

Media Development

2/2020

WACC



Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change: Bridging the Gap

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- 4 Editorial
- 6 Tending the garden
Lila Pine
- 10 Why traditional knowledge holds the key to climate change
Gleb Raygorodetsky
- 13 Indigenous Peoples' efforts to impact global climate agreements
Linda Etchart
- 15 Environmental practices of South Africa's Indigenous #Xhomi Bushmen
Julie Grant
- 20 Comunicación para una vida alegre, sencilla y sostenible
Oswaldo Martínez Flores.
- 23 The heartbeat of Southern African Indigenous peoples
Shaldon Ferris
- 26 For water justice, Churches ought to become "blue communities"!
Dinesh Suna
- 29 Fatal fault line in Catholic Church governance
Robert Carey

33 On the screen

Media Development is an international quarterly journal dedicated to the theory and practice of communication around the world. Many contributors write from the perspective of the South, highlighting social, cultural, and spiritual values.

In the Next Issue

The 3/2020 issue of *Media Development* will explore the theme of language rights, especially in the context of indigenous communities, humanitarian aid efforts, and digital access.



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Many believe that an essential element of ways of responding to the current climate crisis lies in the traditional knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples. The way they think about life and death, natural resources, and the intimate and intricate relationship they have with land, ought to offer pertinent answers to pressing questions of mitigation, adaptation, and survival.

According to the NGO [Cultural Survival](#), “The most significant victory for Indigenous Peoples at COP 24 was the formal establishment of the Facilitative Working Group to develop a work plan for the ‘Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform’. The Platform is intended to strengthen and exchange traditional knowledge for mitigating and adapting to Climate Change, based on paragraph 135 of the Paris Agreement.”¹

Paragraph 135 “Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.”

Indigenous peoples comprise only 5% of the world’s population, yet their lands cover 22% of its surface and include 80% of the planet’s biodiversity. A vital part of indigenous identity is linked to the natural world. Yet, as the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) Climate Change Synthesis Report 2014](#) underlined (p. 19):

“Indigenous, local and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous peoples’ holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change, but these have not been used consistently in existing adaptation efforts. Integrating such forms of knowledge with existing practices increases the effectiveness of adaptation.”

Ironically, as noted by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an activist/scholar from the Nishnaabeg nation and author of the book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2017):

“Indigenous peoples have witnessed continual ecosystem and species collapse since the early days of colonial occupation... We should be thinking of climate change as part of a much longer series of ecological catastrophes caused by colonialism and accumulation-based society.”

Such experiences mean that the practice of traditional knowledge in the everyday lives of indigenous women and men has yet to be adequately understood, with many research gaps confronting policy-makers. One, identified by Julie Grant in her article on the Khomani Bushmen of South Africa in this issue of *Media Development*, relates to what might be described as the forced adaptation of Indigenous Peoples to ways of living that are alien to their history and culture in place of so-called civilization adapting its ways and views to the lifestyle of more environmentally conscious peoples.

One might cite the Karuk Tribe of Northern California, which in 2019 drew up its own plans to tackle environmental management on traditional lands. The Karuk Climate Adaptation Plan points out:

“Ultimately, climate change is the product of unsustainable Western land management practices and the rise of political and economic systems for which indigenous people hold little to no responsibility. In this context, the crisis posed by climate change is also a strategic opportunity not only for tribes to retain cultural practices and return traditional management practices to the landscape, but for all land managers to remedy inappropriate ecological actions, and for enhanced and successful collaboration in the face of collective survival.”

Around the world, an immense amount of positive and empathetic initiatives are being undertaken to work together with Indigenous Peoples in ways that benefit everyone but without riding rough-shod over traditional ways and beliefs. In addition, the science of climate change is itself being adapted in the light of traditional knowledge.

In one WACC-supported project developed by the Folk Research Centre (FRC) of Saint Lucia, some 75 women and men from grassroots Kwéyòl-speaking communities increased their knowledge of the language of climate change particularly in relation to environmental issues. They also shared knowledge and insights handed down over generations.

During a 10-week course, leaders from the communities of Monchy, Babonneau, and Mon Repos were trained on how to produce media content in the Kwéyòl language, with a particular focus on sustainable development and survival.

In Colombia, one of 20 countries most at risk from suffering the disastrous effects of climate change, of particular importance is the protection of moorland ecosystems (known as páramos) in the high Andes (3,100 meters above sea level), which provide approximately 70% of drinkable water and are under serious threat from climate change.

Here, WACC launched a three-year initiative entitled “Voices of the Andean Moorlands: Network of Environmental Citizen Reporters in Colombia” to promote a culture of people-led environmental protection among Indigenous, peasant, and Afro-descendant communities in regions that are home to moorland-related ecosystems.

Drawing on the concept of *sumak kawsay*, an ancient Quechua word meaning “good living” and promoting community-centred, ecologically-balanced and culturally-sensitive development, the project will establish a network of environmental journalists linked to community radio stations.

Such projects are not about plundering



Sumak kawsay or “good living”. Image courtesy of *Otras Voces en Educación*.

or borrowing the non-tangible heritage of Indigenous Peoples, but about working alongside vulnerable and often marginalized communities to assure their future safety and survival. In the process, Indigenous Peoples communicate knowledge that will help the world and its people collectively to turn around the juggernaut of climate change and to repair the only sanctuary we have. ■

Note

1. The United Nations Climate Change Conferences are annual events held in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They serve as the formal meeting of the UNFCCC Parties (Conference of the Parties, COP) to assess progress in dealing with climate change.

Tending the garden

Lila Pine

All my relations. The land. The songs. The language. The stories. The people. The dances.

The plants and the animals. The sun and the moon. The water. The earth.

The climate changing.

To understand these things from Indigenous perspectives it is necessary to begin at the beginning.

The Creation Stories.

I was born into the Mi'gmaq Creation Story which teaches us everything we need to know to live in a good way. Told properly in ceremony and in keeping with oral tradition, the story takes seven days to tell. The number seven is sacred to my people. There are seven directions and seven levels of creation. The seven grandfathers teach us respect, honesty, truth, humility, courage wisdom and love. For every action we take in the present we are taught to consider how it will impact our descendants seven generations into the future.

Our Creation Story teaches us to live in harmony with the land and with all of creation. It teaches us about the interconnectedness of things. It teaches us reciprocity.

Our worldview, informed by our Creation Story and embedded in our language, stands in stark contrast to the Western worldview, the one whose Creation Stories teach domination over nature. To the Western mind, nothing is sacred. Not the plants, not the animals, not even the water.

Not even our Mother Earth.

I was recently told by a Settler Canadian

that the land's agricultural and mineral resources were in no manner exploited by Indigenous culture and technology, as if this were a bad thing. "As such," he said, "the land was worthless until the Settlers arrived and developed the continent." And there we have it. The clash in worldviews so plainly put. To say the land is worthless, is to say our mother is worthless. Mother Earth, so bountiful and generous, gives us all we need to survive. We exploit her at our own peril.

Disparate worldviews

To illustrate the divide between Mi'gmaq and Western worldviews, let's take hunting as an example. To the Western mind, the hunt is a chase, the hunter in competition with the hunted. The animal runs. A life is taken. To the Mi'gmaq mind, the hunt is an exercise in patience. The hunter waits. The animal comes. Tobacco is offered. A life is given. You might say the result is the same. The animal is still dead. But, wait. The story is not over.

The meat from the animal that ran away in fear and killed in flight is tough and hard to chew. No matter, it wasn't about the meat anyway. The animal's head becomes a trophy, its hide and entrails discarded. The animal that gave its life in stillness offers tender meat. Every part is used for food, clothing and tools, except the entrails which are left in the place where it died to honour its spirit and to feed other animals in the forest. One hunter hunts for sport, the other for community.

In Canada, at the time of this writing, these two disparate worldviews are on full display in a standoff, clashing over climate change, pipelines and sovereignty.

Indigenous Peoples across Nations are unsettling the settler economy across the Nation by blocking railways in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs who have taken a leadership role in protecting the integrity of the lands from the extractive industries. Their territory covers around 22,000 square kilometers of sovereign, never surrendered, traditional territory in British Columbia, upon which the Canadian



Once banned by Canadian law under the Indian Act, a Powwow is an inter-tribal gathering of First Nations across Turtle Island where elders, children, women, men and two-spirit people, in full regalia, come together in friendship to share dances, drumming, crafts, stories and food and to celebrate the end of winter. This digital “painting” created in Photoshop by the author captures the colourful regalia and movement of the dances.

government, according to its own laws, has no jurisdiction.

In 1984, the Gitksan (a neighbouring nation) and Wet’suwet’en leaders took the provincial government to court to put an end to extensive logging on their traditional territories. The case ended on December 11, 1997 in the Supreme Court of Canada with the *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* decision that found the province had no authority to extinguish Indigenous rights over the land, including resources from the land. Furthermore, under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the British Columbia provincial government adopted into law in 2019, the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples must be obtained before government and industry can proceed with any project.

Wet’suwet’en, Canadian, and International laws recognize Hereditary Chiefs as the right-

ful decision-makers on their respective territories. These rights and titles have never been extinguished, nor surrendered. The Wet’suwet’en are a sovereign people. The Hereditary Chiefs of all five Wet’suwet’en clans unanimously opposed the Coastal Gas Link/Trans Canada pipeline, as proposed. Instead, they offered an alternate route that would not go through sensitive cultural and ecological areas.

But, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that the permits of Coastal Gas Link (CGL) trumped Wet’suwet’en law, pitting the Western notion of industry first squarely against the Indigenous principle of environment first. In response, the Wet’suwet’en evicted CGL from their territories and blocked their re-entry. The BC government, then enlisted the RCMP as hired guns to uphold the court ruling for an industry injunction.

The land protectors were arrested on their

own territory.

