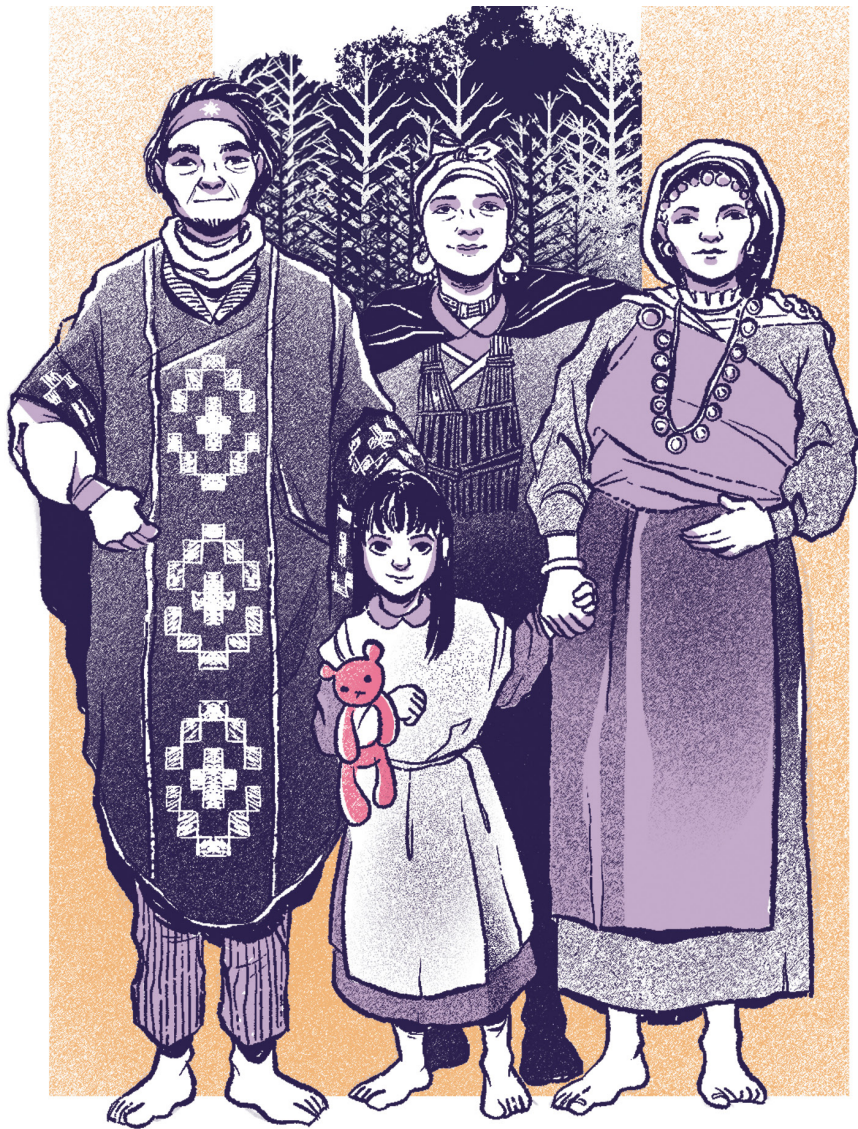


PROMOTING ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES



PEOPLE'S HEALTH MOVEMENT

In 2000, concerned activists, academics and health workers got together for the first People's Health Assembly, where the People's Charter for Health was developed and the People's Health Movement (PHM) was born. Today, PHM is a global network bringing together grassroots health activists, civil society organizations and academic institutions from around the world, particularly from low and middle income countries.

Guided by the People's Charter for Health, PHM works on various programmes and activities and is committed to Comprehensive Primary Health Care and addressing the Social, Environmental and Economic Determinants of Health. Equity, ecological well-being and peace are at the heart of PHM's vision for a better world: a world in which a healthy life for all is a reality; a world that respects, appreciates and celebrates all life and diversity; a world that enables the flowering of people's talents and abilities to enrich each other; a world in which people's voices guide the decisions that shape our lives.

