



Indigenous wisdom and ecopsychology for empowering emerging Latin American change makers: moving from Covid disruption to better social and ecological wellbeing

FINAL REPORT

ONLINE SESSIONS MARCH-APRIL 2021



Authors: Manuela FERNANDEZ, Abigail QUIC, Daniel ABREU

Contents

Acronyms	1
Acknowledgements	1
Introduction	2
Objectives and themes	2
Participants, Resource People and Organizers	3
Sessions and discussions	4
Introductions and agreements	5
Video sessions & inspiring wisdom holders invited	6
Participant evaluations and lessons learned	7
Multimedia links	9
Annexes	10

Acronyms

GDF	Global Diversity Foundation
GEN	Global Environments Network
EIWS	Ecopsychology and Indigenous Wisdom Sessions
Q&A	Questions and Answers

Acknowledgements

We express our deep gratitude to the facilitators who voluntarily worked to carry out this event, including Mokchewan Guaján, Egleé Zent and Cristobal Punolef. We want to express our deepest gratitude to Abigail Quic, Daniel Abreu and Manuela Fernandez for their contribution as organizers of this project.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic creates visible disconnection amongst humans. This new phenomenon also generates, first of all, health crises and later, in a more concealed and insidious way, economic, ecological, and social crises. The systemic nature of the COVID-19 crisis and its unprecedented cascading effects have reverberated in all sectors and levels, and in all countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region. Furthermore, there has been and continues to be a breakdown at different levels: emotional, relational, and territorial.

The Latin American context has the elements to face this situation and to make it possible to envision and move towards a more benevolent reality. Indeed, Latin America still preserves a wealth of ancestral knowledge that could be a key to move from COVID-19 disruption to more social and ecological wellbeing. Also, young Latin American leaders are not indifferent to these problems and are looking for alternatives and solutions to create a more sustainable world.

Through this project titled *Indigenous wisdom and ecopsychology for empowering emerging Latin American change makers: moving from COVID disruption to better social and ecological wellbeing*, we—[Daniel Abreu](#), [Manuela Fernandez](#) and [Abigail Quic](#)—offered live virtual and recorded sessions (3 sessions of 3 hours each, and 3 video recordings) of ecopsychology and indigenous wisdom in the context of a global crisis and changes under COVID-19 and environmental, societal and economic risk drivers and issues. In this time of great turmoil we seek the ancestral wisdom of the elders (how to deal with alienation, intense stress, death, deep societal change, nature regeneration and emotional healing) and practical guidance from eco-psychology/the Work that Reconnects (specially Active Hope practices) and adapt this knowledge from the perspective of young Latin American environmentalists and indigenous leaders.

We aimed to generate a dialogue between young environmental change makers and indigenous leaders in the Latin American region through eco-psychology exercises and sharing of experiences online. In this dialogue the voice of indigenous people was not interpreted but recognized as bearers of valuable knowledge. Also, we wanted to present to indigenous people what young Latin American leaders were feeling, doing and thinking. It was a manner to generate common points and to create a space to be heard and understood.

