activity (e.g., different stages of the rice production cycle, time to celebrate weddings, for house construction and repairs, and also during rituals for the dead and disasters such as burning of a house).  9. No stealing of ores, tools, others.  10. No drinking and gambling in the mining site.  11. Income from mining should not be used for drinking and gambling.	To ensure that people participate in the community ritual or event  These traditional holidays provide spaces privacy for the spirits of forests, farms, sacred sites or free them from human disturbance.  The mining site is an open area. This policy reminds people not to succumb to the temptation of stealing.  Gambling and drinking as anti-social vices can break family/clan relations and can cause public disturbances.

All the policies crafted, except the one on "using only simple tools and no to the use of electricity," were judged to be relevant. The community resolved that all the policies must be upheld. The provision on only using simple, non-electric tools was repealed.

To determine if the mining activity had not gone beyond the delineated mining site located at the lowest parts of the territory, the community agreed on mapping the underground of the mining site.

#### Recalling experiences in policy implementation and actions taken on policy violations

Having established policy relevance, the study proceeded to look into the current implementation of the policies and the past experiences in resolving violations.

Historical accounts showed that the rules pertaining to *obaya* were easily violated, an important reason for the elders to stop the operation of the mines around the mid-80s. Mining was resumed after some dialogues when PMA officers agreed to enforce the policies. The participants in the research decided to study this further due to the observation that *obaya* was still frequently being violated.

In 1989, two lead miners formed their own labor group of miners mainly from Tanulong, a neighboring tribe, and started their own mine. The creation of this mine went unnoticed. It was only discovered in 1992, when there was an investigation relating to the first major case of stealing gold ore and cash as well as the use of chemicals. Mining was again put on hold because of these violations.

The case against the Tanulong miners was supposed to be a violation of the law: "Kabagaang, foreigners, are not allowed to participate in mining." The case was resolved through the decision to consider Tanulong people as relatives and fellow community members, not as kabagaang. It was recalled that Tanulong people who came from a different place were allowed by the Pidlisan to occupy the southeastern part of Pidlisan territory, which borders their lands with the Tetep-an people. On this basis, they are not included as kabagaang. For both the communities of Pidlisan and Tanulong, the fact that the Pidlisan shared their lands with the Tanulong people was new information to many of the participants and is not common knowledge to date. The resolution of the case gave birth to the Northern Sagada Small Scale Miners Association, encompassing both the Pidlisan and Tanulong miners.

On the case of theft, informants recalled that this was considered a grave offense. It falls under the creed of inayan, "a principle of not doing bad acts towards others and that fosters all values like respect, love, and peace for the prosperity of a community."

On the use of chemicals (i.e., mercury), this was seen as a more serious case than theft. It caused the downstream villages to complain as they observed the poisoning of their rivers and some of their rice fields, which is considered a crime against nature and people. An oral agreement was made between the people of Pidlisan (where the mining site is) and Teptep-an (community downstream) to protect the river from chemical poisoning and that required the miners to stop using chemicals. Hence the "no use of chemicals" policy was added. This customary law was seen as extremely relevant and must be upheld at all times.

#### Policy implementation in contemporary times

The year 1996 was a turning point in the mining industry of Pidlisan. As mentioned above, there was a weakening of culture and with it, the weakening of compliance with the policies handed down by the elders. Fortunately, the women's groups of Fidelisan Barangay committed themselves to ensure the execution of policies on safeguards especially on culture, paying attention to those that pertain to the rule of obaya and the "no to drinking and gambling policy." They tasked themselves to patrol and monitor the mining site on a daily basis and the dap-ay authorized them to "do pasaliw or impose fines on those violating policies." Thus, during the 2011-2014 SSM research, women became the main informants and discussants in the assessment of these particular policies.

As mentioned above, the rampant violation of the "no work during obaya" was identified as needing more investigation. Further discourse that ensued showed a clear manifestation of an intergenerational gap in indigenous spirituality within the community.

"Facilitating a process where elders can share their views on what obaya means to them has been one of the most humbling experiences for me. I realized the extent of our alienation, especially the young people, to indigenous spirituality. And at the same time, I felt selffulfillment to be a part of a process where elders start to regain their confidence in sharing their knowledge and experiences on the unseen that is looked down on by mainstream society as superstitious."

The discussion on the obaya opened a continuing sharing from the elders, on their experiences of how the unseen have protected and helped the community as far back as the headhunting days from their enemies, from pests and pestilence, protecting their water sources, and others. This kind of sharing continued on even after this particular research was completed.

Tebtebba was informed that the Pidlisan community amended the sanction for violation of obaya. The prevailing penalty during the research was 100.00 PHP/day whether this is a first offense or tenth offense. Since then, changes were introduced: For the first offense, the violator will be fined 1,000.00 PHP/day of working. For the second violation, the penalty is a suspension of three months. The third offense will result in the disqualification or termination to work in the mines.

One major significant event that happened during this research process was the resolution regarding the violation of the policy on "no use of chemicals." In January of 2012, during the session for collective interpretation of data, there was a resolution to check processing plants to verify if all were complying with the policy of "no using chemicals."

This is one case where Tebtebba let the community undertake their own processes.

"For many reasons, we are very much concerned with the use of chemicals and actively participated in checking processing plants. And there was one who did not like us to enter his mine site. This pushed us to call for an investigation of the suspected user of chemicals. We had to call the attention of our elders from downstream," revealed one pakamang, a woman who came from the village downstream and is now a member of Pidlisan tribe by virtue of her marrying an I-Pidlisan. Jointly, the elders of Pidlisan and elders from the villages downstream did their investigation. It was around February when they started the investigation. By July, the investigation proved that the processing plant was using cyanide. The closure of the processing plant was ordered, and the guilty person was immediately ordered to discontinue his mining activities.

This case shows how indigenous justice works, how community members cooperate and help in generating information, involving concerned parties, working towards a just resolution to the case, and preventing further conflicts among communities and damage to the environment.

#### Knowledge shared underscored the wisdom behind the policies

One lesson learned during the research is that not all policy violations can be resolved through sanctions. Such was the case for prohibiting kabagaang to mine.

In 1996, when a "financing system" was introduced, financiers entered into the scene. By 2012, there were about 36 financiers in the Pidlisan mines. A majority of these people were not living in the ili. They did not participate in mining and had to hire "managers" from among their close relatives living in the community to oversee the operation of the adits that they were financing. The financiers are considered as umili or members of Pidlisan people. But because they were not staying in the ili, their style of management lacked the cultural values of "managers" or lead miners who are residing in the community, who directly participate in mining, and who also directly participate in the affairs of the ili.

"As we stay in the community, we continue to listen to people. If they have criticisms, if they have information needing our attention, we try our best to meet their expectations. When there are accidents, we mourn with the families of victims and do our share to extend whatever support we can give, whereas absentee financiers don't have to be bothered by all of these. While they are true blood, they can be considered kabagaang when they are devoid of the responsibilities and duties of a tribal member," remarked one of the mine managers.

Another aspect is the hiring of *kabagaang*. The increased use of power tools required the hiring of more people; and kabagaang became the preferred workers. Kabagaang can work full time over a long period of time unlike village residents who from time to time have to attend to their farms, social obligation such as death vigil, rituals, wedding ceremonies, and are obliged to observe *obaya*. Also, members of the tribe demand for the fair price of their labor, while kabagaang accept a lesser wage. This was recognized as discrimination within the community, which is prohibited in the principles of *inayan*.

#### **Benefits from Mining for Community Members**

"It cannot be denied that the culture that comes with cash has seeped into the community, negatively impacting the attitude of some miners and the value formation of our children as manifested in their lack of discipline. There are some of us who want to close the mine, yet we are very much aware that mining has become a very important livelihood for our community," remarked an elder woman.

Culturally, people do not talk about a return on investment in specific terms or about their income, hence it was not possible to get quantitative data on this. But a case study of 230 miners in 2012 revealed that their average take home share is comparable to the salary of a regular teacher during this year, which is considered a high paying job in the community.

People can speak of the benefits from mining using general terms, namely:

- 1. Majority of the families were able to send their children to colleges and universities in the big cities.
- 2. Majority of the families were able to improve their houses and changed the wood and GI sheets to cement and other high-end housing materials.
- 3. Some were able to start their own small businesses in town centers and urban areas.
- 4. Some were able to buy hectares of rice lands in the lowlands and residential lots in Baguio City.
- 5. Some were able to acquire vehicles, which earn income for the family or are used for family service.
- 6. Some were able to improve their own farms and are now considered commercial farms.

7. The miner's association is sponsoring the PhilHealth insurance of some of the tribe members, providing them medical assistance.

But despite the clear economic benefits, the erosion of culture and values weighed heavily on the participants; and there was a strong recommendation to address the weakening of transmission of indigenous values. Together with Tebtebba, a proposal to promote indigenous ways of learning and knowing was crafted.

#### **Conclusions**

There were no new methods employed in the case study of the SSM of Pidlisan. But a unique feature of the project was not requiring a prepared and completed research design. This gave more opportunity for people to craft their own questions and define next steps as knowledge and information are mobilized and interpreted. Resolutions were agreed upon, and most of these were acted upon in the course of the research.

The research methods employed were the usual tools commonly used, but what differentiated this research was the sincerity among those involved to achieve a common purpose of objectively assessing the situation of their land and people towards coming out with plans and decisions.

The research process showed that the search for knowledge can be very interactive between those who possess knowledge and those who seek to learn and know, and that community research can show to the people the wealth of knowledge and information that they have and if mobilized can help in the betterment of the commons.

The research was an eye opener for the facilitators of the process, both community members and Tebtebba staff. It shows the validity of Indigenous Peoples' protest against corporate mining all over the country. The research shows that when given the capacity to manage their own mining activities, people can benefit from the wealth of the land while also taking care of the land.

#### Post note

The last endeavor in the research was mapping the underground to determine if the mining activity had reached the boundary set by the elders. It showed that almost all the *adits* are directed to the boundary line. In 2014, some miners voiced out that in 3 to 5 years' time they will have to stop unless they can go to the direction of the river, which will require more advanced technology of pumping the water out. Yet to this day, mining operations continue, and they have registered to the Minahang Bayan, a government program for SSM. This may require a meeting to review that recommendation (to stop mining or continue towards the river), once again showing the continuing dynamism of indigenous knowledge.

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# Engaging Sámi Reindeer Herders in the Co-Production of Knowledge in the Arctic

Gunn-Britt Retter with Anna-Marja Persson, and Áslat Holmberg | Saami Council





The Saami Council is a voluntary Sámi organization (a non-governmental organization), with Sámi member organizations in Finland, Russia, Norway, and Sweden. It was founded in 1956 and since then, the council has actively dealt with Sámi policy tasks.

The primary aim of the Saami Council is the promotion of Sámi rights and interests in the four countries where the Sámi are living. The main task of the Saami Council is to consolidate the feeling of affinity among the Sámi people, to attain recognition for the Sámi as a nation and to maintain the cultural, political, economic, and social rights of the Sámi in the legislation of the four states (Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Finland) and in agreements between states and Sámi representative organizations.

The co-production of knowledge is "a process that brings together Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and science to generate new knowledge and understandings of the world that would likely not be achieved through the application of only one knowledge system."

(Raymond-Yakoubian & Daniel and Behe, 2021)

#### Introduction

The Sámi people are the Indigenous People of Europe. Sápmi has been our home since time immemorial and spans the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in the Russian Federation. Although the Sámi are divided by the formal boundaries of these four countries, we continue to exist as one people united by cultural and linguistic bonds and a common identity. Sápmi, our traditional homeland, covers the Fenno-Scandian Arctic, sub-Arctic and high-altitude areas. The Sámi people thus consider itself as an Arctic people.

The Saami Council was established in 1956 at the second Saami Conference. It is mandated to promote the rights of the Sámi people both in Sápmi and internationally.

It has nine country-level member organizations in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Federation with headquarters in Karasjok, Norway, and employees based at various locations throughout Sápmi.

Engaging with Indigenous Knowledge through research and co-production of knowledge is now part of the work of all four of the Saami Council's administrative units. These are the Arctic and Environmental Unit, European Union Unit, Human Rights Unit, and Cultural Unit.

The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and other Arctic inhabitants on common issues, particularly on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Saami Council holds the status of Permanent Participant (PP) in the Arctic Council as one of six Indigenous organizations. The Permanent Participants have full consultation rights in the council's negotiations and decisions. They contribute to the Arctic Council's activities in various arenas. The Saami Council participates actively in the Arctic Council's work at Senior Arctic Officials Meetings (SAO), working groups, task forces, expert groups, and project groups, based on principles of full and effective participation. It promotes the use of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples where it is found appropriate and relevant.

The purpose of the Saami Council's participation in the Arctic cooperation is to ensure that Sámi perspectives and interests are taken into consideration in Arctic issues with particular focus on the challenges that arise from climate change, biodiversity, and increased interest in new economic development of the Arctic region. *In the last fifty years, climate change has occurred three times faster than the global average. In a rapidly* changing Arctic, the best possible decisions need to be developed at an equally rapid pace to build resilient Arctic societies, mitigate climate change, and adapt to the changes.

This experience paper focuses on the co-production of knowledge, where Indigenous Knowledge holders engage with scientists in an equal and equitable manner, to produce knowledge for the best possible recommendations for decision-making. The paper builds on internal documents and reports from the Saami Council. It will briefly introduce the Saami Council's approach to the co-production of knowledge and present some case studies where the Saami Council is leading projects, testing out the method in different

It is worth noting that the co-production of knowledge should not exclude the need for self-production of knowledge happening alongside the developments of partnerships and the need for co-production described in this article. It is also worth reminding that the Indigenous Knowledge of the Sámi People remains important to document and use within its natural spheres. Co-production should not replace Indigenous Knowledge, nor the self-production and self-driven documentation of Indigenous Knowledge.

# The Value of *árbediehtu* (Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples)

Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is recognized by the Arctic Council, and they remain committed to including Traditional Knowledge in their work (Arctic Council, 2015; 2021). Indigenous Knowledge can operate over timescales often unachievable through scientific study (Wheeler et al., 2020). Indigenous Knowledge is key to understanding natural and social systems in the Arctic. At the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences in 2021, a panel on Indigenous Knowledge and research concluded: "Science and policy that are not inclusive of the Indigenous Knowledge cannot be considered adequate to address the Arctic Peoples' needs" (Degai et al., 2022, p. 2).

A brief example is presented here to illustrate the different approaches of the two knowledge systems. Concerned officials sometimes lack knowledge on reindeer herding and grazing while evaluating the need for additional support for reindeer herders facing climate change hazards. Grazing conditions cannot be estimated merely by looking at statistics on the amount of snow; various aspects need to be considered, such as was the ground frozen when it snowed in the fall and has the snow melted and



Reindeer in Winter landscape. 

ROBERT ABRAHAMSSON

created layers of ice during the season (YLE Sápmi, 2022). In a simplistic way, one could say that in this case, the science takes a narrow approach, looking at the immediate situation based on a limited set of indicators. Advice and decisions are thus based on this narrow set of information and data leading to decisions and action on a thin foundation, in the worst case making wrong decisions. Thus, it is essential to evaluate the conditions based on adequate knowledge. There is an urgent need to more efficiently get Indigenous Knowledge to inform decisions on adaptation and emergency actions.

The efforts to gain recognition and respect for Indigenous Knowledge are showing results and there is growing demand for use of Indigenous Knowledge in research projects. A lot of work is still needed on defining the right working practices to allow Indigenous Knowledge to efficiently inform research projects from start to finish. The Saami Council is working with other parties within the Arctic Council to gain experience in this field, and this work is based on the principles and path described below.

# Co-production of Knowledge

In the context of Arctic research, Raymond-Yakoubian, Daniel, and Behe (2021) define co-production of knowledge (CPK) as "a process that brings together Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and science to generate new knowledge and understandings of the world that would likely not be achieved through the application of only one knowledge system" (p. 2). When successful, CPK can bring a deeper and broader understanding by bringing together different ways of knowing.

Equity of knowledge systems is stressed as a key to a successful CPK process (Raymond-Yakoubian, et al., 2021). Both Indigenous Knowledge and science should be valued equally while acknowledging their similarities and differences. The participating researchers should be familiar with the co-production of knowledge and the nature of Indigenous Knowledge. CPK process should provide space for different knowledge systems.

There should be a space just for Sámi knowledge holders to discuss approaches and priorities and to make decisions before engaging with researchers as well as during the research project. This group should include a Saami Council affiliate (in cases where Saami Council is partnering) who would facilitate the work and support the group on matters such as intellectual property rights, as discussed below. Participants should be informed of and consider the possible benefits and risks of this project and define their aims.

Participation of Sámi in all stages of the research project is key for successfully including their views on research and ensuring that research is relevant for them. Eriksen et al. (2020) provide valuable remarks on community engagement of Sámi in research, by which they mean "the inclusion of Sámi worldviews and lived experiences as part of the research design, data analysis, interpretation of research results, outcomes, and sharing of the research results as well as equitable decision-making power in relation to researchers." The goal should be that the research is understandable and relatable for the participants.

Regarding the participation of Sámi representatives in all stages of the research project, it must be noted that the Sámi participants are not expected to be researchers and they should not be expected to work with the various stages of research in the same way as researchers do. Finding the right working practices is necessary for successful cooperation. Participants should not be expected to spend hours reading and commenting on research plans or keep replying to long emails at a fast pace. Working in writing might not be the most efficient method. Going through the matters at hand in a round table conversational form could be a more suitable approach. For the presentation of research findings, other means should be considered than just text, such as video or perhaps a more conversational podcast format. When Sámi knowledge holders are quoted, they should be consulted to ensure that quotes are understood and in the appropriate context (Eriksen et al., 2020).

English might not be an efficient working language for the Sámi participants. Sámi languages hold knowledge that may not be easily translated to other languages. Sámi knowledge holders should be able to work in the language they are most comfortable with, be that a Sámi language or one of the national state languages.

Intergenerational mistrust in researchers is an issue that should be acknowledged in research with the Sámi. Establishing trust between researchers and the Sámi participants should be one aim of the research project. Informal activities such as field trips can be a good way to establish relationships between researchers and Indigenous Knowledge holders and can support understanding of Indigenous place-based knowledge.

Researchers should have basic knowledge of Sámi culture (Eriksen et al., 2020; Sámi Central Association of Sweden, 2019). Sámi participants should not be expected to educate researchers on basics but rather be able to focus on the research. Understanding the ways in which Sámi communicate is part of that cultural knowledge. For example, knowing that silence can be a sign of disagreement, not agreement, can be valuable and avoid misunderstandings. Besides cultural knowledge, researchers should be prepared for the sub-Arctic circumstances. For example, they should be aware of how to dress for a field trip so that they will not become a burden that needs to be taken care of (Eriksen et al., 2020).

Schedules must be planned together, be flexible, and must fit the seasonal work (Eriksen et al., 2020). Working schedules of people engaged in traditional livelihoods depend on seasons and weather, and thus it may be difficult to agree on specific times and dates long in advance. For example, reindeer corral may happen on a very short notice, and it is the priority for those working with reindeer.