In an unprecedented show of solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Chiefs, Indigenous People and non-Indigenous People alike took to the streets. Peaceful rallies, die-ins, marches and round dances took place daily in towns and cities from coast to coast to coast. Young Braves, demanding the RCMP leave Wet'suwet'en territory, erected rail blockades along key transportation routes across Canada.

These unarmed and peaceful Braves are a beacon of hope for a sustainable future. They are taking a stand to defend their inherent rights to sovereignty and the planet's inherent right to survive unharmed. Our Creation Story teaches us to walk upon the earth without leaving a footprint. And that includes a carbon footprint. Climate change teaches us that if we want to live in harmony with Mother Earth the time to act is now.

Destroying the magic of the land

Before colonization, the Americas were rich in every kind of diversity imaginable – languages, cultures, spiritualities, genders, economic systems, philosophies, sciences, ways of knowing, and nations. Bio diversity ensured the earth was never depleted. Respect for Mother Earth ensured she was never violated.

When Europeans first arrived in the Americas they must have felt the magic of the land. Coming from congested communities, they must have been struck by its powerful expanse. They must have noticed how perfectly the people fit the place. They must have been in awe of it all.

And frightened too.

In their attempts to quell their fear and harness these lands and its Peoples to their colonialist project, European Settlers began to destroy everything Indigenous – languages, spirituality, dances, gift-giving, ceremonies, sexuality and gender fluidity. They used the educational system and Christian churches to “civilize” Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous children all across the newly established country called Canada were kidnapped and forced into residential schools



Sweet grass hanging out to dry in Gesgapegiag First Nation, one of two First Nations reserves on the south shore of the Gaspésie, Canada, most of whose people are of Mi'kmaq ancestry. Photo: Author.

where they were forbidden from speaking their own languages.

A paternalistic fantasy of superiority imagined schools lacking in respect and human decency by any measure. Unrelenting assaults on children who already knew more about living with the land than their teachers ever could must have been fueled by a deep sense of inferiority manifesting as superiority, coupled with the need to wield power over others.

These were not the good intentions of innocent people. They knew what they were doing. They understood that in order to control our thoughts and dreams they had to control our tongues. The cruelty of taking the spoken word away from the speaker is itself unspeakable. To this day, in the Americas, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, literacy systematically separates us from our languages, leaving the

physical tongue in place to choke on the language of those who cut the symbolic one off from its mother.

Underneath this inferiority (disguised as superiority) complex, made palatable through cognitive dissonance, is the issue of land. It has always been about the land. Canada is a nation built on racism, manifested most clearly by the so called “Indian Act” which is, at its core, a land grab. Its goal is the dispossession of Indigenous lands, by any means necessary, including the elimination and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples, in the interest of private property and resource extraction.

On December 15, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its multi-volume, 4000-page final report detailing the physical, psychological and sexual abuse of Indigenous children held captive in Canada’s residential schools. A summary report, released earlier in the year outlines 94 calls to action that would begin the process of “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.” The idea of reconciliation captured the imagination of non-Indigenous people across the nation. Indigenous people were more circumspect.

Reconciliation assumes a priori relationships of reciprocity where all sides take responsibility for their part in the conflict or the breakdown in relations that led up to the need for reconciliation in the first place. If something was taken or stolen it must be returned. If damage was done it must be repaired. Apologizing for stealing land, for example, is not enough. You have to give the land back.

Canada is not even close to taking the first step towards reconciliation. Children are still being taken away from their families and communities, stolen land has not been returned, Indigenous languages are still not spoken in their places of origin. The Canadian government is still in the business of defining who is and who isn’t Indigenous under the aforementioned Indian Act. Treaties are not upheld. Nation to nation

relations are nowhere in sight. Reconciliation is beginning to sound a lot like assimilation.

A relationship of unforgiveable forgiveness

Let’s imagine, for a moment, that meaningful reconciliation is possible. What would it look like? Before reconciling with each other, each group must first reconcile with themselves. Both groups need to find a way to enter into a relationship of unforgiveable forgiveness.

How do you ask for and how do you offer forgiveness for the unforgiveable?

Non-Indigenous peoples living on Indigenous lands, otherwise known as Settlers, must reconcile aspirations of reconciliation with what they are still doing and what their ancestors have done. They have to figure out how to reconcile the part they played and continue to play in what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report refers to as cultural genocide. Reconciliation means, in part, to fix the Settlers – white people are victims too – for seven generations white kids have been taught that they are superior. What happens to them when they realize that they are not? Settlers believe capitalism is good. What happens to them when they realize they have to figure out how to walk in balance on this earth?

For our part, Indigenous Peoples must reconcile with ourselves. We need to heal from the trauma of residential schools, including intergenerational trauma. We need to revitalize our languages, revive our ceremonies and reeducate ourselves and our youth. And we need to take back what is ours. Before entering into a relationship of reconciliation with non-Indigenous peoples we need to strengthen our intergenerational, intergender and intertribal relations.

And, we need to reaffirm our relationship with the land.

Land is everything. It contains languages, stories, histories. It provides water, air, shelter and food.

Land is home.

And herein lies the deepest rift between

the worldviews. The Western mind would have us believe that people own the land, to do with as they will. Indigenous Peoples know that it is the other way around. The land owns us. It is our inherent responsibility to care for her. That means building sustainable gift economies based on biodiversity and local gardens.

We are at a pivotal moment, not only in Canada, but in the world. It is time for everyone to choose which side of the ideological divide they are on, the one that prioritizes the sanctity of Mother Earth, or the one that would dominate her. ■

Dr. Lila Pine, of Mi'gmaq descent, is a New Media artist and Indigenous thinker. She teaches Indigenous Media and New Media courses at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. She received her MFA from York University in Toronto and PhD from the European Graduate School in Switzerland. In 2011, she defended her dissertation, entitled "Memory Matters: Touching the Untouchable", which theorizes oral, literate and "electrate" cultures, as well as the divergence and convergence of Indigenous and Eurocentric ways of knowing. Lila is the Director of Saagajiwe, Ryerson's Indigenous Communication and Design network, whose mission is to facilitate the creation and dissemination of Indigenous thought and ways of knowing and doing. The name Saagajiwe, given by an Elder in a sacred ceremony, is an Anishinaabemowin word which means something like the first ray of light. Not simply the first ray of light in the morning, but rather the first ray of light since the beginning of time. Lila's research seeks to develop a way of "seeing" sound in order to identify distinct qualities in the speaking of different languages. It employs digital art creation as a scholarly research tool and it engages Indigenous research methods to shift perceptions around the relationship of language to worldviews and ecological concerns. Lila is also collaborating with Buffy Sainte-Marie on a project called Creative Native: Youth Mentorship in the Arts Initiative, which brings touring multi-arts festivals to First Nations communities across Canada. The festival showcases local and professional Indigenous entertainers and artists of all kinds, while building a corps of local Indigenous youth who take leadership positions in doable jobs and then mentor their peers at subsequent community events.

Why traditional knowledge holds the key to climate change

Gleb Raygorodetsky

The very identity of indigenous peoples is inextricably linked with their lands, which are located predominantly at the social-ecological margins of human habitation – such as small islands, tropical forests, high-altitude zones, coasts, desert margins and the circumpolar Arctic. Here at these margins, the consequences of climate change include effects on agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, hunting and gathering and other subsistence activities, including access to water.

The rapid rise in the world's population and our ever-growing dependence on fossil fuel-based modes of production has played a considerable role in the growing concentration of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere. As a result, global temperatures are increasing, the sea level is rising and precipitation patterns are changing, while storm surges, floods, droughts and heat waves are becoming more frequent and severe. Subsequently, agricultural production is decreasing, freshwater is becoming more scarce, infectious diseases are on the rise, local livelihoods are being degraded and human well-being is diminishing.

Although indigenous peoples' "low-carbon" traditional ways of life have contributed little to climate change, indigenous peoples are the most adversely affected by it. This is largely a result of their historic dependence on local biological diversity, ecosystem services and cultural land-

scapes as a source of sustenance and well-being.

Indigenous peoples are not mere victims

Indigenous peoples, however, are not mere victims of climate change. Comprising only 4% of the world's population (between 250 to 300 million people), they utilize 22% of the world's land surface. In doing so, they maintain 80% of the planet's biodiversity in, or adjacent to, 85% of the world's protected areas. Indigenous lands also contain hundreds of gigatons of carbon – a recognition that is gradually dawning on industrialized countries that seek to secure significant carbon stocks in an effort to mitigate climate change.

With collective knowledge of the land, sky and sea, these peoples are excellent observers and interpreters of change in the environment. The ensuing community-based and collectively-held knowledge offers valuable insights, complementing scientific data with chronological and landscape-specific precision and detail that is critical for verifying climate models and evaluating climate change scenarios developed by scientists at much broader spatial and temporal scale. Moreover, indigenous knowledge provides a crucial foundation for community-based adaptation and mitigation actions that sustain resilience of social-ecological systems at the interconnected local, regional and global scales.

While unmitigated climate change poses a growing threat to the survival of indigenous peoples, more often than not they continue to be excluded from the global processes of decision and policymaking, such as official UN climate negotiations, that are defining their future.

The consequences of such marginalization are that many globally sanctioned programmes aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change – such as mega-dam projects constructed under the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) framework – further exacerbate the direct impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples, undermining their livelihoods even more.

In addition, poorly designed and implemented climate change adaptation programmes,

for example, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD/REDD+) initiatives, often weaken the customary rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and natural resources, impairing their resilience. Indigenous peoples are facing these escalating pressures at a time when their cultures and livelihoods are already exposed to the significant stress of accelerated natural resource development in their traditional territories, due to trade liberalization and globalization.

One significant manifestation of the marginalization of indigenous peoples from the climate change policy and decision-making is the paucity of references in the global climate change discourse to the existing traditional knowledge on climate change. Such international discourse has often failed to consider the valuable insights on direct and indirect impacts, as well as mitigation and adaptation approaches, held by indigenous peoples worldwide. This is particularly evident in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Reports released every few years.