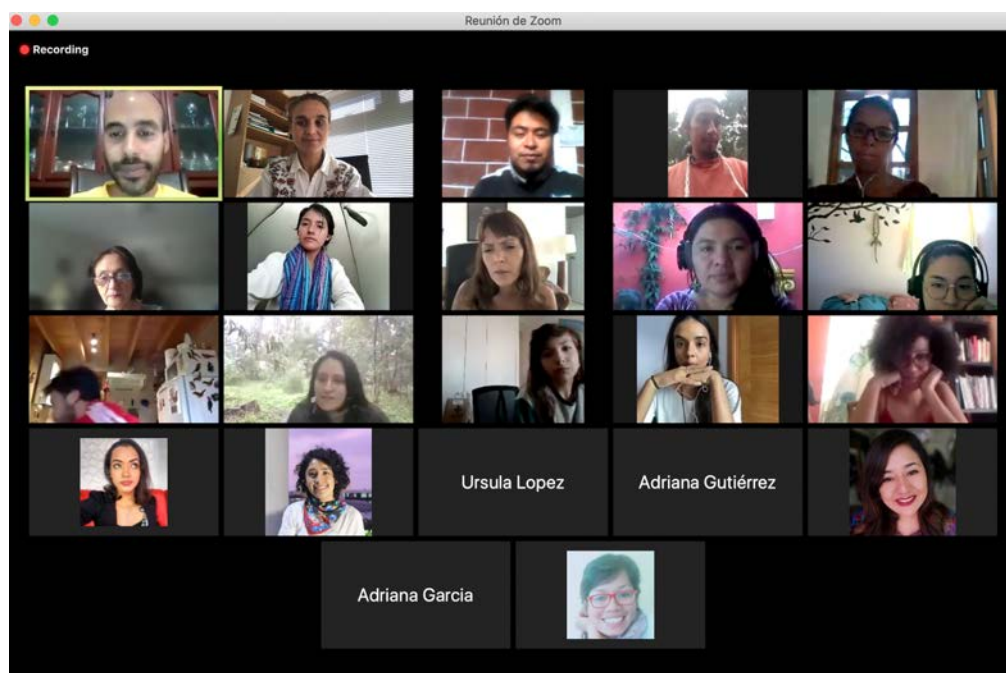
How did we do it? We used the conceptual frameworks of ecopsychology where we strive to understand and harmonize people's relationship with the Earth. In a nutshell, eco-based psychology integrates psychological insights with the grassroots environmental movement (Roszak 1992). We also used Work that Reconnects (WTR) practices, referring to the [suggestions and guidelines for facilitating the WTR online](#).

The virtual sessions, via Zoom on Saturdays, **March 13th and 27th**, and **April 10th**, 2021, were held under the auspices of the [Global Environments Network](#) (GEN), a transformative action network created in 2011 to connect and support emerging environmental change makers and leaders.

Objectives and themes

The main objective was to empower 25-30 young environmental leaders (including indigenous representatives) from Latin America. We expect that this process fosters new partnerships and joint efforts of the participants, by linking ancestral wisdom with the young ecological perspectives of Latin America. We also expected to treat the pandemic crisis in a more humane and sensitive way. We intended participants to be able to replicate these practices or learning in their contexts, thus reaching a wider audience (at least 1000 additional beneficiaries).

Participants, Resource People and Organizers



There were 28 participants from several Latin American countries: Peru, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay. The majority were women.

Dirección de correo electrónico	Nombre y Apellido
aleguz09@gmail.com	Adriana Alejandra Gutiérrez
adriana.garcia.saldivar@gmail.com	Adriana Garcia Saldivar
pascuala.vasquez@pucp.pe	Adriana Pascuala Vásquez Quirita
amapolanunezm@gmail.com	Amapola Núñez
anaccgn@gmail.com	Ana Christina Chaclán García
angelazet04@gmail.com	Angela Zet
arleth.huilcamasco@unmsm.edu.pe	Arleth Fernanda Huilcamasco Romero
babiescarabajo@gmail.com	Barbara Lizardo
emachacan@uni.pe	Eder Alfredo Machaca Neira
eliana93af@gmail.com	Eliana Matilde Antezana Febres
emely.rodriguez.g.01@gmail.com	Emely Rodriguez
20140381@lamolina.edu.pe	Emily Andrea Quispe Ponce de León
erickapaulamaritzar@gmail.com	Ericka Ramirez
puc@hotmail.es	Gloria Beatriz Puc Chiquitó
jiovita26@gmail.com	Jiovanna Mamani Huamachi
licdsjose@hotmail.com	José Ignacio Sántiz García
kemberleyhoyle@gmail.com	Kemberley Hoyle Vega
quisqueyapermacultura@gmail.com	Orquidea Susana
psosamodon@gmail.com	Paula Añil Modón
saqui.atitlan@gmail.com	Rosario Saquí Reanda
nijas.bio@gmail.com	Roxana Borda Mamani
rocal.peru@gmail.com	Roxana Marisol Carpio Almonte
samanta.calle@gmail.com	Samanta Hilda Calle Ruiz
yosandi49@gmail.com	Sandi Joselin Choqueibarra Lopez
sara_sol86@yahoo.com.mx	Sara Oliveros López
ursulopez07@gmail.com	Ursula Lopez Aguilar
yesiquispe@gmail.com	YÉSICA QUISPE CONDE
yiracastillo@gmail.com	Yira Castillo Villalona

List of EIWS participants

The online sessions were facilitated by Manuela Fernandez, Abigail Quic and Daniel Abreu.