As noted by Omma et al. (2021), actively using the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the design phase of the project supports departing from Western science centric approaches. According to UNDRIP Article 31, Indigenous Peoples have the right to control and protect their knowledge. As a guiding principle, the right of ownership to Indigenous Knowledge should remain



Fire. SUSANNA ISBAELSSON

with the knowledge holders and communities. Agreements should be reached on the ownership of the research, including research data. This could be acknowledged by a clause like what the Inuit Circumpolar Council uses in the copyright segment of their report:

"The Indigenous Knowledge, inclusive of concepts and information derived from this knowledge source in this report, remains the collective intellectual property of the communities, organizations, and contributing authors who provided such information." (Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2021, p. 2)

Although the aim is to do research that all the participants find useful, it is still appropriate to compensate everyone for the time that they put into the project. Indigenous Knowledge holders are expected to participate in all stages of the project, and this does take time and effort.

For people who are engaged in traditional economies, time spent on the research project could otherwise be used for subsistence or extra-income activities, such as hunting, fishing, or berry picking. The work that Indigenous Knowledge holders put into a research project should be valued and they should be encouraged to put effort into it.

"If science is evaluated by its own peer reviewers internal to that knowledge system, it seems under an equitable system, Indigenous Knowledge would be evaluated by knowledge holders from that knowledge system."

(Wheeler et al., 2020)

It could support the aims of the project if various communities that take part in the research project could consider knowledge of other communities in similar contexts, not to validate it, but to reflect upon it and evaluate if their experiences match and see if their knowledges can complement each other.

# **CASE STUDY: Climate Impacts on Terrestrial Environments (CITE) –** Impacts of climate change on Nordic and Arctic terrestrial environments: A pilot study in co-production of knowledge

This project was initiated by the Arctic Council Working Group, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) and the Saami Council, and funded by Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). It is a pilot project on how to co-produce knowledge and together produce a joint plan of a multiple year project where parties from both Indigenous Knowledge and science are satisfied with the research question, aim, purpose, and content.

The overall goal of the project is to provide Sámi reindeer herders with tools to assist them in a deeper understanding of the weather and climate and their associated impacts on the terrestrial environment and ecosystems in their herding areas so that they can better adapt to seasonal and annual changes.

The first steps included recruiting the coordinator; identifying the team of Sámi reindeer herders and terrestrial researchers; a workshop to discuss overall goals, create a workplan and timetable, write a plan of a longer project. The project pilot phase got delayed due to the pandemic that did not allow the project participants to meet in-person; all meetings have been virtual. The money saved by not being able to travel was invested in mapping of the reindeer herding areas. This was defined as necessary with the type of research question the team agreed upon.

#### The Co-Produced Process

The first task of the coordinator was to identify the participants. The Indigenous Knowledge Holders (IKH), composed of Sámi reindeer herders and reindeer owners, were identified by reaching out to the various national reindeer husbandry associations. Letters (e-mails) explaining the purpose and the aim of the project were sent, calls and meetings with the organizations were conducted. All possible channels, including private contacts, were used by the coordinator to identify herders/communities for the project. The same was done to find prospective scientists, using private contacts as well as suggestions from earlier projects.

Initially, the intention was to have equal numbers of researchers and herders. However, their numbers fluctuated throughout the project for various reasons. The majority of the team members, including representatives from both knowledge systems, have been involved since the beginning, which is crucial for co-produced projects.

The project started up during the COVID-19 pandemic and all meetings have thus been conducted in virtual meeting rooms. After the team was identified, the first meetings had the purpose to brainstorm around the theme 'reindeer husbandry in a changing climate'. Herders expressed their vision and their needs in relation to the project. Researchers shared their ideas related to the identified needs of the herders. Ideas were exchanged in discussions and dialogues in meetings and via e-mails. The first meeting was held in September 2020 and in December the same year. The first draft proposal was written and could be discussed. Throughout the following spring, the discussions continued, and the draft proposal was eventually developed into a detailed plan for a longer project.

During the pilot phase, a 4-year project plan was drafted, consisting of five different work packages. This was entitled: "Through co-production of knowledge, improve the observation of climate-related impacts on Sámi socioecological systems (SES)." The team wrote two specific applications for different parts of the project plan. These were submitted for funding to the Nordic Council of Ministers working group for Climate and Air, and the Nordic Council of Ministers working group for Biodiversity. Funding for the two first work packages was received.

The researchers in the team have had various experiences in this type of collaborative projects. Most of them had worked with reindeer herders before, apparently with positive results. For instance, they already had an understanding of the challenges within reindeer husbandry; and it was not difficult for the herders to "convince" the researchers that there are huge challenges and problems caused by climate change, exploitation, forestry, etc. This saved time and effort for the team as it allowed them to start discussing possible research questions directly. It does require effort to establish trust and build relations within a team of people with completely different backgrounds and premises, especially if they have not met in person before. Additionally, the virtual setting added on to the challenge, but somehow it felt like trust and relations were developed rather "fast" anyway. It has been a process with a lot of discussions back and forth, which is natural in a process like this.

The CITE project has had funding in place from the very beginning for the involvement of the Indigenous participants, which is fundamental in co-produced projects. This is in contrast to the common situation wherein researchers are affiliated with an institution or university. Herders in this case cannot be expected to match the work of the researchers in terms of time and effort without compensation.

Indigenous Knowledge has been validated by being transferred from generation to generation, and it is collectively owned by the Indigenous Peoples. It is therefore difficult and sensitive to try to put a price tag on the knowledge. The CITE project could draw upon other Sámi organizations such as the Swedish Sámi National Association, which has been involved in many research projects with researchers and herders, and thus could offer advice on the compensation for the knowledge holders.

Members of the team have established a positive attitude towards each other and show deep respect and understanding for the different backgrounds. The participants from science show appreciation for this type of collaboration. They have always been encouraging to the reindeer herders. They understand that the herders' knowledge on nature is unique and invaluable.

From the herders' perspective, they appreciate the immediate perceptiveness to their ideas during discussions. They feel that it has been an important success factor to have worked with researchers who already have knowledge and experience in research in reindeer husbandry. It may also be valuable to have a coordinator who has experience or background in both knowledge systems. The coordinator in this pilot comes from reindeer husbandry background and holds a relevant academic degree and is thus well situated in climate change and other challenges within the field. For the herders, it was positive to have a coordinator from the same background as themselves as it created trust from the beginning.

This project has been an exploring process. There is some level of knowledge and experience from projects that have been co-produced in some way. However, there are no manuals on how to implement a model of co-production of knowledge that this project could adhere to directly. During this process, specific things have been discovered that can serve as inspiration for future co-produced projects.

It has been challenging to start up such a project virtually because it doesn't give the participants the best premises to neither create trust and relations nor to work together face to face during more creative processes. If we had been able to meet and work intensively for a few days, we might have achieved faster results. However, our experience is that co-produced projects cannot have fixed and tight timelines and deadlines in the same way as non-co-produced projects can. When new knowledge is going to be produced, enough time for the process is needed.

Furthermore, since the meetings occurred during such a long period of time it has not always matched well with the reindeer herding work. It is well known that there are more and less intense herding periods and this has been reflected in the absence of herders during meetings in some periods. Spring/early summer is generally a better period than autumn for example. This should be considered when planning projects in which reindeer herders are participating. It can also be an option to have different activities during different periods for the researchers and herders depending on their skills and strengths.

Regarding the language, generally, researchers are used to communicating in abstract terms in academic English, whereas many herders speak their native tongue, Sámi, in concrete and detailed terms. Sámi language is extremely rich and describes many types of weather conditions, which are crucial to reindeer husbandry. For example, there are hundreds of different words that describe the shifts in snow conditions, and thus, the Sámi language carries tremendous amounts of knowledge. Therefore, there can be large language differences that might create a barrier between herders and researchers. In this project some herders have experienced this as a problem and have felt that it has been difficult to participate in the meetings and talk about the project idea and provide their input in a third language. For future projects, this needs to be considered and it should be facilitated for herders to participate in their native tongue, whether it is Sámi or another language.

Regarding applications that need to be written in academic language, this is something that needs to be done by those who hold the skill and knowledge to match the respective requirements from funders.



A Sámi and the reindeer at sunrise. 

Susanna israelsson

During this project, the applications were written exclusively by the researchers.

The discussion about ownership and rights to collected data, results, and co-produced knowledge should be prioritized and cleared before the start of the project. We had discussions on this several times throughout the process but there were no written agreements. There was a positive dialogue about it the whole time, where researchers argued that the Indigenous participants or the Saami Council should own the data and the new knowledge. Nevertheless, we didn't finish the discussion and now it must be done after the project has ended.

In conclusion, the CITE pilot project has been a successful learning process where the team has worked well together and where there has been a good atmosphere during meetings. They have, as aimed, written a detailed plan for a four-year-long project to fund the collection of observations on weather and ecological conditions in Sámi reindeer herding areas of Fennoscandia.

It is important to note that a co-produced project cannot be rushed with short deadlines in the same way as other non-co-produced projects can. It is important to recognize that it requires a long period of time to build trust and create good working relations between the participants coming from different backgrounds and knowledge systems. It may take less time to create trust and build relations when working with researchers who already have been involved in co-produced projects with herders and herding communities. They may already have gained a certain level of understanding and experience as well as reputations in contrast to researchers who have never been involved in such settings before. Depending on the background of the participants, planning of the start-up date, timeline, and activities should be adjusted to the involved participants and be culturally appropriate.

If a project is going to be co-produced, the prerequisites for equitable participation should be prepared. This includes the possibility for Indigenous Knowledge Holders to express themselves in their native tongue, or another language that feels comfortable. Also, the funding agencies setting the criteria and requirements for the research applications and reports should account for and enable Indigenous participation throughout the process, including the academic writing needed. This is especially important when calls and projects explicitly mention co-production and collaboration with IKH in their texts. Likewise, the discussion about ownership and rights of data, results, and co-produced knowledge should be discussed and decided upon prior to the start of a project for simplicity reasons.

Finally, it is important to have funding for Indigenous participation set from the start, as it was in this project. This may sound obvious, but this is seen as a common weakness in many projects intending to engage Indigenous participants and their knowledge.

# Next phase - ongoing

The implementation of the project plan aims to assist reindeer herders in Sápmi to find means to address the consequences of climate change and land use change, necessitating adaptations of their herding practices, seasonal use of grazing grounds, and innovations of knowledge development. This project aims, among others, to compare climate and ecological data for use in adaptation actions.

Among the major problems identified by Sámi reindeer herders in the co-design phase of CITE-I was the large uncertainties about environmental and weather variability pertaining to seasonal pastures. Tools that could guide decisions about moving from one pasture to the other, depending on environmental and weather conditions, would build capacity to respond to climate change over time and to extreme events. One of the potential solutions mentioned by reindeer herders was seasonal weather forecasts that could allow reindeer herders to plan when and where to move, and whether artificial feeding is necessary.

Whereas seasonal forecasts are presently being developed, for example at the Arctic Regional Centre, such data need to be combined with herders' traditional knowledge about the environmental and weather conditions that are detrimental for the use and quality of pastures and reindeer production in order to be useful for reindeer herders. By combining the traditional knowledge of reindeer herders with the knowledge of ecologists and climate scientists, this cooperation aims to improve seasonal forecasts of relevance to herders.

Funding to start working with the two first work packages was received; the ongoing project is the first implementation phase of the larger 4-year project.

The project will be conducted through cooperative work between Indigenous communities and scientists:

- 1. hold a workshop with reindeer herders to discuss the content of the project and the requirements for the digital platform Maptionnaire<sup>3</sup>;
- 2. create the digital Maptionnaire tool for herding communities for systematic documentation of herders' observations and experiences related to observed changes on their land that will cover all of the eight seasons of the reindeer herding year; this digital platform will facilitate the collection, sharing, and communication of environmental data;
- 3. interact with herders and herding communities to develop and test this digital tool for use in community-based monitoring and communication of observations in pilot areas in selected herding communities in the three Nordic countries.

The CITE project has potential to feed into planned Arctic Council assessments both with AMAP and CAFF working groups.

Maptionnaire is a citizen engagement platform. It is a digital tool enabling community engagement in planning and development process, using GIS-backed data to drive decisions. (https://www.maptionnaire.com/product)

# CASE STUDY: Wetlands Sápmi - Indigenous uses and stewardship of wetlands ecosystems

The Saami Council leads this work package Wetlands Sápmi - Indigenous uses and stewardship of wetlands ecosystems, which is part of the larger project Arctic Wetlands Ecosystems - Resilience through restoration & stewardship. The project is linked to the Arctic Council Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Working Group workplan activity to assess Arctic Wetlands. The larger project is led by Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI). The work in the Arctic Council has been on pause since March 2022. However, the Saami Council has been able to do the fieldwork in two Sámi reindeer communities on the Swedish side of Sápmi.

The project work package takes a holistic approach to define the values of wetlands to the reindeer and reindeer husbandry. Wetlands' characteristics, connectivity, surrounding area, and external factors, such as weather conditions, will all be considered to determine the most strategic and sustainable use of the wetlands. Healthy wetlands are essential for the livelihoods of the Sámi reindeer herding communities. The project will examine the importance of forest-based reindeer husbandry through interviews and workshops about earlier and current use of wetlands, factors of change (encroachments and exploitations), and how to enhance the Sámi stewardship of the wetlands. A participatory approach will be used based on reindeer herders' practice and experience. Furthermore, the project also aims to improve the sustainable use of wetlands and the resilience of the communities.

The work package is co-led by the Saami Council, Sámi Riikasearvi, Sweden, and The Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA). The objective of this package is to document and map knowledge and use of wetlands, historically and today, together with the two participating Sámi reindeer husbandry communities. The method chosen for this is topographical participatory mapping. The Saami Council hired a project coordinator who was born and raised in a reindeer herding family and has a science background in the management of fish and wildlife populations, and animal welfare and ethology. This combination for the coordinator is key in building trust among both the participating reindeer herders and the involved scientists.

The first step was to identify the participants. This was done in cooperation with the project partner, the Reindeer Husbandry Association on the Swedish side of Sápmi. Two forest-based reindeer herding communities agreed to participate in the project.

The methodology builds upon discussions and participatory mapping about the historical use, present use, and future needs of grazing areas, and specific wetland areas within their herding communities to have sustainable reindeer husbandry. The data collection for both communities has been done, and the material will be analyzed and communicated in a report with digitalized "maps," articles, and oral presentations, among others.

In this type of project where we aim to co-produce knowledge, we depend upon physical meetings as a starting point. The project leads defined several elements that need to be in place for a good process. Firstly, trust and good relations need to be built for good participation and best possible results. Culturally appropriate timing of meetings and workshops needs to be identified. The seasonal activities of the knowledge holders need to be identified and respected. From May to June, herding work is less intense and snow has hopefully melted which gives the project the possibility to visit the reindeer herding areas with the herders. Exploring the area together opens the way for better discussions and it also gives us a better understanding of their situation and other competing land uses and challenges in the grazing areas.



Topographical participatory mapping with knowledge holders at Wetlands workshop.

ROBERT ABRAHAMSSON

During the knowledge holder workshop, the participants were organized in *siidas* (internal geographical divisions). After the first round of discussion, the whole Sámi village gathered to talk about what they had arrived at. Before the discussions started, the whole team was out in the surroundings to see concrete installations that threatened the Sámi community, such as wind turbines, mines, etc. In addition, to actually be on the land would be an initiative to get to know each other better before starting the work in the discussion room. Large sheets to draw on were used during the workshop conversation. These drawings were put into an electronic mapping tool.

The project conducted two workshops with each of the two communities. After the first round of the workshop, the project leads compiled the material and got back with it to the participants to ensure the input was understood correctly. The project was supposed to start with fieldwork in the spring to summer when the pandemic was ongoing. The project leads agreed that instead of traveling to the communities several times, the fieldwork was adjusted to one longer meeting with each of them to do all the fieldwork at once. The project conducted the second round of workshops with the participating reindeer herding communities in April 2023 and is about to conclude in June 2023, so the results or reports are not clear yet.

#### **Conclusions**

Over the last 50 years, the Arctic region has warmed three times faster than the global average. This is one of the key findings in a 2021 Climate Change Report from the Arctic Council (AMAP 2021). In February 2023, the Saami Council together with the Sami Parliament (Norway) released a report on climate change impacts in Sápmi (Saami Council 2023). These are two reports among many calling for climate action as well as further research using the best available knowledge. The findings bring a need to adapt to the changes and this adaptation requires a systematic approach. This requires capacity building for more equitable and efficient inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in research and decision-making processes.

The Saami Council has decades of experience with Arctic cooperation. The most prominent one is within the Arctic Council, but also with Arctic Scientific Associations being observers to the Arctic Council, such as IASC (International Arctic Science Committee), IASSA (International Arctic Social Sciences Association), UArctic (University of the Arctic). The Arctic Council can be seen as a tri-party partnership between member states, the Working Groups that engage a broad range of scientists in the projects and assessment activities, and the Indigenous Peoples Organizations recognized as PPs. The traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples has been recognized as an important component of the Arctic Council since its inauguration in 1996 and over the years the recognition has evolved and various ways of engagement of Arctic Indigenous Knowledge holders have been used, ranging from own-driven projects, text boxes in larger assessments, separate chapters in assessments on Indigenous Peoples, to mention some. The main intention is to be recognized in the outcome recommendations and thus influence decision-making in the Arctic states. Indigenous Knowledge holders are often recruited through the PPs networks to engage actively in the Arctic Council projects.

While climate change in the Arctic is rapidly intensifying, and the attention to the Arctic has grown immensely over the last 25 years, there is a stronger call from the Arctic Indigenous Peoples to be heard and to be fully engaged in the Arctic Council work, as well as in the traditionally more sciencebased assessments. This is coming with the call to use the best available knowledge, both science and Indigenous Knowledge, to understand the Arctic Changes, thus the present focus on the co-production of knowledge. Both scientists engaged through the Arctic Council working groups and the Saami Council have little experience with equitable co-production of knowledge, therefore we saw the need for us and partners in the working groups to do pilot studies and learning through doing the approach described above. We hope the experiences we are building through these partnerships will form a new universal standard for knowledge generation within the Arctic.

Based on the Saami Council's recent and ongoing engagement in processes of knowledge co-production, enabling conditions for successful processes of co-production are clearly identified: selection of credible team leaders, build-up of team rapport and good relations at an early stage, attentiveness to language and scheduling issues to ensure inclusion and equal participation, and funding for Indigenous participants.

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# **Insights**

Community action research is a powerful tool for communities to get a deep understanding and common awareness of issues and problems that confront them. In the experience of Pidlisan, it was through the participation of the elders, women, youth, and miners that everyone got a good understanding of what was happening in the mining tunnels and gold processing operations, the scale of income and benefits from the gold, and the effects on the community and the environment. It was this deep understanding and awareness that built their capacity to take control of the situation and unite on appropriate policies for the good of the community, the generations to come, and all concerned.

CPK, as presented in the Sámi experience paper, is a very good example of the bringing together of IK and sciences that result in new knowledge to understand the world and positive experiences for IPs engaging in research projects. The perspectives of science and Sámi IK are providing Sámi reindeer herders with tools to assist them in reaching a deeper understanding of weather and climate and their impacts on the ecosystems in their herding areas. The experience paper is a rich source of how both scientists and IKH can work together, providing a basis for formulating an indigenous community protocol on doing co-production of knowledge. Such a protocol is very useful in doing research on IK. It also provides useful tips on how to write up a process documentation of a research project using a multiple evidence-based approach.

The evaluation of indigenous protocols and pre-existing policies regarding SSM in Pidlisan, Mountain Province in the Philippines as well as the Saami Council's practice of CPK to address problems in reindeer herding, resulting from climate change provide examples in which IK and IPs are given primacy, providing gateways into practical means of decolonizing research methodologies.





