



Connections

Jorge Huichalaf

Sister! Brother!

Today I saw your pupils looking to the future.

They were dark as mine,

I felt your blood running through my veins,

Like lava from volcanoes flowing out.

I heard your voice whispering truths,

It sounded like my grandparents praying for change.

Enjoy your bones like Mother Earth,

In the eternal death and rebirth, the purest white!

Your hands smelled of free land,

Seeds charged with tender children.

You live in all my senses,

I throb in all your emotions

And in you I deposit my hope

Like raindrops, love and belief in the earth.

My name is Jorge Huichalaf, and I am Mapuche (the Mapuche are the indigenous people of Chile, the name means 'people of the earth'). In our cosmos, we as humans belong to our Ñuke Mapu (Mother Earth), and she belongs to us. We are not owners of the planet, but part of it. As the father of three adolescents and as a teacher in a rural indigenous school, I always seek to spread those notions of our ancestors to my children and students. Especially today, they gain more importance in the modern world. People



seem to be alienated from each other and a small oligarchy is rising to rule the world, threatening our environment, nature and our ecosystem. Therefore, the notions of our cultural heritage become more and more significant in the defence of our Mapu Ñuke. *Kelluwün* and *Llamewün* are the guiding principles to live by. *Kelluwün* means the mutual support among human beings in harmony with the whole, united by their birth on our earth and their stay in the space we all share as humanity; *Llamewün* means the mutual respect, in harmony with the whole life in deep respect to every existing being, creature or force in our entire universe. These and more notions, the knowledge and wisdom of the Mapuche and other native nations on our planet, lead to *Küme Mogen* — the Good Life: a life in consciousness, balance and happiness.

We carry a mandate from our forefathers. It channels actions for the retrieval of former economic, cultural, linguistic, educational practices. My opportunities to travel, first to Germany and then to other parts of Europe became an extension of this critical directive. There, I had the privilege to learn about diverse topics, which resembled ancient notions we are re-developing in our own group of institutional work in Chile.

Fair trade, conscious consumption, control of alimentation, alternative energies, educational system based on playing, the work in eco-villages, the multiple variants of the informatics

systems, recycling, the time bank, the disturbing experiences of our refugee brothers, the associative work on self-organized fairs, social currencies, communitarian supermarkets of organic products, the conservation of national parks and so much more.

In our journey of consciousness, we need to comprehend how to share our space, living on mother earth. It is an opportunity to meet and discover the spirits that guide us. We need to fully develop our abilities of solidarity to revert to the core of being human, connected to the earth, loving and appreciating nature and promoting diversity.

My story starts in the sad eyes of children in rural schools. The dominant culture's existing discrimination against the Mapuche leads us to think of new methodological and strategic educational alternatives to leave the abysmal well of radical racism. In the land of the highest inequality worldwide¹ the racism a few economic groups promote, strengthened by alliances with political parties and justified in the eternal argumentation of material progress and economic development only look at us as an inconvenience.

My participation at various conferences, of likeminded activists from around the world whose work, ethics and aspirations align with mine, provided me with some life-changing experiences. Together with all, I learned with and from my friends of the network 'Learn to Change' unveiled the world on the other side of the fence of information. It is astonishing to see the disparity of the relations between citizens and governments in different countries and to compare it with the reality in Chile and its indigenous peoples.

The discrimination and repressive violence of police forces, politicians and entrepreneurs against social movements and its activists, especially the Mapuche movement: the charades of the police, the repeated trials in the courts of justice, the imprisonment and permanent criminalization of poor people, the violence against children and women, the murders of youths without any trial, the absence of recognition of the indigenous peoples in the constitution and many factors make me think we do indeed live in the fourth world.

Considering this context, I appreciate the work in the 'Learn to Change' network. For me it resembles the inner connection of the earth's tectonic plates: every insider is a river of lava of solidarity and when these rivers gather, they provoke intercontinental eruptions of mutual support. In the land where I come from education is considered a consumer good². I share the opinion of Claudio

Naranjo, who proclaims that today 'education is a crime, a fraud'³. According to him, it focuses on the access to money, which 'is the most terrible addiction, worse than cocaine or heroin. It provokes a feeling of satisfaction in the people and hardens their heart'⁴. His efforts in educational networks or networks of similar professions help to intervene with love and compassion to affect the world and impact it with *earthquakes* and upheavals of our collaboration to strive for more and better. Thus, we can promote to reconnect with human beings and further the sensibility to listen to the voice of our mother earth to contribute in the recovery of the balance for the future generations.

To know that there are voices rising to generate changes in dormant consciences, which affect our behaviour, but also the awareness, that we can intervene in an educational level to definitely change the erratic direction of our fate, is a great alleviation of our despair.