The most authoritative and influential reference on climate change in the world, the IPCC Assessment Reports guide governments, policy- and decision-making communities, and non-governmental organizations in planning and implementing their actions. The IPCC Assessment (AR4, published in 2007) noted that indigenous knowledge is “an invaluable basis for developing adaptation and natural resource management strategies in response to environmental and other forms of change.”

This was reaffirmed at the 32nd Session of the IPCC in 2010: “indigenous or traditional knowledge may prove useful for understanding the potential of certain adaptation strategies that are cost-effective, participatory and sustainable.”

Previous IPCC Assessments, however, were unable to access this type of information because, for the most part, traditional knowledge either appears in grey literature outside of peer-reviewed academic forums, or remains in oral form, thereby falling outside the scope of

the IPCC process.

Bridging the gaps between traditional knowledge and climate science

To address gaps in available information on traditional knowledge (TK) and climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to promote respect for TK and the role of indigenous peoples in policy development, the United Nations University's Traditional Knowledge Initiative (UNU-TKI) and the IPCC have partnered. Building on UNU-TKI's previous work, such as the book *Advance Guard*, UNU-TKI and the IPCC have been working to organize a series of workshops to ensure that the experience of indigenous and traditional peoples of climate change impacts and their adaptation and mitigation strategies are fully integrated in the next IPCC Assessment Report (AR5) and are widely available to the global community.

The collaboration of IPCC with UNU-TKI is significant at many levels, including:

- * advancing understanding of climate change vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation related to indigenous peoples;
- * collating regional and local data relevant for understanding local-scale climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation involving local and indigenous knowledge holders, and making it available to the IPCC AR5;
- * engaging indigenous peoples in international climate dialogues and debates; and,
- * providing policymakers with relevant information on the vulnerabilities, knowledge and adaptive capacity of indigenous peoples.

An important goal of the collaborative workshops – which also include contributions of several other partners (UNDP, UNESCO, and CBD) – is to promote respect for the local and traditional knowledge at the national and local levels. The workshops aim to empower indigenous peoples to have a greater say in developing global, regional and local policies to address cli-

mate change that are supportive of their knowledge, culture and self-determined development.

For indigenous peoples, such workshops provide an opportunity not only to present their experiences and knowledge about climate change in their communities, but to gain valuable information on global climate processes that are affecting their communities. Moreover, indigenous peoples learn about other indigenous climate change-related experiences, while scientists gain opportunities to ground-truth (field check) climate models and scenarios.

Meaningful dialogue holds the key

Resilience in the face of change is embedded in indigenous knowledge and know-how, diversified resources and livelihoods, social institutions and networks, and cultural values and attitudes. Policy responses to climate change should therefore support and enhance indigenous resilience. It is unfortunate, however, that many government policies limit options and reduce choices, thereby constraining, restricting and undermining indigenous peoples' efforts to adapt. This is reflected in counterproductive policies, including those leading to increased sedentarization, restricted access to traditional territories, substitution of traditional livelihoods, impoverished crop or herd diversity, reduced harvesting opportunities, and erosion of the transmission of indigenous knowledge, values, attitudes and worldviews.

Climate scientists' contributions to the debate must be locally meaningful. They should advance understandings of specific phenomena that are of significance to indigenous knowledge holders. Meaningful dialogues with indigenous knowledge holders are key to the success of this endeavour.

As such cooperation demonstrates, indigenous knowledge holders and scientists are beginning to establish novel collaborative arrangements that are generating new knowledge that would not be created through the efforts of either group alone.

Through initiatives like the UNU-TKI and IPCC workshops, this co-produced knowledge

is opening new and important pathways for climate change adaptation and mitigation. ■

Source: <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-traditional-knowledge-holds-the-key-to-climate-change.html> Licensed by the United Nations University under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 IGO License.

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Indigenous Peoples' efforts to impact global climate agreements

Linda Etchart

Following the adoption in 1997 of the Kyoto Protocol to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, Indigenous Peoples' representatives began to push for engagement in climate change agreements, but they have continued to be side-lined. One of the sources of their frustration has been that the grounds for their involvement were that indigenous communities were affected by climate change, giving them the status of victims, rather than their being viewed as potential actors in the quest to combat climate change.

By 2004, their involvement was given support by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the international environmental treaty negotiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992 – which entered into force on 21 March 1994.

Indigenous peoples' efforts to protect themselves and the environment were slow to capture media attention in both North and South. In its December 2015 report, the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information (DOCIP) reiterated the link between climate change and the rights of indigenous peoples, stating that "Indigenous peoples have been making this link for several decades, taking centre stage in its promotion" (DOCIP, 2015: 3).

Since 2013, indigenous representatives have been meeting at international conferences and other fora that have enabled them to join forces in solidarity to call for their rights to be respected under national and international law on the grounds of both human rights and protection of the environment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been a consistent and vocal support of indigenous peoples, notably having secured in 1989 the “Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples” that entered into force on 5 September 1991 and which laid the basis for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) of 2007.

The Rio+20 Outcome Document of 2012 stressed the importance of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development and the importance of UNDRIP in the context of the implementation of sustainable development strategies. This followed the disappointment of indigenous peoples having been excluded from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000, which led to their insistence in being included in the drafting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015.

Indigenous groups were also frustrated at the way in which the 2007 UNDRIP was omitted from the texts of global climate change agreements, and in particular their exclusion from the main events of the COP21 Climate Summit in Paris in December 2015, at which representatives of indigenous communities staged their own side-events and established their own platform, the Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC).

At the Sixteenth Session of the UNPFII, 24 April to 5 May 2017 in New York, the ILO once again declared that indigenous peoples had a critical role at the forefront of climate action. The ILO’s 2016 Technical Note “Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: from Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work” identifies indigenous peoples as essential to the success of policies and measures directed towards mitigating, and adapting to, climate change (ILO, 2016).

At the UNPFII 2017 conference, indigenous peoples presented themselves as key players in the achievement of SDGs 13, 14 and 15, which include combating climate change, sustainably managing forests and halting biodiversity loss (UNPFII, 2017).

As can be seen from indigenous peoples’ own publications, they take their own involvement in combating climate change as vital to the task. Their interest in preventing the violation of their territorial rights by enterprises engaged in fossil fuel exploration and extraction which have in the past also contaminated their water sources and violated their human rights, coincides with the interest of environment groups and of some UN member state governments in their attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

It should be a win-win situation. Protecting indigenous peoples’ wellbeing, their culture and traditions, the forests and biodiversity by means of the prohibition of oil exploration and extraction on and from indigenous peoples’ territory contributes to the pressures to find alternative sources of energy. ■

Excerpted from Etchart, L. “The role of indigenous peoples in combating climate change.” Palgrave Commun 3, 17085 (2017). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. <https://rdcu.be/b2Mel>

Editor’s Note

At COP24 held in Katowice, Poland, in 2018, there was an agreement to launch the work of a facilitative working group that would scale up consideration of the experiences of local communities and Indigenous Peoples with climate change and efforts to respond to it. The Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform Facilitative Working Group consists of 14 members – half of whom will be indigenous peoples representatives. The aim of the platform is to preserve and strengthen Indigenous and local knowledge systems, enhance the engagement of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in

the UNFCCC process, and integrate their considerations into climate change policy and action.

COP25 held in Madrid, Spain, in 2019, was widely seen as having been derailed by big polluters and the countries most historically responsible for the climate crisis. Indigenous participants focused their efforts on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (2015) which determines how or whether countries can - or cannot - use international carbon markets to achieve their emission targets. Indigenous Peoples argued that the scheme lacks safeguards for their way of life and contravenes their human rights. ■

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- UNPFII Sixteenth Session 24 April to 5 May 2017 Indigenous Speakers in Permanent Forum Decry Governmental Abuse of Traditional Lands, Natural Resources, Urge Respect for Self-Governing Systems <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/hr5353.doc.htm>

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Environmental practices of South Africa's Indigenous #Xhomi Bushmen

Julie Grant

From Australian bushfires to the melting of polar icecaps – the climate emergency is on everyone's lips. Daily reports proliferate from media houses, through newspapers and websites, while civil society distributes its own nuanced interpretations. Whether there is in fact a climate emergency is also being debated as are the best ways to address the situation– including how to contain the sustained damage while minimising future damage.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are a foremost contributor to climate change with the burning of fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide being the main culprit (IPCC, 2007: 23-25). Deforestation contributes to the emergency as forests act as banks for carbon deposits (Survival International, 2007:2). When forests are destroyed this carbon is released into the atmosphere contributing to global warming. Although the global North is responsible for much of the GHG emissions, it is the global South that is most likely to incur the resulting extreme climatic events (Chanza and de Wit, 2016: 35). Indigenous Peoples (IPs) are most susceptible to climate change (Green and Raygorodetsky, 2010: 239).

IPs are affected directly and indirectly. For



Witdraai Farm, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Photo: Julie Grant.

example, directly: rising sea levels due to increased temperatures flood indigenous islanders living in the Pacific (UNPFII, 2008). Indirectly IPs are paradoxically threatened by the implementation of strategies aimed at abating the phenomenon. IPs in Kenya are being evicted in an effort to protect forests (Survival International, 2009: 7) while Brazil's IPs are losing land to bio-fuel production (Survival International, 2009: 5-6), the production of which aims to enable a move away from fossil fuels.

Climate activists are calling for the world's inhabitants to change their lifestyles. It is often suggested that people should learn from IPs who are perceived as living environmentally mindful lives, contributing little to climate change (Chanza and de Wit, 2016: 36).

The #Khomani Bushmen of South Africa

The #Khomani, the last remaining indigenous Bushmen¹ of South Africa, reside in the Northern Cape Province in the southern Kalahari Desert. South Africa's temperatures are rising at twice the global average (Heiberg, 2020) with 2019 producing record high temperatures (Gaworecki, 2020). 2015 was also the driest year on record in South Africa with water levels dwindling in particular areas. Specifically, the Northern Cape has been suffering from consecutive years of abnormally high temperatures and below average rainfall (Heiberg, 2020).