# EMPOWERING METHODOLOGIES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Education strategies can be built and designed to align and respond to the real cycles of life. In this way, children can participate in the natural rhythms and cycles of both nature and their cultural practices. Each of the seasons carries so much which can be learned and observed by the students. The school curriculums could be planned and defined following each of the seasons. The calendars indicate how learning can take place in other spaces like the forest, the rivers, the homesteads, traditional learning spaces, or family gardens. They help to go beyond the physical walls of the community-based ecosystems assessment schools and encourage children and teachers to research and discover other ways of learning together, from each other, and from life as it unfolds.

- Gathuru Mburu/Ngaatho Community Foundation

# Let's Go Back Home: A Collaborative Creation of a Comic Book for the Transmission of Karen Indigenous Knowledge in Northern Thailand

Lakpa Nuri Sherpa | Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)



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AIPP is committed to the cause of promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples' rights and human rights and articulating issues of relevance to Indigenous Peoples. At present, AIPP has 46 members from 14 countries in Asia with 18 national alliances/networks (national formation) and 30 local and sub-national organizations. Of this number, 16 are ethnic-based organizations, six (6) Indigenous Women, four (4) Indigenous Youth organizations, and one (1) organization of Indigenous persons with disabilities. AIPP envisions Indigenous Peoples' dignified voices and choices in Asia being recognized and empowered, and sustainability progressing with fully secured rights and dignity in an environment of justice, peace, and equality.

Website: https://aippnet.org

#### Introduction

The comic book Let's Go Back Home is the product of a series of consultations and above all, the trust, and partnership among the Karen Peoples¹ of Mae Yod village in Northern Thailand, Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD), and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP). The series of consultations facilitated rich discussions which eventually led to the portrayal of the real story of Mae Yod villagers in the form of a comic book. The comic book was co-produced with the intention of creating love, respect, and pride among the Indigenous Youth in their origin, language, and cultural identity.

Children and youth in Mae Yod village are using comic books as part of the Ban Mae Yod School local curriculum learning materials. Through this, it is expected that the young generation will deepen their understanding of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge of seeds and food systems, and the symbiotic relationship Karen Peoples have with nature.

On May 22, 2021, during its celebration of the 2021 International Day for Biodiversity and the upcoming International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), AIPP launched the comic book in Karen, Thai, and English languages. The development and publication of the comic book was financially supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

## I. Background

The Indigenous Peoples of South Asia and Southeast Asia, either fully or partly, depend on rotational farming for their livelihood and food. Rotational farming is a sustainable land-use practice that is more than a century old and deeply rooted in Indigenous knowledge, philosophy, and spirituality. It plays a significant role in providing livelihoods and ensuring food security, and thus, the well-being of Indigenous communities.

The spiritual and cultural values attached to this livelihood system demonstrate that rotational farming is not merely a land use technique but essentially, a way of life. Indigenous Peoples perform rituals asking permission from the spirits to use the land for cultivation. They also perform rituals before they burn the field, asking for the protection of the fire spirit. Ritual is also performed after the harvest.

A key aspect of rotational farming is that Indigenous Peoples allow the land to rest and regenerate during the fallow period. In this time, the rotational fields are the source of food for wild animals and birds thus contributing to their health and well-being. Security in customary land rights is therefore important to Indigenous Peoples, which enables them to continue and promote their sustainable traditional practice that is contributing to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and their well-being, that is, the wild animals and birds and the land and resources.

The life and culture of Karen Indigenous Peoples are intricately linked to rotational farming. In the rotational farm of Mae Yod village, more than a hundred different kinds of edible plants are found. It is mostly the Indigenous Women who are involved in most of the steps in rotational farming, such as selecting seeds, choosing the farm plot, planting, weeding, digging, monitoring the growth of the plants, and storing seeds. Beyond the village, case studies in seven countries showed that Indigenous Women do 70% of the work related to rotational farming (Emi, 2015).

Karen Indigenous Peoples possess deep knowledge of their ecosystems. In some ways, these knowledge systems are deeper than scientific knowledge. It is therefore important for younger generations to learn,

The Karen, an indigenous group in Thailand, can be divided into two main subgroups, the Karen Sgaw (who call themselves Pgakenyaw, with the term "nyang" meaning "person" or "human being") and the Karen Pwo. The terms Karen and Pgakenyaw are used synonymously throughout this paper.

innovate, and continue the knowledge systems of their ancestors. One such venue was organized by AIPP, PASD, Indigenous Women Network in Thailand (IWNT), and Tonkla Indigenous Youth Network from September 27 to 29, 2019. Hosted in Mae Yod village, the knowledge transfer exchange visit was participated in by 54 knowledge holders, Indigenous Women, Indigenous youth and children, school teachers, and community leaders from the different provinces of Thailand. Ms. Da, a Karen girl in Mae Yod, reflecting on her interactions with knowledge holders and walking through the village forests described her experience thus:

I never knew that we have so much food, vegetables, and herbs in our forests. In the beginning, I thought that some of the medicinal plants that I came to know about while walking through the forests and interacting with knowledge holders were just grass. I now know the indigenous names of our medicinal plants, their use, benefits, and their value to our culture. I feel confident of being able to share this new knowledge from this activity with my friends and community members.

In addition, Ms. Jawa, a Karen knowledge holder and member of the Mae Yod Indigenous Women's Group, shared her insight during the evaluation and recommendation session of the exchange visit:

Every day, our children go to school, so they don't have the time to help us on the farm. When the young generation does not understand our values and stays away from our traditional practices, our knowledge and culture associated with those practices will continue to disappear. It is very important to protect, promote, practice, and transfer our knowledge for all of us to continue living in harmony with nature.



Rotational farm in Mae Yod village. 

LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

The organizers and the participants contemplated on the next step of the learning exchange visit. On August 21, 2019, during the preparatory meeting for the exchange visit, the villagers had already informed AIPP and PASD earlier of their idea to have a comic book based on the story of their community. Discussion of this was continued, and the participants agreed to its production in Thai, Karen, and English languages. It was also decided that the material would be used as part of the curriculum at Mae Yod School. AIPP and PASD recognized the important contribution of the knowledge product, agreed to co-produce the proposal, and acknowledged the trust placed in them.

## II. Process in the Development of the Comic Book

#### a. Consultation on the contents

On September 30, 2019, at the conclusion of the learning exchange visit, the AIPP and PASD Team met with the villagers including the teachers, women, youth, and students. The Team documented their ideas and recommendations, which the Village Head Mr. Dilok Trakoolrungamphai summed up well:

The comic book, in general, should generate a deeper understanding of Karen Peoples' way of life, worldviews, food systems, and the roles of Karen women and youth in society. The primary audience of the comic book should be our children and youth. It should be able to sensitize our younger generation about our identity and so be proud of who we are and preserve and promote our language and culture.

The villagers further recommended that the comic book story should be based on real stories of community members and that the characters should reflect the real "face" of their members. Thus, this was what the comic book story idea of Mae Yod village arrived at. At the onset, the AIPP and PASD Team members have made it clear that the writers and artists who will be taken on board will be guided by the Community's priorities and that the villagers will be fully involved in all the stages of the production, with the right to say 'yes' or 'no' on any specific content of the comic book.

#### b. Identification of young artist

To sketch the characters of the comic book, AIPP and PASD engaged Ms. Wanichakon Kongkheeree from Tak Province, a young Karen woman and a graduate of Fine Arts from Chiang Mai University. She had been raised in a community that, unlike Mae Yod, no longer practices rotational farming, hence her lack of real knowledge about Karen livelihoods and food systems. It was thus decided that she first needs to be oriented about the Karen Community as part of enabling her to contribute to the production of the comic book.

She joined the knowledge transfer learning exchange visit which raised her awareness of Karen culture and livelihoods. Eventually, she felt ready to sketch the comic book characters based on real members of Mae Yod village, its culture, and landscape. The villagers sent the AIPP and PASD Team positive feedback on including Ms. Wanichakon as the artist for the comic book.

#### c. Selection of writer, editor, and advisors

Mr. Nutdanai Trakansuphakon, a Karen youth, of PASD has been working with Mae Yod villagers for a long time on the transfer of knowledge to the younger generation. Considering also that the primary target of the comic book are Karen children and young people, the AIPP Team agreed to have Mr. Nutdanai as scriptwriter for the comic book.

The AIPP and PASD Team also discussed the need for an editor and advisors, agreeing to take the following persons to task: Dr. Prasert Trakansuphakon, PASD Executive Director; Lakpa Nuri Sherpa, AIPP Environment Program Coordinator as Advisors; and Pirawan Wongnithisathaporn, AIPP Environment Program Officer as the Editor.

#### d. Meetings among the writer, artist, editor, and advisors

Prior to the development of the script and because members of the production team reside in different provinces, virtual meetings were held among the writer, artist, editor, and advisors. As soon as the first draft of the script was ready, the artist started sketching the characters. An in-person discussion was organized to further refine the script and sketches.

# e. Face-to-face meetings with community members

The AIPP and PASD Team, along with the writer, artist, and editor, made two site visits in 2020 to Mae Yod village where they further consulted with community members on the contents of the comic book. In the consultations, the villagers, including the women, youth, students, and teachers, reviewed the comic book draft and shared their reflections regarding the title, script, characters, landscapes of the village, and layout which were considered fully into the final version. The comic book was first finalized in Thai and thereafter translated into English and Karen.

#### f. Consultation with Indigenous Peoples' Organizations

The consultations were held in 2020 with representatives of AIPP and PASD members and partners such as Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT), Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), IWNT, Ton-Kla Indigenous Children and Youth Network, and Karen Network for Culture and Environment (KNCE). Constructive feedback and guidance provided have been useful in finalizing the comic book.



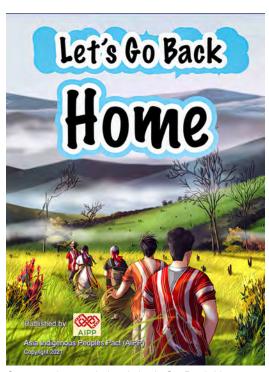
A consultation with the members of Mae Yod village. 

LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

# III. Launching the Comic Book Let's Go Back Home

On May 22, 2021, after consulting with Mae Yod villagers, the comic book Let's Go Back Home was launched as part of the International Day for Biodiversity celebration. Messages from the attending Mae Yod villagers, such as the Head of Mae Yod village, the representative of the Indigenous Women's group, a teacher, and a student, were promoted during the launch and widely shared in the August 2021 celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

> Language and culture are vital elements of our identity. As Pgakenyaw, we are proud to have our own language and culture. While we could learn other languages, we should never forget our own mother tongue and cultural background. We need to pass on to the next generation these important elements of our identity. This comic book aims to create a deeper understanding of the Pgakenyaw People and their culture, particularly the Mae Yod village. Most importantly, this book encourages the younger generation to appreciate their own culture and language and to be proud of being Pgakenyaw. - Mrs. Yanika Thamoon, leader of the women's group in Mae Yod village



Cover of the comic book Let's Go Back Home.

▲ LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

We need to preserve our Pgakenyaw language because it is a distinct element of our identity and culture. Without our language, the Pgakenyaw People would not exist. I like reading this comic book because it is very cute and funny. When others read it, they will gain a better understanding of our rotational farming system. - Ms. Vilasinee Mongkolwat, a student at Ban Khun Mae Yod School

Many young people leave their community in order to study or work in the city. As a result, they become alienated from their traditional way of life, and tend to forget their indigenous roots and the value of their own community. Every ethnic group has its own language and culture. If the language disappears, the ethnic group will lose its identity. We want our Karen youth to always remember their indigenous roots and language. We hope that the message in this comic book will reach our youth. We want them to preserve and pass on their language and culture because these are important resources in their life. We want them to be proud to be *Pgakenyaw.* We will push for a local curriculum to be included in the formal education system. We want to secure the transmission of our knowledge and language to future generations.

#### - Mr. Dilok Trakoolrungamphai, Head of Mae Yod village

Culture and language are the key elements of our Pgakenyaw identity. We need to mutually support each other in keeping them alive. The young generation plays an important role in sustaining our traditional way of life. While they could get attracted to urban life, they should be aware that their ancestral land, culture, language, and traditions are at the core of their identity. Our ethnic and cultural diversity needs to be preserved, as is done in other countries with pluralistic societies. Multiculturalism is beautiful and managing social diversity is an art.

#### - Mr. Somchai Jirapa-amon, teacher at Ban Khun Mae Yod School

The launch event received further amplification by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) through its social media accounts.<sup>2</sup> The comic book has also been included by the CBD on its website as part of the additional resource material on traditional knowledge,<sup>3</sup> and the Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples of Asia (IKPA) shared a short behind-the-scenes video of the comic book on its Facebook Page.4 The comic book is popular not only among AIPP members but also with the United Nations agencies, one of which is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



Comic book launching with Karen students. 

LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

See the post on the SCBD Facebook Page at https://web.facebook.com/UNBiodiversityConvention/photos/ pb.100064652591081.-2207520000./4674821259200147/?type=3

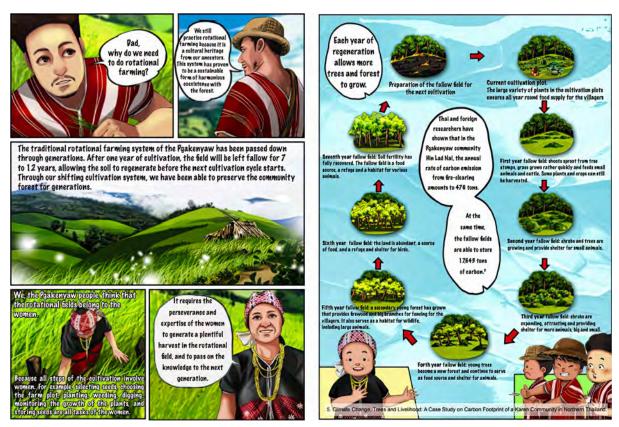
See the CBD additional resource material webpage at https://www.cbd.int/traditional/external-resources/

See https://www.facebook.com/AIPPIKPA/videos/471881330577117

# IV. Giving Back to Karen Peoples

Members of the AIPP and PASD Team were not able to visit Mae Yod village in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the pandemic situation in Thailand started to ease in 2022, the Team made a trip to the village from February 23 to 25. Print copies in Thai, Karen, and English were provided to the teachers, students, and Karen women and youth.

A new Village Head had been elected in the person of Mr. Piseth, a young person, who spoke to the AIPP and PASD Team. "I thank all the people involved in the publication of this comic book. It is the first knowledge product available for Mae Yod School in Thai, Karen, and English languages. This is our publication, and it is going to be useful to our community members and the younger generation in the long run," he said.



An excerpt from the comic book explaining what rotational farming is all about. 

LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

The AIPP and PASD Team also visited the school and observed how the language class use the comic book. "I can see our Karen dress. I can see our culture. I can see our people, and above all, I am proud to see our community story presented in the comic book," declared one student. The Karen language teacher, Mr. Somchai Jirapa-Amon, added:

The comic book in Karen language will be very useful in our revitalization work of the Karen language and culture with the school children. As we have the comic book in the English language, I will ask my students to translate the English version into Thai and Karen. As we use the three versions of the comic book, the students and teachers in the school will gradually learn more about why this publication is important.

## V. Next Steps

The former Village Head, Mr. Dilok Trakoolrungamphai, who supported and provided leadership in the finalization of the comic book suggested that the AIPP and PASD Team explore the possibility of making a documentary on rotational farming and Karen folk tales. The response from the villagers was immensely positive. In the meantime, the AIPP and PASD Team will stay connected with Mae Yod village and monitor the effects and impacts of the use of the comic book in the school.

#### VI. Overall Reflection

This is the first knowledge product published in English, Thai, and Karen languages that the AIPP Secretariat has directly worked on with partner organizations and community members. Throughout the co-production process, there was a strong sense of partnership and trust without which, as AIPP had clearly articulated, it would have been next to impossible for a material of high quality that truly belonged to the community to be produced. The AIPP Team feels fortunate that PASD had already established strong relationships with the villagers.

Members of the AIPP and PASD teams were aware that the comic book will primarily serve the Karen community, particularly the young generation of Mae Yod village, and to ensure that this is realized, the village Elders, women, youth, children, and teachers were given a lead role in identifying what should be put into the comic book. It was also crucial that their consent on the final content of the knowledge product had been sought. Involving Indigenous community members to make decisions on the content of the comic book has been an empowering experience for all.

As the process also required extensive photo and video documentation, it prompted the AIPP Team to enhance their skills in photography and videography. The interest was also taken up by the Environment Program of AIPP whose members decided to self-learn from tutorials on YouTube. They have become skilled at taking high-quality photos and are presently contributing to many of AIPP's publications.

Providing Mae Yod villagers copies of the comic book whose production they have been part of has endeared the AIPP Team to the community. Now regarded as family members of the community, AIPP has started to receive invitations to attend community ceremonies such as weddings. The genuine partnership and respect shown by the Mae Yod villagers toward the AIPP Team members are especially regarded by the AIPP. AIPP, for its part, will continue cherishing and promoting this kind of partnership with other communities in Asia.



The Karen women of Mae Yod village. 

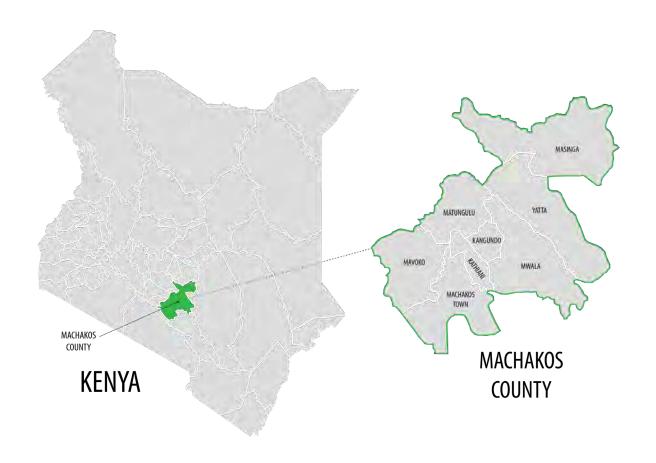
LAKPA NURI SHERPA/AIPP

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# **Eco-cultural Maps and Calendars as Tools for** Recuperation and Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in Masinga Region, Kenya

Gathuru Mburu | Ngaatho Community Foundation (NCF) and Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE)





Ngaatho Community Foundation (NCF) was formed and registered in 2015 as a foundation. NCF was formed to work around Aberdare and Mt. Kenya forest areas with the main aim of using indigenous and local knowledge and practices to conserve the forests and improve the livelihoods of local people. While open to external support, NCF endeavors to assist mobilization of local resources to finance priority community projects. The target region is experiencing diverse challenges related to food and nutrition insecurity, environmental degradation, and water scarcity.

#### Introduction

Eco-cultural maps and calendars are two important tools for cultural recuperation and transmission of indigenous and local knowledge (ILK). Eco-cultural mapping is a participatory process that aims to reveal the deep geography, cultural vision, and meaning of the territory. The development of eco-cultural calendars enables an understanding of life which leads to the weaving of relationships with time in a cyclical way.

These tools have been used for the purposes of recuperation of ILK and transmission of the same in Masinga region in Kenya by the Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE). Key challenges that the community in Masinga are facing include the destruction of sacred ecosystems through encroachment, illegal logging, and uncontrolled grazing of livestock. Indigenous biodiversity is fast disappearing and together with it the Indigenous Knowledge, which is naturally embedded in indigenous social-ecological systems. Earth spirituality has undergone systematic demonization and levels of religious intolerance have escalated.

