



PHOTOVOICE: MONKOXI RECONNECTION

A tapestry of stories of autonomy, identity and climate action
from the youth of the Monkoxi Nation in Lomerio, Bolivia

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Norwich, 2022

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Photography by Eliana Peña Chore

Presentation

The territory of Lomerio is our home. Our ancestors, our parents and we ourselves have always taken care of it. We live and feel connected as Monkoxi People because of our relationship to the forest. Today, we need our young people to take care of our home and feel connected to it, to our history, to our identity and to knowledge about the forest.

The PhotoVoice project was a way to bring our young people closer to the forest, to the elders, to our stories. For four months, eight of our young people were trained in participatory photography and documented our culture, way of life and challenges. They are: Brenda Chuvirú García, Eliana Peña Chore, Gabi Irene Ipamo Ipi, Johan Pedriel Rodríguez Cesari, Jorge Andres Guizada Palachay, Juan Said García Chuvirú, Mary Isabel García Parapaino and Víctor Hugo García. Now they know their reality and identify with the home that is our territory. The photographers who were trained represent youth voices that document our wisdom and knowledge, making new intergenerational and intercultural dialogues possible.

The youth of Lomerio are the present that is building our future and that of new generations. The priority of the Indigenous Organization of the Native Communities of Lomerio (CICOL) is to safeguard the harmonious development of our people. Young people are the ones chosen to build a better world.

The PhotoVoice project was part of a larger project entitled "Indigenous International Interactions for Sustainable Development" (INDIS). INDIS was developed by the University of East Anglia in the U.K. and Nur University in Bolivia, with support from the National Geographic Society and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Civil Peace Service programme. To conclude, I would like to thank all of the institutions and people that contributed to this process of reconnecting our young people to their territory.

Chapie,

Anacleto Peña Supayabe Cacique general
The Indigenous Organization of the Native Communities of Lomerio (CICOL)



Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

Prologue

“Young people are those called upon to save the planet, to save the territory. They are the ones getting ready to defend, to fight, to keep indigenous people alive.”

These were the words of Gregorio Díaz Mirabal, head of the Coordination Committee of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), in a meeting convened by the Youth Unit of the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) on June 26, 2021, on the eve of that year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Young people and indigenous communities are among the populations that will be most affected by the global environmental crisis. Hence the urgency of Gregorio Díaz Mirabal's appeal to the indigenous youth of Latin America. They are doubly vulnerable to the uncertainties of today's world, being both young and indigenous. Many of them are responding to this appeal with courage and commitment. This is reflected not only in the growing social and political mobilisation that indigenous youth have achieved over the last five years in international fora like the Climate Change Conference, but also in the proliferation of new initiatives they are leading in areas such as education, entrepreneurship, legal aid, culture, and the environment, among others, which contribute to the protection of their indigenous identity, and to the conservation and revitalisation of their cultures, territories, ways of life and knowledge.

But Gregorio Díaz Mirabal's appeal is not easy or to be taken lightly. On the contrary, it places a great burden

on indigenous youth. They come up against the global political and economic elites' resistance to change and lack of political commitment to slow the destruction of the planet and the reproduction of social and environmental inequalities and injustices. In addition to that, they confront the complexity of historical and cultural processes produced by modernity and coloniality, which everyday encourage them to adopt values and ways of life different to those of their parents and ancestors.

On this basis, it is unfair to expect indigenous young people to face such challenges on their own. This is a fight that we must all join. Universities, as producers of new knowledge, have an important role to play in this process. We must foster dialogue with different types of knowledge, as well as develop methods and tools that help to revalue, revitalise, make visible and strengthen local knowledge so that indigenous peoples can keep their cultures alive. Moreover, this knowledge can play an important role in local and global responses to the planetary environmental crisis.

The book that you hold in your hands is an example of the commitment that academia can take up to help strengthen indigenous knowledge. “Monkoxi Reconnection” is the result of a participatory photography project (PhotoVoice) carried out in the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío, Bolivia,

which seeks to help Monkoxi youth reconnect with their territory.

The Monkoxi community of Lomerío were one of the first in Bolivia to fight for and, in 2006, obtain titling of its territory. The Monkoxi live in one of the last well preserved tropical dry forests in the world, the Chiquitano Dry Forest. The Monkoxi People of Lomerío also legally own and sustainably manage 256,000 hectares of these forests.

Nevertheless, Monkoxi leaders and elders have expressed great concern that many of their young people have little knowledge of or appreciation for their struggles for territorial ownership and consolidation. Like in many other parts of Latin America, many of their youth have migrated to urban areas in the last few decades seeking educational and employment opportunities. Consequently, they have been losing the connection with their territory and the knowledge needed to guarantee its protection in the long term. However, the synergistic pressures of the food and health crises generated by the COVID-19 pandemic have forced young people to return to Lomerío in search of refuge and security in these uncertain times. It is now more important than ever to work with Monkoxi youth to help them reconnect with their identity and territory, and recover the ancestral values, knowledge and visions their elders had for the future of the community.

Using cameras, the PhotoVoice project gave eight Monkoxi young people the opportunity to gather stories and testimonies from their leaders, parents and grandparents about various aspects of Monkoxi culture and knowledge that are essential for the conservation of their territory and culture. This book compiles a selection of the photography and testimonies collected by these young people, with a focus on autonomy, identity, health, and actions to confront the threats of climate change.

The PhotoVoice project is one of various initiatives that the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich, U.K. and Nur University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia have been carrying out on a sustained basis with the Indigenous Council of the Native Communities of Lomerío (CICOL) since 2013,

to help strengthen the socio-environmental management and territorial autonomy of Lomerío. In 2018, these two universities and CICOL began a collaboration under the "Indigenous International Interactions for Sustainable Development" (INDIS) project (INDIS - Indigenous Sustainable Development (indisproject.org) financed by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) in the U.K. This project has established a dialogue among indigenous organisations in three countries (Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Bolivia) to reflect on and share experiences about their ways of life and troubles with environmental, economic and social policies that threaten their territories and knowledge, as well as to present their alternative visions for the future. It is a transformative action research project that aims to help express and highlight indigenous knowledge, which is usually obscured or ignored when drafting national and international environmental policy. Young people have an important role to play in helping to articulate and bring awareness to this knowledge. Universities contribute by offering methods and strategies that facilitate these processes. PhotoVoice is one of these.

But it's not only the indigenous young people who live in these territories who are responding to Gregorio Díaz Mirabal's appeal to keep indigenous cultures alive. Some who live outside of their territories are taking advantage of the tools offered by modern education. Universities, despite their long and continuing history of domination through the control of knowledge production, are also spaces of indigenous struggles for liberation and emancipation; places where our young people - indigenous or not - may confront the coloniality of power, and imagine and fight for a more just and equal future.

Such was the case of a young Mexican of Zapotec indigenous descent, Markus Martínez Burman, a student of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia and a nature photographer, who was interested in developing a PhotoVoice project with indigenous communities as his way of contributing to the revitalisation of ancestral knowledge. At the end of his university studies in 2020, Markus received a grant from National Geographic's Young Explorers Programme to work with

indigenous youth, using photography to incentivise and strengthen their connection with the natural world. Luckily for Markus and the INDIS project, the use of PhotoVoice was being considered as an activity to help articulate local knowledge about the territory in Lomerio. Thus, the University of East Anglia and National Geographic provided training tools to facilitate this project. They also helped bring together three additional Peruvian and Cuban photographers - Sharon Gina Gonzales Parra, Kevin Joel Palacios Fuentes and Jennifer Albin Betacourt - to work alongside Markus, CICOL and the Monkoxi youth in the making of the PhotoVoice Project.

That's how the project documented in this book came to be. It fills us with pride that the INDIS project has provided a space for this group of young people to meet and exchange knowledge about photography and the Monkoxi indigenous culture. This book is a testimony to the value of intercultural dialogue in addressing the global environmental crisis and the rising threats to indigenous communities.

We congratulate this group of indigenous youth and hope that many others are inspired by this beautiful and useful book to respond en masse to the appeal of Gregory Díaz Mirabal and that of their grandparents to keep native cultures alive. The entire world needs them, and they count on universities as allies.

Iokiñe Rodríguez
(University of East Anglia, U.K.)

Mirna Inturias
(Nur University, Bolivia)



Photography by Brenda Chuvirú García

*"My memory is your eyes
your eyes are my peace"
-Patria es Humanidad, Geografías,
Mario Benedetti*

Introduction

Around the world, the stories of indigenous peoples are made invisible, marginalised and not given any attention in the dominant narratives of the 21st century. Equal treatment is given to the stories and perspectives of young people who are inheriting a world with an uncertain future, threatened by the environmental, political and social crises happening in Latin America and the world today. This was the perspective that shaped this project. The intended message is that young people's stories and narratives matter. Furthermore, they will help sharpen our understanding of reality and facilitate reflection on our past and our present in order to build the future.

That's the reason why the PhotoVoice: Monkoxi Reconnection project took place in the Chiquitano Dry Forest in Bolivia, in Lomerio territory - for the indigenous youth of the Monkoxi Nation to tell their own stories about their territory, their identity and how the climate change crisis is affecting their ecosystems. These stories are supported by the participatory photography process through which the young people take up cameras and begin to document their surroundings with the aims of reconnecting, learning about themselves and broadening their perspectives on their own territory.

The participatory PhotoVoice methodology puts cameras in the hands of people to record and spur change through the exchange of experiences and knowledge among participants. Following the example of the Social Photography Workshops (TAFOS) project carried out in Perú in the 1980s, we see the making of photography as an instrument

of liberation bringing together stories and ways of seeing and living in the world in a way that may challenge dominant narratives. With this objective, the participating photographers began a process of finding a voice by producing, editing and structuring their own stories through photography and their reflections on them.