Historically, the #Khomani were hunter-gatherers living in the southern Kalahari in small family bands. They were nomads who relocated as resources became depleted. Resource

acquisition was limited by adverse weather, the presence of predators, and the existence of neighbouring clans – although informal benefit sharing agreements were usually entered into.

Today the #Khomani live on land returned to them through South Africa's land restitution process. Despite good intentions, when land is returned, recipients do not receive the land as it was prior to dispossession. Land changes over time, depending on how it is being used, as do the laws that regulate its use. Prior to the return of the #Khomani land, it was divided and fenced into farms and remains as such. One of the farms is managed as a private game ranch, Erin, while the others are inhabited by community members some of whom graze domestic livestock. Regulations mean that the #Khomani cannot hunt and gather at will.

There is little game on the #Khomani farms. If community members want to hunt on Erin or on the land that they own in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), where there is game, they have to gain the permission of local governing bodies and secure a permit. Human habitation and the grazing of domestic livestock have also limited the growth of veldkos² and medicinal plants on the farms. More are available in the KTP; however, gathering is controlled in the Park so community members need to request permits and secure transport to the Park, located 60 km away, before undertaking any gathering activity.

These requirements mean that since the return of their land, the #Khomani have been unable to pursue their environmentally sustainable hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence, and have been inhibited from passing on their indigen-



Buks Kruiper making crafts. Photo: Julie Grant.

ous knowledge to current generations. There are a number of environmental concerns regarding how the #Khomani live and use their land.

The #Khomani as contributors to climate change

Successive community bodies have struggled to manage the assets in an environmentally, financially and culturally appropriate way. A consultant has been appointed by the South African government to work with the #Khomani, but there is still little, if any, discussion or training regarding environmentally responsible management.

The 400-strong community relies on water pumped from boreholes with the number of tap outlets having been significantly increased without a water use policy being conceived. Borehole water is not an infinite resource and given that the Northern Cape is mid-drought consideration regarding its replenishment would be pertinent. An environmentally minded land use policy is also lacking as over-grazing occurs due to inappropriate farming methods.

The government has not provided formal housing or basic services including refuse collection or sanitation provision. This is a contravention of the South African constitution (Grant,

2011). This situation promotes environmentally damaging actions that contribute the climate emergency-albeit in a small way compared to the broader population.

Community members collect wood which they burn for cooking purposes and for warmth on the cold winter nights. Although wood is not a fossil fuel, it does release carbon into the environment when burned and as it is less energy efficient than fossil fuels more of the product needs to be burned (Energy News Network, 2013). The

community also substitutes the use of plastic bags for firelighters which again releases carbon into the environment along with toxic fumes. These fumes are known to cause a variety of health problems and aggravate existing ailments such as respiratory illnesses (UN Environment Programme, 2019). These are common within the #Khomani community and often lead to premature death.

Given the restrictions and difficulties involved with hunting and gathering, community members buy food and clothes from local shops. In the past when Bushmen sourced food by hunting and gathering, also satisfying their clothing needs in this way, it resulted in a limited amount of bio-degradable waste. Today, like everyone else they buy products packaged in plastic and non-biodegradable materials. As the #Khomani have no electricity to run fridges they buy much tinned food rather than fresh. Overall, the #Khomani now have a less environmentally friendly means of subsistence.

No refuse collection services are provided on the #Khomani farms. Households dig large unsightly holes within which they store their trash burning the contents on an irregular basis. Despite potentially carcinogenic fumes and carbon outputs everything is burnt – plastic fizzy drinks bottles and tins among other items. Although it is common practice for municipalities in South Africa to burn refuse at designated sites,

the fact that community members are burning their own trash less than 100 meters from their homes means that they more readily inhale the toxins. This is of particular concern in regard to young children and babies.

The provision of sanitation services are non-existent on the farms. People have no option but to relieve themselves in the bush. This leaves a proliferation of toilet paper, human waste and sanitary products. Like other litter disregarded outside of the homestead it does not merit collection or burning. These disused items are just left to litter the environment and for local dogs to play with.

Despite the #Khomani being Indigenous People (IP), the majority do not live in, or strive to maintain, an environmental paradise. In the past when they have been offered trash bags and the use of vehicles to enable litter collection on their land, they have refused. Most community members will only join such initiatives if they are paid.

Communication towards environmentally mindful behaviour

Some #Khomani remain traditionally minded and share an affinity with the environment. In an attempt to maintain their traditional knowledge and facilitate the intergenerational transfer of indigenous knowledge some #Khomani have established a veldskool.³ Community elders act as mentors and are joined on the week long excursions to the KTP by the youth who are instructed in tracking and plant knowledge, including medi-



Teaching the children. Photo: Julie Grant

cinal and food uses and how to gather plants in a mindful way that respects nature. The youth hear traditional stories at camp, and are taught dancing and the once spoken Bushmen languages. While the language of the climate change is not present on these excursions much of the practices being communicated and taught are environmentally beneficial.

Youth camps are another way that environmentally mindful messages are relayed. The camps are facilitated by #Khomani individuals who take the youth on weekend camps to either the KTP or the Erin Game Ranch. Youths are taken on guided walks by trackers and cultural guides to learn about nature and their heritage. Each camp has a specific educational focus. Some are obviously related to the environment and focus on environmental sustainability or how to encourage environmental mindfulness.

Others are less obvious in their relation to the environment but promote environmental mindfulness never the less. These topics include cultural restoration, identity and self-esteem, and what it means to be an owner or custodian of the land. Given that the #Khomani were historically hunter-gatherers, their culture, identity and

aspirations are linked to environmental sustainability hence all these topics are pertinent to the climate emergency.

The veldskool, however, has been limited by the number of reliable mentors available. This can be seen as an indicator that the culture is in decline. The youth camps have also suffered due to the lack of community members able and willing to assume the facilitators role and although the initiatives have been well attended they have not as yet resulted in noticeable behavioural change towards the local environment.

Conclusion

The situation of the #Khomani, forced into a mode of subsistence akin to other non-IPs has resulted in them contributing to climate change. Currently, the community is home to individuals who retain knowledge that could be communicated through various initiatives to help promote more environmentally mindful behaviour. These individuals will not be around indefinitely so time is of the essence.

Rather than romanticising that all IPs including the #Khomani live in harmony with nature, it would be pertinent to recognise that many are struggling to align their traditional beliefs with modern life, and to maintain and pass on their knowledge. By supporting the transfer of such knowledge, it could benefit the communities, the environment and the world more broadly. ■

Notes

1. Although the term Bushmen is controversial, I have chosen its use as it is preferred by the #Khomani.
2. Veldkos is an Afrikaans word literally translated as fieldfood. It refers to wild edible plants that can be harvested and eaten.
3. Veldskool is another Afrikaans word that translates as fieldschool.

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Comunicación para una vida alegre, sencilla y sostenible

Oswaldo Martínez Flores.

El Pueblo Xidza se encuentra ubicada en la región del Rincón de la Sierra Juárez de Oaxaca, en el Suroeste Mexicano y se ha caracterizado por un gran contraste, contar con una riqueza natural, cultural y humana, pero con una pobreza material vista desde la “modernidad”.

Muchos han sido los pioneros, misioneros, técnicos extensionistas, investigadores, grupos políticos, organizaciones con ideologías propias, que han tratado de impulsar alternativas de “desarrollo”, sin embargo, ésta siempre ha sido detenida u obstaculizada por choques de poder que encuentran en la pobreza su fórmula de riqueza individual, y también, porque la promoción ha sido de afuera hacia dentro.

Se ha visto que lo que obstaculiza un proceso son las condicionantes por algún esquema de trabajo, que si no apoyas dicho partido político, forma de pensamiento o porque eres mujer, y sobre todo indígena, simplemente no te toman en cuenta, por ello se decide agrupar un grupo de jóvenes que apostaran más por el amor a la humanidad, sin condiciones, buscar un promoción más humana y propia desde la visión del Pueblo Xidza.

Por lo que en el año 2006 se comenzó a desarrollar una serie de proyectos de traspatio y el rescate de telar de cintura, con el cual cinco jóvenes fueron invitados a participar en un proceso educativo conocido como la Escuela del Bien Común, organizado por una organización social (Ideas Comunitarias A. C.) lo que les permitió conocer sobre los derechos humanos de

los pueblos indígenas, además, en esta conocieron experiencias de radios comunitarias en diferentes regiones del Estado de Oaxaca, por lo que a su regreso realizaron un análisis con respecto a la falta de comunicación en la región y detectaron que había una desinformación constante, pues las señales de radio eran de otros lugares, con otros contextos y otras realidades, que nada tenía que ver con el Pueblo Xidza, por lo que era necesario contar con un medio de comunicación propia.

Conociendo de nuestras preocupaciones el P. Pablo Merne (1944-2015) Misionero del Verbo Divino (SVD) nos platicó de la World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) que apoyan los derechos a la comunicación, por lo que decidimos presentar una propuesta con el aval moral del P. Gabriel Gutiérrez (SVD) en el año 2008, con lo que pudimos ser beneficiados para la adquisición de equipo de radiodifusión y fue el 12 de diciembre de 2019 que comenzamos a transmitir para 15 comunidades del Pueblo Xidza.

Entonces empezamos a transmitir solo los fines de semana de 6 de la mañana a 9 de la noche ya que la tarifa de la energía eléctrica es muy alta, comenzamos con música educativa, alternativa y a llamarnos Radio Xhbëëchi (Radio del Rincón). La gente empezó a decirnos que no les gustaba el nombre ni la música, por lo que recurrimos a la asesoría de Radialistas Apasionados y Apasionadas (<https://radialistas.net/>). El Maestro Ignacio López Vigil nos dijo: *-la radio es para ustedes? o para el pueblo?, ¿hay que hacer participativa la radio!-*, y a partir de entonces comenzamos a escuchar a nuestra audiencia.