Still, some positive results have been realized. Re-igniting and strengthening eco-cultural practices such as earth stewardship, massive community mobilization, community life plans including conservation actions were developed which have been guiding local actions. Respect for elders by young people has increased as more join in the earth stewardship for cultural recuperation. Cross-knowledge interactions (i.e., ILK, science, and practitioners' knowledge) have happened.

This paper is presented in four parts. Part 1 describes in detail the Masinga region where the tools were used for recuperation and transmission of ILK. This includes the main challenges that the project was addressing. Part 2 describes the two tools (eco-cultural maps and calendars) that were used to address the challenges that the community had prioritized. Part 3 discusses the results of the project and analyzes in a deeper way the two tools and their usability to address diverse challenges affecting people and nature. Part 4 presents the observations and conclusions made during the project period and also highlights the challenges that were encountered during implementation.

# Introduction to Masinga Region

Masinga region is inhabited by the Kamba community, which is a Bantu ethnic group who predominantly live in the eastern side of Kenya, spreading down to the coast. The first group of Kamba people settled in the present-day Mbooni Hills in the Machakos District of Kenya in the second half of the 17th century, before spreading to the greater Machakos, Makueni, and Kitui Districts.

Like many Bantu communities, the Akamba were originally hunters and gatherers. They later became long-distance traders because of their knowledge of the expansive area they inhabited and good relations with neighboring communities as well as excellent communication skills. They would go on to later adopt subsistence farming and pastoralism due to the availability of the new lands that they came to occupy. The Akamba believe in a "monotheistic, invisible, and transcendental God" (Ngai or Mulungu). "He is also known as Ngai Mumbi (God the Creator) and Mwatuangi (God the finger-divider). He is perceived as the omnipotent creator of life on earth. . . . The traditional Akamba perceive the spirits of their departed ones, the Aimu or Maimu, as the intercessors between themselves and Ngai Mulungu" ("Kamba people", 2023). Despite the spread of new beliefs, a significant number of people in this community still practice earth spirituality and have deep respect for itonyeo (small sacred sites) and mathembo (highly potent sacred sites) where they conduct rituals according to their ritual calendar.

Masinga is in Machakos County which forms part of the previous Eastern Province. The county stretches from latitudes 00 45' South to 10 31' South and longitudes 360 45' East to 370 45 East. It covers an approximate area of 6,281.4 km most of which is semi-arid. High and medium potential areas where rain-fed agriculture is carried out consist of 1,574 km or 26% of the total area. The district has a variety of topographical features. The landscape is largely a plateau that rises from 700 m to 1,700 m above sea level and is interrupted by an escarpment and a series of hill masses, the highest of which is Kilimambogo or Ol Donyo Sabuk, which rises to 2,144 m above sea level. Rising steeply to the northeast of the Athi River is the Yatta Plateau, which is broken by occasional hills. This plateau extends into the basin of River Tana. In the central part of the district is a striking series of hill masses that stretch in a roughly northsouth axis. This series includes the Ol Donyo Sabuk, Kanzalu ranges, Kangundo, Mua, Mitaboni, Iveti, and Kiima Kimwe. Most of these hills in Machakos are either sacred or have sacred sites.

Masinga is generally hot and dry, with two rainy seasons, the long and the short rain seasons. The long rains seasons starts at the end of March and continues up to May, while the short rains season starts at the end of October and lasts till December. The annual average rainfall ranges between 600 mm to 2,000 mm. Mean monthly temperatures vary between 21°C and 31°C (Mutua et al., 2006).

The coldest month is July while October and March are the hottest. However, the onset, cessation, and duration of rains have been changing due to influences of global warming (Wambua et al., 2014) and the failure to respect the traditional ecological laws that protect life-sustaining social-ecological systems (Traditional Earth Spiritualists in 2014).

63% of the population is regarded as poor with the perennial lack of water being the major contributing factor to poverty. Being largely a semi-arid region, the amount and frequency of rainfall in Machakos is quite erratic. The massive nature of the ground's parent rock limits the potential of groundwater.

ICE Kenya has been working with the community of Masinga in an area near Kamburu Dam, an area originally referred to as the "Tsetse Area" due to the presence of tsetse flies (Odingo, 1979, p. 85), to protect sacred natural sites. Agricultural and grazing activities in the area take about 86% of the total catchment area (Mutua, 2006). During the course of this work, it became apparent that the revitalization of sacred natural sites would require indigenous seeds, which are used in ritual practice at the sacred sites.

Unfortunately, food production in the project site has been greatly affected by climate change and the overemphasis on industrial farming practices. For a long time, indigenous seeds in the region were not promoted. Successive governments promoted the 'green revolution' farming system, which emphasized chemical fertilizers (Wambua et al., 2014) and hybrid seeds. Katumani hybrid maize was promoted as the main staple food, with indigenous crops marginalized to the extent of being referred to as orphaned crops. Most of the soils are also heavily deprived or acidic. Due to this, most households are known to afford only one meal a day, with devastating impacts on their health status. Due to neglect of traditional laws for the protection of springs and rivers, most springs dried up, leaving the community extremely vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition (Traditional Earth Spiritualists, 2014). The area has also experienced notable droughts such as La Niña of 1999 to 2000 and 2008 to 2009 which have led to severe water scarcity (Wambua et al, 2014). Under such circumstances, the resilience of this farming community is hugely threatened. However, in 2002, the government introduced the Strategy for Revitalizing Agriculture (SRA), which emphasized the use of drought-tolerant crops in arid and semiarid lands (ASALS), most of which are basically indigenous crops.

In 2013, ICE started working with the community to strengthen the whole social-ecological system by revitalizing the sacred relationship between people and nature—revitalizing and protecting the system of sacred sites in the area by sustaining the ritual cycle, bringing back indigenous seeds and cultural practices associated with them, reviving the dried-up springs, mobilizing and educating people, and collaborating with other knowledge systems. This work is usually led by elders who understand the whole culture around traditional seeds. Men elders lead ritual practice with the support of women. Women elders lead the revival of the traditional seed system since they understand indigenous seeds and their various benefits as well as traditional storage practices for effective protection from pests.

# Challenges

Traditionally, the Kamba community was very religious in practicing indigenous beliefs. Most of the hills and some sections of rivers were sacred. Some hills have several sacred sites, and this phenomenon is now being used by some stewards to develop an emerging philosophy of the ecosystem function of sacred sites to protect threatened hills.

Unfortunately, the sacred ecosystems are now under threat of destruction through encroachment, illegal logging, and uncontrolled grazing of livestock. Indigenous biodiversity is fast disappearing and together with it the indigenous knowledge, which is naturally embedded in indigenous social-ecological systems. Earth spirituality has undergone systematic demonization and levels of religious intolerance have escalated.

# Innovations and Tools Employed

To assist the community in addressing the situation and challenges, eco-cultural mapping and calendar development were used.

#### 1. The eco-cultural mapping

#### The preparatory phase

Eco-cultural process denotes an analysis of interactions between a people's culture and their immediate environment. The success of an eco-cultural process is determined by the amount of ecological knowledge and practices. In Masinga, eco-cultural mapping began with community dialogues which were aimed at mobilizing people to validate and believe in their own knowledge.



Masinga people participating in a dialogue session attended by five different communities.

AFRICAN BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (ABN)

Community dialogues are spaces in which participants from different sectors of the community come together for face-to-face discussions on common issues of concern. The community clarified different perspectives and developed commonly agreed responses to the common issues of concern. Dialogues were an important aspect of local governance and consensus building, as most community processes require a broad-based agreement for their effective implementation. Dialogues took different forms and participation (some involved the whole community while others involved specific sectors of the community). They provided the community with a good opportunity for joint reflection, analysis, and consensus-building on priority actions. This community is composed of different sectors, and this necessitated holding separate initial dialogues to negotiate and arrive at a consensus between all those groups to ensure that they respected each other especially when it came to ritual practice. This community leads a syncretic life, and this did not present insurmountable challenges since all members had testimony of instances where indigenous knowledge and practices had worked for them collectively.



An intergender dialogue at Masinga. 

ICE

#### Development of eco-cultural maps

Eco-cultural mapping is a participatory process which aims to reveal the deep geography, the cultural vision and meaning of the territory. In Masinga, it brought elders and youth together and also provided an opportunity for cross-knowledge interactions since diverse knowledge holders were involved.

Mapping develops a collective vision which can help in the reconnection with the past, the understanding of the present, and the visioning of the future. The preparation stages before beginning mapping are extremely important for the success of the mapping exercise. The deeper the reflections before the exercise, the clearer the elaboration of the maps and the easier it gets to develop implementation plans. The maps are critical in helping the wider community to hold a collectively agreed vision of the relations of different elements that interact in their territory over time. For Masinga community and nature to benefit from the mapping exercise, three sets of maps were produced as follows:



A break-out session during cross-knowledge session.

- *Map of the ancestral past.* This map helped to bring back the original knowledge and the ancestral order. It showed the way the ancestors used to live according to customary laws, distilling their culture from interactions with the territory. It provided inspiration when drawing the map of the desired future, as the community's aim was to restore the degraded ecosystems to a level close to the past situation. As a learning process for youth, eco-cultural mapping brought out the deep geography, the cultural vision, and the meaning of territory.
- Map of the present. This map facilitated the analysis of the impacts, transformations, and changes that the territory has suffered over time. It included the modern state and the new structures and foreign ways of governing which have been brought to the territory.
- Map of the future. This map depicts the desired state of the territory which the Masinga community envisions and agrees to move towards. It was accompanied by envisioned actions, processes, restoration initiatives, ways for recreation, and resurgence. Its development presented an opportunity to examine strengths, weaknesses, and potentials in light of the maps of the past and of the present. The conclusion of the map of the future consolidated the community ecological governance plans for the community of Masinga. The map also helped the community to move towards a local, collectively agreed and connected future.

#### 2. The eco-cultural calendars

#### Seasonal calendars and ritual cycle

The world's original cultures relate to the reality of time and space in a natural way. Over time, they learned how to read the cycles and protect nature by evolving appropriate ways of satisfying their human needs while enhancing the source of life. Since ancestral times, the sky and the movement of the celestial



Elders and youth in an eco-cultural mapping event. 

ICE

bodies have inspired humans to understand the dynamics in nature. Masinga Community evolved ways of understanding life this way so that they could weave relationships with time in a cyclical way and recognize how their territory encompassed sacred places and other elements. In this process of cultural resurgence in the Masinga area, the eco-cultural calendar captured this holistic worldview which saw the relationship between all elements. Their cyclical time marked social practices, rituals and celebrations, leadership roles, and the dynamic relationship between territory and culture. In this case, their ecocultural calendar (past, present, and future), encompassed their universe in totality. The following describes the aspects that are included in such a calendar:

The outer circle shows what is happening in the cosmos with the celestial bodies (stars and the moon, etc.). The next layer is what is happening in the ecosystem. The following layer of the circle shows what is going on with the domesticated crops and livestock in each season. The inner layer is the human rituals and ceremonies.

This process, as a cultural resurgence and learning process, was aimed at including the entirety of Masinga territory to show the relationship between the cosmos and humans.

The development of calendars is a continuous process that stimulates community analysis and research. In Masinga, the community has gone over the process several times with the aim of ensuring a strong and inclusive process which would lead to collectively elaborated calendars. This in turn ensured that a deep understanding of the dynamics of the territory (past and present with a vision of the future) was achieved before the calendar was done. From this calendar, the community was able to zoom in on specific aspects such as indigenous crops or the ritual cycle. This facilitated more detailed research, analysis, and planning by the community themselves. The image on the next page represents an ecocultural calendar.

#### **Results**

The use of eco-cultural maps and calendars in the Masinga region achieved the following results.

It led to re-igniting and strengthening eco-cultural practices such as earth stewardship, which has led to the regeneration and protection of the Kivaa sacred forest. Earth stewards are providing leadership in the protection of a system of sacred sites which play a significant role in the governance of their socialecological system. They have also reinstated their ritual calendar which has become a key component in the governance of the social-ecological system.

Massive community mobilization also happened and local farmers and earth stewards collectively protected the sacred forest. Although limited disturbance happens especially during the dry season, the sacred forest is largely protected due to the depth of mobilization and awareness created during the process of development of the maps and calendars. These tools are occasionally used to locally assess the levels of implementation of the plan of action to realize the map of the future.

Life plans (including conservation actions) were developed which have been guiding local actions especially by the core group in the restoration of the social-ecological system. They formed a research group to guide in the recuperation of indigenous seeds and setting up a community learning center which would also act as a seed banking center. The land has since been acquired and a basic building structure set up.

Respect for elders by youth has increased as more youth join the earth stewards in rituals each year along the eco-cultural calendar. This would not have happened in previous years, and the stewards are using this opportunity to continue inducting the youth into their own culture, which is going to enhance the sustainability of the processes.

Some cross-knowledge interactions among ILK, science, and practitioners' knowledge occurred. An example is the gazettement of sacred sites. This happened when the National Museums of Kenya worked closely with the earth stewards to list the Kivaa forest as a sacred forest. The next phase is to work on a program to ensure the sacred forest and others in the region are protected.

Some deeper insights into eco-cultural maps indicate that the process, including the elaboration of the eco-cultural calendars, works with the emotions of the participants. It opens people's hearts and minds, especially as they recall their memories and feelings on how their ancestral knowledge has in fact continued to be alive. By cultivating their memory, day by day, the resurgence of their culture will be assured in the future. The maps and calendars are tools that can be used again and again, to continue to stimulate the memory of communities. In Masinga, maps and calendars are being revisited every so often to keep the learning process alive and to enable the community to monitor the changes that are taking place in their territory.



Eco-cultural calendar of the Masinga region.

Even though the Masinga people considered maps and calendars separately, the two can be combined since calendars can also represent ancestral times, present times, and future times. Having the changes of the territory in perspective and understanding the relations between the sky, the weather, and the natural, agricultural, and ritual worlds, could be of great use because that can show an integrated picture of what has happened not only with the land but with the people and their way of living. All these take place on the same social-ecological system.

Sometimes people prioritize different aspects of the relationship between territory and time. For example, a group may decide to develop the agricultural calendar, the ritual calendar, the changes that occur in nature, the stars, or the changes in the weather. Given the time available and objectives, a group may decide to focus on any of the topics that they prioritize, or they can create a diagram in which they relate many of the topics in the same calendar, which then enables them to identify the intrinsic relations between them.

#### Challenges, obstacles, and conclusions

Along the way, several challenges have been met, which have affected the work with the Masinga community. A key challenge has been the ongoing demonization of culture, especially by new religious formations. This has presented a serious challenge to the community and has escalated to religious intolerance. This has however been addressed by the earth stewards through interdenominational dialogues with leaders of the new faiths, which were facilitated by ICE. Another challenge has been the deliberate misappropriation of certain cultural practices by the church, which is done with no regard to cultural protocols. This is happening across different communities of Kenya where the church copied the tunes of traditional songs and inserted their words apparently to obliterate the cultures.

Other challenges are technical such as how to approach co-production of knowledge with the holders of ILK. The knowledge has to be validated through the indigenous knowledge system and it takes time and resources. It therefore becomes an expensive process that has always been postponed. Free and Prior Informed Consent is a useful tool to protect ILK from being appropriated without consent. Our concern has been how to manage and screen the requests that would follow, especially if the community is not entirely ready to interact with diverse requests such as the removal of herbs. A remedy to this would be having biocultural community protocols, which have not been developed so far. Respectful referencing of ILK sources has not been commonly agreed upon globally, and this poses a challenge of referring to knowledge that has not been documented.

Eco-cultural calendars can be a very useful tool for inter-generational learning. If they are well related to the territory, especially to the way the territory moves and changes from ancestral times, to the present, and to the future. They can be an extraordinary tool for understanding the dynamics of the territory and the role of humans. The maps and calendars are an excellent methodology for community-based ecosystem assessment. They can be used to encourage community reflections about social organization, decision-making procedures, self-government, education, health, productivity, and gender issues. Furthermore, these tools help to plan initiatives and programs in different areas of the community's life.

Calendars inspire self-governance, given the differentiation of cultural roles for all sectors of the community. This ensures that the relationship between the territory and the human community respects each of the seasons and the different elements of life. In this way, a mutually enhancing relationship can be maintained by good governance as it was in ancestral times. This has been evident in Masinga where the local community is gradually re-aligning with the eco-cultural calendar, especially in the agricultural sector. They always remind the earth spiritualists to do rituals embedded in their cosmovision.

Education strategies can be built and designed to align and respond to the real cycles of life. In this way, children can participate in the natural rhythms and cycles of both nature and their cultural practices. Each of the seasons carries so much which can be learned and observed by the students. The school curriculums could be planned and defined following each of the seasons. The calendars indicate how learning can take place in other spaces like the forest, the rivers, the homesteads, traditional learning spaces, or family gardens. They help to go beyond the physical walls of the Community-based ecosystems assessment schools and encourage children and teachers to research and discover other ways of learning together, from each other, and from life as it unfolds. In Kenya, this fits well with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) which emphasizes place-based and experiential learning in nature.

In the political realm, calendars and maps can be used as Development Plans and as a tool for negotiating the community's proposals with various levels of political governance. Well-developed calendars and maps can show the government authorities that the people have been researching and getting together to analyze their situation and plan their own solutions. In this case, they help to build confidence between the communities and the state and to open dialogue. In Kenya, maps and calendars can be used to negotiate for county and national government support for rural development. More importantly, maps and calendars can reflect indigenous cultures' holistic vision of the territory, of life, and of how everything is interrelated. This sets up the basis for creating proposals that are rooted in local and traditional knowledge (considering socio-ecological systems), transcending western development approaches that do not entirely contribute to fulfilling local needs. As a matter of fact, these tools could help the industrial world to begin the critical shift to holistic thinking, which it urgently needs to do. As an example of this assertion, the Masinga community is involved in the piloting phase of Indigenous Futures Thinking together with NCF and ICE. The Masinga community is showing the way because Indigenous Knowledge is inherently holistic.

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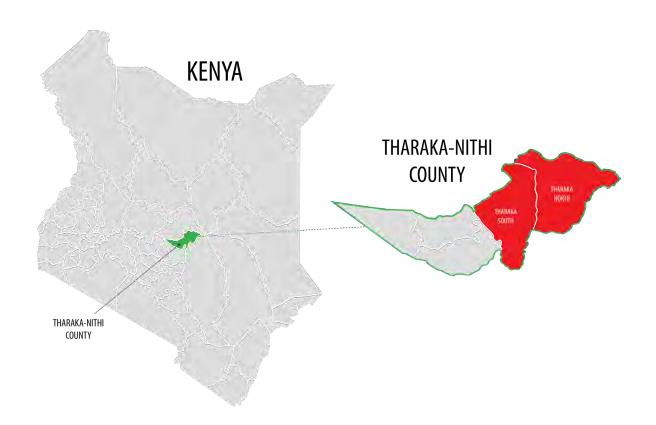
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# Asserting Bio-Cultural Rights and Autonomy through Cultural Festival & Spiritual Gathering in Tharaka, Kenya

Simon Ndonco Mitambo | Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation (SALT)





SALT accompanies communities through deep and transformative processes based on holistic knowledge systems of the indigenous and local peoples both in schools and with communities. Through community dialogues, ecological maps and calendars, and nature experiential learning processes, communities revive their indigenous knowledge and practices rooted in their Earth-centered methodologies. The approach of SALT is holistic and engages every aspect of humans, inner and outer, secular and sacred, matter and spirit, tangible and intangible, quality and quantity.

