

Systematization of the
INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES & CLIMATE JUSTICE

Dialogues on the
Path to COP30 Belém



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Systematization of the INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP Indigenous Peoples and Climate Justice. Dialogues on the Path to COP30 Belém

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This document systematizes the contributions and ideas shared during the International Workshop “Indigenous Peoples and Climate Justice: Dialogues on the Path to COP30 Belém,” in which the following participants took part:

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	THE CONTEXT	1
	KEY MESSAGES	2
	INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CLIMATE ACTION	4
	1 Territorial Security in Climate Action	5
	2 Indigenous Economy and Knowledge	9
	3 Participation and Advocacy in Climate Action	12
	IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE COP	13
	RECOMMENDATIONS	14
	FINAL REFLECTIONS	16

THE CONTEXT

Over three days, 17 indigenous leaders joined researchers and political actors from Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile at the International Workshop “Indigenous Peoples and Climate Justice: Dialogues on the Path to COP30.” This was a space for reflection and collective construction of proposals for Indigenous political influence on global decision-making platforms. The key findings and messages retrieved in the Workshop yielded three overarching themes that structure this systematization:

- 1 Territorial Security
- 2 Indigenous Economics and Knowledge
- 3 Participation

This International Workshop, held in partnership with the [“Voices in Recovery”](#) project, was the outcome of the methodological process that we have been building over the last three years as part of the [“Indigenous Visions for Climate Justice”](#) project.

In the *Indigenous Visions for Climate Justice* project we produce systematic, critical, and collaborative knowledge alongside Indigenous Peoples. We provide spaces for dialogue to analyze and visibilize Indigenous perspectives on climate justice and to strengthen their participation.

In the *Voices in Recovery* project we work with historically marginalized groups. The goal is to understand the risks and needs that historically marginalized groups faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery strategies they adopted to promote their recognition and strengthen their decision-making processes toward sustainable recovery and conservation.

Documents and policies review

Interviews and meetings

Ethnographic case studies

Participatory workshops
subnational
national
international

Dissemination and advocacy

Our action–research methodology combines ongoing knowledge generation and advocacy at the subnational, national, and international levels. This approach has brought us closer to the priorities of Indigenous Peoples while allowing us to strengthen partnerships with different actors and to share the results through publications, audiovisual materials, and co-organized events, conferences, and workshops.

KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages were co-constructed from the dialogue and the collective dynamics that unfolded during the three-day International Workshop:

Territory is everything

For Indigenous and Native Peoples, territory is neither just land nor just a physical and geographical area but an integral space animated by living beings where the material and the spiritual are deeply connected, forming a cohesive and non-fragmented continuum like those administered by states. These visions sustain ways of life that value harmony with nature and the protection of life in all its forms.

Indigenous autonomy is a guarantee of conservation

The evidence shows that levels of deforestation and degradation are lower where there is Indigenous control of territory. Autonomy is not only a political right for Indigenous Peoples but also a specific tool for ecosystem protection. It also refers to the capacity to make their own decisions about their territories—something that Indigenous Peoples have long demanded of the state.

Long-term relationships of trust form a restorative bond

Lasting relationships based on mutual respect, intercultural dialogue, and recognition of the plurality of knowledge must be built to overcome the historical mistrust between Indigenous Peoples and states. Experience shows that these links are not state concessions but the product of persistence and articulation on the part of Indigenous organizations in collaboration with committed public officials. Thus, despite structural differences, there are opportunities to build bridges through mutual recognition and co-construction of agendas.

Indigenous women are community and political leaders

Indigenous communities have enormous leadership and advocacy potential. Women, in particular, are pillars in the defense of territory, culture, and community life, providing a holistic vision of care and sustainability.

Credit: viernes.online



Seeds are a symbol of sovereignty and future

For Indigenous Peoples, seed care is an act of intergenerational cultural sovereignty and resistance. They are the inheritance of the past and the basis of the future: Without seeds, there is no regeneration, no nourishment, no continuity of life.

Community tissue as resilience infrastructure

Community networks function as living tissue that enable sustenance, resistance, and action amid multiple ongoing crises. This tissue is not limited to the local level: It also connects with national and international movements and partnerships.