Entrevista importante

Continuamos haciendo programas, noticiarios, radioteatros para la gente, sin embargo, había un programa especial que se llama “Somos del Campo”, donde hablamos del medio ambiente, de las problemáticas de los grandes megaproyectos, de alternativas, de los derechos de la madre tierra, de nuestro pueblos. Un día llega a cabina un hermano campesino.

-Buen día, muy bonito su programa, todas



Sierra Juarez, vista de San Juan Yagila en el Rincón de Ixtlan, Oaxaca, México. Foto: Prsjl CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7455055>

las mañana lo escucho- Me dijo.

-Gracias- le contesté emocionado.

-Pero puedo decirle algo?- me vuelve a decir.

-¡Claro!, acá es una radio ciudadana, estamos para escuchar al pueblo.- contesté con mucho orgullo.

-A su programa le falta una frase, somos del campo y ni al campo vamos. Sabe?, todo lo que dice de lo negativo de los transgénicos, del daño que le hacemos a la madre tierra con los fertilizantes y herbicidas tóxicos, la roza, tumba y quema que hacemos, la llegada de la modernidad a nuestra comunidad, claro que entendemos, y siempre decimos que está mal, pero no creas que lo hacemos por gusto, sino por necesidad, y la alternativa que nos cuentan en la radio se escuchan muy bonito, pero no vemos, y ya sabes que hasta ver y no creer.- Y se quedó viendo mi cara.

Le di las gracias, se despidió y lo vi alejarse entre las veredas con su burrito. Yo me quedé

pensando y reflexionando, y me dije que razón tiene.

Entonces comenzamos a investigar, contactar con organizaciones y universidades para conocer de las alternativas, teníamos que hacer y comunicar, entonces decidimos crear una escuela campesina con familias campesinas y encontramos que en el río pescaban con pólvora. Hicimos cerca de la radio nuestro estanque de peces con captación de agua de lluvia y con plantas acuáticas, nuestras construcciones con barro y recursos renovables, nuestras pinturas de tierra, sistemas de tratamiento de aguas de cocina, la siembra de caña en curvas a nivel, la roza tumba y pica.

Con el apoyo del Movimiento Social por la Tierra (MST) y un grupo de campesinos, demandamos que los apoyos del gobierno fueran paquetes tecnológicos orgánicos, incrementamos el rendimiento de maíz nativo con pequeñas téc-

nicas de mejoramiento, y muchas más alternativas, con lo que podíamos ahora hablar con verdad de las alternativas para el cuidado del ambiente.

Esta experiencia nos llevó al acercamiento de mucha gente para capacitar en estas técnicas, por lo que decíamos que era necesario la formación desde la juventud con una escuela propia y se planteó y se instaló con el equipo de la radio un bachillerato agroecológico, que después se convirtió en Bachillerato Integral Comunitario. Hoy los jóvenes hacen radioteatros en lengua Xhidza para concienciar a la gente y continúan su aprendizaje en técnicas amigables con el medio ambiente.

Nos dimos cuenta que debíamos siempre mostrar y difundir las alternativas de vida, de técnicas, tecnologías a todo el bombardeo tecnológico que empezaba a llegar a las comunidades, por lo que decidimos probar en instalar nuestra propia telefonía celular comunitaria con el apoyo de Rhizomatica (<https://www.rhizomatica.org/>) y esto nos ayudó a ser sostenible en la radio, y le siguió el reparar y reutilizar computadoras en desuso que nos donaban y a través de software libre volvían a ser funcionales, hasta tener la escuela del pingüino xhidza (<http://escueladelpinguinoxhidza.blogspot.com/>).

Sin embargo mantener la radio ha sido sumamente difícil, por lo que uno de los problemas que siempre hemos enfrentado son los altos costos de pago de energía eléctrica, el pago de conexión de internet y de los que colaboramos en la radio ha sido a base de tequio (trabajo a favor de un bien común sin pago alguno). Por lo que hemos solicitado un apoyo para el uso de paneles solares para reforzar nuestra radio.

Una comunicación para la vida futura

Después de 10 años de la radio, ha comenzado una nueva etapa, hemos iniciado el proceso de lucha de reconocimiento como sujetos de derecho a tener concesiones propias como comunidad indígena, esto con el apoyo de Servicios Universitarios y Redes de Conocimiento en Oaxaca (<https://surcooaxaca.org/>); con el apoyo de NDN (<https://ndncollective.org/>) con el mejoramien-

to de infraestructura y equipo, y beca para personal de la radio ya estamos funcionando todos los días, así también con los paneles que están interconectados a la Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE), el sol nos proporciona la energía necesaria para nuestro uso y el excedente lo redistribuimos a la red de CFE.

Así pensamos que contribuimos a mitigar el impacto ambiental con el uso de tecnologías, nosotros ya no tenemos que pensar de donde vamos a obtener para pagar la luz, y seguimos cumpliéndole al campesino de experimentar alternativas. Pues hoy los campesinos en las charlas colectivas dicen que sería bueno instalarlos en los ranchos de trabajo, en las casas, inclusive como alumbrados públicos.

Nuestra pregunta es: ¿si es que existen estas alternativas y la preocupación es la falta de energía, para que hacer represas o campos de aerogeneradores, seguir usando el petróleo, guerras por el petróleo, etc? ¿No podría ser que cada familia, edificios públicos, comunidades, generan y usaran energías y tecnologías alternativas? Creemos que es posible una comunicación para la vida futura, desde la vida misma viviendo y experimentándolo. Grandes cambios comienzan desde nosotros mismos, haciendo alianzas con gente de buen corazón, entonces podremos comunicar para una vida alegre, sencilla y sostenible. ■

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The heartbeat of Southern African Indigenous peoples

Shaldon Ferris

As an Indigenous rights radio coordinator for Cultural Survival, an Indigenous peoples' rights organization, my daily activities include setting up interviews with people from all over the world, with the aim of producing radio content for broadcast all over the world. This provides me with an informal barometer reading on communications in Africa as compared to communications in other parts of the world. Because our work is mainly with Indigenous peoples, it is pertinent to narrow the reading down to the 476.6 million strong, and growing Indigenous people.

My first memory is my own interview with Cultural Survival. It was supposed to be a Skype call on a Tuesday afternoon. I am based in Johannesburg, in Eldorado Park, Soweto, South Africa, and I remember at the time that the underground telephone cables had just been stolen and then replaced, so I was naturally nervous, not certain of the complex web of wires and networks and signal and things would allow me to make the call so that I could make a decent first impression. The time came and I was ready, I had tested Skype with a few friends earlier that morning to make sure that we could hear and see each other, and it seemed fine.

As Murphy's law would have it, by the time the sun moved a bit further westward, another piece of copper had been stolen somewhere and

the internet was down, well partially down. I could take the call, and I could hear only bits of the questions and the folks on the other side could only hear bits of my answers – it was a mess. We tried the telephone and it worked only a little bit better. This went on for probably 30 minutes and eventually we spoke enough to come to a conclusion. Thankfully I got the gig and have been with Cultural Survival for almost four years now.

In South Africa, 26 years after apartheid, infrastructure remains a key issue. It is fuelled by abject poverty and sheer thuggery – cables are stolen every day to be stripped for their copper, which is sold off to scrapyards, which in turn melt it down and sell it off. In the same breath, South Africa is still perceived to be the land of milk and honey from the perspective of the inhabitants of other countries.

In February 2019, I got the chance to go to Botswana to go visit the San Youth Network (SYNET), a grant partner of Cultural Survival's Keepers of the Earth Fund. I flew from Johannesburg's state of the art O.R Tambo International Airport to Maun Airport, which is based in a small town in the north-east of Botswana. As soon as I got in the rented Toyota Etios, the first thing I did was to switch the radio on to get a feel of the mood of the country. For a while, there was the familiar sound of commercial radio, complete with throwback hip hop to current pop tracks. As I got closer to my destination in D'Kar, where the San Peoples resided, the signal gradually faded into nothingness and no other stations picked up.

I met with the folks from the San Youth Network, which consists of a group of Indigenous youth from Botswana, who are hell bent on righting the wrongs, turning the tragedies of their people into triumph. In Ghantzi village, they conduct their work in a small office. They have applied for funding from Cultural Survival to re-establish the link between the ancient and the present. The ways of their forefathers were to be taught to the youth.

For this exercise they had gathered a large

number of interested youth, probably 50 or more, and for a weekend they were encouraged to remember the ways of the Ncao Khwe, or red people, the Naro speaking people of Botswana. The main challenge faced by this community, as is the case with many other Indigenous folks, is the threat of their language going silent. Language encompasses centuries of place-based Indigenous knowledge and dictates how Indigenous communities see and relate to the natural world. Once a language goes silent, we lose a part of our human heritage.

Preserving cultural heritage

Right next to the office of the San Youth Network, is the office of a Naro language preservation project, also spearheaded by a young lady from the San Youth Network. Some projects by the project include a children's book that is available in both Naro and English, in an effort to make the ancient language relevant today. We also passed by the Naro Museum which houses objects and artefacts of the people. It is efforts like these that try hard to maintain the languages, communication systems and cultural ways of a People.

I was hosted by Job Morris, fluent in Naro, who is the co-chair of SYNET. I met with Xukuri Xukuri too, the other co-chair. We stopped in front of a preschool and I was introduced to 5-year olds who are fluent in Naro, and I was very proud to see that the youth are speaking the language. Xukuri and Job Morris taught me to say goodbye in Naro, which I most ashamedly cannot remember, but in any case, they bid me farewell, and I was on my way.

My next stop was another 700km away, to another country all together, Namibia. My mission this time was to meet with folks from the Babwata Khwe Peoples, in what was previously called the Caprivi Strip. Potholes aplenty ensured that I kept the speed to a bare minimum, peaking probably at 60km per hour.