In April 2024, PHM held its fifth People's Health Assembly (PHA5) in Argentina, bringing together activists from all over the world to share analysis, struggles and strategies around 5 axes that are key for the health of people and the planet:

1. Towards the transformation of health systems
2. Gender justice in health
3. Ecosystem health: food, energy, climate
4. Resisting forced migration and war
5. Promoting ancestral and popular knowledges and practices

This booklet originates from the discussion of axis 5: Promoting Ancestral Knowledge and Practices



HARKATU KORO ALAM ANDU!
People's Health Movement



<https://www.phmovement.org>



People Tree Studio is an independent graphic design and art studio working with graphics, comics, murals, textiles and visual storytelling. It is based in Goa, India and is founded by artist Orijit Sen and curator Gurpreet Sidhu.
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Peoples Health Movement

Promoting Ancestral Knowledge and Practices

Written by Cordelia B. Francis | Edited by Orijit Sen | Art by Pia Alize Hazarika

Winter is easing.

A group of police have stormed into a Mapuche community, the Lof Quemquemtrew, who had reclaimed a piece of ancestral land in a wooded valley known as Cuesta del Ternero, in the Andes mountains of Argentina's Patagonia region.



Two months later
in the dead of
night...

Some Mapuche men hear something
and approach the men sneaking in.

WHO'S
THERE?!

LET THEM THROUGH.
THEY ARE ROCCO'S MEN.
THEY HAVE PERMISSION FROM
THE SECURITY MINISTRY.

The intruders shoot.
Two Mapuche men are hit.

Smallholders lacked deeds. Indigenous people were told they could own their land—if they “improved” it by clearing native forests for pine.

This land isn't private; it's public. Yet, the beneficiaries include Rocco, Benetton, and Papel Prensa.



THE NATIVE FOREST
IS THE REPOSITORY OF
MEDICINAL PLANTS AND HERBS
WHICH WE HAVE USED FOR
CENTURIES.

TO DESTROY THE
FOREST IS TO DESTROY
OUR WAY OF LIFE. OUR
ROOTS ARE WHAT
UNITE US.

ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE
IS SOMETHING WE LIVE WITH
EVERY DAY—IT CONNECTS US. IT'S
ABOUT PROTECTING THE RIGHTS
OF TRADITIONAL PEOPLES FROM
PRIVATIZATION.

WHEN WE THINK OF HEALTH,
WE PICTURE HOSPITALS, STETHOSCOPES,
AND MEDICINE. WE HAVE TO CREATE
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE KNOWLEDGE
OF THE PAST 4,000 YEARS
AND TODAY.



Forced to leave their land, Lucia and her mama live in a poor neighbourhood of Mar del Plata.



Like many displaced Mapuche, Lucia's mother sells traditional handicrafts at the local markets.



THIS IS BETIANA COLHUAN, A MAPUCHE LEADER.

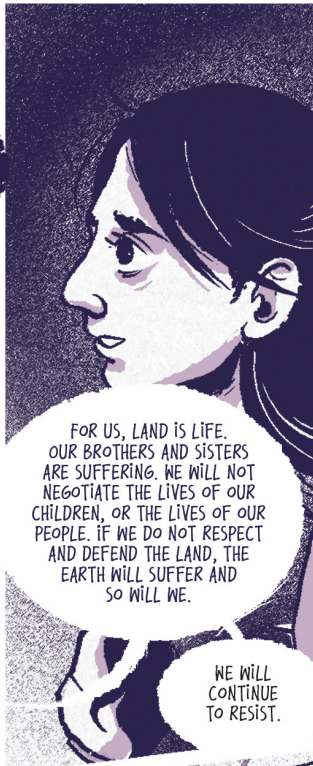
THE LAND HER COMMUNITY USED TO SIT ON FALLS WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NAHUEL HUAPI NATIONAL PARK, THE COUNTRY'S OLDEST NATIONAL PARK AND A POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION...



Meanwhile, at home...



IT IS PAINFUL TO SEE THE LAND LIKE THIS... THE LAND IS ALIVE. WE HAVE TO FIGHT HARDER...



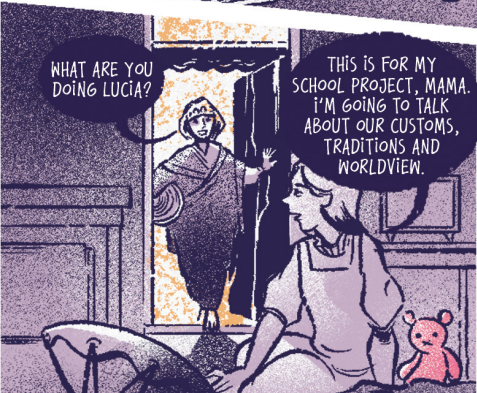
FOR US, LAND IS LIFE. OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE SUFFERING. WE WILL NOT NEGOTIATE THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN, OR THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE. IF WE DO NOT RESPECT AND DEFEND THE LAND, THE EARTH WILL SUFFER AND SO WILL WE.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST.