Environmental inspiring leaders were invited. Egleé Zent (from Venezuela), Mokchewan Guaján (from the Maya Katchikel people of Guatemala) and Cristobal Punolef (from the Mapuche people of Chile) participated and presented their indigenous vision and experiences.

Sessions and discussions

The project was implemented through 3 live virtual presentations, discussions, guided exercises about practical ecopsychology and indigenous wisdom in times of pandemic, and a virtual platform for group support, nurturing and follow up. Additionally we worked **with 3 filming and editing crews in Peru, Chile and Guatemala to create 3 high quality videos** featuring elders/wisdom bearers from indigenous people from Latin America who were willing to share practical wisdom, rituals and practices for reconnecting with humanity and Mother Earth.

These videos were integrated in the virtual sessions and were used as standalone material for a wider audience. Versions with English subtitles of these videos were coordinated with the support of Marina Aman Sham.

These are the final versions of the created videos:

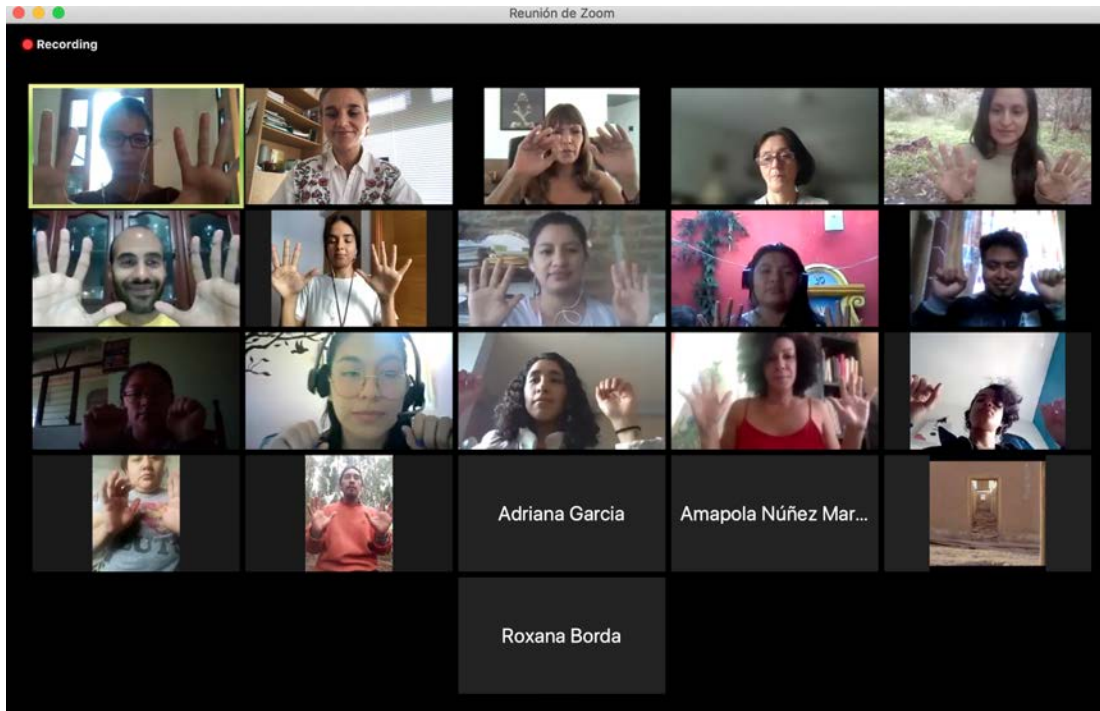
1. [Indigenous Wisdom from the Mayans of Guatemala](#)
2. [Indigenous Wisdom of the Quechuas of Peru](#)
3. [Indigenous Wisdom of the Mapuches of Chile](#)

<i>Ecopsychology and Indigenous Wisdom Sessions (EIWS)</i>
EIWS initial activities
EIWS and GEN introduction/presentation
Ecopsychology activities (Work that Reconnects exercises, Spiral WTR explanation, meditation, peer-to-peer exchanges, open sentences)
Video screening
Open dialogue with environmental leaders
Action plan
Closing activity

Introductions and agreements of virtual sessions

We began the first day with an introduction of GEN and EIWS purposes. We co-established several agreements in order to create a safe and respected space.