I kept the scanner of the car radio on to see what I can pick up all the time, on the long straight road northward to Namibia. I drove with the sound of static coming through the speakers

for most of the way. Luckily, I grabbed a flash drive before I left home, and the only company I had was an old radio show I had copied onto it from Eldos FM, in Johannesburg – it looped and looped until I was sure I knew all the words the presenter and guest were uttering, as well as the words to the songs in between the discussion. In front of me was an ambulance travelling at the same speed as I was, a guide to avoid the potholes. I would change the source to the radio from time to time, only to be greeted with more static.

Overnight, I stayed at a small town close to the border, and it had satellite TV with some TV channels from Botswana as well as some from South Africa. I left the familiar voices of the South African Broadcasting Corporation on in the background, and faded away into car-lag induced unconsciousness.

The next day I was up early, and crossed the border, into Namibia. The first thing I saw was a malaria prevention billboard, and I remembered to take my pills, and sprayed myself from head to toe, in the daylight, as per my wife's instruction. As fate would have it, the last bit of Indigenous communication I received before boarding the plane in Johannesburg was a message from her in Afrikaans, the language taught to her Griqua ancestors by the colonists which read "Moenie 'n aap wees nie, vat jou pille" – loosely translated "Don't be an idiot, take your pills".

The longest dirt road ever followed soon after. The road signs on the dirt road seemed to emphasize that there were elephants on the gravel or in the bush somewhere. Kilometres and kilometres of bush. Mama elephant, papa elephant and two baby elephants is what the picture seemed to say. The bumps on the road were not too friendly on the 3-cylinder entry level Toyota, but the combination of the two kept me awake. Well most of the time. For a brief second I faded out into daydream land, and lo and behold probably 100m in front of me, two mammas, three papas and many elephant babies just stormed out and crossed the road from one end of the bush to the other.

Had I been there seconds earlier that would have been it for the Toyota, and all its cylinders, and who knows what else. I felt my left leg jitter, but I got out and eventually pulled myself together. Not long after that, I met with glorious colonial tarred roads. For a minute there I almost thanked the Germans, but quickly remembered Hendrick Witbooi. His revolt against all things evil earned him a place on some of the Namibian banknotes in my pocket.

The tarred road too, seemed endless. It was another 300km or so until I got to Omega1. Now just hearing the name of the town, you might think about the military, and you would be right. Omega1 and Chetto are the names given to the villages by the South African defence force in the 70s and 80s when there was war with SWAPO, the South West African Peoples Organisation, a liberation movement who fought against apartheid rule.

The army barracks are where the San people are located today – the place that they now call home. Tienie Arbenie and Sonner Geria also wrote to Cultural Survival, requesting assistance to set up a radio station that will broadcast in their languages of !Xun and Khwedam. I had come to spend some time with them to understand their needs, and the visions of their community.

There, I also met with two San grandmothers, who are both over 100 years old. Tienie does not understand them too well, because their dialect of Khwedam is pure, so pure that it is distinctly different. They spoke about the old days, and Tienie attempted to translate. Behind us or close to us all the time, were young kids, puppy dog eyes turned all the way up, trying to separate me from Hendrick Witbooi, which they managed to do at the end of the visit.

Tienie and I drove a further 50 km to where Sonner lives. Sonner explained that the internet signal strength in both villages is minimal. Their wish is to have a radio station that will broadcast in Khwedam and !Xun.

Prior to my journey, I had contacted CRAN, the broadcasting authority in Namibia, and learned that a moratorium had been placed

on all community radio licenses in Namibia. I was the one who relayed this news to the future potential station manager and program manager. They had no way of finding this out. Chetto and Omega1 are in the remotest parts of what is now called the Zambezi river region.

We communicate in Afrikaans, they speak it, and I speak it. I am of San origin too, though I did not know it, because it was taboo to know about our roots in apartheid South Africa. Our grandparents knew and could speak the ancient languages, but raised us in English and Afrikaans. The closer you were to the Queen's English, or the president's Afrikaans, the better your chances for a better life. It was not until I had done the DNA test, that I was sure. But I knew.

The way I connect with Tienie and Sonner from Namibia is the same way I connected Job Morris and Xukuri Xukuri from Botswana. In fact, I met Xukuri at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, two years prior. We smiled when we met.

Communication with Indigenous Peoples runs much deeper than copper cables, cell phone masts, radio transmitters, gravel or tarred roads. It is spiritual, without a doubt. We connect on a level that is higher than us. Sometimes we do not even know how, and maybe we do not need to know - we just feel the connection, and embrace each other on that level, and that will always be enough. ■

Shaldon Ferris (KhoiSan), Indigenous Rights Radio Coordinator, started out in media by producing music videos. His work with Indigenous people started in 2006 after he went on a countrywide journey to document the origins of his family surname "Damakwa" which is a Khoi tribe of South Africa. On his paternal side, Shaldon's San heritage can be traced to the Northern Cape, South Africa. His first film "Eldorado" premiered at the Durban International Film Festival and won an award in 2011. Shaldon became involved in radio when he started volunteering at his local community radio station, Eldos FM, eleven years ago in Eldorado Park in Johannesburg. Since then, his live show, "Cleaning Up The House," which airs weekly on Saturday mornings, has won numerous awards, and is the longest running weekly show on Eldos FM. The show is built on interaction from the community based on current issues. Contact Shaldon at shaldon.ferris@cs.org

For water justice, Churches ought to become “blue communities”!

Dinesh Suna

Would you ever buy a sandwich for USD 10,000? I guess no one would, even if he or she were a billionaire. Because it's insanely expensive for a sandwich. About 2000 times more expensive, assuming the sandwich costs about USD 5. However, most of us have paid the equivalent of that “10,000 dollar-sandwich” for – guess what? A bottle of water!

Many of us have paid up to USD 10 for a one litre bottle of water at a restaurant or airport kiosk. This price is around 2000 times more than the price of tap water. How on earth do we not think twice before buying this insanely expensive product which is practically available for free from our kitchen tap?

This is the power of marketing. Through numerous advertisements, we have been told that tap water is not safe for us to drink. However, the problem of “bottled water” is not only the price. The problem is much more serious. Bottled water mostly comes in plastic bottles. Today we are buying more than [1 million plastic bottles every minute](#).

When we finish drinking the water, we dump the bottle in a garbage bin or in a so-called “recycle bin”. However, statistics have shown us that more than [91% of these plastic bottles end up in landfills and in the oceans](#). Where they remain for up to 1000 years before fully biodegraded. If the business, as usual, continues it is estimated that [by 2050, there could be more plastics in the oceans than fishes](#) (by weight).

Further, the problem of bottled water is not limited to plastic pollution alone. The problem is larger. Bottled water industries are an impediment to the realisation of the human right to water. This is discussed in detail later in this article.

WCC became a blue community

Because of these problems associated with bottled water, the [World Council of Churches \(WCC\) became a blue community](#) in 2016 and banned bottled water on its premises and appealed to its member churches to do similarly.

What is a blue community? A blue community has to respect three criteria: 1) Recognize water as a human right; 2) Say “no” to the sale and use of bottled water in places where tap water is safe to drink; and 3) Promote publicly financed, owned and operated drinking water (in other words say no to privatisation of water).

The concept of the blue community was started by the Council of Canadians through its “Blue Planet Project”, targeting the municipalities of Canada. However, soon it had spread to different parts of the world. Today we have several blue communities involving institutions, universities, churches and cities including Bern, Switzerland, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, and several municipalities in Canada's Quebec province.

Water privatisation

For most developed countries, water services were by and large under public control from the beginning, through its Ministries and the water authorities of the government. However, with the increased demand for clean water and to promote Public-Private-Partnership, slowly countries started to privatise their water services. Quite notably under the leadership of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, water was privatised in England and Wales in the late 1980s.

In the 1990s, privatisation of water rapidly expanded as the World Bank's IFP (International Finance Corporation) lent around 75 billion dollars to countries for water and sanita-



Children take part in the occasion of the World Council Churches joining the Blue Community project, including installing tap-based public water fountains at the Ecumenical Centre. Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC.

tion projects including water privatisation. The two French water service giants, Suez and Veolia, are the world's largest private water firms and responsible for the majority of water privatisation around the world.

When water privatisation is offered as a solution to municipal budget problems and ageing water distribution systems, it creates a greater problem leaving communities with higher rates, worse service, job losses, and more. The primary motive of the corporations is to make a profit. This will influence their pricing/tariff fixing, catering, quality, cutting corners, etc.

While the government is accountable to its public irrespective of the communities' ability to pay the water bills, the private water operator is not accountable to anyone. Often the contracts signed by them with government authorities run 20 years or longer and make it difficult for successive governments to pull out of the contract.

Nevertheless, today, thanks to the blue communities, more and more cities are making their water public again. A report by the Transnational Institute (TNI), Public Services International Research Unit and the Multinational Observatory suggests that "180 cities and communities in 35 countries, including Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, Paris, Accra, Berlin, La Paz, Maputo and Kuala Lumpur, have all 're-municipi-

palised' their water systems in the past decade."

While AquaFed, a federation of more than 400 private water operators including Suez and Veolia continues to claim that [they provide clean and safe drinking water to over 1 billion people](#) and thereby they contribute to the realisation of the human right to water.

In a debate organised by the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) of the WCC between AquaFed and EWN in Geneva, we pointed out to them the problems of privatisation of water and clarified the WCC-EWN's position of public control over waters system. We said, "[private companies are not the solutions...Focusing on community participation is the answer.](#)" That is why we strongly believe in being a blue community.

Water and sanitation are human rights

In 2020 we are celebrating the [10th anniversary of the recognition of water and sanitation by the United Nations](#) as human rights. We have made significant progress in ensuring the right to water and sanitation for all. However, SDG 6's (Sustainable Development Goals) universal access to water and sanitation by 2030 is still a far-fetched dream. According to the new [JMP Report 2019](#) (Joint Monitoring Programme) of UNICEF and WHO, 2.2 billion people around

the world do not have safely-managed drinking water, while 4.2 billion go without safe sanitation services and three billion lack basic handwashing facilities.