Website: https://saltnet.org/chumvi/about-us/

#### Introduction

Tharaka traditional territory is known as Nthiguru iri Njuki (The Land of the Bees), a semi-arid land characterized by lowland scrub and hill ranges. It is located between the foothills of Mount Kenya and River Tana, a biodiversity hotspot area. Tharaka has very rich cultural traditions and elders with deep ecological knowledge, which is at the center of their governance systems. However, these traditions are being increasingly undermined. The colonialists started this erosion. After independence, the government and external agencies fell victim to colonialism, promoting projects that are ill-conceived for the region, such as livelihood projects that promote livestock and seeds that are not adapted to these conditions. Along with the traditional governance system, the customary laws that controlled the cutting of trees, hunting of animals, and farming too close to water sources have been eroded. These powerful external forces continue to divert the community from seeking solutions that come from within. There has been privatization and commercialization of their land, ecological knowledge, and bio-cultural diversity in the name of poverty alleviation. This has all contributed to the increasing vulnerability of the community to pandemics and climate disruption. However, the tide has slowly been changing since the birth of the Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation (SALT) in 2012 and its legal formalization in 2013. Through the collaboration of SALT, the community has found that the solutions they seek are already lying deep within their indigenous cultures.

#### What is SALT?

SALT is a community-based network of cultural and ecological governance institutions founded and established under the customary laws of the indigenous and local communities of Tharaka. These cultural and ecological institutions include clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms, councils of elders, custodians of sacred natural sites, diviners and spiritual leaders, and traditional healers. SALT has been reviving and revitalizing culture to build solidarity and assert bio-cultural rights.

The customary laws that manage the use of the land and its resources are slowly being respected and followed again. There are 30 sacred natural sites (SNS) being revived, and their role as central to culture, food sovereignty, and the protection of the ecosystems is being returned. Tharaka elders have been remembering how our community had survived pandemics and plagues like COVID-19 and climate related calamities like droughts and famine. They had traditional and cultural ways of responding to these crises, ways that were embedded in the community's cosmovision and worldviews. These helped Tharaka people remain resilient in the face of many challenges.

The traditional knowledge is now quickly returning, thanks to the work of SALT on reviving and revitalizing these cultural ways through intense community dialogues over the last decade. It has not been easy! SALT is now evolving diverse strategies to reinvigorate indigenous knowledge and practices concerning community and ecosystem resilience. One such strategy has been to hold an annual cultural festival, a spiritual gathering, and walking workshop. These activities are all geared towards indigenous futures thinking of bringing Tharaka community and their leaders together for dialogue with the aim of asserting their bio-cultural rights and autonomy to their ancestral land and territory.

#### The Bio-Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering

From October 12-15, 2023, SALT held its first Tharaka Annual Cultural Festival, Spiritual Gathering and Pilgrimage, and Walking Workshop at Chiakariga Market, Chiakariga Sub-County. It was a divine process initiated by the local community and led by the elders to re-connect people of Tharaka with themselves and with the ancestral wisdom and worldviews of their ancestors. The event was held in Chiakariga (originally known as Miruguyuni) because of its indigeneity as the home of the Gumba, the first native people to live in Tharaka. The Gumba were hunters and gatherers and practiced blacksmithing. It is also the ancestral home of the Tharaka spiritual leader, the Mûgwe and Kîbûka, who are seen as saviors of Tharaka. Kîbûka was later betrayed by the same people he purported to save. The event allowed other communities to come and immerse themselves in the very rich culture of Tharaka and was an effective strategy to appreciate and uphold the diversity of our African cultures.

The overarching theme of the 4-day event was "Finding our ways into the heart of conservation of bio cultural diversity through re-rooting with our culture and indigenous wisdom." Each of the four days had a sub-theme, ranging from stories of origin and pilgrimage of the people to the community's seasonal calendars and ritual ceremonies and practices. The event taking four days is also symbolic in the Tharakan worldview. Four represents both the elements of life—Fire, Air, Water and Earth—and the four directions. We concluded the four days with a walking workshop and pilgrimage. We walked to the Kîbûka Grand Falls, where the elders from 30 clans of Tharaka performed appeasement rites. The rites were directed to Kîbûka, the mythical legend of the Tharaka people.

SALT at the same time used the event to celebrate its 10-year anniversary since its inception in 2013. The event was attended by more than 3,000 people from across the country and East African region. The attendees included people from the Maasai (Narok and Kajiado), Ogiek (Nakuru), Imenti (Meru), Chuka



The Tharaka people during a spiritual gathering. 

SALT

(T/Nithi), Maara (T/Nithi), Kikuyu (Laikipia, Nyeri, Nakuru), Kamba (Machakos), and Mbeere (Embu), among others. Those from across East Africa through the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) included people from Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. One participant came from Dakar, Senegal. These participants joined the celebrations through songs, dances, poems, percussions, storytelling, and ritual ceremonies. The participants included the elders (both men and women), custodians of sacred natural sites, spiritual leaders such as Mugwe, Oloibon, and Mugo. The constituents included school children who came to perform and learn from the elders. These schools included The Kithino Learning Center, Chiakariga Girls Secondary School, Kajiampau Secondary School, Kirimankari Primary School, Kombo Primary School, Kijege Primary School, and Mutaranga Primary School.

The event was officially opened by Mr. Nobert Komora, Tharaka Nithi County Commissioner, who was accompanied by Mr. Kaloki Kyalo, the Chiakariga Sub-County Commissioner. They both were the representatives for the President of the Republic of Kenya. Other senior government officials and policy makers who graced the occasion included Mrs. Bridget Wambua, the County Director of Education accompanied by a team from the Ministry of Education, Hon. Susan Ngugi Mwindu, Member of National Assembly and Women Representative, Hon. Joseph Kinyua, area Member of County Assembly, Muthini Karangi, County Minister for Public Service, Administration and Devolution Affairs, and John Kibabaya, representing Hon. George Gitonga Murugara, Member of Parliament for Tharaka Constituency. Both national and local media houses were also represented including The Star Newspaper, Radio Africa Group, Kenya National News Agency, Tuliza FM, Mwariama FM, Meru FM, Geetu FM, Wendani FM, Muuga FM, and Weru TV.

#### The Importance of a Bio-Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering

The Tharaka Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering is such an important event for Tharaka because it presents the community with an opportunity to revive and revitalize their indigenous and local knowledge systems and intergenerational learning. Indigenous and local knowledge and practices play a critical role in the protection and conservation of biological diversity and regeneration of the land. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) have been given recognition under the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol. The event brought together diverse knowledge systems to dialogue together for enhanced bio-cultural protection through a process known as Indigenous Futures Thinking Walking Workshop/pilgrimage.

In this process, we took a walk through the ancestral landscape of Tharaka to the Kibuka Grand Falls, one of the most sacred natural sites in Tharaka and now threatened by dam construction, which is a flagship project of Kenya Vision 2030. This presented an opportunity for re-connecting ourselves with the sacred land and ancestral territory, our ancient wisdom and worldview of the Tharaka people, as well as celebrating our cultural identity. This was critical as it connects well into national and global networks that SALT engages, linking the local to global processes. The Gathering and pilgrimage began with an appeasement ritual at the Kibuka Grand Falls in order to break the intergenerational curse directed to Tharaka people through the Legend of Kibuka. The ritual restored peace and built solidarity with all the people, other Earth communities, and the ancestral spirits of the land and territory. Beginning in 2023, SALT decided to make this Gathering and Festival an annual event.

#### The journey with regard to the appearsement ritual and breaking the curse

The actual effects of the journey with regard to the appearement ritual and the breaking of the curse were great. We experienced rains immediately after the appearement ritual process. The elders said that this was a good sign to show that the offerings were accepted by the Kibuka, the ancestor of the rains, and our ancestors.

Some of the elders had dreams, which they interpreted as an affirmation that the ritual of appearement was accepted. The elder Chabari Mwarania, a healer, saw monkeys visiting people in his dream. He was told that visitation by the monkeys will be an affirmation that Kibuka and the ancestors were happy and that their offerings were accepted. Some community members called during and immediately after the festival to confirm the visitation by monkeys.

The appeasement ritual re-connected the people with their ancestral land, their wisdom, and worldview. It helped mend the relationship that had been broken by betrayal of Kibuka by the people. One of the elders confirmed that this was a good step forward in breaking the intergenerational curse.

The elders are keen to continue with this ritual and agreed to perform it annually. They said that the more it is performed, the more it will restore the broken relationship with Kibuka and the ancestors. They also said that there would be more signs to be seen and thus promised to be vigilant in reading the signs of nature and respond accordingly.

#### Collective Reflections From the 2022 ILK Global Workshop

#### On photographs

The use of photographs is a powerful method to engage the attention and interest of young and old. Strong images can help bridge gaps among generations and facilitate dialogue and intergenerational learning.

We must take care when using photographs. In Thailand, community elders have advised that children's faces should not appear in the photograph. In Africa, we experienced an instance when a photo by our community was used in an advertisement. Upon investigation, we learned that consent was not properly asked and so we filed a complaint.

Our organizations have great numbers of photographs in the archives. How can we maximize these resources? This is an issue that all organizations grapple with. Aside from using them in our publications, we can use the Local Biodiversity Outlook (LBO) as one vehicle to make use of these fantastic resources. At the same time, we can set up a website.

#### On Cultural Maps and Eco-Calendars

There is much to learn from the methodologies of cultural mapping and eco-calendars as tools for the transmission of knowledge. These are effective in getting a complete picture of the community. Maps and calendars are outputs of processes wherein young and old share their knowledge. What's new here is the time dimension in the process of mapping indigenous territories.

Here is a tool to assess and compare the past and present, and to plan for their vision for the future. When looking into the biodiversity in the past, it was plenty. Then through time, it has degraded. With the observed change, communities have decided to take control of their territory. The map of the future is a move to see the future in a creative way. It helps people move forward toward their vision.

In the Philippines, this has been used in the defense of ancestral domains especially when development projects come in. It is useful in development planning.

The eco-cultural calendar is a strong tool. It shows different community activities and crops being planted throughout the season. It includes information on the blooming of certain plants which indicates the changes in seasons. Climate change has affected communities but still, people find their knowledge useful. For example, the behavior of animals and plants sends a message that rain will come. Until now, such knowledge is useful to farmers in adjusting their activities because of changes in climate. Presently, the people are keenly observing the changes in order to assess if these indicators are still appropriate or need to be adjusted.

#### On Strengthening Indigenous Spirituality

Indigenous spirituality has been greatly affected by our colonial histories. In order to convert people to Christianity, missionaries branded the local beliefs and practices as demonic and took away the traditional symbols. The education system likewise alienates us from the teachings of our ancestors.

Despite these challenges, indigenous communities continue to practice their ways of life including their spirituality in varying degrees.

Sacred sites need to be respected and protected. These are where the shamans and other spiritual leaders perform our sacred rituals. In Africa, some sacred sites have suffered damage from the construction of dams and other development projects of the government.

It is important to document customary laws, move them forward, and push for their recognition in the national legal system so that our identity will be recognized and respected.



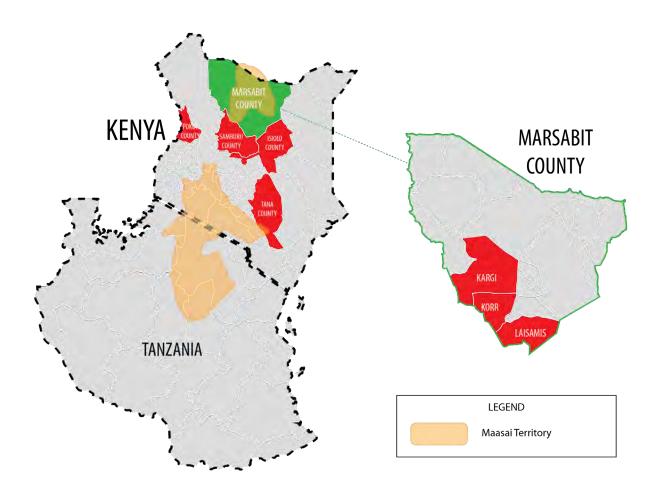


# THE CENTERS OF DISTINCTION ON INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The Knowledge Resource Centers play a significant role in promoting environmental conservation by showcasing sustainable practices and raising awareness about their importance. Furthermore, they contribute to community development by facilitating knowledge exchange, collaboration, and empowerment opportunities for community members, including women, youth, and elders. Serving as platforms for advocacy, these centers amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples and address crucial issues such as cultural preservation, gender equality, and youth empowerment. Through education and mentorship programs, the resource centers empower Indigenous communities and enhance their capacity in various areas.

## Community-Based Knowledge Resource Centers Working for the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge in Africa

Indigenous Information Network (IIN)





Indigenous Information Network (IIN) is a non-profit, volunteer-run non-governmental organization (NGO) registered in the Republic of Kenya. IIN works on both development issues that affect and impact Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The main focus is on women, girls, children, youth, and other vulnerable members of their communities. IIN recognizes that conservation and protection of the environment is key as it plays an important role in their lives since they depend on the environment for their survival.

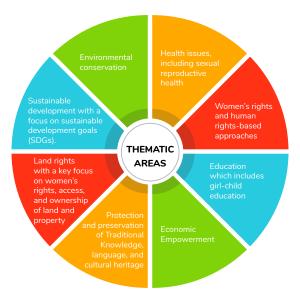
#### Introduction

Indigenous Information Network (IIN) is an organization formed as early as 1996 when we were preparing to go to Argentina to attend the 3rd Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Since then, we continued slowly, until we finally registered as a non-profit non-government organization (NGO) in 2001 in the Republic of Kenya.

The organization was founded by a group of professionals to address the need for information through media and other channels about Indigenous Peoples, who in this case are nomadic pastoralists, huntergatherers, and other minorities, and the challenges they face as they struggle to survive.

The organization has been involved in the dissemination of information, environmental conservation activities, human rights, women's rights, community development, and advocacy activities in support of the indigenous communities which include women, girls and boys, youth, and other isolated minorities in the region.

Thematic areas of our organization include:



#### Indigenous Knowledge and Challenges Faced

Indigenous knowledge is of utmost importance for the cultural continuity and identity of indigenous communities. It plays a crucial role in sustainable resource management, biodiversity conservation, and local resilience.

However, the transmission of this knowledge is increasingly threatened. In Kenya, the erosion of traditional knowledge is a significant concern due to various factors that contribute to its decline. The impact of modernization and globalization often leads to the prioritization of western knowledge systems over indigenous wisdom. With the increasing influence of technology, urbanization, and formal education, younger generations may be disconnected from their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. They are increasingly embracing modern practices which leads to a loss of cultural identity and a decline in the transfer of traditional knowledge.

The education system in Kenya is a hindrance because students spend a long time in school. Hence, they do not have enough time to learn the different aspects of culture and traditional knowledge from the elders. Meanwhile, the population of elders who have information about indigenous knowledge is rapidly declining.

The rapid pace of change and shifting societal values also contribute to the erosion of traditional practices and beliefs. Factors such as intermarriages and rural-urban migration have contributed to the loss of language. Many people, including the young generation, have moved away from the villages to other parts of the world and are not coming back to their homes. This has made them lose touch with their roots.

Additionally, socioeconomic disparities and limited access to resources can further marginalize indigenous communities, making it challenging to preserve and transmit their traditional knowledge to future generations. Traditional items are disappearing because they are sold to tourists while the community people do not have time to make them anymore.

Environmental degradation and climate change are factors leading to the erosion of valuable traditional knowledge linked to the environment such as herbs used for medicinal purposes, food crops, and animal habitats.

Finally, Indigenous Peoples have a lack of knowledge on what information may or may not be shared about their resources. This is why many communities have lost precious resources to strangers who have taken advantage of their ignorance.

#### **Indigenous Communities and the Knowledge Resource Centers**

IIN works closely with indigenous communities in Kenya and throughout the African region, including pastoralists, hunters and gatherers, and other scattered minorities. Below are the communities IIN works with.

#### The Pokot community

The Pokot people form a section of the Kalenjin ethnic group. The community is found in the larger Pokot County of Kenya. They are both pastoralists and agro-pastoralists who mainly rely on their livestock products and farming as their livelihoods. Beekeeping is listed as one of the livelihoods they have where the honey is eaten as food, using honey to make traditional drinks, and using the honey for medicinal purposes.



Pokot women during a learning session.

#### Waata community

The indigenous community resides in Marsabit, Isiolo, and Tana River counties. They are a hunting and gathering community who have unfortunately been assimilated into the Borana, Gabbra, and other Oromo-speaking communities. During the 2019 census, they were counted amongst the communities into which they have been assimilated. They are estimated to be around 20,000 people. They now practice agriculture and keep livestock, especially goats, cows, and camels as it is now illegal to hunt wild animals.



Waata community learning center.

#### The Samburu community

They reside in Kenya's Samburu County and follow a pastoralist way of life. They keep cattle, camels, goats, and sheep. They are organized into clans. Each clan lives in separate manyattas.1 The name "Samburu" translates to "butterfly," as their clothing showcases intricate beadwork designs resembling butterfly wing patterns. The Samburu people are recognized for their vibrant and beaded garments, skillfully crafted by women and worn by both men and women.



The Samburu women wearing their intricate beadwork designs.

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Traditional homestead or settlement of a number of households surrounding a cattle enclosure.

#### Maasai community

Maasai make up a community that lives across northern, central, and southern Kenya, and Northern Tanzania. The community also extends to other parts of Tanzania. They are pastoralists and care for their cattle which make up the primary source of food—meat, milk, and even blood, as certain sacred rituals involve the drinking of cow's blood. Amongst the Maasai, the measure of a man's wealth is in terms of children and cattle. They live in Manyattas which are made from dried cow dung. However, their livelihoods have changed over time, and some are now practicing farming and large-scale agriculture and mining in both Kenya and Tanzania.



The Maasai people gathered in a community learning center. 

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#### **Rendille Community**

Rendille is a Cushitic sub-ethnic community. Rendille people inhabit the arid and semi-arid landscapes of Marsabit County in Kargi, Korr, and Laisamis which is in Northern Kenya. They are adapting to the challenges of their environment. They are neighbors of the Borana, Gabbra Samburu, and Turkana tribes. As nomadic pastoralists, they rely on camels, goats, and sheep for their livelihoods. They are organized into clans. Each clan lives in separate manyattas consisting of homesteads that have strong kinship ties. Their dwellings are temporary due to their mobility as they seek pasture and water.

These communities possess an abundance of traditional knowledge and practices that are invaluable for sustainable resource management, environmental conservation, and the preservation of biodiversity. Their profound connection to their ancestral lands, combined with centuries of accumulated wisdom, offers unparalleled insights into living in harmony with nature. For instance, among the Waata people, there are trees and herbs that cannot be cut down because of their spiritual and cultural values. They only use the bark, leaves, and roots of these trees. After collecting some parts of the bark of the tree for



IIN helps indigenous communities build sustainable livelihoods. 🗖 IIN

medicinal purposes, they would cover the bare part with soil. At Waata shrines and sacred areas, cutting of trees and any plants is forbidden.