Articulated responses to common challenges in Abya Yala

Indigenous territories face shared structural problems in the Americas (Abya Yala): militarization, illegal economies, extractivism, and strong pressures within the current economic model. These threats call for articulated responses based on autonomy and solidarity between Peoples.



Credit: viernes.online

“

The actions of Indigenous Peoples are based not on a vision of caring for nature or biodiversity but a vision of caring for ourselves: we as people, bodies, and women. Our vision is one of self-care. We are just another [inhabitant] in our territories. What affects the earth affects us

”

(Rosa, day 3)



Network-building
activity on the
second day of the
workshop.

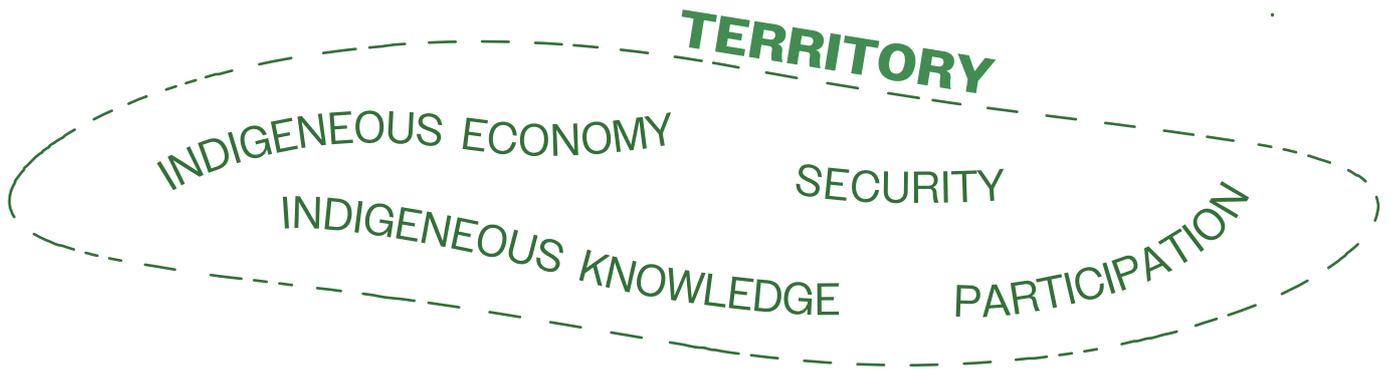
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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CLIMATE ACTION



1

TERRITORIAL SECURITY Indigenous Territory



The territory must be understood as an integral whole in which everything unfolds and everything is interconnected. We must not look at it in a fragmented way, as states or public policies do. This concept of territory encompasses material as well as immaterial, spiritual, and cosmogonic components, and extends to the relationship between humans and more than humans in which the animate environment is an essential part of the life of Indigenous Peoples.

“In Colombia, for Indigenous Peoples, [territory] is also spirituality. In nature-based solutions, in the economic dimension or that of Indigenous territorialities, there is a loss of the spiritual

”

(Jenny, day 1)

Recognizing this conception of territory is the first step toward effective territorial governance. The state’s demarcation and recognition of Indigenous territories guarantees their legal security. Therefore, because Indigenous Peoples have control over the territory, they can have the capacity to decide on its development and protection.

These recognition processes make it possible to generate mechanisms for territorial administration, adapted to the realities of each Nation. However, the problems associated with the titling of land, much of which is under state control or in private hands, put the access and security of Indigenous territories at risk.





Credit: viernes.online

For Indigenous Peoples, the territory is collective. It is where they as well as their ancestors live.

“The territory is where Indigenous Peoples’ governance, self-government, and form of government are lived and exercised through their organizations.”

”

(Elvira, day 2)



TERRITORY

Understood as a whole

Material, immaterial, and cosmogonic components

Controlled by the Peoples

Collective and from everyone

Where we and our ancestors live

Physical space and ritual space

TERRITORIAL SECURITY IN CLIMATE ACTION

Territorial security must consider the spiritual and physical dimensions of those who inhabit the territory as inextricable. A climate policy that ignores the profound relationship with the territory will be limited

in its effectiveness since solutions must respond to specific contexts and to the visions of each People. Without territorial security there can be no true climate adaptation or mitigation.