This was prompted by the following questions: How can we build a bridge connecting modern-day knowledge to ancestral knowledge? How do we create a space that enables intergenerational, independent and autonomous dialogue? The answers to these questions gradually became clearer, through a series of workshops that functioned as a type of introspective process between the young people and the facilitating team. It was important to create an inclusive space for learning and practice that allowed the narratives of the Monkoxi youth to emerge and grow.

The objective of the workshops went beyond a simple photography course. It was to create an experience of reconnection. The training sessions were a space that fostered freedom of expression, trust, security and active listening. The workshops and activities were divided into three phases: In the first, the team of facilitators taught the basic, technical skills of how to use cameras and their different functions through practical exercises that served as an introduction to establishing a connection with their identity. In the second phase, having already gained the technical knowledge, the young people began to immerse themselves in their surroundings, adding to their personal and collective stories. At this

point, they began to look at their traditions, context and identity from a new perspective. The field trips took on a key role because, through them, the youth were exploring their territory with fresh eyes and a renewed curiosity. Through photography, they began to establish connections between their knowledge and that of their ancestors. In the third phase, the young people took control of their individual narratives and began to construct their own personal projects and stories.

As a result, the participants could focus on themes that mattered most to them, such as: the documentation of medicinal plants to treat COVID-19; political issues in the territory; and the imminent impact of climate change on their communities, etc. They all tracked the issues they each chose and conducted interviews with experts in the territory, in addition to collecting audiovisual documentation related to their topic.

This book - "Monkoxi Reconnection" - uses photography to tell the stories of the leaders, women, elders and young people that make up the Monkoxi nation. It also shows young photographers co-producing collective stories in the style of documentary photography with groups that are fighting to protect their autonomy, their culture and their socio-environmental practices within the territory. It also served as a space for the youth to write letters dedicated to persons important to them or to present and future generations. Based on what they had investigated through the use of cameras, it helped the youth start thinking about alternative futures.

Throughout this process, photography was the medium through which the youth rediscovered the place where they live. They established this reconnection with their surroundings through

visual arts, which allowed them to explore their territory - and its interior tapestry - through their senses and with a sense of curiosity. The practice of photography also opened up the field of active listening. It allowed them to learn from people who fight everyday to protect and take care of their territory, their knowledge and their ancestral practices.

The book consists of four chapters. The first compiles the stories about the daily lives of people who have fought to establish the Lomerio territory and today enjoy the freedom to be self-sustaining and live in a self-governing territory. The second chapter emphasises the importance of indigenous music as a base of Monkoxi culture. The third chapter teaches us about Monkoxi medicine and ancestral knowledge in the fight against COVID-19 and other diseases. Lastly, the fourth chapter presents a documentary narrative that showcases how the residents of Lomerio have organised to take action against the effects of the climate crisis.

Markus Martínez Burman
Sharon Gina Gonzales Parra
Kevin Joel Palacios Fuentes
Jennifer Albin Betacourt

**Chapter 1:
Stories from the
Casa Grande**

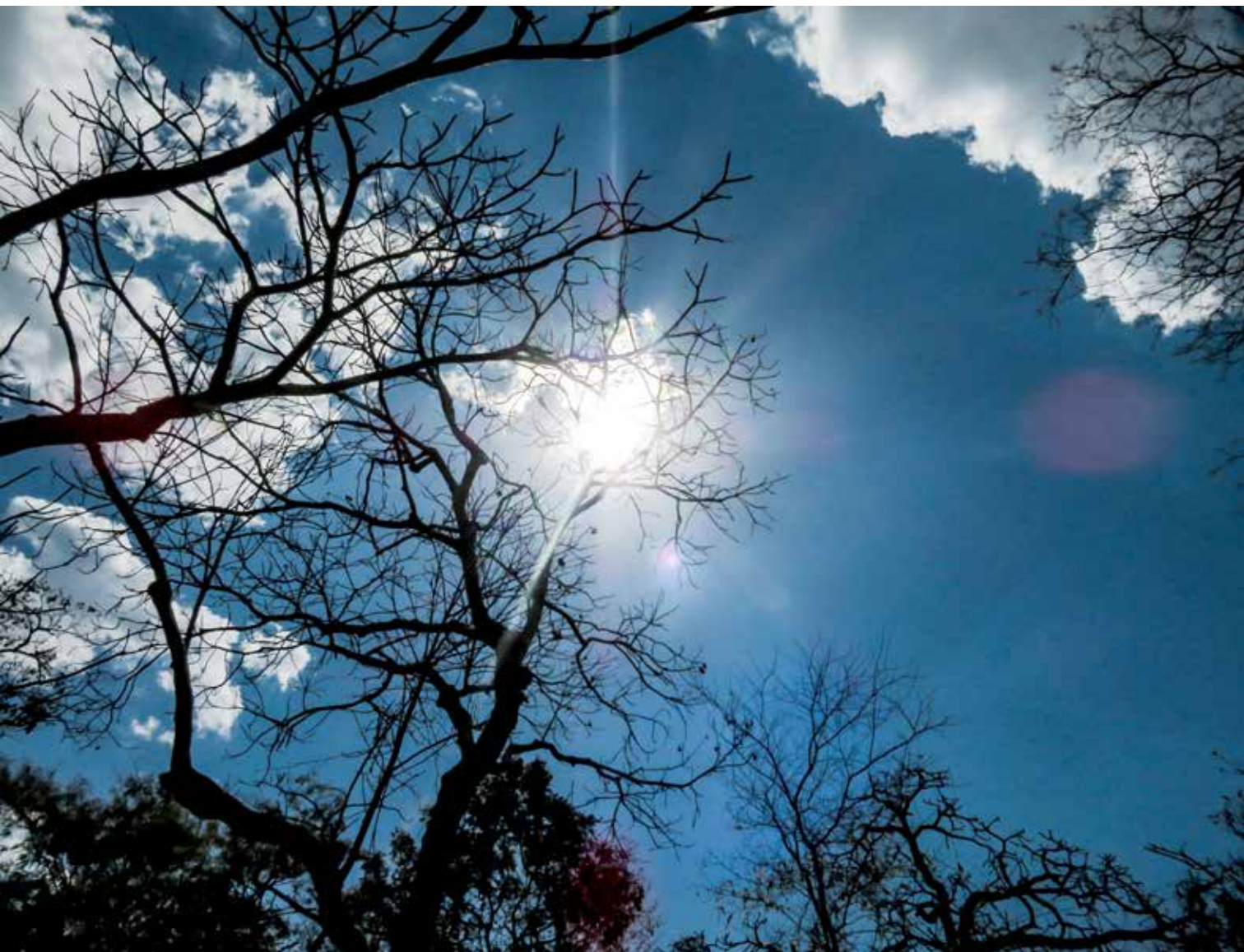


This chapter depicts the daily life of community members, founders and chiefs of the Lomerío indigenous territory. They were the protagonists of the long struggle for autonomy and the organisational reinforcement of CICOL. They are the ones who exercise their rights and customs on the basis of freedom and autonomy within the territory of Lomerío.

"Autonomy means the full exercise of our rights within a framework of decisions about our own development. In this way, the Monkoxi Indigenous Nation claims their autonomy within the Communal Indigenous Territory (TCO) of Lomerío" (Eliana Peña, personal communication).

The indigenous territory of Lomerío comprises 259,188 hectares. The land title was obtained in 2006, after a long fight led by the Indigenous Organization of the Native Communities of Lomerío (CICOL). As a result, in its 26th Assembly, the Monkoxi Nation declared itself the first autonomous territory of Bolivia, claiming autonomy as an inalienable right.

However, the rights to territory and autonomy are under daily threats by various actors within the current capitalist and political system, who seek to exploit the natural resources of the Lomerío territory.



Photography by Eliana Peña Choré

Portraits of a territory: Don Ignacio

Text and photography by Brenda Chuvirú García



Don Ignacio Supayabe García was the founder and first president of CICOL. He was an important part of the process of exercising and defending collective human rights in the Lomerio territory.



Today, he is an active member of the Council of Elders, guiding the organisation with advice accumulated from his experience. He lives with his wife in the community of El Puquio Cristo Rey in Lomerio, where the offices of CICOL are also located.

A day in the field

Text and photography by Eliana Peña Chore



One Saturday, my dad, Anacleto Peña, took a break from being the Chief General of CICOL and took me out for a day in the field. First, we stopped by a sacred lake called Las Conchas.

That day, my dad told me one of his dreams...

A large rock extended out into the sparkling waters of the sacred lake. There were some holes in the rock that looked like windows. The bottom touched the surface of the water. From the window, a large, green alligator with a golden chest and a mysterious voice emerged and told me that he was the guardian of the sacred lake.

We continued our trip past Las Conchas and encountered a herd of "troperos" (peccaries). My uncles with their "salón" (shotguns) headed off to hunt and with their natural-born talent, returned with their prey in 10 minutes. There and then, in front of everyone, they skinned it and removed the bones.

We walked approximately one hour to the Los Simbao river, located 23 km from the neighbourhood of Palmira, a Monkoxi community of the Indigenous Nation of Lomerio. We set up our tents, lit a fire and cooked the day's game: a peccary accompanied by a badger. That same night, Anacleto, my dad, went out to fish and only returned to his tent after three in the morning.







On Sunday morning, we grilled the diverse species of fish that Anacleto caught, among them the "venton". Once the cooking was done, we prepared for our return, carrying food for our families.