The Pokot community has its own special animals, called totems, which represent each clan. These totems create a spiritual bond between humans and nature, promoting a peaceful coexistence with the environment. For example, if a clan has a totem connected to an animal like an eagle or buffalo, they view it as sacred and highly respect its presence. This respect leads to a cultural norm of protecting the animal's habitat and ensuring its survival. The traditional knowledge and practices associated with these totems guide the clan in hunting through ways that keep nature balanced and ecosystems healthy.

These communities are the most vulnerable since they reside in arid and semi-arid places hence, they face social, economic, and environmental challenges that threaten their cultural heritage. IIN partners with them to empower, preserve traditions, build sustainable livelihoods, and advocate for land and resource rights.

To facilitate learning and sharing among community members, IIN has established Knowledge Resource Centers in these communities. These centers primarily cater to the indigenous communities that IIN partners with. The centers are named after the places the indigenous communities live in. The centers are:

- 1. Olorukoti Enooretet Resource and Knowledge Center
- 2. Kiltamany Resource and Knowledge Center
- 3. Naramum Women Knowledge Center
- 4. Melelo Resource Center
- 5. Olekuseroi Resource Center
- 6. Saparingo Naretoi Resource Center
- 7. Salamis Women Knowledge Center
- 8. Paran Women Center
- 9. Napakarin Women Knowledge Centre
- 10. Namunyak-Lepolosi Resource
- 11. Naramam Women Knowledge centers
- 12. Naserian Saparingo knowledge center
- 13. Olorukoti Knowledge Center

#### The Role of the Knowledge Resource Centers in the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge

In response to the challenges facing indigenous knowledge, IIN decided to establish Knowledge Resource centers where communities can meet, share, and learn together, both elders and youth, as a means to recover and safeguard the continuity of indigenous knowledge for future generations.

The Knowledge Resource Centers are instrumental in fulfilling our mission and vision. They serve as spaces where valuable information about Indigenous Peoples, their cultures, and the challenges they face can be preserved and shared. The centers also play a significant role in promoting environmental conservation by showcasing sustainable practices and raising awareness about their importance. Furthermore, they contribute to community development by facilitating knowledge exchange, collaboration, and empowerment opportunities for community members, including women, youth, and elders. Serving as platforms for advocacy, these centers amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples and address crucial issues such as cultural preservation, gender equality, and youth empowerment. Through education and mentorship programs, the resource centers empower indigenous communities and enhance their capacity in various areas.



Knowledge resource centers serve as spaces to share and preserve Indigenous knowledge.

#### 1. Gathering Spaces for Cultural Exchange

The resource centers provide physical spaces where indigenous community members can come together to share their knowledge, experiences, and stories. These spaces foster a sense of belonging, strengthen cultural identity, and promote intergenerational dialogue.

#### 2. Knowledge Sharing and Education

The resource centers serve as platforms for knowledge dissemination and education. They organize workshops, seminars, and cultural events that facilitate the sharing of traditional knowledge and skills. Elders and community members act as teachers, passing down their expertise to younger generations. The centers promote the use of traditional knowledge in the preservation of natural resources. For example, the existence of sacred forest areas helps maintain the ecosystem and ensure that genetic resources are safeguarded.

#### 3. Community Archives

The elders come to be interviewed on histories concerning their communities, and audio recordings of spoken histories, narratives, written newsletters, and songs were captured. These are stored in the resource centers. Recording these allows for their preservation and future access by community members.



The resource centers serve as spaces to document oral histories with elders serving as resource persons. • IIN

#### 4. Language Preservation

Many indigenous languages are endangered and at risk of extinction. The resource centers play a pivotal role in language revitalization efforts by offering language classes, language immersion programs, and language-focused cultural activities. They provide a safe space for linguistic practice and the intergenerational transfer of native languages.

#### 5. Skill and Craftsmanship Development

Indigenous communities possess a wealth of traditional skills and craftsmanship, such as weaving, beads making, carving, and traditional medicine. Resource centers provide training and apprenticeship opportunities, enabling the transfer of these skills from masters to apprentices, ensuring their preservation. Also, this craftsmanship and its products are displayed at the centers.



Indigenous women engaged in traditional skills and craftsmanship.

#### 6. Intergenerational Learning

The resource centers foster intergenerational learning by encouraging interactions between elders, adults, and youth. During the school holidays, the elders get a chance to pass knowledge to the young. With the creation of platforms for knowledge exchange and mentorship, resource centers bridge generational gaps and create opportunities for youth to learn from their elders.

For example, the Viva Girls program is regularly conducted at the centers. Adolescent girls and boys undergo mentorship and training on traditional knowledge by the elders of the community. The girls and boys of school age get to be mentored by the older youth who have successfully graduated from different universities. These older youth and other experts share their experiences and give advice on commonly faced challenges such as peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, sexual reproductive health rights, and mental health and illnesses.

The program also tackles climate change impacts on women and girls and mitigation strategies including tree planting activities. The community elders are invited in a session to pass their traditional knowledge to the girls through storytelling, songs and dance, and oral narratives promoting intergenerational knowledge exchange and use of their local language.

#### 7. Restoration of Indigenous Trees

The centers have seedlings of indigenous trees which communities are encouraged to plant. Community members learn the importance of the trees such as the medicinal values attached to them.

**8.** The centers have acted as meeting points for women and elders across the indigenous communities whereby they come to share their experiences and ideas with their counterparts. This has enhanced networking and connection among themselves. This also provides them a platform to learn from each other's culture and traditions, songs, ways of living, and language. For instance, International Women's Day 2022 was held at Naramam Resource Center, and International Women's Day 2023 was held at Olorukoti Enooretet resource and knowledge centers. For such occasions, women from all the other centers, over 600 women each time, are in attendance. There has been a lot of appreciation for the differences in cultures as seen clearly in their way of dressing, song, and dance.



2022 International Women's Day Celebration at Naramam Resource Centre. 

IN



Indigenous Women from the Pokot Community during the 2022 International Women's Day Celebration at Naramam Resource Centre. 

IN

The organization hopes to do more of these in the future to ensure continuity in the development of these centers to reflect what the women truly believe in: collective and individual development of its members, environmental conservation, promotion of knowledge exchange, and appreciation for cultural diversity.

**9.** The centers have enabled the women to get connected with relevant government offices such as the Ministry of Tourism and Cultures, hence making them get assistance on issues affecting them. Also, this enables them to actively contribute to the preservation and promotion of their traditional knowledge.

#### Achievements of the Knowledge Resource Centers

The centers have acted as unifying factors in the communities. They have brought women, men, and youth together through regular meetings and exchange visits which have enhanced unity and mutual learning.

The centers fully recognize and support the Indigenous Peoples as custodians in biodiversity conservation and culture preservation.

The Viva Girls Program is aimed at empowering Indigenous adolescent girls and helping them gain confidence and claim their rightful place in the community and in society. There has been a reduction in cases of early pregnancies, school dropouts, early marriages, and issues of gender-based violence since the girls and women have been trained on their rights through the Viva Girls program.

Indigenous women are active in training the girls about their role in the passing of traditional knowledge. Participating in their traditional ceremonies and learning traditional practices like bead-working have greatly helped in the transmission of traditional knowledge through the generations.



Viva Girls Program. 

IN



The learning centers serve as spaces for conversation among the youth.  $\mbox{\ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ } \mbox{\ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{\ \ \ \ } \Box \mbox{$ 



Learning centers are spaces for intergenerational learning.  ${\color{red} \bullet}$   ${\tiny \mbox{IIN}}$ 

# The Importance of Transmitting the Knowledge of the Guna People of Guna Yala Region, Panama

Onel Masardule | Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena (FPCI)





FPCI is an Indigenous organization of the Guna of Panama. With the participation of youth, women, and other members, FPCI manages programs and projects based on Indigenous Knowledge of the sustainable use and monitoring of natural resources to improve the quality of life and the enjoyment of their rights as people.

FPCI works in indigenous areas at national, regional, and international levels on wetlands and biodiversity, climate change, protected areas and culture, gender and natural resources, youth and the environment, Indigenous rights, systematization and training; knowledge promotion, dissemination and diffusion; conventions and environmental initiatives and indigenous entrepreneurship guided by ancestral values.

#### The Guna People

The Guna People are one of the seven Indigenous Peoples of Panama. The Guna population is currently estimated at 80,000 distributed across 49 islands in Gunayala Comarca<sup>2</sup> northeast of Panama City. We are autonomously governed by our Guna authorities having gained independence from Panama in 1925. Our main economic activities are tourism, subsistence agriculture, hunting, and fishing. We maintain our own language which is recognized in Panamanian law.

#### Importance of Indigenous Knowledge and Its Transmission

For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have developed and used knowledge, evident in customary law and traditions which have been transmitted from generation to generation and which have evolved through time. Indigenous knowledge has contributed to the sustainable development of communities. One of the contributions of Indigenous knowledge is traditional medicine. The recognition of Indigenous Peoples as authors and active managers of knowledge, instead of being considered as mere sources of information, is gaining strength in an economy based on the conservation and use of natural resources. The transmission of knowledge is still practiced orally in most cases.

Indigenous Knowledge is an essential component in our development and daily life experience. This knowledge plays an important role in our food security, conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, agricultural development, and medicinal treatments, among others. Transmitting this knowledge remains crucial especially since the Guna youth are increasingly being trained in Western systems of education. The challenge is to ensure that young people will continue the traditional practices and carry out appropriate innovations of this knowledge thus strengthening the identity of the Guna People.

Language continues to play a fundamental role in strengthening Guna's knowledge and culture. The collective memory of the Guna People always evokes the experiences of our ancestors which are reviewed through oral history in the form of lullabies, the sagla,<sup>3</sup> and interpretations of the Argar.<sup>4</sup>

The Guna holds much respect for the natural resources which are considered just like us—as human beings at some point in the evolution of life which had been changed by the designs of Baba and Nana. Earthly life and spiritual life are parallel; therefore flora and fauna have the same value as human beings. "The marine and land species that we know today were beings like us and had names like ours from hundreds of years ago," as Guna Elders explain it. Knowledge such as this has been transmitted orally from generation to generation.

#### The Guna Knowledge Center of Distinction

The mission of Guna Knowledge Center of Distinction, a member of the global network Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK), is to contribute to the search for alternative solutions to issues affecting the Guna People, such as climate change, biodiversity and ecosystems, language, education, culture, and spirituality.

Panamanian word for a region that is governed by the Indigenous Peoples living there. 2

A ceremonial song led by the holder of knowledge on the creation of the world, human beings, and the Guna People's culture and history, which is sung in a language only Guna specialists know.

The specialist who interprets the song of the sagla.

Expected changes that the Center is aiming for are (1) inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in environmental governance and decision-making at local, national, and international levels; (2) valorization and strengthening of Indigenous Knowledge among the Guna People; (3) recognition as a partner in all platforms and agreements related to Indigenous Knowledge; and (4) acquire resources for communication and education on Indigenous Knowledge.

#### **Activities and Results**

Activities that were carried out to recover and strengthen Guna knowledge were meetings with Guna knowledge holders, workshops, and field research and information gathering using participatory methodologies. Results are seen in the systematization of information on Guna knowledge, the development of a program on Guna knowledge that will be implemented in Gunayala Region schools, namely Felix Esteban Oller College in Yandub and the Cacique Olotebilinguiña Institute in Usdub, and linkages with and among the Elders, young people, and women in knowledge transmission.

Activities that were held to strengthen the Center were institutionalization of the Center of Distinction in the communities, workshops on institutional strengthening and its operationalization, and workshops hosting the exchange of experience and information between communities.

Results are seen in the creation of the Institute Masar Ibegun Galu dedicated to research, promotion, rescue, and education on the Guna People's culture and knowledge. For its operations, Guna authorities provided the land and an allocation amounting to 2% of the Community budget, and strengthened coordination and communication with the COD-ILK network.

Activities that were held to share Indigenous Knowledge were participation in COD-ILK virtual meetings and contribution of articles on Indigenous Knowledge for publication by COD-ILK. Results were seen in the partnerships formed with government institutions, indigenous organizations, and research institutions at the regional and international levels which are expected to facilitate wider dissemination and education in Guna knowledge and recognition as a strategic partner in local, regional, and international platforms on Indigenous Knowledge systems as well as publications.

### The Transmission of Mayan Ancestral Science, Knowledge, and Practices in Guatemala

Ramiro Batzin | Asociación Sotz'il





Sotz'il is an Indigenous organization in Guatemala that is of a technical nature, based on the principles and values of the Mayan cosmic vision, and is made up of community representatives, Indigenous leaders, and professionals. Areas of work revolve around biodiversity, climate change, and protected areas.

Sotz'il is grounded on community participation from where we generate alternative proposals related to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural spheres in search of the utz k'aslemal or "good living" associated with collective well-being in Harmony and balance with an integral development.

#### Introduction

Guatemala is a multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic country characterized by its exuberant cultural and natural diversity in which three Indigenous Peoples coexist: the Maya, Garifuna, and Xinca. The indigenous population is 6.5 million which represents 43.60% self-identified as Indigenous Peoples: Maya (41.7%), Garifuna (0.1%), and Xinca (1.8%).

The Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala possess a vision of life known as the Utz K'aslemal which is based on their way of understanding the origin and development of all forms of life from a cosmogonic perspective and the interrelation between mother nature, human beings, and the universe.

Indigenous Peoples are bearers of a refined system of related knowledge as varied as astronomy, botany, agriculture, spirituality, cosmogony, history, ethnography, science, society, economy, symbols, and material culture, which allows them to obtain a different approach during the process of acquisition and construction of knowledge.

Article 66 of the 1985 Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala recognizes, for the first time, the existence of different "ethnic groups," which constitutes a great advance in political and legal terms, but is not consistent with the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples since it reduces them to "groups," which in truth are Peoples. In any case, this constitutional article has remained only a legal statement since in reality public policies have not been substantially transformed.

Guatemala was declared a Mega Diverse Country at COP-10-Biodiversity held in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010. In February 2014, the country approved the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This agreement was suspended by the Constitutional Court because indigenous organizations filed an unconstitutionality on June 16 of the same year, and in 2020 the Court ruled to give effect to the protocol.

From the Indigenous Peoples' point of view, laws and public policies do not allow Indigenous community management within the framework of the collective and historical rights, which are widely recognized in the international legal frameworks, as is the case of ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples ratified by Guatemala in 1996, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

#### Mayan Knowledge

"Indigenous knowledge and practices," "Maya traditional," "ancestral," or "science" are concepts that have been used and evolved parallel to the recognition of indigenous rights. Mayan or traditional knowledge is the knowledge possessed and used by the 22 linguistic communities in Guatemala. This knowledge is integrated by a set of knowledge and experiences based mainly on ancestral practice and a process of permanent interaction between human beings, nature, and the universe. The knowledge has unbreakable linkages to the lands, territories, and living well.

Mayan knowledge is part of a system of knowledge, of which, part is codified (systematized and structured) and is transmitted from one generation to another among men, women, and youth. The sages refer to this knowledge system as cosmovision because it is through this that the life of the people, the life of the community has been maintained and will continue to be maintained. This vision or concept not only includes a sacred and spiritual aspect, but it is also believed by the Maya that knowledge is learned by studying and practicing or it is also a gift by the Creator and Creator of Universes, according to their day or Nawal of birth which is connected with the Mayan calendar.

Mayan knowledge and practices are an intergenerational cultural legacy, which has facilitated the conditions for different peoples to preserve their own forms of social, environmental, political, and economic organization and life itself based on a cosmogonic approach that has allowed a harmonious coexistence of nature, humans, and the universe.

This knowledge and practices are gradually being lost due to factors that threaten them, both external and internal, among which the current development model, acculturation, loss of identity, discrimination, and racism stand out. However, fundamental knowledge and practices associated with agriculture, forest management, climate risk management, conservation of natural resources, and biodiversity are still preserved and supported by their own logic.

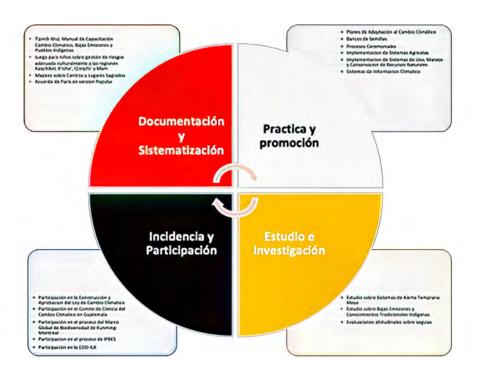
Indigenous Peoples have highlighted in different spaces and dialogue mechanisms established at national and international levels that ancestral and traditional knowledge need to be recognized as science. As a result, these proposals and demands are recognized and embodied in international instruments such as Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

#### The Guatemalan Time and Space Observatory Center of Distinction

The Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK) are scientific and political spaces that are developing processes within the territories, the national and international level on Indigenous knowledge and science, based on their cosmovision and which have contributed to the civilizing action of the world, contributing their scientific knowledge (called traditional) to the sciences: astronomy, to the measurement and ordering of time (calendars), to mathematics, to architecture and engineering, to the economy, to the political system, to agriculture, to the arts and that have, are, and will continue to contribute to the balance of ecosystems and the rational sustainable use of natural resources. The COD-ILK is composed of organizations, indigenous leaders, experts, professionals, and defenders of indigenous and local knowledge as vital to nature.

In Guatemala, the Centers of Distinction are developed as Observatories of Time and Space and have the mission to develop Indigenous knowledge through respect, recognition, development, and promotion of Mayan Knowledge and Practices, through four lines of work:

- **Documentation and Systematization** of Mayan knowledge and practices.
- *Advocacy and Participatio*n in the formulation and implementation of public policies and international frameworks on Mayan knowledge.
- **Practice and promotion** of Mayan knowledge and innovations using intergenerational and gender frameworks.
- Study and research of Mayan knowledge.



These four lines directly align with the objectives of Sotz'il of realizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples. We build integral development alternatives for Indigenous Peoples based on their identity, values, and cosmovision and promote full and effective community participation to create sustainable solutions for Good Living or *Ütz k'aslemal* and developing intercultural research and planning processes based on the vision of Indigenous Peoples.

"The Observatory of Time and Space" is an initiative that is being promoted by Sotz'il through synergy between Indigenous Knowledge (Mayan Calendar, Mathematics, Astronomy, architecture), western knowledge, and modern technology (weather stations) in the search for its validity as a science. Through a systematic work design, experimental method, socialization at the level of the Kaqchikel volcanic chain and at the national level as a traditional model that provides support to agricultural, environmental, use, management, and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity systems, early warning processes to avoid, prevent, and reduce risks to climate, seismic, and socio-natural disasters and improve the response capacity of communities through their own institutions, carrying out direct coordination with local actors and state institutions that have territorial and national presence.

#### Methodology of Work

The work methodology used is fundamentally participatory, using indigenous research methods and techniques, rights-based, gender, and intergenerational approaches, as well as analytical, inductive, and deductive methods, which are appropriate to the sociocultural context and realities of the impact areas.

The work processes are guided by the following principles: participatory, which allows generation of active opinion of all the actors contemplated in the process; inclusive, which allows taking into account the opinion of all those involved in the process, favoring the equitable participation of men, women, and young people; systematic, ensuring the collection of all substantial elements at the different phases described above.

#### **Knowledge Transmission System**

The system of knowledge transmission takes a retrospective view of the channels and means of communication developed by the Indigenous Peoples. The Maya people used friezes, steles, and codices as channels of transmission, combining written and visual techniques, using a graphic syllabic alphabetic code with elements such as the hieroglyphic, drawings and high reliefs.