By 2025 two-third of the world will be facing water stress. As the resource becomes scarce, tensions among different users may intensify, both at the national and international level. Over 260 river basins are shared by two or more countries. In the absence of strong institutions and agreements, changes within a basin can lead to transboundary tensions. [A 2014 survey of the world's 500 largest cities](#) estimates that one in four is in a situation of “water stress”.

According to UN-endorsed projections, global demand for freshwater will exceed supply by 40% in 2030, thanks to a combination of climate change, human action and population growth. This year 21 cities in India are predicted to be running out of groundwater. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the Most Water-Stressed Region on Earth. [Twelve out of the 17 most water-stressed countries are in the MENA region.](#)

Respecting water rights

In such a scenario, how can we realise the human right to water and sanitation? And that's why being a blue community is to respect the human right to water and work towards it. Many people may have a different understanding of the human right to water. Some may argue that the right to water means water should be free. However, unlike air is free for us to breath, water has a cost – particularly that of treating it and providing an infrastructure for the service delivery to our homes.

But the cost has to be affordable. In the case of a particular community, if they cannot afford to pay any amount because they do not earn enough, access to water should be made free for them. Some countries have experimented with this aspect. The WHO has stipulated about 100 litres of water per day per person as a minimum amount of water for decent living.

The government of Delhi, India has allo-

cated about 20,000 litres of water per family per month, which equals about 166 litres/day/person in a family of four. However, if anybody exceeds the 20,000 litres cut off even by a litre, they will have to pay the full water bill. This system has a safety net for the poor as they get the minimum water need for free. The rich, however, will find it hard to manage with 20,000 litres/family/month and will have to pay the full price.

Besides affordability, the human right to water and sanitation has four other important criteria / “normative content”. They are [accessibility, availability, quantity \(sufficiency\) and quality and safety.](#)

Now let us revisit the issue we had placed in the parking lot - how bottled water is an impediment to the human right to water. It is the government's responsibility to provide clean water to its citizens fulfilling all the above five normative conditions of the human right to water and sanitation. However when the rich aren't complaining about unsafe drinking water through the taps, because there is always an alternative of bottled water available in the market, the government can continue to avoid its responsibility to ensure clean and safe water from the taps in the households.

The lead contamination of water in the U.S. city of Flint, Michigan, that began in 2014 is a case in point. The majority of those affected were African Americans who did not constitute an influential rich community. That led to negligence and overlooking the quality of the tap water for more than a year. Besides bottled water was supplied to the community for more than a year because tap water was contaminated.

This year's [Lenten campaign: Seven Weeks for Water](#) for the World Council of Churches EWN was focused in the Pacific region. The most famous bottled water comes from this region: Fiji water. The biblical reflections of Seven Weeks for Water have criticised how an American company markets Fiji water as [“earth's finest water, bottled at the source, untouched by man, until you unscrew the cap”](#). The irony is that the local people of Fiji are struggling to get access

to clean and safe drinking water in the wake of climate change. But people around the world are drinking this surreal Fiji water.

[Water and Climate Change](#) was the theme of this year's World Water Day (March 22). The campaign says, "these two are inextricably linked. Adapting to the water effects of climate change will protect health and save lives. Using water more efficiently will reduce greenhouse gases."

Virtual water

Have we ever imagined that we "eat" more water than we drink? [You may be surprised that we "eat" 3496 litres of water every day](#) and of which only 137 litres on average is consumed by us for domestic use including drinking and sanitation. This hidden water we use is called "virtual water". A kilogram of meat represents about 15400 litres of virtual water. You may ask why? That much water is used by the cow for fodder and water from birth till it becomes at least three years old and is then slaughtered, packaged and shipped from one part of the planet to another.

For this reason, it is important to choose wisely what we want to eat. A vegetarian diet consumes only a fraction of the water used by a meat-based diet. So it's not enough to save water physically where we can control only some 137 litres of water/day, whereas by choosing what and how to eat we can save a great deal of water from our daily consumption of about 3496 litres of virtual water.

What can we do as churches and individuals?

- * Let us become a blue community.
- * Respect the human right to water and say no to bottled water.
- * Save "virtual water" by choosing what and how to eat.
- * Join the campaign for water justice. ■

Dinesh Suna is the Coordinator of the Ecumenical Water Network of World Council of Churches (WCC), Geneva since 2012. The EWN raises awareness on the urgency of the water crisis and to strengthen the voice of Christian churches in the water debate.

Fatal fault line in Catholic Church governance

Robert Carey

The culture in the Catholic Church of covering up the sexual abuse of minors by clergy has come into sharp focus in Australia during the recent trial of its cardinal, George Pell. Pell boasted of having implemented best practice in the Church's response to sexual abuse in the Church. When he was Archbishop of Melbourne (1996–2001), he introduced the "Melbourne Response", a set of policies for the compensation of abuse victims. The model is now discredited, with some saying the Melbourne Response was Pell's way of ensuring the Church's handling of sexual abuse complaints was not transparent and that any response to victims remained firmly under the control of the Church and of Pell himself.

The culture of cover-up is hardly a new thing in institutions and neither is its repudiation. Half a century ago the battle lines were clearly drawn in the Catholic Church between those calling for more transparency in Church communication and those vested in a culture of unaccountability. This battle occurred at a watershed moment in the Catholic Church's history. Between 1962 and 1965, the Church held an ecumenical council of all the Church's bishops, the Second Vatican Council. It was a reforming moment that promised a new dawn for the Church – and also a degree of instability. Issues and questions hitherto out of bounds, or apparently set-

tled, were put on the table: relations with other Christians, with the Jews and with non-believers; the relevance of traditional liturgical practices; the structure of the priesthood; the practices of religious communities; the role of the lay faithful; and the question of whether or how Catholic teaching might be adapted to modern life.

For the first time in such a forum, the Church ventured, in the Council's *Inter Mirifica* decree, proposals about how the Church might better manage its internal and external communications. Among the principles advocated, was the primary role of the Catholic press in "supporting and advancing public opinion" in the Catholic community. The innocent phrase "public opinion" referenced a discourse during the preceding decade which proposed an open, two-way dialogue in the Church, promoted by people such as Jesuit theologians Karl Rahner (in his "Free Speech in the Church") and John Courtney Murray (adviser to the bishops at the Second Vatican Council) – and even by a pope. Pius XII told Catholic newspaper editors in 1950 that enabling the expression of public opinion was fundamental to the role of a Catholic newspaper.

Contemporary with the Council, and no doubt inspired by it, a smaller movement arose within the Catholic press in Australia and the United States in particular. Certain editors began to push for a more open dialogue in their publications and for more independence in the making of editorial decisions. While undeniably loyal to the Church, these editors were ready to challenge any Church authorities who wished to censor information to which they felt readers entitled. They resisted attempts by those authorities to limit their efforts to stimulate open conversations in their newspapers. They argued that this was the Catholic press's very role and that the changing times made the argument for a more liberal Catholic press the more compelling. Their readers needed to know about the new ideas that were challenging old orthodoxies. The liberal editors had no blueprint for this new approach – and certainly no official mandate – but the outlines of a "liberal project" in the Catholic

press were clearly discernible.

History shows that the attempt by these editors to make their journals "real newspapers" was short-lived. Nevertheless, for a short time the liberal project could be seen in sharp relief in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The associate-editor of *The Advocate*, the long-running Catholic weekly there, was a diocesan priest, Michael Costigan. Appointed as de-facto editor late in 1961, Costigan began to open up the pages of his newspaper to a broader discussion on the issues which were then troubling Catholics. The discussion was too broad for the Church hierarchy and Costigan soon found himself in conflict with Church authorities.

The Vietnam War and birth control

In the 1960s, two topics in particular drove discussion and argument among Catholics, one with wide social implications – the Vietnam War – and the other of particular interest to Church members – birth control. In these years, Australia's and the Catholic Church's support of the Vietnam War were in lock-step. News and opinion about the war would occupy many columns in *The Advocate*, but editorials were consistently behind the war effort. Anxiety about the conflict was increasing, however, especially over the sending of Australian conscripts to fight in Vietnam, and leaders of other Christian Churches were speaking out against the war.

Nevertheless, the Catholic bishops' absolute conviction about the justness of the cause of defeating communism in Vietnam did not appear to allow for any meaningful discussion of the justness of the means. But the decision by Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1966 to send conscripts to Vietnam saw *The Advocate* break with the Church party-line. *The Advocate's* declaration in March 1966 that the Prime Minister had no right to send conscripts to Vietnam brought an immediate condemnation of that view by the Church hierarchy and the conservative, Catholic-backed Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Costigan became a prime target of attack by the dominant conservative side of Church

politics. Costigan said later: “I think if we published an article denying the truth of the Blessed Trinity no one would take any notice, but if we deviate from the DLP line then all hell breaks loose.” *The Advocate* had challenged Church doctrine on the war but, in some minds, it had committed a greater sin by suggesting that the role of a Catholic paper might be more than to merely represent the “official” view of Church authorities.

A topic with even greater impact on the lives of ordinary Catholics was birth control. Traditional Catholic teaching held that no artificial means of contraception was allowed. But the pope who proposed the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII, had established a small commission of theologians to look at the issue. For a long time there had been ambiguity about the Church’s position, and the new birth control pill had just made that position more ambiguous. As *The Advocate* drew fire over Vietnam, it incurred the further ire of Church authorities by publishing views suggesting the Church’s teaching on birth control might be relaxed.

One such expression of opinion had the backing of a member of the Pope’s birth control commission, the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, Julius Döpfner. Döpfner’s archdiocese had released a statement suggesting there might well be circumstances justifying Catholics’ use of the pill – such as the case of young couples who “after only a few years of marriage easily find themselves in the distressing situation in which it would be irresponsible to have another child”. This was a revolutionary statement from a Catholic cardinal, and the *Advocate’s* report was instantly picked up by the local press.