Four key ideas about Territorial security for Indigenous Peoples were co-created over the three days of the International Workshop:

Territorial security as a guarantee of physical and cultural existence

For Indigenous Peoples, territory is the basis of identity, spirituality, and ways of life. Therefore, ensuring Indigenous territorial security for climate action involves:

- Protection from despoliation, envelopment, and displacement
- Legal recognition of their ancestral territories
- Respect for their own forms of economy, governance, and justice

Territorial security as protection against extractivism

Extractivism poses a direct threat by triggering:

- Violence
- Displacements
- Criminalization of Environmental defenders
- Conflicts within communities

Tackling **territorial insecurity** means bringing together **climate justice, territorial rights,** and the **autonomy of Indigenous Peoples** onto a single path.

Territorial security as self-government

Territorial security that strengthens climate action is only possible if Indigenous Peoples exercise real control over their territories. This includes:

- Autonomous justice systems
- Indigenous territorial management
- Community patrols or guards

Territorial security as recognition of collective rights

Territorial security is closely linked to collective rights such as:

- Prior consultation
- Self-determination
- The right to govern their territories

Credit: viernes.online



Dimensions of multilevel intervention for climate justice:

Community and Local level	In communities, intervention translates into 1) community climate adaptation plans co-designed with Indigenous Peoples or local communities, respecting their worldview and knowledge to prevent forced displacement or livelihood loss; 2) culturally based restoration , promoting ancestral and local practices to reforest, conserve watersheds, and protect biodiversity in consonance with territorial identity ; and 3) modern technology combined with traditional knowledge to tackle droughts, fires, or floods.
National level	The national dimensions include legal recognition of Indigenous territory as a subject of rights , the reform of regulatory frameworks on consultation and participation to ensure effective Indigenous consultation mechanisms , and the allocation of public funds for Indigenous climate actions .
International level	Among the international dimensions are advocacy in global negotiations to ensure Indigenous and local community representation in decision-making on climate policies , as well as multilateral agreements that compel states to protect environmental defenders in highly conflictive and violent contexts.

Only with territorial security for Indigenous Peoples can the relationship with **the state** be transformed into a **partnership of care and co-responsibility** in which the **territo-**

ry is recognized not only as a **physical space** but also a **spiritual, political, cultural, and ecological apparatus** that supports us all.

Forms of articulation between states and Indigenous Peoples

Shared governance for indigenous territorial security:



INDIGENOUS ECONOMY AND KNOWLEDGE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Indigenous Economies

Indigenous economies are a fundamental part of the vision of the territory and are closely linked to actions for adaptation to climate change. Understanding Indigenous economies entails recognition of the autonomy and **self-determination of Indigenous Peoples to decide on their own development model**. In this sense, the notion of **balance** is key, since the answer is not to pursue extreme conservationism or an excessive high-productivity, market-driven model.

During the International Workshop, participants discussed how the exchange and use of seeds and the promotion of alternative economies have been important contributions by Indigenous Peoples to the fight against climate change. In the case of local economies supported by ancestral and local knowledge, for example, communities develop small-scale productive activities intended for self-sufficiency and the market through sustainable ecosystem use and minimal institutional support. These models point toward food sovereignty, respect, and *buen vivir*.

However, **these local practices coexist with large-scale extractive activities** that jeopardize territories, sources of life, and community autonomy. This translates, in many cases, into situations in which future generations are displaced from their territories of origin. Likewise, **limited access to climate finance** also restricts the upscaling of these sustainable local economies. Less than 1% of this funding goes directly to Indigenous Peoples. Institutional barriers, extensive administrative burdens, poorly

adapted technical requirements, and centralized channeling make funds difficult to access—a situation compounded by an increasingly urgent global context for climate support.

“
*Sometimes we feel like
REDD+ is REDD-
because less reaches the
community.*
”

(Bequer, day 2)



ECONOMIC AUTONOMY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Economic autonomy can give control to Indigenous Peoples and serves as a mechanism for moving beyond subsistence economies.



Indigenous Peoples need to be free to choose their own development models based on guarantees that what is produced is sustainable, can be integrated into markets, and ensures the sustainability of forests and territories.



The economy is understood beyond monetary considerations.



There is a lack of fair trade opportunities for Indigenous artisanal products. The knowledge and labor involved in these products are not valued.



In the territories there are resistance economies as opposed to extractive economies.