WE NEED TO RECONSTRUCT THE LIFE THAT WAS PRESENT BEFORE AND TAKEN AWAY FROM EVERYONE. ALL KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE COMPLEMENTED WITHOUT BRINGING ANY OF THEM DOWN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THE PAST. DENIAL IS NO SOLUTION TO THE BURDEN THAT HISTORY PLACES ON US.

WE HAVE TO PROTECT DIVERSITY. "BUEN VIVIR" IS FOR EVERYONE.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING LUCIA?

THIS IS FOR MY SCHOOL PROJECT, MAMA. I'M GOING TO TALK ABOUT OUR CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS AND WORLDVIEW.



TELL ME WHAT YOU REMEMBER, MAMA. WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT LIVING IN CUESTA DEL TERNERO?



..LET IT RAIN, SAY YOU,
BIG MAN WITH GOLDEN HEAD,
AND YOU, BIG WOMAN
WE PRAY TO
BOTH BIG AND OLD PERSONS...

HOW I MISS THE
KULTRUN DRUM,
THE MACHI'S VOICE
CARRYING
ANCESTRAL SONGS.

A NEW SHAMAN
ERECTS A SACRED
PILLAR, THE
KEMUKEMU, MARKING
THE LAND AS HOLY.

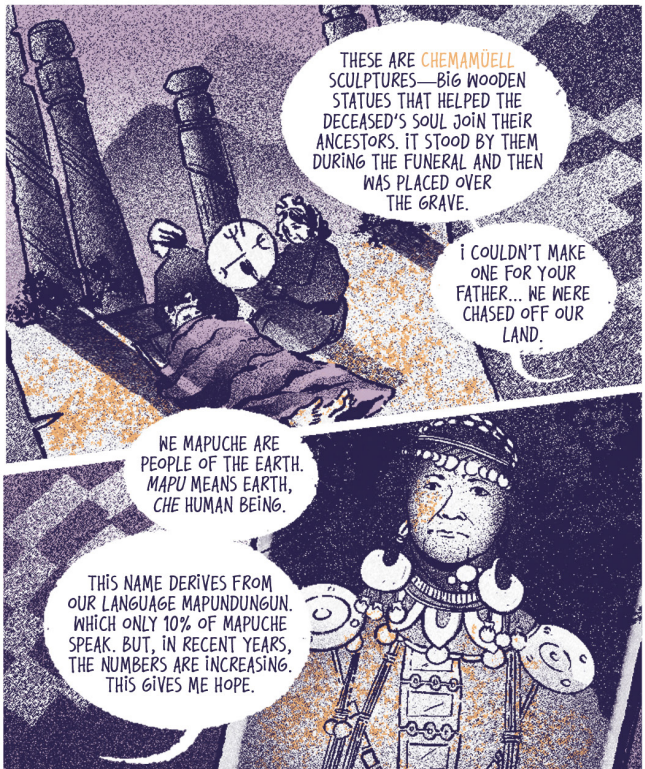
AT ITS CENTER,
THE **REWE** BECOMES A
GATHERING PLACE FOR
NGUILLATUN—OUR
CEREMONIES.

WE PRAYED FOR BIRTH,
FOR DEATH, FOR RAIN
TO NOURISH CROPS AND
ANIMALS.

YES. WE HAD JUST
BURIED YOUR PLACENTA
ON THIS LAND AND
PLANTED A TREE ON TOP
SO YOU WILL NEVER
FEEL UPROOTED.

WE BELIEVE THIS CREATES
A LIFELONG CONNECTION
BETWEEN A NEWBORN AND
THE NATURAL ELEMENTS OF
OUR FAMILY TERRITORY.

IS THAT ME,
MAMA?



THESE ARE **CHEMAMÜELL**
SCULPTURES—BIG WOODEN
STATUES THAT HELPED THE
DECEASED'S SOUL JOIN THEIR
ANCESTORS. IT STOOD BY THEM
DURING THE FUNERAL AND THEN
WAS PLACED OVER
THE GRAVE.