Jasaiyé

Text and photography by Eliana Peña Chore

Jasaiyé is a weave of motacú palm leaves that our community uses for various activities, like transporting produce from *chacos* (garden plots) or making hunting equipment. This weave has been passed on from generation to generation and represents the unity and strength of our people.

My dad made the jasaiyé weave in a moment of reconnection with nature after getting our family's daily meals, just like our ancestors did.









Portraits of a territory: Don Nazario

Text and photography by Brenda Chuvirú García

The first people who escaped slavery came from San José de Chiquitos to the Lomerio territory in search of a refuge far away from forced labour. The new arrivals became farmers to feed their families. That's how working the *chacos* became a traditional method of self-sufficiency.

The community members of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerio take as a founding principle the preservation of life through caring for the Earth. Traditionally, crop rotation

is used in *chacos*. Crops such as cassava, plantains, and corn are planted.

However, various factors threaten the sustainability of these practices. Cold fronts, drought, and wildfires are responsible for a significant portion of crop losses. The changes to usual planting seasons, and dependency on food supplies from outside of the territory pose a risk to these traditional practices of self-sufficiency.





Don Nazario Garcia Supayabe lives in the community of El Puquio Cristo Rey. Today, he is 74 years old. He has worked the chacos since he was 12 years old. It is tiring work that has left its mark on his hands, feet and face over the years. For Don Nazario, the chaco is a very important practice because it was a source of food, and sometimes, income, for him and his family.



Every day, Don Nazario wakes up very early to chase the rodents that can damage his plants. The "good abarcas" (a type of sandal), as Monkoxi footwear is called, are made with cow's leather and can last up to five years without falling apart, making them an essential and cost-effective resource for work in the chacos.

His most important tool is his shovel. It helps keep his chaco clean. He can do many things with the shovel - weed the plot, dig holes and kill dangerous animals, like snakes, which he finds in the chaco. He also uses a machete, a hoe, a pickaxe and a wheelbarrow.





When Don Nazario is on his break, he listens to news and music on the radio. For today's young people, this isn't a form of media that we usually use, so it is strange for us. Don Nazario is an example of someone who always wanted the best for his children and grandchildren. He hopes that, one day, they too can work the *chaco* as he has done for years.



After working all day on the *chaco*, he takes a break in his "*chalé*", a hut traditionally built of motacú palm leaves. Don Nazario stores all his crops in his *chalé*. It also provides refuge from the sun, the wind and the rain, protecting him from the many dangers of the mountain.

Portraits of a territory: Abuelo Ignacio

Text and photography by Eliana Peña Chore

Ignacio Chore Sumami was born on September 8, 1932, in the community of Monterito. His mother took care of him and his three sisters after his father left them due to enslavement. When his maternal grandfather died, they went to live with his aunt where he lives today, in the community of Palmira.

He was a part of they called "contract" slavery. He worked part of the time for his boss and the rest of the time for himself. In that period of time, they punished those who did not want to continue in forced labour, beating them with straps. But he never failed to do his job. He was "obedient".







Since he was 15 years old, he worked in farming and ranching. He also worked alongside his mother during the agrarian reform of 1953. He got married at 20 years old and had his first daughter at 22. He was part of farm workers' unions, which mobilised against enslavement, working with them to plant peanuts and cane to sell in Santa Cruz. He was part of the group that built the "Pedro Pablo Peña García" Educational Unit and the community church, with the hope of giving his descendants a better life.

He still works in the *chaco* and never stays at home, even at his age. He says that being at home isn't useful. He spends time with his grandchildren, for whom he is an example of strength and of the struggle for a better future. *He tells them that the story continues, that the fight to defend their rights and their territory continues.*



Xaume Nakari Nacio:

Abe 89 nasikibeka nayarusiriki axiñi nakari, ixhanka ñachampienka aemo ityopi aukiki ñaka iku na kixi uxia nisiboriki, nasiboriki ikutaku ejclavidud taruku natakisiriki, auki kaima axiki taruku nakusiu au naxanka uxia nasiboriki iku na kixi nauki tapi ane asio a kuataki aiñamesoko. Chapie imo nasiboriki.

Chapie aemo nakari ityopi axiki axianka uxia nasiboriki ñoome baityo pasiribo suipu niñuxiankaxi tikañee chauki omixhiantee, chapie aume ityopiki kaima axiñi isamute axina inanxhantimo isiu nixhanka, iku axina kixi, iñununekakaityo au nixhikuera, auki kaima xhanityaka ikitipi nixhapanauku, hauki ñemonkox chisisokapi sukanañi axiñi ta niyurataiki axiba pasiribo suipu auki ñemonkox, aximano opiñata nuxia apiñaibu manu kutubiuxi pesinakana imo uxia siborikixhi.

Ixhanka aye soobi takana nakusiu nauki yiroti isiu kutubiuxi pesinakana imo uxia siborikixhi, ñome ba kuantioki nauki tapi abe ba abasio yukuata apiñamesoko niyosiborikixhi, nauki uxia yupachikoi aibu niunxi aibu axina niyokixixityo.

Eliana Peña

Translation

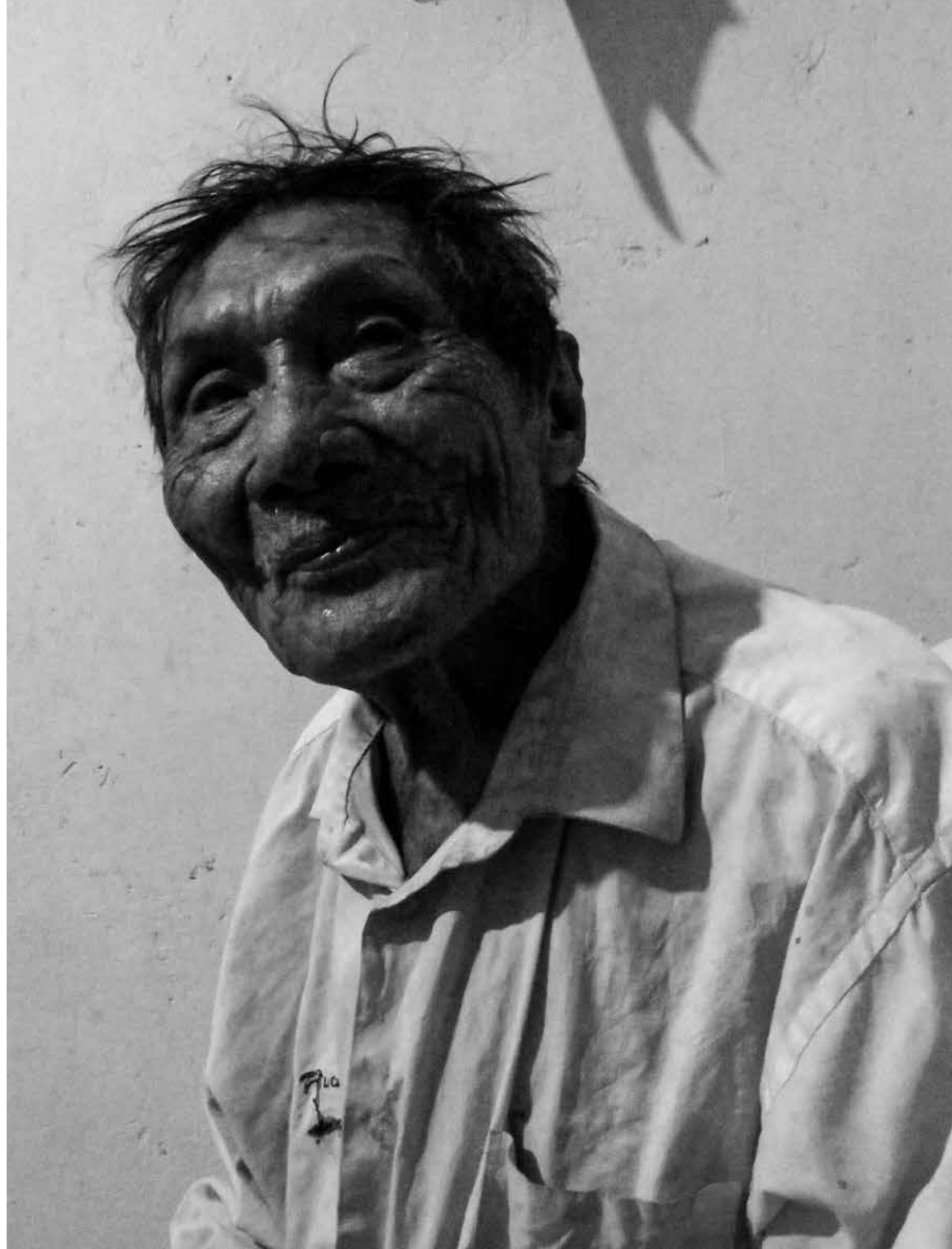
Dear grandpa Ignacio,

At your 89 years of age, I, your granddaughter, want to thank you for fighting to give us a better life. I don't forget the past slavery in which you suffered, but which also made you a man of many strengths, who dreamed and fought to control this land so that your rights were respected and took up this never-ending struggle to be autonomous.

Thank you so much. Your dreams and those of our ancestors are coming true. Today, thanks to your fight, I am in control of my own decisions, my territory and I have access to education. Today, speaking about my culture and where I come from brings me pride. I am proud to know that I am a descendant of those who gave everything, even their lives, to take this path towards freedom.

I promise to continue your fight, to continue carving this path for those yet to come, so that we can continue living in freedom and enjoying nature and this fertile land.

With love, Eliana Peña





Chapter 2: Monkoxi Identity



The territory of San Antonio de Lomerío has vast cultural and ancestral resources. From deep within the Chiquitano Dry Forest, indigenous communities of the Monkoxi Nation fight to revitalise and reinforce their cultural identity through conserving their cultural traditions and practices.