However, despite the challenges identified, Indigenous communities maintain a remarkable capacity for resilience, as evidenced by the strengthening of female leadership in both the Indigenous economy and climate action. For Indigenous Peoples, control over the territory means the capacity to exercise a sustainable economy, which allows them to make their own decisions about how to live and work in harmony with their own worldview.

Indigenous Environmental Knowledge

Indigenous economies and knowledge are deeply connected with climate action. During the International Workshop, the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous Peoples was a central theme in several discussion spaces. This is because accumulated knowledge about territory and the use and protection of natural resources can offer valuable lessons about how nature works.

“*Within climate policies, ancestral knowledge is not valued; it is subordinated to scientific solutions.*”

”
(Group 3, day 1)

Credit: viernes.online





Credit: viernes.online

Key ideas about Indigenous environmental knowledge:

 Indigenous environmental knowledge implies an **ancestral relationship**, physical and spiritual, based on the **sacred link between Indigenous Peoples and nature**. This special bond must form the basis of any climate discussion and action.

 This knowledge involves recognizing the complementarity of **community and natural relationships in times of crisis**. This knowledge has educational value but it is also paramount to addressing the current crisis. The relationships between communities and nature are central, and an inclusive and bilingual policy approach that recognizes and respects these special ties is essential.

 **Bilingual education (IBE) is an outstanding debt owed by states to Indigenous Peoples.** IBE is a tool that Peoples use to pass on knowledge to children, but it also serves to combat the racism that persists where they live and develop. The promotion of IBE is a state duty; in the communities, Spanish prevails over their own languages. Indigenous Peoples must be allowed to transmit their own knowledge in their native language.

 **The absence of a sustainable scientific approach in state environmental education undermines the relationship with nature** and adversely impacts health, the economy, and the inter-generational transmission of ancestral knowledge. Neither climate change nor sustainable management of nature are taught; rather, its exploitation is encouraged (through mining, extractivism, etc.). **Local knowledge must be strengthened** to promote appropriate environmental education as well as the generational transmission of this knowledge. The lack or loss of knowledge about nature, including health, since fruit and the foods provided by nature are no longer consumed out of ignorance. This also has repercussions for the economy.

 **Youth migration threatens the continuity of the relationship with nature as well as local knowledge.** The migration of young people away from communities raises concerns over the adoption of new ways of thinking, such as the acceptance of genetically modified seeds. This highlights the need to strengthen self-knowledge.

 **Education as a vital tool:** Education must be an engine for recovering traditional practices and knowledge, promoting a dialogue between ancestral wisdom and technological instruments for the protection and care of territories.

PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY IN CLIMATE ACTION

The first consideration and the minimum standard of interaction with the state is free, prior, and informed consent. This whole approach informs a key field of action: **the participation of Indigenous women in climate action.** Throughout the International Workshop, Indigenous women were represented as pillars in the defense of the territory, culture, and community life. Thus, women's participation is essential to forging partnerships with various actors, contributing to the intergenerational transmission of experiences, and collectively influencing discussion spaces such as international forums.

It is important to recognize that this discussion on indigenous participation in climate action occurs not only at the state level but also in transnational spaces. Progress in political advocacy has been made in some nation-states, such as Chile and Colombia, although this is a process that needs to be sustained and reinforced. In the case of Peru, advocacy is equally important at the national and subnational levels, especially where there have been setbacks in the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Key contributions from the International Workshop participants:

- Individual rights are collective rights
- The place of Indigenous women within communities needs to be strengthened
- There are opportunities for inclusion but there are also risks associated with the advance of artificial intelligence and the use of social media for advocacy
- The education of young people is fundamental since it is they who will continue the fight against the climate crisis

The state-sponsored creation of protected areas is a policy that sometimes causes overlaps between Peoples, their presence, and their interests, forestalling access to their own territories. As a result Indigenous Peoples can be denied free movement and the practice of daily ancestral tasks such as harvesting.

Marisol asks,
"Who are they protected from?"

“ There is a global agenda to encourage the creation of more protected areas to address climate change, but without the Indigenous Peoples. ”

(Marisol, panelm day 2)



Indigenous Peoples do not only protect biodiversity; they also possess ancestral science, wisdom, and technology that must be recognized in public policies to ensure true participation. There is an urgent need to implement mechanisms of political participation that respect the identity of Peoples, languages, and forms of organization. However, Indigenous Peoples are often instrumentalized through formal, but not real participation.