I COULDN'T MAKE
ONE FOR YOUR
FATHER... WE WERE
CHASED OFF OUR
LAND.

WE MAPUCHE ARE
PEOPLE OF THE EARTH.
MAPU MEANS EARTH,
CHE HUMAN BEING.

THIS NAME DERIVES FROM
OUR LANGUAGE MAPUNDUNGUN,
WHICH ONLY 10% OF MAPUCHE
SPEAK. BUT, IN RECENT YEARS,
THE NUMBERS ARE INCREASING.
THIS GIVES ME HOPE.



BUT MOST OF ALL,
I MISS OUR GOOD LIFE
'**BUEN VIVIR**' WHICH IS HARMONY
BETWEEN PEOPLE, NATURE,
ANCESTORS AND SPIRITS.

WE KNOW THREE WORLDS...
MINCHE MAPU - THE UNKNOWN
UNDERWORLD BENEATH OUR FEET.
NAG MAPU - OUR WORLD, SHARED WITH
ANCESTORS, SPIRITS, THE LAND, AND ALL
LIVING BEINGS.
WENU MAPU - THE UPPER WORLD OF
STARS, SUN, MOON, WIND,
AND THUNDER.

SHAMANS BRIDGE THESE WORLDS, ENTERING TRANCES TO SPEAK WITH ANCESTORS AND HIGHER BEINGS. THEIR ASSISTANTS, EVER WATCHFUL, GUIDE AND PROTECT THEM—THEIR EYES IN THE UNSEEN.

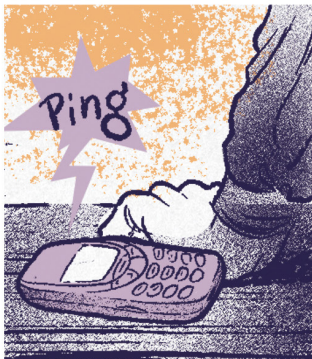


HERE, MAMA, WE ARE SO FAR AWAY FROM OUR ANCESTRAL LAND... I MISS PAPA. AND THE SNOW CAPPED MOUNTAINS. PICKING BERRIES WITH MY FRIENDS, WALKING THROUGH THE FORESTS, GATHERING SEEDS...



I'M GLAD YOU ARE DOING THIS PROJECT.

YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE BOTH THE SEEDS OF OUR ANCIENT ROOTS AND THE BRANCHES OF OUR FUTURE LIVES.



LUCÍA, THERE IS A BIG MEETING THIS WEEKEND AT MAR DEL PLATA.

WE MUST GO! THERE WILL BE MANY MAPUCHE AND OTHER INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. I'M SURE WE'LL MEET OLD FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

THE MAPUCHE INHABIT VAST LANDS ACROSS SOUTH-CENTRAL CHILE AND SOUTHWESTERN ARGENTINA, UNITED BY SHARED TRADITIONS, LANGUAGE, AND BELIEFS.

WE RESISTED COLONIZATION, REMAINING INDEPENDENT UNTIL THE LATE 19TH CENTURY WHEN CHILE AND ARGENTINA SEIZED OUR TERRITORY, DIVIDING THE MAPUCHE NATION WITH AN ARBITRARY BORDER.