Traditional music, which is presented in this chapter, is an important pillar of the construction of Monkoxi identity. During important community festivities, traditional verses are performed in the Bésiro language. Songs and poems in Bésiro are one of the community's most important written cultural practices. Everyone in the community buzzes with excitement when they hear the flute, the drum and the *secu-secu* (a small woodwind instrument). The traditional musicians are living heritage of vital importance - they possess the knowledge of how to make the instruments. They use a special type of bamboo called *tacuara* to make the wind instruments, and for the drums, they use animal skins.



Photography by Brenda Chuvirú García

The Superturikimia band

Text and photography by Víctor Hugo García

Superturikimia is a folk music group from the Lomerío Communal Indigenous Territory (TCO). Their mission is to keep the traditional music and dance of the Monkoxi Nation alive. Most of the members are elderly. There were 20 members when they were formed, but with the passing of time, some passed away

and others emigrated from Lomerío. Today, there are only five members: Pedro Parapaino Oli (drummer), Alonso Supayabe Pocuena (flautist and drummer), Miguel García Parapaino (bombo drummer), Nicolás Peña (drummer and flautist) and Pedro Peña Parapaino (flautist).







If the musical tradition isn't practised and kept alive, it is likely that, a few years from now, the Superturikimia band could disappear and with it, a part of indigenous music and ancestral knowledge about creating these instruments.



Portraits of a territory: Don Pedro Pablo Ipi

Text and photography by Victor Hugo Garcia

In the community of Monterito, Lomerio, lives Mr. Pedro Pablo Ipi. He is considered one of the last remaining instrument makers. He knows how to make instruments with Monkoxi plants and materials, like *tacuara* bamboo wood and its stalks, as well as beeswax. Mr. Pedro Ipi has

taught many young people to carry on the tradition of using Monkoxi instruments. While he still has use of his mental facilities, he keeps this custom alive and helps ensure that his children and grandchildren keep up the practice.



At only 8 years old, Juan Chuvirú, Pedro Pablo Ipi's grandson, identifies as a Monkoxi native. His grandfather has helped him develop his great musical ability and is the reason Juan plays wind instruments. The values instilled in him by his grandfather have aided his learning process and taught him to value his culture and identity.





Chamu Xaume Sarukitayki Nisiakitayki Monkox,

Axiñi nisiri Victor Hugo Garcia, ane 19 nasikibeka iñemo. naukiche yaka iku na kixi chitusiupi nuxia iñemo axina nusaka y axina humanityakatoe, auki ñonkisio chisuputakapiñi axiñiantoe. Ta isekati auki taman ñeMonkoxi ichepaeki nauki iñanai takana nakaxima. chitusiupi iñemo causane uiñanai axiba nasikibeka takanaxti masamoña nomensokox añopinanaki axina numapanaunku. Axibama uyaitaiki y bama uñumantaiki axima tusiu nuxia imoma aukiche ayemati. Axima chitonempi nuxia imoma nuaki okimama ityaku axina numapanaunku, ityopiki axoñi ma yaika, ma ñaimanka chauki champiki nimoche osoi axina nusakatoe.

Tapi uiñata imobama uyaitaiki uñumantaiki ta axina nipebiki na siborikix uiche amameso axina nosiboriki, ta kuati okimenu, y axibama moche manxi ane yacheuxi ta oemo axibama poosoma auki ñemomkox champiti manxi imoche oñonkati ta oekati isiu bama aboma au niriakaxi. Ityopiki axti chuisamutempi basikia sane champiti asarati oemo sane kaima oekati ikimenu na kuati auki kiatax kixi, auki kaima kuati oemo axina chusuputakaipi y ensoro osoi axina numapanaunku, auki kaima uipiaka axina chitipi nosiboriki maniyaka kiatax maniyakax, kaxtrianux y ensoro osoi humanityaka auki bésiro.

Bapachera causane uiña au manunekatax axina bésro, nanaiñaintyo axina ane iku axina kixi oboi uxia nosiboriki, ityopiki axti chuxiankapi uipia kiatax mapanaunkux usaka akamanuantai.

Axiñi yaixi Monkoxi, xhankikia nauki ayetatu takana tikañee axina nosiboriki, axiñi ixhanka nanaiña ma siomanka tapi kisoboma ityaku nusuratoe bésiro, nauki atusi axti maniyaka auki bésiro uxia nusaka, tapi cheebo uiñensonoko axina nosiborikiatoe.

Axoñi imo usaka nauki aye tatu osoi, bupasau nasikibeka uiñana tatu takana tikañee, axti uiñokota imo tyubaka chuxiampi uisamunena ityaku bama kuamatiki, axoñi uiñensonokota, uiñana tatu nanaunkuxi takana tikañee.

Axiñi Victor

Translation

To present and future generations of the Monkoxi People,

My name is Victor Hugo Garcia. I am 19 years old. I don't know much about my culture and identity and that makes me feel an enormous emptiness inside of me, because I belong to an indigenous culture that I don't feel a part of yet. I don't know how we got to this point where our ancestral knowledge is fading and becoming lost. Our grandparents and parents know our roots and customs, they live our culture, but they did not prioritise preserving it through us. That's why many young people and children don't know their identity.

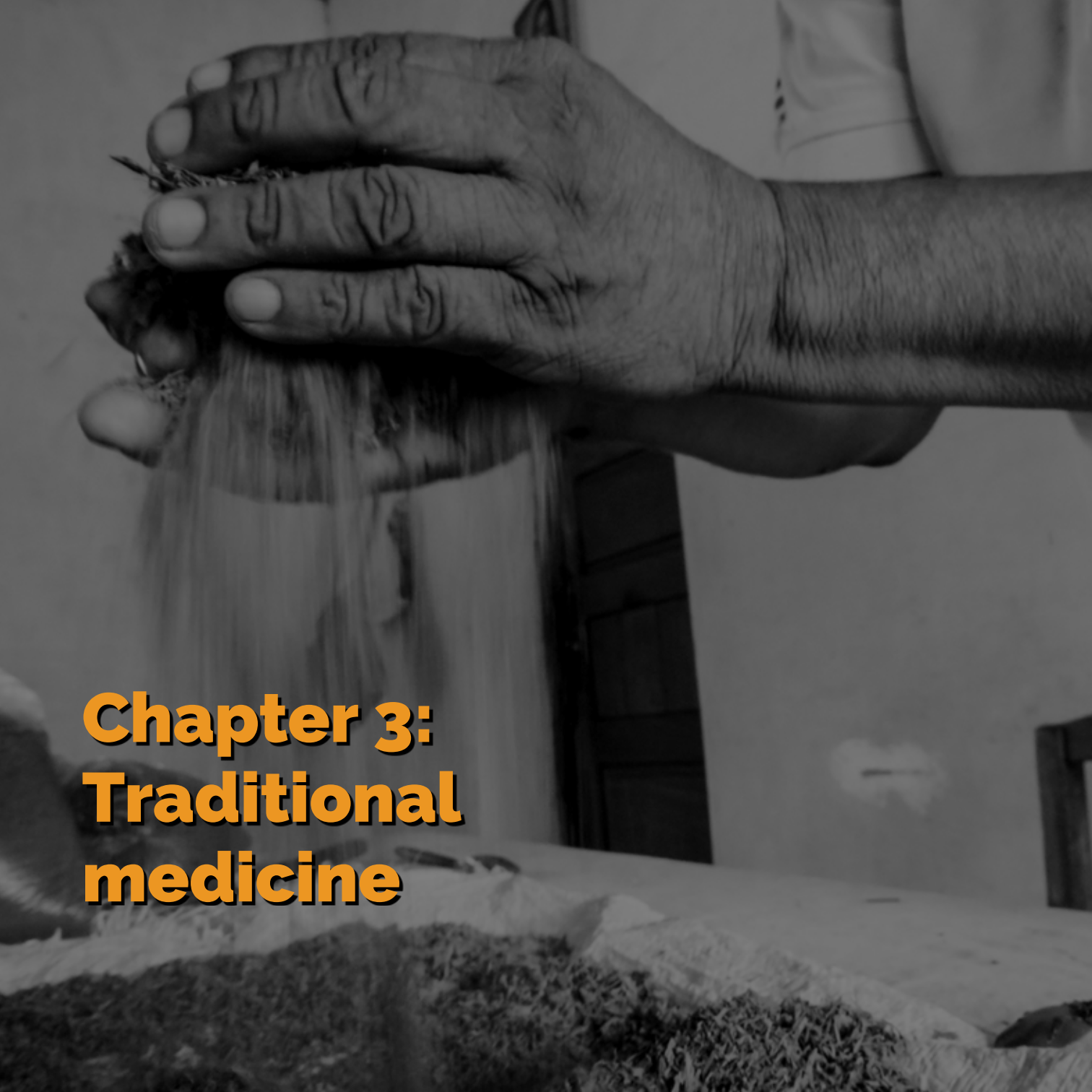
But our parents and grandparents aren't to blame; it is the social system that maintains complete control over peoples and nations. Indigenous populations are those most affected because they have no other option but to comply with the governmental system. If they don't, there is no route to progress. We depend on everything from the outside, which means opening up to new and foreign things, but closing off to our cultural roots. This has caused us to learn customs and languages that are not of our culture. They teach us Spanish while we shun our own native language.

We must find a way to include our customs in our own education and learn that everything that exists in our surroundings helps us to live a better life. Refusing to learn something new always leads to discrimination.

As an indigenous youth of the Monkoxi Nation, I ask that we reconnect with our roots again. Together, we can return to our ancestors' world. My aim is that no child grows up feeling ashamed of their roots, and that each child knows that they should be proud to speak bésiro. I ask that we don't stand idly by and let this destroy our culture.