The ancient Maya writing is a mixed hieroglyphic system that combined phonograms, ideograms, and pictograms, which allowed the same word to be written in several ways. Currently, Maya writing has its alphabet and grammar. In the development and transmission of knowledge, language is a key and fundamental element which is interrelated with identity and culture, and the vision of the past, present and future.

Currently there are Mayan schools and universities that offer an education based on their own vision and knowledge, their curricula include subjects such as mathematics, Mayan calendar, linguistics, and Mayan medicine.

#### **Knowledge Holders**

- 1. Indigenous scholars, scientists with expertise in the subject matter
- 2. Indigenous community members with expertise in specific topics
- 3. Indigenous experts: historians, epigraphers, linguists
- 4. Academics or indigenous professionals with expertise in the subject matter

#### Publications by Sotz'il

#### Knowledge, Contributions, and Participation of the Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala in the Conservation of Biodiversity

These studies discuss and analyze the contributions and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems in the Mayan Kaqchikel regions of Guatemala and Guna in Panama, as well as an analysis of Indigenous participation in the Convention on Biological Diversity from the perspective of Indigenous Women.



#### Rucholajem Samaj Pa Ruwi' Ruchajixik K'echelaj Forestry Calendar from the Ancestral Knowledge and Traditional Practices of Indigenous Peoples

The forest calendar was built from the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and is an instrument that complements the knowledge and technical parameters for sustainable forest management.



#### Low Emission Development Experiences and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

The objective of this systematization is to make visible the successful indigenous models that are applying their traditional Indigenous Knowledge and practices on lowemission production for development.



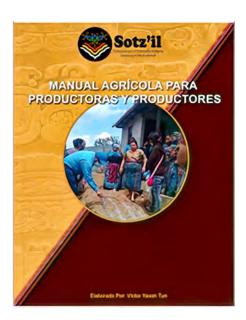
#### Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change

The Guatemalan Climate Change Science System developed the First Evaluation Report on Climate Change Knowledge in Guatemala, which included 13 chapters, one of them being Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change, which states that Indigenous Knowledge, practices, and technologies are an alternative to face the impacts of climate change in Guatemala. By the way, the creation of intercultural systems in which modern technology and Traditional Knowledge are interrelated is fundamental in the context of a multicultural Guatemala.



#### Agricultural Manual for Farmers and Growers

This document describes the simplified, technical and theoretical concepts on traditional agricultural knowledge and modern techniques. The purpose of this document is to improve and strengthen the technical capabilities of producers under a good agricultural practices approach to ensure the health of the consumer, producer, environment and obtain the high quality and safety of the harvest, as well as to strengthen the practice of Indigenous Knowledge and techniques.



#### Water Governance from an Indigenous **Perspective**

This report establishes the model of indigenous water management in some areas of the western highlands of Guatemala, identifying its strengths and weaknesses.

The model of the indigenous vision of water is based on the way of perceiving this resource as a living and sacred entity; in the indigenous vision, water is treated and managed as the sacred liquid.



#### Kumatzin

The development of the material constitutes a fundamental support for Risk Management, First Aid Education, and Strengthening of Indigenous Knowledge, Mayan Identity, and Culture, specifically in the Kaqchikel and K'iche', Q'eqchi', and Mam linguistic regions.





#### First Aid Guide

The Practical Guide on First Aid was culturally adapted to Maya-Kaqchikel with the objective of providing the communities with material in case of emergencies so that they make use of the resources present in the community and strengthen their Indigenous Knowledge.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The knowledge, science, and technology of Indigenous Peoples have had different approaches, from those who do not recognize it as science to those who have conducted in-depth research into its methods and results.

Respect, recognition, and development of Indigenous Knowledge as a contribution of Indigenous Peoples to the world at large.

Strengthen intergenerational Indigenous Knowledge transmission systems as continuity and innovation of Indigenous Knowledge and practices.

These communities are repositories of vast amounts of Traditional Knowledge and experience, linking humanity to its ancient origins. Their disappearance constitutes a loss for all humanity, which could learn much from the traditional skills of indigenous populations to manage very complex ecological systems.

> - Report of the World Commission on Environmental Development: Our Common Future (1987)

# Revitalizing the Ba-eng, Ibaloy Home Garden in Baguio City, Philippines<sup>5</sup>

Maria Elena Regpala, Vicky Macay, and Jill Cariño | Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP)





Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP) is a learning network of organizations, indigenous knowledge holders, researchers, writers, artists, advocates, and communities in the Philippines working to promote and strengthen indigenous knowledge. PIKP and its partners aim to contribute to greater recognition of indigenous wisdom, the rights of Indigenous Peoples to lands, territories and resources, and Indigenous Peoples' contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Website: https://pikp.org

This paper is an edited version of the paper presented during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge at Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission (KEDC), Kahnawà:ke, Quebec, Canada, November 28-30, 2022.

# Introduction

In 2020, Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP) started its ba-eng home garden initiative to document indigenous wisdom related to the home gardens in Baguio City in the highlands of the Cordillera Region, Northern Luzon, Philippines. The Cordillera region is dominantly populated by Indigenous Peoples.

The original Ibaloy people adapted livelihoods suitable to their mountainous environment. They planted root crops, rice, and other food crops. Traditionally, they took care of chickens, cows, and horses. They maximized the use of their land including the land adjacent to their homes to plant for food and medicine.

Baguio City, the ancestral lands of the Ibaloy Indigenous People, is presently inhabited by people from all over the Philippines, including many indigenous migrant communities from the different provinces of the Cordillera region and nearby lowland provinces. Because of its cool climate, despite being in a tropical country, Baguio City has become the summer capital of the Philippines attracting many tourists and visitors to the city in addition to its history, cultural heritage, and its people.

The American colonialist in the 1900s viewed the land as the perfect site for a future urban center. In 1909, Baguio became a chartered city of 49 square kilometers within the townsite reservation that encompassed the ancestral lands of the Ibaloy clans who lived there (Cariño-Fangloy, 2023). Today, Baguio City is highly urbanized where there is limited space for planting and producing food. Most of the food supply in Baguio City comes from lowland farms and gardens outside of Baguio City. As part of their customary sustainable use of resources, Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera region set up gardens near their homes. There are different local terms for home gardens. Among the Ibaloy Indigenous Peoples, the term used is ba-eng.

### Prayer for the ba-eng

Dear God, we ask your blessings As we work on the soil

> Give us strength To sow the seeds And care for the plants

May the seeds grow well May we have food to eat And a source of livelihood

(Macay, 2021)

# Transmitting ba-eng wisdom in an urban setting

The objectives of Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines' (PIKP) initiative to document indigenous wisdom on home gardens includes the promotion of the ba-eng as a sustainable source of food for the family to adapt to livelihood challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and to transmit the indigenous wisdom on ba-eng from the elders to the youth and to the general public. The PIKP initiative resulted in the following outcomes and achievements:

# Publication of the book entitled "Welcome to our Ba-ëng\*!" (\*Ibaloy home garden)

The book documented indigenous knowledge based on the experience of Vicky Macay, an Ibaloy elder. The topics include seeds and planting materials, keeping the soil fertile, water sources for the ba-eng, keeping the pests away, time spent in the ba-eng, medicinal plants, tools, important plants in the ba-eng, harvest, and sharing. The book serves as a resource material for people—men, women, and youth who are interested to learn more about Ibaloy ba-eng home gardens and the steps to set up their own home gardens.

# Partnership with Onjon ni Ivadoy, an organization of Ibaloy people in Benguet to establish a ba-eng home garden learning site

PIKP entered into a partnership with Onjon ni Ivadoy to set up a ba-eng learning site at the Ibaloy Heritage Garden at Burnham Park in Baguio City. Visitors can walk through the garden and learn about the ba-eng. As a learning site, people can also be trained on how to establish their own home garden.

# Establishment of three (3) additional ba-eng learning sites in Loakan, Leonila Hill, and in Camp 7

The original plan of PIKP was to establish partnerships with schools to set up ba-eng home gardens, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in the closure of schools, PIKP decided to partner with an Ibaloy organization, clan, and families to establish three (3) additional ba-eng learning sites in Baguio City namely in Loakan, Leonila Hill, and Camp 7.



Vicky Macay teaching the children at the Ba-eng learning site in Loakan, Baguio City.

▲ KINJA TAULI/PIKP

# The formulation of a trainers' training module for young people and other individuals interested to learn how to establish a ba-eng home garden.

PIKP also came up with a trainers training module for young people and other interested individuals. The module was pre-tested at one of the ba-eng learning sites at the Ibaloy Heritage Garden. Module topics are the same as those in the book, Welcome to our Ba-ëng! (Macay, 2021).

# Seed exchange among ba-eng practitioners

PIKP organized a seed exchange among ba-eng practitioners. This was held in the Loakan ba-eng. Most of the seeds that were exchanged were seeds from the home gardens.



Seed exchange among ba-eng practitioners. 

KINJA TAULI/PIKP

# Establishment of a Facebook group 'Ba-eng home garden for food'

PIKP established a Facebook group, 'Ba-eng home garden for food,' which is envisioned as an online platform for information and experiences exchange among ba-eng practitioners and people who are interested in setting up their own ba-eng. As of 2021, the group has more than 100 members, and it is still growing.

### Youth-led video production on the ba-eng

Young people produced a total of nine short videos which serve as resource materials in teaching and learning about Ibaloy ba-eng home gardens and growing particular plants in the home garden such as coffee, taro, sweet potato, and flowering petchay.<sup>6</sup> The short videos are accessible on the PIKP YouTube Channel.7



Indigenous Youth listen to Vicky Macay, elder and mentor on the ba-eng Ibaloy home garden during a trainer's training held at the Avong, Ibaloy Heritage Garden, Burnham Baguio City.

♠ KINJA TAULI/PIKP

# Below are the titles and descriptions of the YouTube videos:



Welcome to our Ba-eng! Episode 1 - Introduction (what is a ba-eng?). This is an introduction shared by Ibaloy elder Vicky Macay of her lifetime experience in producing food in the ba-eng.



Welcome to our Ba-eng! Episode 2 - Coffee: From Bean to Brew. The video documents the traditional process of making a cup of coffee.



Welcome to our Ba-eng! Episode 3 - The Gabi Plant. Gabi or taro is required in Ibaloy people's rituals. It is among the essential offerings used by the Ibaloy mambunong or traditional ritualist when inviting the Unseen spirits to join the ritual feast. It is also an important food in everyday life. The entire gabi plant—its roots, stem, and leaves—is eaten by the Ibaloy people.



Welcome to our Ba-eng! Episode 4 - Flowering Petchay. Flowering petchay has been planted since the early times in Baguio City. Its seeds can be saved for propagation.

Local leafy green vegetable of the cabbage family.

<sup>7</sup> https://www.youtube.com/@pikp-peopleofthemountains-1753/about



Welcome to our Ba-eng! Episode 5: Kamote. Kamote or sweet potato is another root crop planted in the ba-eng for food. Along with gabi, one or more pigs, a jar of rice wine, and cooked rice, it is also a required offering during Ibaloy rituals. A good time to plant kamote is during the early rains of the months of March or April. Kamote can be harvested after four to five months.



Loakan Liwanag Ba-eng. Children in Loakan Liwanag learned how to clear, plant, harvest, and care for the ba-eng. As such, they learned indigenous knowledge and developed new skills through growing their own food. This demonstrates that learning by doing is key in transmitting indigenous knowledge.



Maintaining the Ba-eng. Ibaloy elder Vicky Macay mentors the youth in starting and maintaining the ba-eng as caring for the ba-eng teaches patience, industriousness, thrift, and respect for the land and nature.



Building a Stonewall (Kabite or riprap). Building a stonewall is a traditional practice and skill of the Cordillera Indigenous Peoples to stabilize the soil particularly of hill and mountain slopes. Children can learn this by helping build one in their ba-eng.



Seed and Knowledge Exchange. Exchanging planting materials like seeds and cuttings, and sharing the food harvested from the ba-eng can encourage others to start and develop their own home gardens. Container gardening is an innovation that maximizes limited space around the home.

# **Innovations and Tools Used**

PIKP used different innovations and tools in the transmission of indigenous knowledge on *ba-eng* home gardens. Traditionally, knowledge of the ba-eng is transmitted mainly by the women home gardeners who teach the younger generation through learning by observation and doing.

An important innovation in transmitting indigenous knowledge on ba-eng is written and video documentation of interviews of the Ibaloy elder's oral accounts, which are then published. In order to communicate the knowledge not only to the younger generations but also to the general public interested to learn and practice ba-eng, PIKP held training events, produced a trainer's training module, established ba-eng learning sites, and utilized social media such as Facebook and YouTube for popular education and public engagement.

### Cultural issues, challenges, problems, and obstacles

An important cultural component of the ba-eng which many forget is praying to the Unseen spirits for help in home gardening. Values in indigenous home gardening such as nurturing the land and respect and seeking the help of the Unseen God, ancestor spirits, and nature spirits for a more productive garden are at times forgotten and so are related values such as mutual labor exchange, sharing of seeds and seedlings and products from the home gardens, and not wasting food.

Indigenous plant species for food and medicine are largely not grown or available in the city and knowledge of them has been mostly forgotten. Moreover, many young people are not interested in practicing home gardens. Seed propagation, storage, and exchange of planting materials are therefore critical. During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, among the positive actions taken by the households in the city was reviving their home gardens as a ready source of food and medicines.

# Safeguarding and protection of knowledge

To safeguard and protect indigenous knowledge, documentation of its oral form from elders and knowledge holders, and popularization of this through print media and its practice are essential. With the recognition by the Philippine government of the importance of Indigenous Peoples' education, it is good if the indigenous wisdom and values of the ba-eng and other indigenous and traditional wisdom are documented, practiced, and taught in the Philippine educational system.

### Reflections

Traditionally, the Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera have transmitted their knowledge orally such as through rituals, stories, proverbs and sayings, and narratives of experiences of elders within sociopolitical community institutions. Today, these traditional cultural institutions have been weakened and in many places, have disappeared. In light of these, PIKP chose to utilize research, documentation, and practice methods in facilitating the transmission of indigenous knowledge. These include written documentation in the form of stories for young people and audio and video recordings. Another method is the establishment of learning sites for demonstrations of home gardens which are set up in different areas in the city. In these learning sites, people interested in learning about home gardens can see and learn from the people taking care of the gardens. In addition to the learning sites, this knowledge is taught through workshops with the aid of written training modules and design. PIKP also used social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and its website to popularize indigenous knowledge. Aside from these, there are also efforts at networking with home garden practitioners through social media and workshops. These networking activities are venues to discuss experiences in home gardening and to expand and to increase members of the network and practitioners. With all the activities that are being held regularly, indigenous knowledge is kept alive.

It is hoped that all will be inspired to set up their ba-eng. Those who have a ba-eng must continue to maintain, improve, learn, and share experiences to enrich their practice. This will contribute to the intergenerational, inter-community transmission of indigenous wisdom, the sustainable use of resources, and the values related to the practice.

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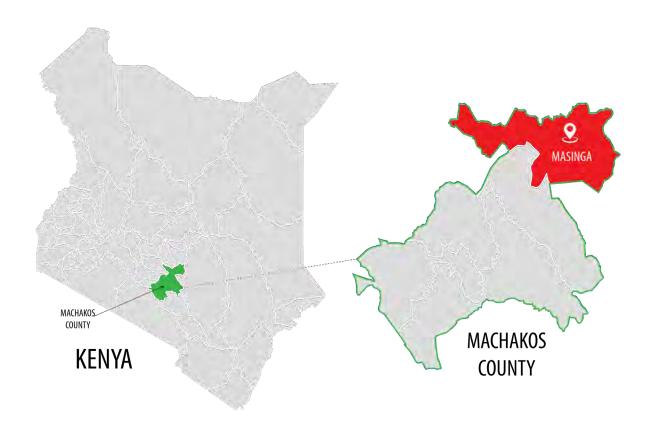
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# **Restoring and Potentiating** Kivaa Socio-Ecological Systems in Kenya

Gathuru Mburu | Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE)



### Introduction

The Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) is a Kenyan non-governmental organization (NGO) that was established in 2006 under the NGO Coordination Act. ICE was established in response to a clear need in Kenya to promote the inherent and natural role of culture in environmental and resource management. ICE works with communities to rediscover the significance of local knowledge and naturally endowed resources in improving livelihoods and conserving the environment. As a result, communities can take control of their own development and break free from the cycle of poverty. ICE collaborates with like-minded organizations, institutions, and individuals on the national, regional, and international levels.

# Kivaa Sacred Hill Socio-Ecological System

Kivaa Hill is situated in Machakos County. The local community migrated to the area around 1940. There they found a beautiful hill famed for attracting rain. The hill had become a tower of rocks, and then it pronounced itself as a sacred hill through a seer from a different region.

ICE started working in Kivaa region in 2008 and in 2012, the issue of the hill being sacred was discussed with ICE, and a cultural response guided by the local earth spiritualists was agreed upon. The gods had to be appeased and the hill needed to be cared for, protected, and strengthened as a sacred hill. These two processes required the support of the local community and other stakeholders, and a broadbased mobilization process was agreed upon, which involved community dialogues mainly to achieve informed consent of the people.

The local people are agro-pastoralists who depend on rain-fed agriculture and keeping of livestock as livelihood options. The area is dry and access to clean and adequate water is a challenge. During the community dialogues, the community outlined the benefits that they had been accruing from the sacred hill, which included ritual performance at the sacred site, sourcing of herbal medicine and pasture, and water from rains. However, these benefits were short-lived as massive illegal logging and uncontrolled sourcing of pasture led to the destruction of the hill. The dialogues concluded that a holistic approach should be employed to address the different issues affecting the community and an ecosystem approach was agreed upon. The following action plans were identified:



### Vaccinating Kivaa Hill

Sacred sites in Kivaa region manifest in two categories depending on levels of potency: rituals that are performed each year at the lower-level sacred sites and once every two years at the higher-level sacred sites. Once a ritual is done at a sacred site, the potency of the site rises to high levels which enables the site to protect itself from acts of desecration. The ritual process is equated to vaccination which gives the body immunity. Once this ritual was conducted, the local people stopped destroying the hill and it regenerated into a beautiful sacred environmental phenomenon. Since then, rituals are consistently conducted every two years to sustain the potency of the hill. They also revived the use of traditional beehives for the protection of trees since it is taboo in the Akamba community to cut down a tree on which a beehive is hanging. In this case, the earth spiritualists and local youth are setting beehives on trees that would be targeted for logging in order to protect them and also harvest honey to earn an income.

### **Rejuvenating the Water Wells**

Kivaa area is classified as a semi-arid region where access to clean and adequate water is a challenge. The local community therefore dug water wells in the different villages to provide water for household use.

Special sanctions were also provided which maintained a spiritual connection between people and the water. People were supposed to observe high standards of respect and love for each other when fetching water at the wells. Failure to do so would lead to the wells drying up. The community was suffering from water shortage, and they knew they had violated the sanctions, but they did not have the confidence to perform rituals to restore the wells for fear of stigmatization. During the community dialogues, the wells that had dried up were identified and the earth spiritualists planned to conduct rituals to unblock them. With support from ICE, this happened over several years; and in 2023, three of the remaining wells were unblocked. The community now has water closer to them, and they are protecting the wells by maintaining respect among themselves as they fetch the water.