The Advocate was condemned by Church officials for carrying such a controversial statement, notwithstanding it was by a Catholic cardinal. Costigan said some of his fellow priests “were ready to tear me limb from limb for printing the Döpfner statement”. Döpfner, under pressure himself, later backed away from his statement. For Catholics, however, discussion about the continuing dilemmas and difficulties raised

by the birth control pill could not be easily hosed down by the backtracking of a cardinal or the affirmation of traditional doctrine by an archbishop’s secretary. In the event, Pope Paul VI did not move on the Church’s traditional teaching on artificial contraception, when he issued his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* virtually banning the pill. It was a moment of disillusionment. The Church’s credibility in the eyes of many Catholics was irreversibly damaged and many made a break with the institution in these years.

Costigan resigned as editor in 1969, but not before further Church condemnation of the *Advocate’s* support of the peace movement (“communist-influenced”, said Melbourne Church officials) and dialogue with communists (“naïve capitulation”). Immediately following Costigan’s resignation, the then Archbishop, James Knox, appointed an editorial board to keep watch over the *Advocate’s* editorial direction, and the paper’s declining years would see the appointment of a succession of mostly conservative editors. Costigan was not alone in his fight for more editorial freedom, nor in his failure to convince authorities of its necessity. As the 1960s drew to a close, doors were closing on the liberal project wherever it had been attempted in Catholic newspapers around the world.

Tighter editorial control

Proprietors of Catholic newspapers – namely, the bishops in charge of dioceses – began to exercise a much tighter rein on the editors of diocesan newspapers in the decades following the Vatican Council. They were encouraged to do so under a new conservative pope, John Paul II. “Fake news” had not become a watchword in those year, but it might be said that this is what readers were getting when they turned to the Catholic press for information about the Catholic Church. Should any readers wish to complain about selective information, they were unlikely to get a hearing in their Catholic newspaper.

After John Paul II decreed, in his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, that women could not be ordained priests, the editor

of the conservative Sydney *Catholic Weekly*, Phil Pearman, was directed by the *Weekly's* editorial board to announce that the newspaper would publish no further letters on the subject. A few Catholic editors repudiated this censorship, the Australian Catholic Press Association issuing this plea in June that year: "As a general principle, the credibility of the Catholic press depends on its freedom to discuss the issues that are important to its readers. [This credibility] is under serious threat if its readers know some of their letters will be censored."

The *Catholic Weekly* defended its stance on the grounds that the *Weekly* was "an official organ of the church". This became the default position of most of the bishop-proprietors of Catholic diocesan newspapers in Australia. By this time, it was universally understood, inside and outside the Church, that no more was to be expected from a Catholic diocesan newspaper than from a house organ.

The campaign of the liberal editors had not been simply about Catholic newspapers. Their cause was fundamentally about the health and credibility of the Church community itself. While their editorial battle was fought and lost, the legacy of that defeat echoes loudly in the Catholic Church today, as its leaders stand charged with a gross failure of accountability. What redeeming light might have been shone in dark places, far earlier, were the liberal project to have prospered? What better scrutiny of Church governance might there have been if the Catholic press had held up a more "truthful mirror" to itself – as the second pope of the Council, Paul VI, proposed in 1964?

It is not too late for a reform of the clerical culture that has enforced censorship in the Catholic press over recent decades – but can we expect to see a new encouragement of dialogue by Church leaders and an invitation to scrutinise Church governance, any time soon? Will there be a sincere attempt to root out the deeply-ingrained clericalism that allows Church leaders to be unaccountable? The signs are not promising.

Despite the court cases, Pell still casts a

long shadow in the Australian Catholic Church. His brand of Catholicism, which he continues to promote, is one of rigid conformity to Church doctrine and obedience to Church authorities. For him, the doctrine that Catholics might be free in their conscience appears to be anathema. Over the past decades, Pell used his influence to ensure the appointment of bishops in his image to the highest places in the Catholic Church in Australia. The archbishops in the largest Australian capitals – Anthony Fisher in Sydney and Peter Comensoli in Melbourne – are both protégés of Pell, and Pell was influential in their appointments. A long reign is expected for Comensoli, appointed Archbishop of Melbourne in 2018 at only 54 years of age.

On the eve of his first anniversary as Archbishop, Comensoli appeared to see a threat from a visit to Melbourne of an American Benedictine nun, Joan Chittister, who had been expecting an invitation to speak later this year at a National Catholic Education conference in Melbourne. Chittister has been a long-term advocate of church reform and for the greater role of women in the Church. Comensoli apparently vetoed the invitation, requesting the organisers to consider other keynote speakers. Many Melbourne Catholics were alarmed that the new Archbishop did not seem to welcome the kind of dialogue this widely published 85-year-old Catholic author promotes.

The failure of the liberal project in the Australian Catholic press, at the very least, left a culture wherein the Church was less accountable to its people and less able to respond transparently to institutional problems. It is a moot point whether the lessons have yet been learnt. ■

Sources for this article come from Robert Carey's 2019 PhD thesis: "Freedom in the Catholic press: a case study of the Melbourne Advocate in the 1960s", published by Monash University, Melbourne.

Berlin (Germany) 2020

At the 70th Berlinale International Film Festival held February 20 – March 1, 2020, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize in the International Competition to the film *Sheytan vojud nadarad* (There is no Evil) directed by Mohammad Rasoulof (Iran, 2020).

The movie reflects upon the importance of moral conscience in four episodes, telling the stories of four men who are confronted with carrying out death penalties and the people surrounding them. Especially the stories of young men faced with this task during their military service, one escaping, another facing the task, and the complications and deep moral conflicts these killings bring about for them confront the audience with the disturbing reality in the Iranian political and judicial system. The actions of these men have a deep impact on the relationships to their loved ones and families, especially the strong female characters. The atmosphere of political persecution is unsettling.

In a very impressive way the film depicts the options that exist, and gives a sense of the possibility of decision and resistance even under political pressure. Thus it shows an impressive fundamental critique of the death penalty in general and especially of the oppressive system in Iran by means of outstanding storytelling and cinematography and intense acting. The film makes a strong statement about human dignity, which is what constitutes us as a person in Iran and everywhere.

In the Forum the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to *Seishin 0* (Zero) directed by Kazuhiro Soda (Japan, USA, 2020). With subtle though effective use of cinematic means,

especially of camera and montage, the film shows the impact the psychiatrist Dr Masatomo Yamamoto has on his patients and their fear of a future without him as he approaches retirement. With sensitive understanding of their distress and with gentle encouragement, he motivates and accompanies them as they seek to move forward.

In the second part, he is shown after his retirement, spending time with his wife now with dementia. Impressive in its seeming simplicity, the film is a landmark for human dignity and agency. Compassion and humility guide the action. A moving film about the value of human agency and care for loved ones in a society motivated more by financial and social success.

In the Panorama the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference, to *Otac* (Father) directed by Srdan Golubović (Serbia, France, Germany, Cro-



atia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, 2020). This road movie (still above) is based on a true story about a father who walks 300 km from the province to the Serbian capital to show his desperate will to get back his children. Because of the precarious economical family situation and a desperate irrational act of his wife, the children were taken care of by the youth welfare office.

The film shows that the Serbian system is still stuck in socialistic arbitrariness, corrupt structures, a strong urban-rural divide and an unbearable neglect of the whole country. Yet the father manages to deal with the catastrophic tension, his feelings of guilt and the challenges on

Church Media Foundation Award 2020

his way to Belgrade in a reserved and non-violent way. In the character of the father, the jury recognized an attitude of persistence and search for justice without hurting anyone else. Thus the father becomes a hero without considering himself as a hero at all.

In addition, the Jury awarded a Commendation to the Panorama entry *Saudi Runaway* (still below) directed by Susanne Regina Meures (Switzerland, 2020). Her upcoming wedding day will change Muna's life forever. It is the day she makes her decision, not about the groom already



chosen for her, but whether to seek freedom outside of Saudi Arabia. A woman of courage facing dangers and challenges, Muna plots her escape from her paternalistic society. Precisely because she is a person of compassion and love for family values, she has to leave.

This coming-of-self-determination-story is real, authentic and touching, being totally put together using smartphone videos. Susanne Regina Meures as the director with Muna as the protagonist created more than a film. Together they added feminism to smartphones and cast the dignity of women as a bridge instead of a border. Together they added a young woman to Germany who is happy about the sun of freedom inside – and so very fine about the rain outside.

Members of the 2020 Jury: Roland Wicher, President of the Jury (Germany); Kodjo Ayetan (Togo); Alexander Bothe (Germany); Rinke Dellebeke-van Hell (Netherlands); Melanie Pollmeier (Switzerland); James Thessin (USA).

Director Elina Talvensaari received the Church Media Foundation Award for her documentary “Lady Time” (Neiti Aika, Finland 2019) at the 50th Tampere Film Festival (March 4-8, 2020).

The winner was chosen by Mikko Hieta, deputy board member of the Church Media Foundation, and communications director in the education company Hyria that focuses on visual expression and training media professionals.

The motivation for the award states that “Lady Time” is simultaneously timely and timeless. It invites the viewer to pause and ponder big issues like loneliness, life without children, the perishability of everything and the things that truly matter in life.

An old lady has died with no one left to remember her. The filmmaker has purchased her apartment and everything the lady owned remained there and passed on to her. If she would throw everything away would the woman's life disappear in oblivion?

In this documentary, the filmmaker becomes a modern-day Good Samaritan who volunteers to help selflessly an unknown person. With that, the viewers get lured into a mind-boggling journey through the time, through happiness and sorrow.

“Surely every one of us ends up thinking what will remain, when I am no more. This film is deeply touching, humane and a consoling reminder that life itself is meaningful even if the memories later on will be lost in the timestream”, Mikko Hieta says.

The Church Media Foundation Award is given to a domestic film every year at the Tampere Film Festival, and is endowed with € 1.500.

Source: Interfilm