We are the present. It is in our hands to prevent this from happening. Time goes by without stopping. Every minute counts. Don't leave what could be done today for tomorrow, because it could be too late. We must think about the future of our sons and daughters. What values are we going to instil in them? If today we don't know where we are, what hope can we have for their future? Let us find new ways of expressing ourselves and communicating between generations.

Victor Hugo Garcia



**Chapter 3:
Traditional
medicine**

The indigenous territory of Lomerío, belonging to the Monkoxi Nation, is found in the Precambrian Guaporé Shield and the Chiquitano Dry Forest, a unique ecosystem in the world. The territory hosts an impressive biodiversity of flora and fauna. Many species of plants are used in traditional medicine. Herbs, plants, trees and their seed, roots, bark, stalks, wood, and leaves are utilised in different ways, depending on the ailment being treated. The inhabitants of the Lomerío territory hold deep ancestral knowledge that continues to expand, evolve and be rediscovered to this day. This knowledge, alongside scientific medicine, has been a great advantage for the Monkoxi People in counteracting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and various other diseases.

The majority of the inhabitants who have this ancestral knowledge are elderly. There is therefore a huge risk that this knowledge will disappear with them. It is necessary for the Monkoxi Nation to record and document these natural remedies so that this information can be transmitted to new generations and to wider society.



Photography by Eliana Peña Chore

The Kutuki

Text written collaboratively; photography by Eliana Peña Choré

In 2020, the community of Lomerio suffered the devastating effects of COVID-19. Since the virus emerged in our communities, everyone and their families got infected. In the face of community health care centres that collapsed due to a lack of doctors and medicine, the inhabitants of San Antonio de Lomerio turned to their

ancestral knowledge to combat the symptoms of the disease. That's how the residents of the area began to use medicinal plants to prepare a remedy that combined various, essential plants from the region, among them the kutuki.

Photography by Eliana Peña Chore



The importance of the kutuki root stems from its ability to cure viral diseases. On the advice of the elders, this root was rediscovered and began to be used again. They remarked that young people had stopped consuming the plant because of its unpleasant taste, but before, the population had used it to alleviate cold and flu symptoms.





Nowadays, the preparation of the remedy varies from family to family. Some soak it in alcohol, while others prepare it like an infusion, sometimes combining it with other traditional plants like the *guayacán* - the bark of a tree of the same name, which is in danger of disappearing due to loggers in the area. Doña Juana, a healer with ancestral knowledge, uses this bark in her kutuki infusion because it has properties that cure the cold. The infusion also includes the leaves of the *matico* plant, the white *vira-vira* plant, pieces of

onion and lemon. Doña Juana recommends using this treatment for 15 days in order to counteract COVID-19 symptoms.

The Lomerío forest hosts a vast quantity of plants with curative properties. This is the reason Doña Juana asks that the forest and fertile lands of the territory be taken care of. If these species go extinct, all the ancestral medicinal knowledge goes with them

Photography by Eliana Peña Chore



Portraits of a territory: Doña Polonia and Tobacco

Text and photography by Mary Isabel García Parapaino

My grandmother's name is Polonia Parapaino Jiménez. She is 72 years old and was born on December 3, 1949, in San Antonio de Lomerío. However, she moved to El Puquio Cristo Rey around the age of 12, when she was forced into marriage, and still lives there. Of the ten children she had, only four are still alive.

When people feel ill, they always come to her to prepare their remedies. That's how it was during the COVID-19 pandemic as well, when people didn't even know what remedies to ask her to prepare.



My grandmother made the kutuki remedy, a traditional remedy to treat COVID-19, and sent this to her granddaughter and son who live in the city of Santa Cruz. One of her daughters who lives in Chile also asked her to send some. Thanks to this medicine, they recovered.

In spite of the difficult life my grandmother has had, she continues to fight for the good of her family and her community. I see the years of effort and struggle in her hands. At her age, she still works in the *chaco*, planting corn and cassava with her husband.

The reason she keeps working in the *chaco*, she says, is so that when she dies, her grandchildren can inherit the land.





She has ancestral knowledge about medicinal plants. The plant she uses most is tobacco. My grandmother has a tobacco plant in her house and smokes every night with my grandfather to ease her chest and knee pains. She takes the tobacco from the fresh plant, grinds it up, and rolls it up in another tobacco leaf. Sometimes, she adds garlic and Mentisan (a menthol ointment) for the cold and body aches.



When the men go out to hunt, they smoke tobacco. Smoking makes all the bad things go away. It is a remedy for stomach aches, and it helps keep you warm.



My grandmother told me that tobacco has an ancient, origin story: there was a very ugly woman who wasn't pursued by any man. She turned into tobacco so that every man would seek her out.

Napae Poronia

Aibu na kichonimiakax korobo soobi ixhanka ñachampienka aemo, ityopiki sirimana nuxiante oobi ichakuñi, suraboi axina ñonkisio naka au nisiboriki. Chapie aemo ityopi auki simiañinki aisunankukañi y isiu nisunau, xhakionkañi naukiche kusinitaña aityañumekañi. Ñonkisio takana xhimianaiña iñemo, auki ñonkisio taruku nisua aemo, ñonkisio axina ane ui na yarusirix aibu nipiaetoxi.

Naukiche aiñanai manu chisuisuputakaipi noxokoxi aiñununekakañi axina niñoche uxia axiba nubataka ikuki na kixi. Axi kutanu nasikiibese tarukapae suichakisiriki naukiche tiñonkoi manu kusiribo akoo y ñonkisio ixhuka ityaku nipiapa y tyaku nisaruki manonkioo au Santa Curusixi tapi obebo ui manu noxokoxi, auki suichaka niyi xopopoko nixhanaka Nikitukimia auki ñonkisio ane okimana suichakuu.

Aximanu nubatama eanaki na kixi tyone uiche chisupaunxokokapi ta ui manu nubatama okimana suichakuu ikiaibuta subuturuki manu noxokoxi. Ñachampienkaka nuxia aemo ityopi urapoi isukariñi napanaunku, axina napiaka yusiuki nampuma y napapa, axiñi ixhanka aye soobi napanaunku aibu nubataka nauki apiaityo axiba nisiborisapa axina napanaunku aibu nubataka axiba abe au na nokii, isiu nasiboriki axina uxia aemo nauki apipia pikiatata asiukiki, ixhankaityo sane soobi nauki isamune axiba uxia siborikixhi, manaunkux imo na nenaxhi na kixi y yupu baityo Nixhikia.

Chapie aemo napae ityopi aka sutakikiboyi naneneka, ityopi aikuansomokokañi, chapietyo iptyopi ane nauche taruku nupukinunku axti ichepe nusaka, chapie aemo ityopi axiñi takana nityurukiki nasiboriki.

Taruku nakua iñemo
Mariax Saberax

Translation:

Dear grandma Polonia,

In this letter, I want to thank you for all you did for me and to tell you how important you are in my life. Thank you for taking care of me in my childhood and adolescence. I still remember the first time you hugged me. It was a very comforting feeling. I felt all the pure and genuine affection and love that a grandmother has for her granddaughter.

During the time of COVID-19, you taught me the importance of natural medicine. This past year was very difficult for me. I felt the most scared when I learned of the first death. I was afraid that I would give COVID to my mom and sister who live in the city but taking kutuki made me feel safer in my house.

That was medicine that our beloved land provides for us, medicine that helps us combat this disease that has taken so many of our relatives. Thank you for sharing the ancestral wisdom that you learned from your parents with me. I promise to continue learning and preserving knowledge about the home-made remedies that you taught me in order to expand other people's knowledge, to draw on a spirit of collaboration for those who need it most and to continue cultivating good practices for our family's survival, with respect for and in harmony with nature and our jichis (guardian spirits of nature).

Thank you for always being with me and for your good advice. Thank you for the happy moments we spend together. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your life, grandma.

With love,
Your granddaughter, Mary Isabel

The Sassana

Text written collaboratively; photography by Victor Hugo Garcia and Mary Isabel Garcia

Don Juan Soqueré was born on February 11, 1960, in the community of San Antonio de Lomerio. He now lives with his wife Petrona Motoré in the San Lorenzo community. At 61 years old, he is the president of the Association of Doctors with Traditional Wisdom in the municipality of San Antonio de Lomerio. He knows a lot about the medicinal plants that are found in the territory. Don Juan continues to expand

his knowledge in this area by exchanging experiences with other indigenous communities and people that he meets in his day-to-day life. He also gets information from things that are shared on social media. He is very passionate about sharing his knowledge. That's why he is currently writing a handbook of traditional remedies to record the information in written form so that the ancestral knowledge is preserved.

Photography by Victor Hugo Garcia



The sassana plant is used as a natural remedy to cure ailments related to the prostate and urinary infections. Don Juan tells us that, before, the plant was seen as a pest that didn't bring much value to the community. However, during a visit to the city of Santa Cruz, his mother gave him a piece of information that caused him to place significant value on the plant. Because of what she said, he began to prepare the sassana, grinding it and letting it dry in the shade for four days. Then he bags it up and sends it in a package directly to Santa Cruz.

"Obviously, the majority of us know it as a weed and that's it. But now that I know its importance, I don't see it that way anymore. I pick the plant and take it with me instead", Juan Soqueré commented.





Photography by Mary Isabel Garcia

Upon discovering the great healing properties of this plant, the people in the city of Santa Cruz began to ask for 400g bags for their treatments.

The treatment using the sassana plant consists of boiling the plant in two litres of water and drinking the tea once in the day and then again at night.