Seeing furthermore, that there are different peoples in different parts of the world in need of support, impels us to continue working together. Peoples living in situations of helplessness, injustice, discrimination, misrule, abusive exploitation of natural resources, which generates great environmental imbalances, need solidarity. United in our pursuit of change, we make efforts to search for alternative ways in both the direct educational experience in the classrooms and the social experience of organizations to encourage the emergence of new spaces of expression with ancient concepts (*Kelluwün* and *Llamewün*) to create new opportunities for sustainable development and institutional responses.

Thanks to the union and alliance with institutions like 'Learn to Change' I have felt a true shelter and unprecedented projection for our precarious personal and institutional existence. The linkage in the Global Learning Network helped me become acquainted with ideas, actions, shared dreams and successful experiences of educational and social change. In my case, it is an opportunity to transform the ankylose and discredited economic institutions into real opportunities to fight rural and urban poverty. In short, the journey through our shared work in the network of international educators, 'Learn to Change' has been an invaluable experience, an experience that has resulted in awareness and changes in our own local perspectives. We could open spaces of transition into the future, windows of reconnection between cultures and passionate

people for the education of peace, continued in the pursuit of an endogenous development through linkages with the *kūme mogen* or good living and the experience from inside to discover the endogenous development of our beings.

The participation in the network handed me an enormous knowledge acquisition and the tour through different countries increased the certainty that we cannot give up on fostering a global reconnection. The more we seem to be separated and disconnected as human beings, the more we are urged to reconnect with each other to re-educate ourselves as human beings and to be able to enlighten the darkness to where the current economic system has taken us. The powerful voice of our mother earth forces us to amend the course of humanity, until we find equilibrium through gratitude, mutual support, and collaborative work.

Among branches of the mountains, in the green meadows by the river, in diaphanous premonitory dreams or dazzling visions of unknown vibrating states nature revolts, are messages transmitted to the healers (*machi*), who for millennia have kept the answers to the diseases of soul and body. The voices of the earth are trying to connect with us, human beings, to whisper the keys of a sacred planet. We seek to reconnect us in solidarity and affect our environment in such ways as to generate permanent changes and develop alternative models to draw the participation of groups. We seek to implement similar ideas as the Transition Groups⁵ in the



European countries, which sued irresponsible companies that harm the environment for the crime of ecocide.

Furthermore, we combine this journey of encounter out of our territory with an epistemological journey into culture to gather, to search and to recreate ancient concepts from the first human settlements of America or Abya Yala. In the discovery of the development of a cooperative concept based on ancestral cultural canons, we form a group of humans vibrating with the spiritual mandate and material defence of the mother earth inherited from our ancestors. We need freedom of mind to enhance our work in community action and to assume a commitment to consolidate changes that spring from the very bowels of citizens organized by their rights and those of mother earth.

We aim for the creation of an ethical bank for the *Wallmapu* (Mapuche name of our territory, our homeland) and South America and offer our best efforts and creativity to generate points of support in the creation of new foci of alternative economies. For dialogues, we seek for sustainability that requires our planet to be alive to sustain us as humanity. Time Banking or *Mingako*; the barter that involves the exchange of seeds, products and services without monetary valuation or *trafkintu*, together with the development of local energies and the social currency. All that is needed in the recovery, for our children and future generations of our *Mapuzungún* — mother tongue, and its movement of reconnecting concepts, the sounds of mother earth and its diversity.

Notes

1. <<http://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2015/01/14/piketty-y-la-desigualdad-en-chile-el-1-mas-rico-tiene-cerca-del-35-de-la-riqueza-nacional-y-es-la-cifra-mas-alta-del-mundo/>>.
2. <<http://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/pais/educacion/proyectos/presidente-pinera-la-educacion-es-un-bien-de-consumo/2011-07-19/134829.html>>.
3. <<http://www.theclinic.cl/2018/01/08/claudio-naranjo-pienso-la-educacion-crimen-una-estafa/>>.
4. <<https://www.disidentes.net/2018/01/08/chileno-referente-de-la-psicologia-mundial-hace-mierda-la-educacion-la-gente-dejara-de-ir-a-los-colegios-asi-como-ya-no-va-a-las-iglesias-como-en-el-siglo/>>.
5. These are local groups/hubs of the Transition Movement, founded in 2005 by Ron Hobkins. On their website, they explain themselves as follows: It is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local. By coming together, they are able to crowd-source solutions. They seek to nurture a caring culture, one focused on supporting each other, both as groups or as wider

communities. In practice, they are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support. It's an approach that has spread now to over 50 countries, in thousands of groups: in towns, villages, cities, Universities, schools.

More information here: <<https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/what-is-transition/>>.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jorge Huichalaf Díaz is a primary teacher. He has a Masters in management, planning and innovation of educational practice. He is president of the Koyam Educational Corporation and president of the Endogenous Mapuche Credit Union Küme Mogen. He works in rural schools to support for the education of Mapuche children.

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