# **Recuperation of Indigenous Seeds**

Ritual practice in this community involves the use of certain indigenous seeds, most of which are on the verge of disappearing. During the community dialogues, a key outcome was setting up a seed research group which was tasked to search for possible areas where these seeds still exist. The group retraced their migration route and visited the communities along their migration route. They found the seeds they needed and brought them back to their agro-ecosystem. The seeds were shared among the farmers who multiplied them and kept sharing. The process of multiplication has had some challenges, especially during extreme dry weather and pest or disease outbreaks. However, the connections along the migration routes have kept replenishing the seeds, which is of vital importance until the situation stabilizes.

Growing of indigenous food varieties such as beans, sorghum, wheat, and pumpkin among others has been key to ICE conservation agenda in the area to cushion communities against climate change and promote resilience since these crops are known for their ability to adapt to the changing climate. The communities have also been mentored on seed saving and preservation of indigenous varieties to prevent them from extinction.

### **Reviving Traditional Control Mechanisms for Pests and Disease**

Traditionally, this community conducted rituals every season to protect their crops from destruction. Over time this practice was abandoned due to the influence of new religion, and the community adopted chemical inputs which led to a decline in farm produce as the use of inorganic inputs increased. This issue was discussed at length during the community dialogues, and a decision was reached to revert to traditional pest and disease control measures. In the subsequent seasons, earth spiritualists conducted rituals to ward off pests and diseases, and it worked for them. They now consistently conduct rituals each season which has brought mixed reactions from different religious groupings.

# **Reviving the Ritual Cycle**

One outcome of the community dialogues was that ritual practice played an important role in maintaining socio-ecological balance in the community. Agro-pastoral activities and bio-cultural conservation were all part of an elaborate ritual cycle. Due to the influence of new faiths, this was abandoned and the socioecological balance caved in. The community decided to develop a ritual calendar alongside seasonal activities to guide them in reviving the rituals and thereby firing up the Kivaa socio-ecological system. Following this, rituals are conducted every year at the lower-level sacred sites and after every two years at the higher-level sacred sites. Other rituals are conducted seasonally to keep pests and diseases away, "cool" new crops before harvesting, and pray for rains.

# Thome, the Community Learning Centre

Having worked to revive their social-ecological landscape, the local community is now setting up a community learning center for intergenerational learning. It is at this center that the community has been drawing their eco-cultural maps and calendars, validating the knowledge they revive for the different sectors, prioritizing community activities to realize their life plans as drawn during development of eco-cultural maps, mentoring the youth, and holding inter-knowledge dialogues with other knowledge systems.

# Challenges Experienced by the Community

Restoration of Kivaa Hill has not been a walk in the park. Based on its strategic placement, there is a lot of interest both from the communities who over-depend on it for firewood, charcoal, and harvesting of medicinal herbs and also the private sector who have encroached to install communication masts on top of the hill. Somehow, the communications mast installed four years ago failed to work, which is attributed to lack of respect for the sacred hill.

In responding to these challenges, earth stewards have teamed up with local youths to scout around the hill every so often to keep away would-be loggers. It is this group of young people who worked with the earth stewards to set up bee hives on the hill as a deterrent to logging.

### Conclusion

The Kivaa success story presents to ICE an important case for revitalization of socio-ecological landscapes for protection of people and nature. It is also a good case for understanding the contribution of indigenous knowledge to ecosystems conservation today as promoted by various global environmental conservation undertakings including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

# Collective Reflections From the 2022 ILK Global Workshop

The work of the Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge shows the potential for sustainability and impact. Linkages have been built, there was collaboration with partners and engagement with policy makers on various initiatives addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. The community is at the center of our work. Policies relevant and useful to the community have been crafted. Knowledge products and publications share community data and information and are of key importance as the Centers engage in knowledge and policy platforms.

# **Linkage Building: Local**

Community-based cultural centers are great venues for learning as shown in the experience of IIN. Identity and belongingness within the community are strengthened. Centers in remote areas are highly appreciated because people can gather, interact, and learn more about nature and culture. The community cultural center plays a very important role as a repository of knowledge and a living platform where people can interact and learn from each other.

In the IIN, the centers are mostly managed by women—evidence of women's capacity and knowledge in managing resources. Women gain respect for this. The centers facilitate the transmission of knowledge and learning exchanges.

For Sotz'il, the community allocates funds to the projects making these community-supported projects. One such project has been successful in increasing corn varieties. Corn has species and many varieties. There are 20 species of corn for promotion. Some are used in agriculture as trees, medicines, and for ornamental purposes. With orchids, the in-vitro fertilization program is like the Western laboratory setup but located in the community. It entails matching Western technology with TK. The work is being led by a Spiritual Guide.

There are plans to have a series of dialogues with the community toward establishing the baseline data on carbon capture in indigenous forests using TK. In the Philippines, the method of calculating carbon includes biodiversity transects and scientific methods in combination with TK, wherein community members identify the plants. This is also done by PASD in Thailand.

The ba-eng experience of PIKP examines the transmission of knowledge in urban environments like Baguio City in the Philippines. Home gardens could be practiced anywhere. Working on the interlinkages between Indigenous Peoples and sustainable cities could be further considered in the future work of PIKP. Social media also presents opportunities for sharing knowledge and experiences. It could also be a platform to learn and re-learn Indigenous languages.

### Linkage Building: National Government and the Academe

Work in CBD such as establishing a national mechanism specifically for Indigenous Peoples is an important lesson in relation to the Paris Accord. Engaging government is needed despite the government not agreeing at all times with Indigenous Peoples. The credibility of FPCI and Sotz'il have made national collaboration possible.

FPCI has a strong relationship with the government. Working with government opens opportunities for discussions with Indigenous Peoples such as in the establishment of Protected Areas to address climate change. It is important that government perceives IK and scientific knowledge as equal since these two knowledge systems are complementary. Guna People are the managers of their own autonomous region thus they are part of decision-making in any project introduced into their community. It shows that their system is a living system, having the full support of their Guna Congress. Leadership and accountability are evident. Problems arise when government implements projects without the knowledge and participation of the Indigenous community.

In Guatemala, Sotz'il is the first Indigenous People's Organization (IPO) serving as a member of the Committee on Climate Change which works with universities and academic centers. Presently, one of the questions being addressed by the Committee is whether TK will be a thematic subject of work in the Committee or a cross-cutting issue in identifying Nationally-Determined Commitments (NDC). Also, the Committee is addressing the need to establish the baseline data on carbon capture in indigenous forests in relation to TK.

Sotz'il is keen on working with government. However, experience shows that Indigenous Peoples do not always support government's positions nor does government support all IP initiatives. The basic requirement is respect for human rights. A favorable factor is IPs make up 60% of the population, which means the government cannot avoid having a discussion with them. Another positive factor is the historical work being done by Indigenous Peoples. Sotz'il addresses structural challenges by working closely with public policymakers, maintaining good relations with technical people, and working with the community.

# **Linkage Building: Global**

Participants remarked that FPCI has maximized spaces in the global processes in both the UNFCCC and CBD. Its leadership in these processes has provided opportunities for linking its local work to international and national levels.

Sotz'il highlighted its contributions in addressing climate change issues and TK. Its work in Guatemala is well-structured and consistent. There are staff doing technical work. It has collaborated on various workstreams addressing climate change and biodiversity loss while engaging with policymakers.

Centers in the COD-ILK Network have produced good materials such as brochures and videos. The Local Biodiversity Outlooks (LBO) website and its editorial board support the communication work of the Network. These materials would be more useful when uploaded in the COD-ILK website or featured in its newsletter, *Indigenous Options*. The COD-ILK is presently developing an information management system. All these have contributed to the work of COD-ILK and in producing the second edition of LBO (LBO2), once again underlining the importance of providing evidence while engaging in policy platforms through knowledge products such as publications.

The Network has identified thematic areas for collaboration. One is transmission of knowledge in indigenous and traditional food systems which is important for communities and in transforming dominant food systems. Nutritional and health status have declined among Indigenous Peoples due to the practices of industrial agriculture, thus the need to revitalize traditional food systems to arrest the decline.

# Our Ways Forward: What We Have Learned

As a result of three days of intensive collegial discussions among participants during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge, many lessons were learned by all members of the COD-ILK Network. Arising from these discussions were many proposals for future actions and areas of collaboration.

# Reflections on what we have learned

- 1. Cultural Exchanges and hearing of experiences from the different members are very enriching. As Indigenous Peoples, we come from different regions and we each have our national work. We all but have common work on ILK transmission. Talking to each other and having a good exchange allow us to appreciate what we do and what is relevant to us. It is important to set aside time for face-to-face exchange. The workshop is opening more opportunities to work together and establish future collaborations, beginning with food systems and indigenous spirituality (as identified in the Global Workshop).
- 2. All Centers are active in revitalizing ILK, and we shouldn't tire of doing this work. We are all becoming better as more work is done. The sharing of experiences shows evidence of the great work Indigenous Peoples carry out. The huge amount of work already done requires us to look into the impact of what we are doing. Each Center has its own strengths and weaknesses, but we are not static. We are continuously revisioning and reinterpreting our work. We have limited resources but have done a lot. There is a need to know and understand the abundance of available blessings and resources around us, and we need good guidance on how best to value and use them.
- 3. All Centers demonstrated leadership roles in supporting communities and overcoming the challenges that they face. The Centers have ownership of their work. From all the examples and presentations, revitalization is happening, funds are being raised, and collaborations are happening across different Centers such as Sotz'il and FPCI in Central America.

- 4. Our collaborative community actions demonstrate how we immerse and re-root ourselves in renewing our identities and relationships with other people and nature. Being grounded in indigenous issues makes it is easy to communicate with and motivate others. This means we need to continue immersing ourselves more deeply in the everyday lives of our community partners.
- 5. It is sometimes difficult for Indigenous Peoples to practice traditional occupations that also connect to the market. Sometimes there are disconnections between people who go to the city and look for jobs and those who stay in the community. This highlights the important relationship between knowledge, culture, and livelihoods and the ability to support community initiatives on intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Communities need funding that is unrestricted and accessible.
- 6. Intergenerational dialogues are important to bridge the differences between generations. There is a need to talk about these differences. There should be spaces for innovations, encouraging younger generations to relate with ILK. Central to ILK transmission is how we engage children and youth and empower their decision-making. Indigenous Women play an important role in the transmission of knowledge. The experience of the Language Nest teaches us how to bridge the gaps in generational knowledge on language and culture.
- 7. There is a need to recover ILK and stop its loss. Community participatory action research is one way to address this. In this work, it is good to understand the importance of decolonizing our conceptions about research and education. It is very important to document ILK; and there are many talents in the community such as skilled or trained artisans, storytellers, and writers. They could document their experiences and can be researchers as part of community-based monitoring and information systems (CBMIS). In undertaking research and knowledge generation in the community, attention must be given to the question of who will give the Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC).
- 8. We also need to look into the issues on communication and education. It was enriching to learn about significant and diverse success stories around the revival of indigenous languages, cultural reaffirmations, community dialogues and mobilization, collaborative research, and the establishment of numerous community learning centers. There has been a surge in the production of multimedia educational resources, curricula, field guides, and training courses. Traditional learning approaches, new education tools and methods such as eco-cultural mapping and calendars, modern technologies such as the internet, websites, and different media platforms are being used with good outcomes. There were many innovative methods shared on Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) on ILK. How best can we project these initiatives to a broader audience and with different constituencies?
- 9. Working relationships with national and local governments are improving. Having discussions and dialogues with government are necessary in our work. It is not necessary to agree with everything that the government does, but engagements with the different branches at all levels are needed to broaden the impacts of communities' collective actions. Promoting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches can help to reform and democratize government implementation of their global obligations and commitments to Indigenous Peoples.
- 10. Engagement with different knowledge-policy platforms is necessary. We need to be able to adapt to rapid changes taking place. Political and economic changes affect policies. Initiatives on transition pathways and systemic transformation will affect Indigenous Peoples. It is important to monitor all these developments and see how IPs are benefiting at the local level. A lot of lessons learned can be relevant to IPBES assessments, including making use of materials that the Centers are producing for various knowledge-policy platforms. We need to redefine and clarify our role in different platforms such as IPBES, CBD, and climate change. It has been good to be linked to the CBD process, bearing in mind that there will be a new program of

- work and institutional arrangements on traditional knowledge. The Centers need to strengthen their presence regarding climate change. Sot'zil is participating in IUCN workshops, and they are interested to know more about what IPs and LCs are doing. It may be good to consider participation in the IUCN processes highlighting the use of technology.
- 11. Let us consider the idea of expanding the COD-ILK network, including further organizational strengthening and institutionalization. We have a whole-of-society approach to transformation. If we want to achieve this, then we should have one Center in every country where Indigenous Peoples live! We need to have a global plan of action in order to have more resources. There is increasing funding of biodiversity actions. If we have a clear long-term plan, it will be easier to access available resources. This group is in a strong position to prepare and submit a project proposal on strengthening our institutions supporting and promoting Indigenous Knowledge.

# **Our Ways Forward**

Our global network of COD-ILK has agreed on strategic functions and areas of collaboration amongst our members. These serve as an overall framework for ongoing and future work. Proposals for future activities have been organized under these strategic priorities:

# Intergenerational transmission of knowledge

- Continue revitalizing ILK at the level of communities.
- b. Replicate good practices and lessons in other communities.
- Emphasize working with the youth. Continue the dialogues with the youth and the building of relationship across generations.

### Community participatory research

- Come up with research guidelines and protocols on how to do research and document a. ILK.
- b. Increase research collaboration at different levels.
- Value blessings and resources available at the community level and creatively mobilize these in collaboration with others (creating guidelines on this would be helpful).

### Cultural exchanges among network members and other Indigenous Peoples

- Work together with partners to identify and advance appropriate innovations. a.
- Increase COD-ILK collaboration and synergies with other Indigenous Peoples networks undertaking similar work such as Local Biodiversity Outlooks (LBO), International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IIFBES), International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), and others.
- Continue organizing dialogues and face-to-face meetings on ILK. c.
- d. Conduct collaborative work on food systems and hold a global workshop on food

- systems. Check the Indigenous Peoples Food Sovereignty Caucus and other related work organizations and networks.
- Hold activities on Values of Indigenous Knowledge and spirituality including sacred sites in 2024.

# Engagement in relevant knowledge-policy platforms to promote indigenous and local knowledge

- Sustain work at the global, national, and local levels. An important process is on the new program of work on Traditional Knowledge (Article 8j) of the CBD.
- Maximize the use of existing materials and publications produced by COD-ILK members to make inputs into IPBES assessments and CBD processes.
- Monitor changes in ILK-related policies and work at global to local levels. c.
- Heighten and deepen work on Nature and Culture interlinkages. Continue work on education and values across different platforms such as the IPBES and UNFCCC.
- Strengthen ongoing engagement with IPBES, including institutional mechanisms for ILK inclusion in its rolling work program and deliverables. IPBES has a registry of knowledge holders and experts from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to engage in IPBES processes.
- COD-ILK linkages with the International Indigenous Forum of Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IIFBES) need further attention. UNESCO, serving as the IPBES Technical Support Unit, is supporting communication with the IIFBES network through newsletters and other means.

# Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA)

This function complements the effectivity and reach of our work and needs to be included in our planning of activities of the network and of members.

### Engagements with national and local governments

This additional function was identified as important towards amplifying the impact of our various activities and mainstreaming ILK across government and society.

### Institutional strengthening and capacity-building

- Our members need capacity strengthening on different aspects of work on ILK such as methodologies and tools for revitalization, research and documentation, information management and mainstreaming of ILK.
- Facilitate organizational processes, including regular meetings and common activities. b.
- Fund-raise. Elaborate on a strategic project proposal to support the work of the CODc. ILK network. Activate our Fund-Raising Committee.

# We Give Thanks

It is fitting to close this report by thanking all the authors, their peoples, and organizations for contributing their experiences, their time, and their commitment to ensuring the perpetuity of indigenous wisdom into the future. The Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address1 has a verse that gives thanks to The Enlightened Teachers:

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how-to live-in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring teachers.

Now our minds are one.

This translation of the Mohawk version of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address was developed, published in 1993, and provided courtesy of: Six Nations Indian Museum and the Tracking Project. All rights reserved.

Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World English version: John Stokes and Kanawahienton (David Benedict, Turtle Clan/Mohawk) Mohawk version: Rokwaho (Dan Thompson, Wolf Clan/Mohawk) Original inspiration: Tekaronianekon (Jake Swamp, Wolf Clan/Mohawk)



# KARI-OCA DECLARATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' EARTH CHARTER<sup>1</sup>

# World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Territory, Environment and Development KARI-OCA 25-30 MAY 1992

### Introduction

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the Kari-Oca Conference, have made our Declaration of our intentions for the future.

Our Declaration is for ourselves. In the spirit of our ancestors and in harmony with one another at Kari-Oca, we have signed the Kari-Oca Declaration.

Kari-Oca represents five hundred years of survival for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Pacific. Our peoples came together to discuss our own agenda in the areas of Indigenous Spirituality, International Law, Human Rights, Land, Territories, Environment, Culture and Science, and Intellectual Property.

The Kari-Oca Declaration is in keeping with our spirituality. The Kari-Oca Declaration is a prayer that our ancestors and future generations will help us.

The Kari-Oca Declaration and Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter was the united statement of Indigenous Peoples on the occasion of the United Nations Summit on Environment and Development. It has since been reaffirmed by subsequent meetings of Indigenous Peoples in Bali, Indonesia and in Kimberley, South Africa as follow-up gatherings to the 1992 meeting at Kari-Oca, Brazil. It is reprinted here as the closing prayer to this publication as a reaffirmation by the COD-ILK of its enduring guidance. Its opening words—We, the Indigenous Peoples walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors—embody the spirit of our continuing work: intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

### **KARI-OCA DECLARATION:**

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

From the smallest to the largest living being, from the four directions, from the air, the land and the mountains. The creator has placed us. The Indigenous peoples upon our Mother the earth.

The footprints of our ancestors are permanently etched upon the lands of our peoples.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, maintain our inherent rights to self-determination. We have always had the right to decide our own forms of government, to use our own laws, to raise and educate our children, to our own cultural identity without interference.

We continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation and genocide.

We maintain our inalienable rights to our lands and territories, to all our resources —above and below—and to our waters. We assert our ongoing responsibility to pass these onto the future generations.

We cannot be removed from our lands. We, the Indigenous Peoples, are connected by the circle of life to our lands and environments.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

Signed at Kari-oca, Brazil on the 30th Day of May, 1992 Reaffirmed at Bali, Indonesia, 4 June 2002 Reaffirmed in Kimberley, South Africa 20–23 August 2002



The Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK) came together as a global network for the purpose of renewing and promoting traditional knowledge, wisdom and practices as crucial to solving contemporary social and ecological crises.

We are diverse centers, grounded in our ancestral territories and cultures and each with distinct activities and strengths. By coming together, we expand our learning about experiences from around the world and amplify our voices and the power of indigenous values and collective actions.

This publication brings together a collection of experience papers authored and presented by COD-ILK network members during a global workshop on Inter-generational Transmission of Knowledge.

# As one participant recalled:

I was very shy because I believed that I had no "knowledge" and I had not yet "learned." Yet the people who came to listen to us are VIPs—businesspeople, researchers, and university professors. Initially, my colleagues and I had looked upon this with heavy hearts, and wondered what we could do to alleviate the situation. We came up with the idea that since we aren't "educated" but are constantly learning in and about the world, we introduced ourselves as the "graduates of the University of Nature."

Outside the university walls, however, one finds that knowledge is everywhere.



