Implications for Discussion at the COP

Conferences of the Parties (COPs) are crucial for climate change policies but their effectiveness is blunted by a lack of political will. **Young women must be empowered to actively participate in these spaces** and then disseminate the information and knowledge generated to their territory using new technologies.

“*Training young seeds to prepare ourselves for the future and assure informed participation in spaces such as the COP.*

(Rosalia, day 1) ”



Participation in COPs should not be limited to small spaces or tables but should also include more open environments, which allow greater interaction and exposure for different Peoples' voices.

It is important to note that **climate issues affect women in different ways**, so a **specific gender focus is required**. “*All injustices have a woman's face*” since, in addition to bearing the brunt of climate change and climate actions, it is they who are tasked with new roles and responsibilities such as ecofeminism.



The PPICC is an institutionalized space in Peru that seeks to integrate the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous Peoples into national climate action. Its objective is to manage, coordinate, disseminate, and monitor proposals for climate change adaptation and mitigation by placing value on their traditional and ancestral knowledge, practices, and wisdom.

The **Indigenous People's Platform to Address Climate Change (PPICC) in Peru** should be seen as a **significant achievement among Indigenous Peoples**, as it represents an institutionalized space of their own and brings together several national organizations through which to position their proposals and participate in the formulation of climate policy.

However, it is important to recognize that COPs remain **state-controlled spaces** in which Indigenous Peoples participate primarily as **observers**, limiting their direct influence on key decisions.

Recommendations

From the conversations held during the three days of face-to-face sessions, **several recommendations were co-created** for sharing in larger spaces such as the COP. Foremost among these were:

 **Comprehensive vision of climate policy:** Climate policy should not be considered solely from an environmental perspective. Limiting the territory to the environment is a colonial vision that neglects the multiple dimensions of the territory and its Peoples.

 **Territorial and climate governance:** Governance must ensure active participation and binding decision-making by Indigenous Peoples. Only through real inclusion can effective and respectful management of the territory and the climate be achieved.

 **The territory as a whole:** The conception of the territory and the system as a whole must be expanded from a strictly spatial approach to an animate and holistic one. It is vital that policymaking recognizes this totality and that it does not fragment the territorial reality through its interventions.

 **The forest as a source of life:** The forest is seen as a living space that provides everything necessary for daily life—food, medicine, and protection—like a natural market that covers the basic needs of the communities.

 **Indigenous versus state logic:** There is a structural difference between the state's vision of conservation and Indigenous land management practices. Indigenous methodologies and visions that have proven to be effective and sustainable must be recognized and respected. "While Indigenous management of the territory is collective, the state adopts an individualistic and bureaucratic logic" (Elvira, Day 2). There is a risk that the state will upset the balance.

 **Building bridges between the technical and the ancestral:** It is necessary to reconcile technical-legal approaches and ancestral-community knowledge for more integrated and just territorial management.

“We know our territory. For us it is already in order; it is the state that comes along and messes it up with the territorial management”

“The forest is like our market, because there we find everything: hospital, pharmacy, food, and so on.”

(Anila, día 2)





CHILE

"We are 21st-century Mapuche"

Rosa Catrileo



COLOMBIA

"Minga on the inside"

Gina Paola Escué



PERÚ

"The Indigenous Peoples bear the problem, but on their shoulders they carry the solutions."

Rosalía Clemente



Buen vivir and co-management:

To speak legitimately of "buen vivir," the co-management and territorial administration process must be equitable and transparent and recognize Indigenous Peoples as decision-makers.



Climate crisis and human rights:

The climate crisis is not merely an environmental crisis; it is also a crisis of human and territorial rights. Climate policies must recognize this interrelationship and act accordingly.



Indigenous mechanisms for territorial control:

Indigenous Peoples have developed a range of mechanisms and experiences to protect and exercise control over their territories, adapted to the instruments and realities of each country.



Youth participation:

Resources, such as guides and webinars, must be created to actively involve young people in decision-making and in territorial and climate governance processes.

"We carry forward the voices that come from our ancestors; what we know is from them."

(Thalía, day 2) ”

"Many injustices are committed. My dream is to pave the way for other young people like me."