The structure of all sessions began with words of welcome and enunciation of our emotions. Then, ecopsychology activities were facilitated. Through Joanna Macy's Work that Reconnects, participants were able to explore the psychological, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their priorities and concerns, as well as the personal tools that they can put at the service of the work they do. The online sessions included different activities, interactions and discussions with environmental leaders.



Ice breaking activity

Video sessions & inspiring wisdom holders invited

1. [Full recording of Session 1](#) (March 13, 2021)

Keynote participation: the elder Mokchewan Guaján from the Maya Katchikel people of Guatemala from 1:23:22 to 1:55

2. [Full recording of Session 2](#) (March 27, 2021)

Keynote participation: from min 1:04:30 to 1:34 is the beautiful presentation of Egleé Zent as an expert of the wisdom of the Joti people of the Venezuelan Amazon.

3. [Full recording of Session 3](#) (April 10, 2021)

Keynote participation: the last 10 mins are very special, the main guest, the Mapuche representative Cristobal Punolef, shares a blessing song and prayers.

Seed funds and selected projects

With the money collected from registered participants (USD 125) and some additional funding given by ITRI to Daniel Abreu, we channelled around **USD 555** to grant some seed funds for some participants to generate their own projects in their respective countries. **The idea of seed projects funding was not contemplated originally and is a positive non-expected outcome of this process.**

3 projects were selected:

“Somos Naturaleza” (We are Nature) from Peru and Dominican Republic aims to create experiences that reconnect children and adolescents (8-18 years olds) with the natural environment through urban gardens. Connection activities will be carried out for understanding

nature, through dynamic games, experiments, planting and care of plants/animals in line with the agroecology perspective.

"Polinizadores ambientales" (Environment Pollinizers) from Guatemala and Mexico aims to raise awareness among youth people (18-30 years olds) about the importance of caring for the environment. Through online sessions and face-to-face follow up, agroecology will be presented as a tool to contribute to the improvement of human and environmental health.

"Water Songs and Encounters that Reconnect" from Uruguay and a Maya community of Guatemala aims to organize a ceremony during Pachamama Day in both places and record water and sacred songs from the communities.

Additionally, one of the participants in the Dominican Republic developed a local project to create a program to sensitize youth about indigenous wisdom and organize visits to indigenous sacred sites, especially relevant in a context where the indigenous population has become formally extinct.

Participants that completed the sessions

21 out of 28 participants completed all three sessions and received completion certificates designed by the SERES team.



Otorga el presente diploma de reconocimiento a

Adriana Alejandra Gutiérrez

Por participar en el taller en formato virtual de **"Eco-activismo, Basado en Sabiduría Indígena y Trabajo que Reconecta"** con una duración de 8 horas.