"Now I can supply it to the market because there is demand," says Juan Soqueré. However, he remarks to us that the plant is a little delicate. After it flowers, it rots quickly. On top of that, it takes a lot of effort to find it in large quantities as well as just to look for it and gather it.

His clients say that after ingesting four or five bags of the plant, you get over the pain and/or ache in the prostate. Because of the demand for his product, Don Juan would like to begin growing the sassana plant in his home garden, so that he won't have to go out to the field to gather it.



Mango leaf

Text written collaboratively; photography by Victor Hugo Garcia and Mary Isabel Garcia

Doña Petrona Motoré García was born on February 3, 1967, in the community of El Puquio Cristo Rey. When she got married, she moved with her husband, don Juan Soqueré, to the community of San Lorenzo. Both are the most knowledgeable and important medical healers in the area. Through years of practice and studying medicinal plants, they have compiled a vast quantity of medical formulas for all kinds of sicknesses. Doña Perona has a great memory and is able to remember the traditional remedies that she has been compiling from community members and elders. She says that, up to a few years ago, she had never written down any of the formulas. Currently, the couple is writing a handbook in order to preserve this knowledge and leave a written record of their research on medicinal plants in the region and their healing properties.

The leaves of the mango tree are used in an infusion to alleviate stomach aches. Doña Petrona Motoré García got this formula from one of the region's oldest residents, who once told her about the great healing properties of the mango leaf for that type of ailment.

It is recommended that the infusion be prepared with young, fresh leaves. The recommended dose is one mango leaf per each glass of water, letting it boil for five minutes. It should be noted that Doña Petrona recommends that the mixture be served hot and without any added sugar. Immediately after taking the infusion, the person should rest for approximately 8 to 9 hours. In many instances, Doña Juana's patients, upon feeling an instant improvement, forgo their rest. This is counterproductive and makes the pain worse.

Photography by Victor Hugo García





Photography by Mary Isabel García

Doña Petrona fondly remembers how the mango tree grew in her garden by chance, next to a lemon tree. Like her husband, she thought that only one of the trees would survive, but both are still alive to this day. According to Doña Petrona, this happened because the trees fell in love with each other and decided to grow and stay together in her garden.





**Chapter 4: Stories of
climate action from the
Casa Grande**

On a global scale, the climate situation could not be more critical. Humanity is in a race against time to slow and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, which have caused a global rise in temperatures and extreme natural phenomena, before it becomes a catastrophe for planet Earth and its inhabitants. This is a critical juncture in ensuring that present and future generations can grow up in a liveable world with clean air to breathe, enough water to drink and fertile earth in which to plant.

The territory and inhabitants of the Lomerio indigenous nation are witnesses to and victims of the devastating effects of the climate crisis. From intense droughts and sudden cold fronts to huge wildfires and the lack of water, intensified natural phenomena are forcing the population to reorganise and adapt quickly to combat this crisis. That's how in the communities of Lomerio and the Chiquitano Dry Forest one finds stories of sacred places with ancient tales, of organised honey producers who coexist with bees and nature, and of warriors who have fought to protect the forest from the massive fires that ravage the territory each year.

Photography by Gabi Irene Ipamo Ipi



The forest

Text and photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari

Our territory forms part of the Chiquitano Dry Forest, which provides us with air and life. That's why the forest is our *casa grande*. However, these days our territory is changing drastically. The forests, as well as the species of flora and fauna it contains, are disappearing.





In the future, we will see a very different community. We think there will be fewer trees and animals. We will no longer hear birds singing at dawn, and there will be much more pollution caused by plastic and waste.

Las Conchas

Text collaborative photography by Eliana Peña Chore

The "Las Conchas" lake and the forest are considered sacred places in Monkoxi culture. This sacred place in the forest is home to great biodiversity and a complex ecosystem that includes many different species of birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and mammals. It is also a mystical space that is home to the *Jichis*. In the Monkoxi

cosmovision, *Jichis* are the masters and guardians of nature. In this forest live: the Nixhi Tux (water Jichi), the Nixhi Kanx (rock Jichi), the Nixhi Yirityux (mountain Jichi), Nixhi Niunx (forest Jichi), Nixhi Numukianka (Jichi of the animals).



Photography by Eliana Peña Chore





Photography by Mary Isabel García Parapaino

"There once was a girl who lived with her dad and stepmother. Her dad liked to go fish and hunt while his wife and daughter stayed at home. She always mistreated the girl. On one of those days, the stepmother sent the girl to fetch water with a large clay pot. The daughter could not lift the clay pot but had no other option but to bring the water from the stream. After filling it, the girl tried to lift the pot, but it fell into the stream. The water of the stream began rising until it formed a lake. The girl could not get out of the stream and drowned. Since then, the lake has never run dry. Today, it provides a lot of fish because when she died, the girl wanted her father to never lack food."

Creation of the lake - Oral history, ancient tale



Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari



Two fishermen that fished to feed their families went to the San Miguelito River in search of food. They threw their shiny hooks for many hours, but only caught a pair of fish. The sacred turtle, master from its shell, was crossing the river as night fell. While swimming, it came across a fish hook with bait. When the turtle ate the bait, it died. As it was being pulled in by the fishermen, who thought it was a big shad fish, a young cayman was angered by what it saw happening to the turtle. When the cayman came out to defend the turtle, one of the fishermen got scared and killed it with one shot. The water rippled and a strong wind came and swept the fisherman's weapons into the river. The fishermen ran away frightened by what they had just seen. When they arrived home, they told their family what had happened. From that moment, they realised that nature has masters.

Oral history, ancient tale

The Turtle and the Cayman, Text and photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

Portraits of a territory: Karen and water

Text and photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

Water is one of the key elements for humans because it is essential for the life of living beings and nature. All the communities of the Monkoxi Nation of Lomerío are located on the banks of natural sources of water, including the El Puquio Cristo Rey community. The greatest number of natural water sources are found there, such as the Paurumanka and el Curichi springs. Since the founding of the community, they have never run dry. There are also the El Tumbe, Paquio,

Los Aceites, Nasikiurux, Nansiax and Remanso rivers and streams, among others.

In the Bésiro language, Puquio translates to *nantaityu*, which means "water that never runs dry". The residents of the Monkoxi Indigenous Nation place a lot of importance on water sources because it shows respect to the water Jichi, Nixhix, a supernatural being in the Monkoxi worldview. In this way, we establish our reciprocity with nature.





However, the water is running out in our communities, and the little that remains is polluted. For example, in my community, El Puquio Cristo Rey, there is only one clean source of water to drink and share. Drought and the drastic changes in temperature, as well as the pollution of our rivers, are spoiling our water sources and having dramatic consequences on our way of life.

I ask myself: What will we do to survive when reserves run out? If humans continue polluting the rivers, burning down forests, and contributing to the climate crisis, the Jichis, masters of the land, will abandon us and we will lose every source of life.

Water, like the Jichis for nature, is the source of life for the heart of the human being, the engine of our bodies. Therefore, we have to take care of it in order to avoid various illnesses and even death. On top of that, if we don't take care of these resources, we are condemning future generations to live without this element that is so fundamental to our existence.





Nisaruki Karen Yolfi Ípamo Ipi

Xhakonomoka aemo axina kichonimiakax nauki suraboi asukariki axina nikoñoko axiba nasikiibeka tapi atiborikia iñemo ityopi axiki kaima atakisirika ui axina chauki ti mameso ui axina supachikoi chuxiankipi axina kixi soboi.

Axiki tusiu aemo axiñi yaka iku kixi au nasikiibese 2003 abe 27 nasikiibeka ni yarusiriki xhakionkañi naukiche simiañinki abe sirimana sueka eana niunxi auna Nantaityu, somekati supapiu eana tuxi au nusiruxi, au pauruxi, au baixhi, ane chama tuxi somekati supaa.

XHANXI AKIPI TUXI, AXIKIA AXTI AXIANKA IMO TUMA, ASASATI NUXIA ITYAKU AXINA KAUTA NUSAKA.

Xhakionkañi abe tikañee sirimana bakipukuka nauki supakuira ityaku tuxi, champi nimoche soboi champi onkoi, kanakpaepi chikipiropi tuxi ñana, kaima nusiruxi, pauruxi, baixhi kipro tuxi ubauki.

Suraboira asukariki chikokotapi axti sanempi ñana, kaima au nasikiibese 2031, axina mamesoo nityaki nokitipi, noxokox okiboobi, tyone kaima uiche ñonkoka ba bopooso, axiba sirimanax supachikoi, pachebo tuxi ityobo trabakox chupapakarapi aibu monixhi, naneka kaiburu aibu baikixh ityopi taman litro tuxi, kaima batopikia aibu xiripitix pankana, tisiro niki nutanu tapi chama tuxi uiche axibi, chiñataipi tuxi otipobo trestai machamatata aibu tuxi otipobo naneneka, chiñataikiipi tuxi nauki masamu naxixhi, taruku nikua tuxi chama nikuaxi manxi ape nikuaxi pinanaki oro y aximanu chinantipapae kanxi.

Ikuki axina nikorox surapoi asukariki nisaruki axina tikañee suichaka, supatopikia ui chinantipi tuma, sumanasaka makiitima ximianaña, supapiuka ñokianaka sueka kiana nubausipitux, axti ankitio xhopinanakiñi cuasane atakiri, xhanxi isareo ityopi axiñi yaka iku kixi yochepe axiba oboiche sane nakana kixi.

Nisaruki axaño kaima autakisirika ityopi axina sane imo Na kixi, sanempi tikañee naukiche uxiainki paario axina kixi aibu nenaxixhi nauki anenkipi aume.