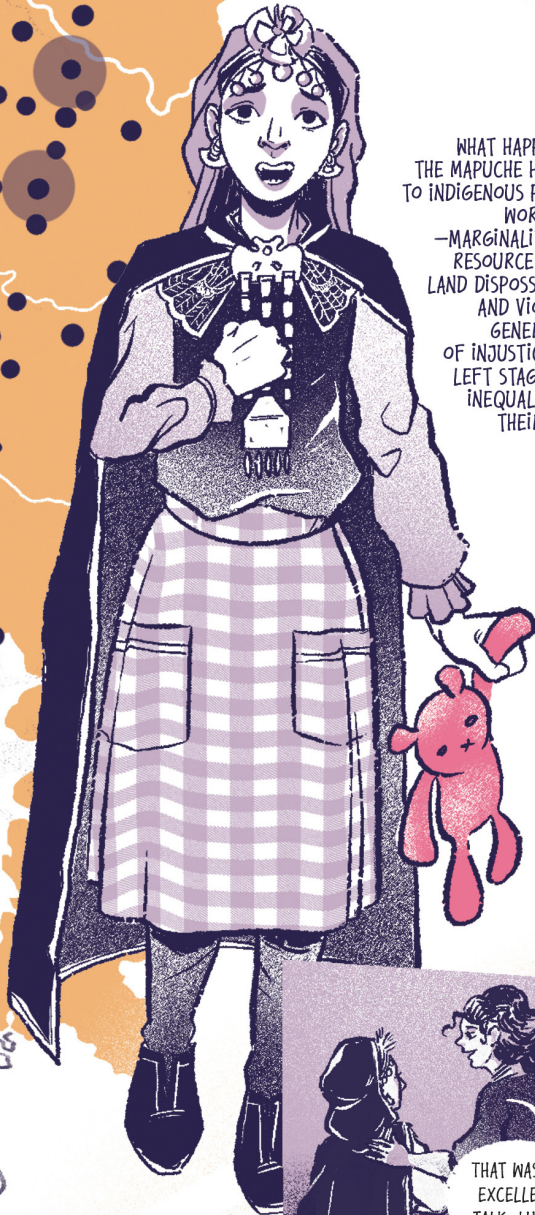
BENETTON, THE ITALIAN FASHION GIANT, OWNS 2.2 MILLION ACRES IN ARGENTINA—MORE THAN ANY OTHER PRIVATE LANDHOLDER. THEY EXPLOIT IT FOR LIVESTOCK, FARMING, FOSSIL FUELS, AND LOGGING.

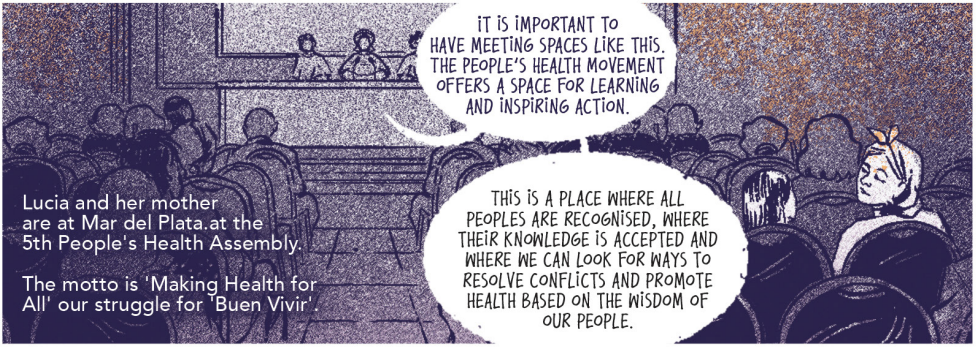
WHEN THE PU LOF RECLAIMED THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS, BENETTON SENT IN GENDARMES. WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE LOCKED UP, BEATEN. THEIR BELONGINGS - MATTRESSES, BLANKETS, TOYS - BURNED TO ASH.

TO RECLAIM OUR FUTURE, WE MUST RECLAIM OUR PAST. OUR ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE, STOLEN BY HISTORY AND COLONIALISM, MUST BE RECOVERED—PERSONALLY AND COLLECTIVELY—TO GUIDE OUR WAY FORWARD.

TODAY, ARGENTINA OFFICIALLY COUNTS 955,000 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE—JUST 2.5% OF THE POPULATION. YET DNA STUDIES REVEAL THAT 56% OF ARGENTINES HAVE INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY, A STARTLING FACT IN A COUNTRY THAT HAS LONG ERASED US FROM ITS HISTORY.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MAPUCHE HAPPENS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORLDWIDE—MARGINALIZATION, RESOURCE THEFT, LAND DISPOSSESSION, AND VIOLENCE. GENERATIONS OF INJUSTICE HAVE LEFT STAGGERING INEQUALITIES IN THEIR WAKE.





IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE MEETING SPACES LIKE THIS. THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH MOVEMENT OFFERS A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND INSPIRING ACTION.

Lucia and her mother are at Mar del Plata at the 5th People's Health Assembly.

The motto is 'Making Health for All' our struggle for 'Buen Vivir'

THIS IS A PLACE WHERE ALL PEOPLES ARE RECOGNISED, WHERE THEIR KNOWLEDGE IS ACCEPTED AND WHERE WE CAN LOOK FOR WAYS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AND PROMOTE HEALTH BASED ON THE WISDOM OF OUR PEOPLE.