Abril 2021

Nessie Reid
Directora
GEN

Daniel Abrew
Facilitador

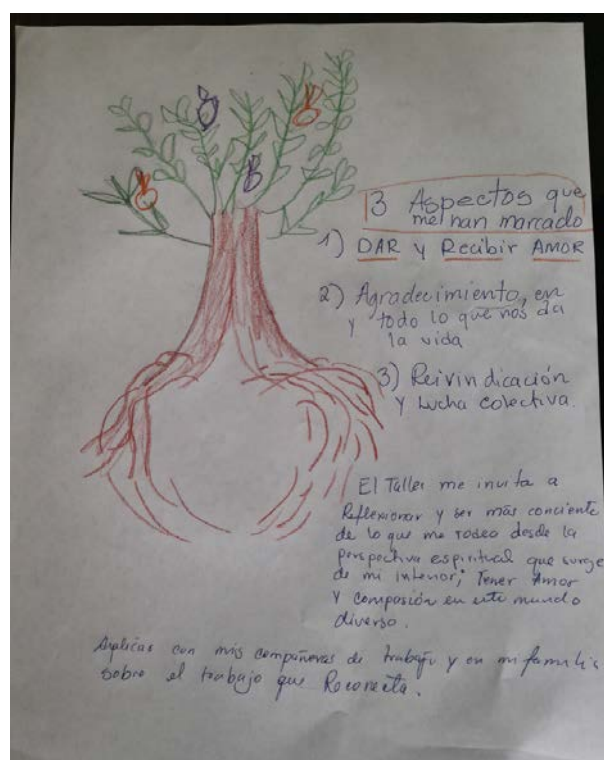


Participant evaluations and lessons learned

Participants responded in different ways (video, writing, draft, etc.) to the following questions/statements:

- Three ways in which the sessions have affected you
- What would you like to transform in your life?
- Action/steps forward that you plan to take

Of the 21 participants that completed the whole program, 11 submitted their responses. All expressed that the sessions had a great impact on them, and that they could identify new ways of thinking, feeling and being with renewed commitment to become more effective activists.



Adriana Alejandra from Mexico expressed in drawing: *"the workshop invited me to reflect and be more conscious of all that surrounds me from a spiritual perspective that comes from within. To have more love and compassion to this diverse world"*.

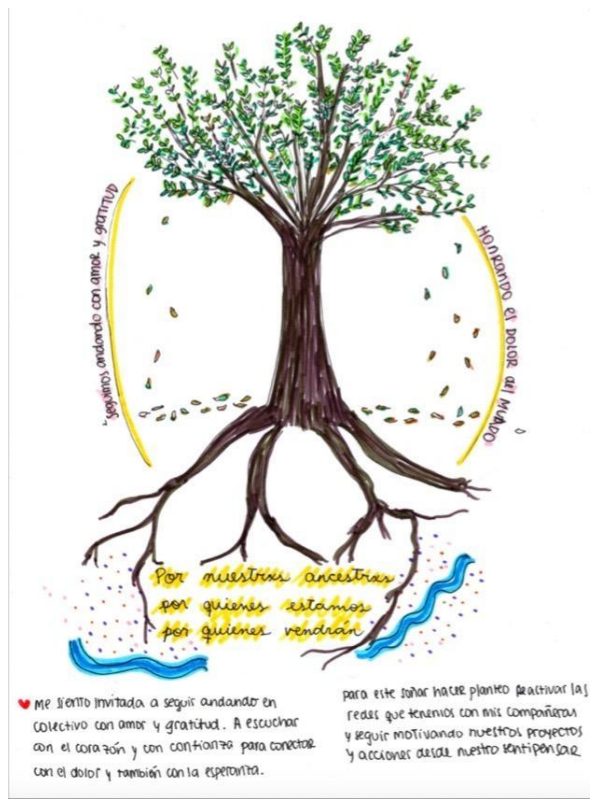
Arleth Huklcamasco from Perú shares:

"This has motivated me to continue doing grassroots work in my locality, to keep thinking about the connections between nature and people in working on issues of human settlement. I commit to continue supporting this work for the collective benefit".

Rosario Saqui from Guatemala says:

"It calls my attention to continue raising awareness about Environmental Education in childhood and youth, and in adults; to make myself available to volunteer in environmental issues in my region and with my community and in the community library program that I am leading. I will take the tips from this workshop to revive the consciousness of recognizing ourselves as humans who come to serve on

this planet that we are passing through, and emphasize our ancestral values and wisdom so as not to forget where we come from."



Eliana Antezana from Perú created a significant drawing of a tree to express her learnings and commitment.

Paula Sosa from Uruguay commits herself in this way:

"I will generate instances of ecosystem recognition, the beauty and power that surrounds us in Punta Negra, one in the native forest, one on the coast of the sea and one in a public place to honor the fire that always finds us as a community."