Champi axti sukanañi aemo axina nakua iñemo iku axina kichonimiakax, iñata au nixhakionko axina korobo soobi tapi sane ñana, taikiana uxia nasiboriki iku axina kixi auna uturu yiriyuka, tari anenki niunxi, nusiruka ane tuxi yusiu.

Akuasirika iñemo

Naruki Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi.

Translation:

Dear sister Karen Yolfi Ípami Ipi

I wanted to write you this letter to talk about how beautiful the past was. I hope that you don't hate me, sister, because it is you who is paying the price of all the human actions that contributed to climate change and the destruction of nature.

As you know, I was born in 2003 and I have just turned 27 years old today. I remember when I was a young child, there were many trees all over my community of El Puquio Cristo Rey in Lomerio, and I could drink water from the rivers, springs and lakes. Water was plentiful. We could go fish and water the fields.

"WATER IS SCARCE! USE RESPONSIBLY! TAKE CARE OF THE WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT!"

I remember that there were a lot of announcements like that, but no one paid any attention. People thought that the water would never run out, but now, the rivers, the springs and the lakes are polluted or completely dry.

I am going to tell you about today's reality, a future I never thought would be possible. Today, a day in the year 2031, skin diseases and stomach infections are the main causes of death. Factories are the main employers, and they pay with potable water instead of money. Attacks for a can of water are commonplace. Today, we use damp cloths to wash ourselves and we have to keep our hair short so that we don't use too much water to wash it. We can't drink more than three glasses a day and there isn't enough water to make *chicha*. Water has become a valuable element these days, more valuable than gold or diamonds.

I write to you, sister, to tell you how beautiful it was to drink and bathe in clean water, breathe clean air, and to play and walk in the forest, enjoying nature. If you ask me, sister, "what happened to everything?", a lump forms in my throat and I feel guilty. I belong to the generation that caused this disaster.

Now you, sister, and those of your generation are paying too high a price. How I would love to go back to a time when we could still do something to save the Earth.

Maybe I haven't told you how important you are to me or how much I love you. I hope that nothing I have written in this letter to you becomes a reality. I hope that you are still living in this territory full of life that is Lomerio, and that the forests and the rivers still surround you.

With love,

Your sister, Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi





Photography by Mary Isabel Garcia Parapaino

Mónica says that, before, her grandparents would harvest honey from the trees where hives of Señorita bees lived. Today, they take the young bees from the branches and place them in small, wooden boxes they put in their garden so that they can manage and care for them better.

Coexistence

Collaborative Text and photography

The Association of Honey Producers of Lomerío

The Association of Honey Producers of Lomerío (APMIL) was born of the need to provide the appropriate technical supervision, conditions, and resources to the practice of sustainable beekeeping in Lomerío. It was also necessary to continue recovering and conserving the knowledge of honey producers, which has been developed in the territory over hundreds of years. In this way, beekeeping has contributed to the conservation of nature, and represents food and economic support for the beekeepers who work with honeybees and stingless bees.

As a PhotoVoice group, we spent a few days documenting this group of beekeepers led by Alejandro Chuvé, president of APMIL, and Mónica Cuasaca, president of the Association of Stingless Beekeepers. The art of harvesting honey from bees is a long process that requires various tasks throughout the year. From the upkeep, cleaning and feeding of the bees, to specific tasks in the flowering season between August and November and harvesting season between September and November. APMIL has its headquarters in the community of San Lorenzo and works all year with three species of bees. The group consists of 17 female beekeepers who work with the native Suro (*scaptotrogonia spp.*) and Señorita (*tetragonisca friebriigi*) stingless bees, and five male beekeepers who work with a honeybee species from Cuba called the Apis (*apis mellifera*).



Photography by Eliana Peña Chore



Photography by Mary Isabel Garcia Parapaino

The female beekeepers supervise the boxes to check the state of the beehives. The temperature in the hive cannot be too hot or too cold, so the group has built roofs to protect the boxes from drastic changes in temperature.

This box has been affected by high temperatures and the white dots show that the honeycomb has completely dried out.



Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

"During the drought, we feed them, give them pollen and try to keep an eye on them each week. When the cold fronts passed through, several hives of bees died, but we are learning, and we are prepared for the next time," said Mónica Cuasace.



Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi



Photography by Juan Said García Chuviru

Ignacio Supayabe and Alejandro Chuvé, technical expert and president of the Association of Honey Producers of Lomerio, respectively, with new frames ready to be installed in the apiary housing Apis bees, located 2 kilometres from APMIL's manufacturing headquarters.



Photography by Juan Said García Chuirú

Bees depend on the flowering season to feed themselves. However, climate change has modified this cycle, which no longer corresponds to traditional periods of blooming and sowing. Consequently, in less than ten years, the beekeepers have observed that the harvest of honey has been reduced from three times a year to one. This is a significant reduction that has also been greatly affected by the forest fires that completely stop the flowering period.



Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodríguez Cessari



Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari

During the harvest, the frames in the apiary that are at least 90% covered with honey are taken to the extraction room. The honey is extracted by centrifugation and placed in a decanter, where the impurities are removed.





Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

The beeswax extracted in this process is melted down and reused to make new frames for the apiary. In this way, beekeeping is a completely self-sustaining and low-cost operation.

The women of the Association of Stingless Beekeepers wear overalls, hair nets and face masks and use disinfected stainless-steel equipment for processing. This is so the honey and by-products derived from the packaging process are of top quality.



Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi



Photography by Gabi Irene Ipamo Ipi

During the processing of the honey from the Señorita and Suro bees, the pollen and glue that they produce is also used. These by-products have high medicinal value and are used in the community to prepare natural remedies, from mixtures with energising or healing properties, to remedies for the common cold and dry skin.

Honey and its by-products have therefore not only been used to provide food and income for families, but also

have medicinal properties that have helped in the fight against COVID-19. Don José Masay, a beekeeper who is a member of APMIL, tells us: "When the pandemic came, we were all worried about what we were going to use as a treatment and honey is one of the most curative ingredients that there is to mix with other natural medicines [...]. We used it to prepare a natural treatment, mixing it with some plants, with the kutuki plant."

APMIL members say that beekeeping has changed their relationship with nature. As Mónica says: "Before, we would go to the hillside to look for firewood. Now, when we go to the hillside, before taking the wood, we check to see if there are Señorita bees living in the tree. If there are, we don't take the wood, because the tree is their home."



Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari

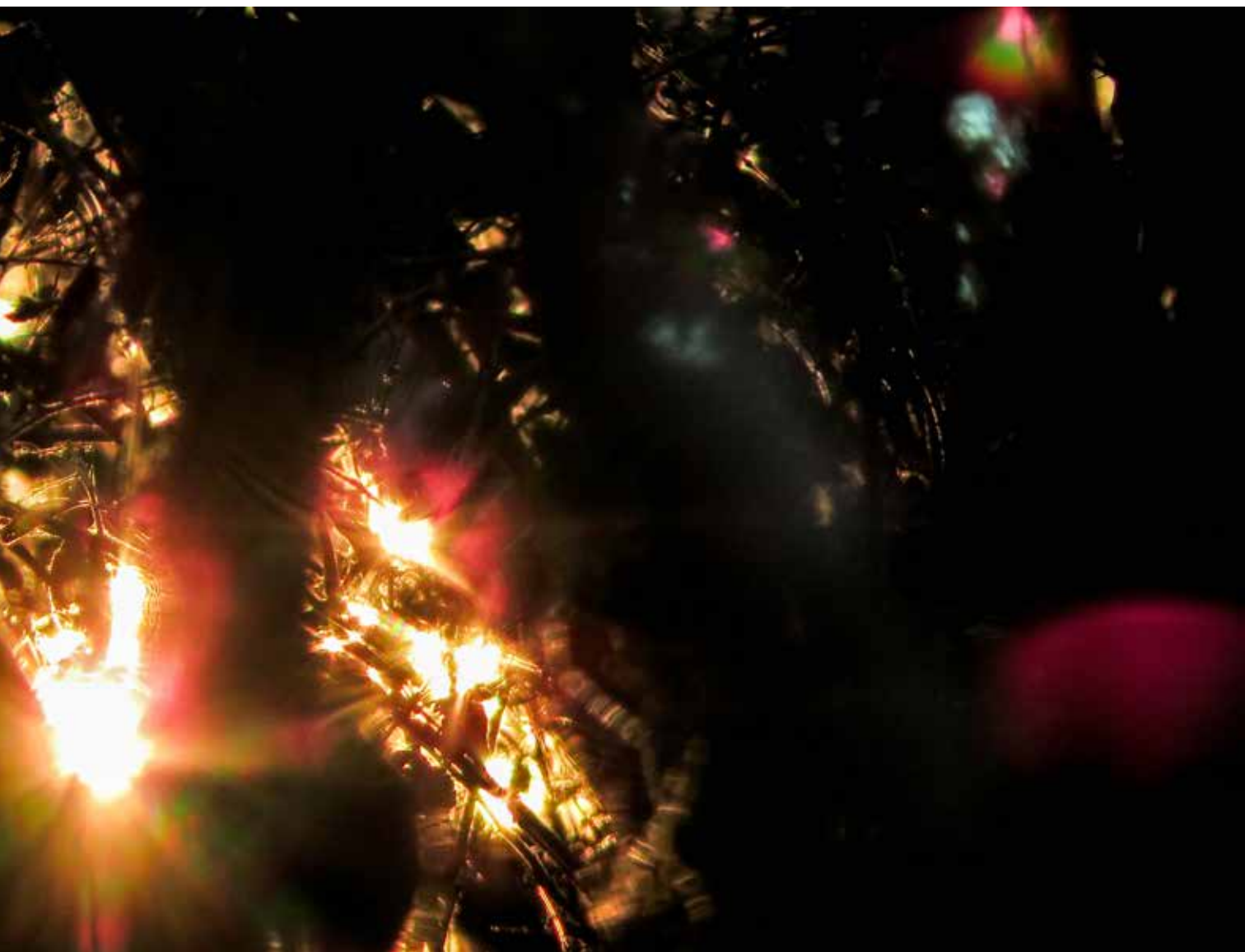
The group of female beekeepers has only been working a year with the native bees and it has been a big learning experience. One of the lessons has been the importance of bees to the ecosystem.