AND, IF IT IS NOT RESOLVED, TO LOOK FOR OTHER WAYS, BUT WITHOUT LOSING THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE, WITHOUT GIVING WAY ONLY TO THE COLONIZED MINDSET.

...OUR YOUNG WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED IN THE COLONIAL SYSTEM, CAN SHOW THE WORLD WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR COMMUNITIES AFTER COLONIALIZATION.

I DREAM WE CAN REPAIR THIS FRAGMENTATION IN THE COMMUNITY: RETURN HOME, WHERE EVERYTHING HAS BEEN LOST. AT HOME WAS WHERE EDUCATION TOOK PLACE.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAKE UP 5% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION BUT ARE 50% OF THE WORLD'S POOREST.

THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, BUEN VIVIR WAS PRESENT IN ALL COMMUNITIES. THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE STILL BELIEVE EVERYTHING HAS LIFE, EVERYTHING HAS MOVEMENT, EVERYTHING HAS SPIRIT AND VIBRATION.

ANCESTRAL MEDICINE IS NOT A COMMODITY OR A TOURIST ATTRACTION. THE CURRENT SYSTEM COMMERCIALIZES OUR TRADITIONS—WE NEED SOVEREIGNTY. COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES AND DIVERSE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES ARE ESSENTIAL TO CONVEYING THIS MESSAGE.

WE NEED TO RECONSTITUTE BUEN VIVIR THAT WAS PRESENT BEFORE AND TAKEN AWAY FROM EVERYONE.

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH FOR ALL PEOPLE IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF HEALTH IS UNDERSTOOD ALSO THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PEOPLE. BUEN VIVIR IS FOR EVERYONE.

WE NEED TO TURN FROM PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION TO RECIPROCITY AND SUSTAINABILITY. WE NEED TO BUILD ORGANISATIONAL MODELS THAT CHALLENGE THE MODEL OF REASON.

I AM A FARMER, THE DAUGHTER OF THIS EARTH, MY AUDIENCE IS CORN AND PEAS. TODAY, MY MICROPHONE IS THE SHOVEL THAT I USE TO DO MY WORK.



The kultrun is a Mapuche ceremonial drum and a significant symbol of Mapuche culture, representing the world and its four cardinal directions, with the cross on its surface symbolizing the spaces into which the world is divided. It is used by the machi (healer or shaman) for religious and cultural rituals.

Mongabay

Link: <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/07/tree-plantations-in-patagonia-are-the-site-of-wildfires-and-land-dispute/>

Al Jazeera

Link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/4/12/a-journey-through-chiles-conflict-with-mapuche-resistance-groups>

Link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/16/the-land-is-still-alive-a-mapuche-leaders-fight-for-home-in-argentina>

Infinity of Nations, Art and History of the Contributions of the National Museum of the American Indian

Link: <https://americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/infinityofnations/patagonia/175773.html>

Linden-Museum Stuttgart Collections Online


Link: https://sammlung-digital.lindenmuseum.de/en/topic/el-buen-vivir-mapuche-what-is-a-good-life_14111

5th People's Health Assembly (PHA5)

Link: <https://phmovement.org/the-wait-is-over-pha5-mar-del-plata-2024>

United Nations DESA programme

Link: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples>



A Mapuche family is uprooted from their ancestral land by a nexus of political power and private industry.

One night, a Mapuche man is killed by hired agitators. His daughter Lucia, her mother and the entire community are forced off their land. Displaced, they migrate to a poor neighbourhood of Mar del Plata where Lucia attends school while her mother sells baskets at a local market.

Lucia—like many displaced Mapuche—grows up in an urban landscape devoid of cultural and community connections and values. She feels lost, disconnected from her roots, and marginalized.

When her teacher at school requests the students to present a topic close to their hearts, Lucia is inspired to dig into her community's history and culture. She discovers that as a toddler her life was once rich with ancient rituals that connected her people to their land, to their ancestors, to the forests and the spirits. It was the good life known as Buen Vivir.

Eager to relate more deeply with her people and their ancient knowledge, Lucia and her mother attend an assembly organized in their city where she learns about a global movement that puts Buen Vivir at the centre of the struggle for health for all.

About the Series Editors

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