José Santiz from Mexico shares:

"I feel invited to transform my relationship with others and with nature; change my way of seeing and living life; improve my actions without harming mother earth. After these sessions, I feel more strengthened and convinced that the heritage of our ancestors must remain and spread. We are facing a human crisis of principles and values, which increasingly provokes individualism, competition and extractivism, superimposing the city and the importance of natural assets. Given the above, I am determined to transform my ideas and motivations into actions that favor the reconnection of humanity with nature, starting from the conception of life as a gift from our ancestors, who know and define that the future is not ahead, but from behind, and that the past is what we have in front of us."

Orquidea Susana from Dominican Republic commits to:

"Incorporate the concepts of decolonization into permaculture and the workshops I teach - enriching the content (sense of collective responsibility, changing language, doing emotional work, revaluing our masculine / feminine energies, revaluing being / identity / culture) and innovating Quisqueya Permaculture teaching material. Also to create strategic alliances with GEN facilitators and course participants. With this part I feel that I need help, since I have never formulated projects. More than ever willing to learn."

Taller Ecoactivismo y Sabiduría Indígena 01 2021

Mi nombre es Emely Rodríguez y soy ese agente de cambio que está super agradecido con todos los que hicieron posible el **taller Ecoactivismo y Sabiduría Indígena**, puesto que de formas tan inesperadas ha traído a mí conocimientos, conceptos y experiencias de vida que me afectaron positivamente y repercutirán en mí; de los más importantes mencionaré tres aspectos:



El primero es el concepto de "dividuo" que viene como agua fresca y se conjuga con mi visión de que todo lo vivo conjuga una comunidad que crece junta y unida, y se deshace si cortan sus lazos. Esta visión la tenía como una idea pero cuando se conoce que muchas poblaciones indígenas reconocen, desde toda su experiencia de generaciones, que más que "individuos" somos "dividuos", esto es lo que necesitaba para empalmar mi teoría con su práctica.

De la mano con lo anterior, el segundo es algo que me impacta como la pequeña comunidad de los Jodi tenga una cultura tan nutrida e involucrada con todos los demás procesos de la naturaleza, que como tal, ellos no tienen una distinción en su lenguaje de lo que son ellos y lo demás de la naturaleza, como lo hace la sociedad con naciones; en este caso me impacta pues me dio cuenta que la sociedad en la que estoy ha cometido tantos errores y cometerá muchos más por el hecho de que en su cultura se hace la diferenciación entre naturaleza y humano. Saco la conclusión que esto repercute en que sus decisiones y acciones tanto como para hacer daño al resto sin percatarse que a la larga se hace daño a sí mismo.

Un tercer aspecto está en el hecho de que por la mezcla de culturas que tuvimos y la oportunidad de compartir con ellas, me da la convicción que la lucha para la transformación del mundo a uno más espiritual y sostenible, esa lucha está pasando en todos los lugares del mundo y por tanto es un movimiento colectivo, que estamos acompañados y que podemos unirnos para lograr mejores resultados de lo que estamos soñando.

Me siento invitada a transformar mi vida a través del aprendizaje profundo sobre estas comunidades indígenas, porque siento que ellas tienen mucho que decirme donde pueda utilizarlo para crecimiento y conocimiento, y a continuación de eso también para todo aquello que me rodee ya que confirmo soy una agente de cambio.

Sobre la Acción o paso a llevar a delante: desde los grupos temáticos me di cuenta de que, con lo que se y con las personas que conozco, puedo crear canales y/o contribuir con la educación ambiental para niños y jóvenes con actividades diferentes, llamativas y divertidas que permitan dejar la huella justa a ese ser para inducirlo a ser una semilla de agente de cambio.

¡Námaste!

Emily Rodríguez from the Dominican Republic shared a very deep and detailed reflection. Here is a snap of it: *"I feel invited to transform my life through deep learning about these indigenous*

communities, because I feel that they have a lot to tell me where to use it for growth and knowledge, and after that too for everything that surrounds me since I confirm I am an agent of change."