"Without bees, there would be no pollination. They are connected to us in a very important chain." [...] The environment needs them to bloom, and they need the environment because it is their home, and we need them both [...] We have dedicated ourselves to agriculture, but what use is it to plant a lot of corn if there aren't any bees to pollinate them? Without bees, there would be no corn."

If climate change and huge forest fires continue to affect the flowering season, the jobs of the beekeepers of Lomerio will be jeopardised. These activities could stop completely, also affecting the local population's production of natural medicines. The beekeepers are therefore seeking to raise awareness within the population so that they can assist by controlling the fires used to clear *chacos*. They invite everyone in the territory to become familiar with beekeeping and to join the Association of Beekeepers of Lomerio (APMIL) to help make the group even stronger.



Photography by Gabi Irene Ipamo Ipi



When there is a drought, the sun makes the wildfires burn with greater intensity. Hot spots are increasingly common within our communities. In autumn, during the months of August, September and October, wildfires appear and destroy the forests, burning trees and with them, the natural habitat of many animals. This is also the season when different species of bees produce honey. With a lot of hard work and a lot of energy, they find a way to survive the wildfires. Nevertheless, this is not a fire, but a radiant sunset. The sun, way above the fire, gives life to the flowers and the bees that pollinate them.

The sun, Text and photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi

Forest fires

Collaborative text and photography

The communities of the Monkoxi people have used fire to prepare the soil for sowing since the days of our ancestors. The use of fire in our communities is indispensable. To prepare the land in the *chaco*, community members use fire as a natural means of fertilising the soil and getting rid of pests. To control the fire, they leave a row without any plants that is at least a metre wide to prevent the fire spreading to other areas.

These days, because of the intense droughts and the cold fronts, there is a bed of leaves and dry branches, which we call fuel. This fuel makes the flames spread wildly in the *chaco*.

The intensity of the hot spots, which can result in forest fires, have forced us to restrict burning on the *chaco*, making it difficult to plant certain crops we need for our sustenance. Only by organising ourselves can we continue our ancestral practices of farming and community self-sustenance. Therefore, we have to warn the community before burning and coordinate *chaco* workers so that we all contribute to controlling the fires.

Climate change and the aggressive monoculture that surrounds our borders have forced us to organise, not only to keep an eye on the burning of *chaco* plots, but also to control the forest fires that, once they begin, spread rapidly within our territory.



Photography by Jorge Andres Guizada Palachay



Photography by Brenda Chuvirú García

Through the analysis of real-time satellite data, the technical experts at the Indigenous Organization of the Native Communities of Lomerio (CICOL), like Guillermo Supabayé Peña, can determine the coordinates of hotspots in Lomerio territory and inform the environmental monitors.

Environmental monitors stand ready to respond to possible hotspots identified in Lomerio territory. They use cell phone applications to get themselves to locations where hotspots have been identified.

Once there, they evaluate the situation in the field and take photographs. This information is uploaded to the monitoring team's data cloud so that the authorities are kept up to date on whether the hotspot is under control or if there is a possibility of a large-scale forest fire starting.

Photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi





Photography by Jorge Andres Guizada Palachay

If there is a forest fire to be fought, the chiefs of the Land and Territory, and the chiefs in the community where the fire has been registered act to mobilise the necessary resources and Lomerio's community fire brigade.



Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari

This is what happened when wildfires near the community of Salinas burned more than 1,247 hectares of forest between August and September due to two forest fires in the region.

Photography by Johan Pedriel Rodriguez Cesari



Portraits of a territory: Doña Lucía

Text and photography by Jorge Guizada Palachay

Lucía Palachay tends her garden where she has planted various vegetables to meet her food needs. She also rears chickens, geese, ducks and pets, like her dog, Lucero. She usually waters her plants in the afternoon to take care of her plot.





Kichonimiakaxi aibu nausipi Nipiaki

Aume ma iñumantaiki

Nanenese 13 panxi Octubre nasikiibese 2021, taikiana uxia aemo, xhakonomoko aume nauki atusi aume axisomi axina nasikiibese champixti uxia suiñemo ityopi sirimana omomo xhoenka siroti pese eana niunxi, uibabo kixi, taruku nipeekixhi.

Axina kauta subaka ane niunxi isiu takana poxi sirimanaxi kauta uxia nosiboriki aibu nenaxi niunxi, basakati yusiu nutaumanka, numukianka auna champiapae nausixhi takana axina kauta sirinana poca au yarubaityux tube.

Axina nomonko xhoenka ane yacheuxi suiñemo, subaka aibu sumasata kauta ane omo somekati sopiñotochema tapi siroti eana niunxi, au kutanu nasikiibese 2019 pese iñatai saimia nipoo auki chauki ixhuka.

Axiñi ane nixhakionko kausanenpi ñana axti chiyakapiki iku na kixi, tari ñana champiapae nausikia, tari axina nenaxi niunxi taikiana masamoña pario aibu, tapi anaiña niunxi airo akii, tari auxia nausiboriki, ityopi axina yaxtai xhanxi amenso numukianka ychepe niunxi, oxonene iñemo axti sane ñana aupu.

Nipiaki ane masamunu ipobo, axti tisonka tari axina pox anenki nauki amasarai kauta amekati aucha naximia usiña, nauki apakionaño suisiu.

Axiñi yaka iñununekaka nauki ityomo nausipika iku kichonimiakaxi nauki amasarai axina chuxiampi axina yachikoimia aibu nenaxi niunxi, nauki masamonka paario aibu niunxi nauki anenki isiu yupasaka nasikiibeka.

Ñasamuka nariox amopinanaki tari axaño apiña nuxia yutaku axiba noñenaxi nauki amasaraiki numukianka eana niunxi, nutaumanka axiba abe auna kixi Monkoxi.

Xhatañumena tanu aume ma iñumantaiki

Jorge

Translation:

Dear descendants,

Today is October 13, 2021. I hope you are well. I am writing to let you know that these years haven't been going very well for us due to wildfires and droughts.

Here where I live, the forest is the place where we can live in harmony. I can live and feel at peace as I watch the birds in my house and in my community. Here where I live, there isn't as much pollution as there is in big cities.

But the wildfires are affecting us gravely. We have to be vigilant and organise ourselves to combat each hotspot and prevent the fire from spreading through all the forest. For example, in 2019, the fire almost spread to my house and that scared me.

Lately, I have been wondering about how the world will change when I no longer exist. I hope that when I am no longer here, there will be less pollution and resources will be used sustainably. I hope that the forest in which I live will not have been cut down nor destroyed. Finally, I hope that there is change for the better, because now, I see animals and forests disappearing due to the fires. It would hurt me a lot if people were to continue being affected by the fires.

My mum is building a house and I hope that this house will still be standing when I am no longer here, that it will still be a place where people come together to share a jug of sweet chicha and in this way, remember us.

On my part, I am receiving training in a photography workshop so that I can share our reality and how much our natural surroundings are struggling. I hope that you can see these photos and that they have served to raise awareness in our community and in the world, so that the forest can continue to be your home.

I sign off with the hope that you keep fighting not to lose the forests nor the animals and birds that live in our Monkoxi territory.

A hug for you my grandchildren,
Jorge



Currently, Doña Lucía is building a house. My siblings go to help her by cutting wood. We hope that she finishes soon and this can be a place where we can be together. I feel proud of all the work she does to take my family forward.

Final reflections

PhotoVoice: Monkoxi Reconnection aimed to train young leaders connected to their territory and to their history. This experience brings together a tapestry of stories. It shapes the experiences, emotions and views that emerge from an exchange of experiences among the eight young students and from the intergenerational conversations channelled through photography as a powerful tool for dialogue.

During this process, photography helped the young people make an introspective journey from their own realities to their territory. Through this, they recognised the importance of their family and cultural connections as well as their relationship with the forest. The power to tell these stories independently, through a medium like photography, gave the stories more significance. This process provided time and space for the past and future to resonate with each other, helping their stories find meaning and form.

The images reflect a territory in dispute and marked by its history of slavery; a present characterised by generational differences, the threats of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic; and a future filled with uncertainty. In this context, photography permits us to better listen and communicate with each other in order to begin a dialogue between past and present knowledge and experiences, which is fundamental to reconnecting everyone.

Photography and storytelling enabled a space for reflection on and exploration of their territory. It allowed ancestral knowledge, experiences of reconnection and reflections on their own roles as young people in this world and in their territory to be shared. It also helped the young people document evidence for present and future generations. On this foundation, the interior worlds and subjectivities of the youth were linked to their territory, forming a tapestry of stars in the sky.

Markus Martinez Burman and Sharon Gina Gonzales Parra



Each and every one of us hides within our own shadows and conceals our mistakes. Our shadows grow, while those of the trees and the different species that inhabit them disappear one by one. Climate change, deforestation and the extinction of species are a reflection of all of humanity's mistakes. The shadows hound us and only at night, when the lights, the sun, and the moon are hidden, can we escape the terrible future ahead. The only thing we can do is take action to correct our mistakes.

The shadow, Text and photography by Gabi Irene Ípamo Ipi



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