(Gina, day 3) ”





Final Reflections

Credit: viernes.online

We closed the International Workshop with awareness of a profound certainty: **There is no climate justice without territory.** Everything we shared and heard over these sessions casts light on a common perspective: Climate action can be neither effective nor just if it is disconnected from the territories, their Peoples, and their roots.

These final reflections gather the voices, experiences, and proposals that have emerged from the heart of the territory. They are key to looking forward with clarity and commitment.

TERRITORY

Not without the territory!

- To be just, global climate action needs to be anchored in Indigenous territories.
- Territories are not merely vulnerable areas: They are political, ecological, and cultural sources of climate action.
- Without territorial rights there is no climate legitimacy or effectiveness.
- There are no Indigenous Peoples without territory, and there is no climate solution without Indigenous Peoples.

SEEDS: INHERITANCE, SOVREIGNTY, AND CARE

- To care for seeds is to exercise sovereignty and defend culture.
- They are the past and the future: Without seeds there is no regeneration or collective life.
- Indigenous climate adaptation includes:
 - Preservation of native seeds
 - Territorial management
 - Agroecological knowledge
- Adaptation is not technical; it is a way of inhabiting the world that requires recognition of autonomous strategies rather than external imposition.

MEANINGFUL CLIMATE FINANCE

- Climate finance must guarantee territorial rights. If it does not, it loses legitimacy and transforms nothing.
- Investment without territory is “REDD minus.”
- Projects must emerge from the territory and from co-creation rather than being imposed from the outside. For instance, young Indigenous people in Colombia promote environmental care projects from their own territories.

TISSUE

Living and political networks

- Tissue symbolizes the relationships between people, knowledge, generations, and territories.
- With regard to climate change:
 - Tissue is resilient infrastructure.
 - It articulates support, knowledge, and collective action.
- Tissue also applies to governing: it is a way of caring for the territory in times of uncertainty.

Organizational tissue and political action

- Indigenous organizations emerge from this community tissue.
- They are living political infrastructure, not just spaces of protest.
- They act **continuously**, not sporadically.
- Women sustain the everyday tissue: They care, they teach, they transmit. But they also participate in the political tissue, where meanings, resources, and governance are disputed from the territory. In this sense, women are active political subjects in the international climate system.
- It is important to choose **good partners** by building trust and encouraging the political **formation** of young people.

RIVER

Spirituality: a profound bond with life and the territory

- For many Indigenous Peoples, the spiritual is not a separate sphere from the political or the ecological: As Dalmiro says, it is the unseen “Wisdom” that sustains collective life, territory, and relations with the world.
- The territory is inhabited not only by bodies but also by the spirit: It is a sacred space where ancestors, life forces, and memories live.
- Spiritual practices—such as rituals, ceremonies, chants, the care of certain places—are ways of governing the territory and relating with it through respect, reciprocity, and balance.
- Amid climate change, indigenous spirituality is not opposed to scientific knowledge but offers an expanded vision of care and regeneration. **It teaches that the aim is not just to reduce emissions but also to heal relationships:** with the earth, with natural cycles, with past and future generations.
- Climate justice also demands spiritual justice: Recognition that responses to ecological collapse are not only technical and legal but also ethical and spiritual. Decolonizing climate action involves listening to territorial spiritualities: not as adornments but as sources of meaning and guidance for the transition.

POEM: THE ECHO

by Dalmiro Acosta



I am the echo of the mountains. A place where there was a home.

Where the song of the birds was a tornado full of joy.

Every moment. Every instant.

Every morning. Every dawn.

Children, the elderly, full of peace and harmony in

connection with nature.

Mother Earth, the rivers, are our siblings.

We have indisputable testimony from the trees, from the birds, from the winds, from the rivers.

The earth is our mother.

We are pre-existent. We did not come from order. And nature herself knows it.

Each ghostly reflection in the waters of the lakes tells of events and recollections from the lives of my siblings, the sap that circulates in the trees bears the memory of my Native People in these American lands.

“We are part of the earth and it is part of us.”



*Poem written during the International Workshop
Lima, Peru, April 25, 2025*

Dalmiro Acosta
The Wichí People,
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VISIONES INDÍGENAS
PARA LA
JUSTICIA CLIMÁTICA



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