Entender que no se trata de un trabajo individual, sino de un trabajo
Colectivo.
Orientando nuestras diferencias culturales a
Acciones y aptitudes de respeto hacia el
Conocimiento de nuestros antepasados.
Tratándonos como hermanos , reconociéndonos como
Individuos capaces de realizar impactos positivos en las
Vidas de nuestros semejantes, reflexionando sobre nuestros
Incios y sobre el tiempo actual en dónde la salud mental y
Salud física nos pone nuevos retos.
Mirando el presente como una oportunidad de desarrollar
Objtivos conjuntos.

Ursula Lopez from Perú created this beautiful acrostic reflection, from the word ECOACTIVISMO.

Multimedia links

[GEN Call for Applications](#)

[Project Launch video](#)

Indigenous wisdom video interviews links:



- [Mapuche video](#)
- [Quechuas video](#)
- [Maya video](#)

[Recorded sessions](#)

[Participants lessons learnt](#)

Annex

Resource People

 A portrait of Daniel Abreu, a man with short dark hair, wearing a green t-shirt and a dark green jacket. He is looking slightly to the right and has his hands raised in a gesturing motion.	<p>Daniel Abreu, Dominican Republic has an expertise in Development Studies and Climate Change by the Institute of Social Studies of the University of Rotterdam and Public Policy from the University of Barcelona. He has worked as a researcher for the UNDP Human Development Office and Coordinator of Participation of Adolescents and Youth for UNICEF. He currently serves as a consultant on initiatives related to risk management, climate change adaptation to various UN and multilateral cooperation agencies, and as Regional Focal Point of a climate change learning project with UNITAR and UNESCO. Daniel has completed research on issues related to climate change, democratic participation and risk management for GIZ, Greenpeace International and Transparency International.</p>
 A portrait of Abigail Quic, a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue patterned top and a colorful skirt. She is smiling and holding a white paper, with her right hand raised in a gesture. The background shows an outdoor setting with other people.	<p>Abigail Quic, Guatemala</p> <p>I'm a Maya Tz'utujil woman. I recognize the power I have as an indigenous woman in my different roles: as the last daughter of six siblings, I was able to break the cycle of little participation and an unsustainable lifestyle. I built a sustainable house and now I make decisions at the table with my family. As a citizen, for 10 years I led cleaning, reforestation and environmental education campaigns with more than 1,000 children annually in my town. As an agent of change and leader, I founded Casa Maya in 2017. Here I share local wisdom from the hearts of indigenous families, where the work as a housewife is relevant and paid. The world came to my table and others to expand our learning zones and provide access to an economic fund to equip local houses with green technology. In 2019, I stepped up to become co-executive director at SERES, a nonprofit organization that has spent over a decade working in youth development with indigenous rural communities in Guatemala and El Salvador. At the same time, Casa Maya was also named winner of IMPULSA, a nation-wide competition run by the Guatemalan National Institute of Tourism (INGUAT) and Alterna. As an educator of sustainability over the past decade, I have facilitated more than 60 programs reaching 1,276 young people across Guatemala and El Salvador. These programs are designed to inspire a new generation of young leaders and changemakers to co-create creative change at a community level, with SERES.</p>



Manuela Fernandez, Argentina has an academic and professional background that focuses on sustainable development, ecosystem management and disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies. She holds a PhD in Environmental Science, and her work is based on interdisciplinarity and knowledge dialogues. Manuela promotes a sensorial approach to reconnect people to nature and move towards a carbon-sober society by facilitating Carbon Conversations and Ecopsychology workshops. Through her experience with the IUCN Global Forest and Climate Change Programme, she became fully qualified in evaluating program results, creating and evaluating impact and outcome indicators, and constructing and preparing learning workshops using lessons learned as a learning strategy. She worked for the Crisis Management Branch at UN Environment as Eco-DRR Education and Training Specialist and in early 2020, joined the INTA Agricultural Experimental Station in Bariloche, Argentina to conduct research on resilience and disaster risk reduction in the face of new climatic scenarios in the agricultural-livestock and forestry sectors of northern Patagonia.

Organized by:



**Global
Diversity
Foundation**
A world of difference

Global  **Environments**
NETWORK
Connecting for change

With the collaboration of:



seres