

Ancestral Wisdom and COVID-19

Myrna Kay Cunningham Kain¹

Vivian Tatiana Camacho Hinojosa²



3

This document contains an innovative proposal for the health of Mother Earth and Biocultural Ecosystems, one which is based on ancestral community wisdom and constant dialogue with Indigenous Peoples in order to have public health policies for indigenous communities during this COVID-19 Pandemic.⁴

For our peoples, health, life and Good Living are a complex interdependent whole that is part of interconnected relational networks, of human communities, social relations and relations with Mother Earth.

Indigenous Peoples have kept an institutional framework and a social fabric that is highly specific to them, in addition to possessing traditional knowledge known as Traditional Ancestral Medicine, which was developed within the framework of their respective cosmovisions. Their Health Systems are an intrinsic part of the Good Living paradigm and are oriented to the care of diverse ecosystems that coexist in balance, in relation to the community territorial context and the coexistence that involves both the relations with the community and with nature. Therefore, this proposal raises the need for Intercultural and Inter-scientific Dialogue, in order to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some brief definitions of concepts in the proposal:

1. Good Living. Understanding that "The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth," therefore, this is about coexisting in harmony and balance among the beings that inhabit Mother Earth.

2. Health of Mother Earth. To take care of her, we have Traditional Ancestral Medicine, which takes care of human beings, plants and animals, even taking care of sacred places that coincide with water sources and places with great biodiversity. Its methodology

¹ Mirna Cunningham Kain is the President of the Fund for Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin American and the Caribbean (FILAC)

² Vivian Camacho: High-Level Commissioner "Alma Ata 40 years" for PAHO, Bolivia Peoples Health Coordinator, Quechua Midwiser, Indigenous Communicator, Master's in Agroecology and Culture, Medical Surgeon with Specialization in Interculturality and Health. Contact: camachovivian@gmail.com

³ Image Source: Own Photography "Pachamama Sumaq Jampeq Usta" (Mother Earth the Great Healer)

⁴ <https://www.who.int/es/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/q-a-coronaviruses> Questions and Answers on the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

varies according to each ecological floor and according to each specialty. The spirituality of the healings reconnects us with the force of life that makes the seeds sprout and causes the movement of the stars and the birth of all beings. It is from this way of relating to a living universe that the ancestral doctors, with their ritual practices, can predict the time of rain or drought, favor a good harvest and a healthy life in harmony with the natural cycles.⁵

3. Biocultural Ecosystems Health. Health is built within the land, which is why water sources are sacred, as are the places we inhabit. It is urgent to promote Agroecology, Solidarity Economy and Reciprocity, as part of a model that protects the social coexistence of the community, respecting the natural environment and cultural identity. We consider this a biocultural heritage. We are living territories in dialogue with our environment, we take care of the seeds, the water, the land and the land and our sacred places.

Also important is the constant and permanent promotion of intercultural and inter-scientific dialogues between governments and Indigenous Peoples, as a measure to confront the Covid-19 pandemic, based on the proposals and contributions of indigenous organizations to confront the pandemic.

The expansion of the pandemic in the indigenous territories must be informed and prevented, and this information requires an adequate cultural context as well as appropriate translations of the different messages that are being developed by the member countries. Other measures for the implementation of the proposal are:

- Characterizing the main vulnerabilities of the various Indigenous Peoples and prioritizing their attention.
- Carrying out a massive media campaign through radio, television and social networks, with accurate information, translated into the local indigenous language which is widely disseminated.
- Reinforcing the health fence in communities with voluntary isolation.
- Establishing mechanisms for participation with indigenous peoples in urban areas, involving community health leaders and agents from traditional ancestral medicine, for the prevention and treatment of patients with COVID-19.
- Promoting methods and treatments from local Traditional Ancestral Medicine, within each territory, together with their medicinal plants, ancestral food and rituals for Mother Earth and for the well-being of the community.
- Caring for the sources of healthy and clean water for consumption by the communities, as part of the strategy of prevention and treatment of COVID-19.
- Promoting solidarity and complementarity as a deep ancestral value of Indigenous Peoples.
- Promoting the recovery of community values of coexistence and harmony with Mother Earth.

⁵ Climate Change and Traditional Ancient Medicine / ORAS-CONHU Andean Health Agency Convention Hippolyte Unanue/ Vivian Camacho 2020

I) **Bibliography.**

Chuyma Aru Association. (1997). *Así nomás nos curamos, la medicina en los Andes* [This is how we cure ourselves, the medicine in the Andes]. Puno_Peru.

Camaqui A., (2009). *Plantas Medicinales* [Medicinal Plants]. Bolivia.

Camey Huz M., (2012). *Escuchando el clamor y los gritos de la Madre Tierra: Guía metodológica para la reducción de vulnerabilidad desde la Cosmovisión Maya* [Listening to the clamor and cries of Mother Earth: A methodological guide for vulnerability reduction from the Mayan Cosmvision]. Guatemala City: CEDIM Foundation.

Choquehuanca D., (2017). *Manifiesto del Vivir Bien* [Living Well Manifesto]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Consejo Maya Mam Txé Chman San Marcos. (2012). *Heal our life, love our life in fullness*. Guatemala City: CEDIM Foundation.

De Lucca M., Zalles J., (1992). *Flora Medicinal Boliviana* [Bolivian Medicinal Flora]. Cochabamba_Bolivia.

Delgado F., editor. (2006). *Diálogo Intercultural e Intercientífico: para el fortalecimiento de las ciencias de los pueblos indígenas originarios* [Intercultural and inter-scientific dialogue: for the strengthening of indigenous peoples' sciences] La Paz: Agruco/Plural editors.

Elbers, J. (2013). *Ciencia Holística para el Buen Vivir: Una introducción* [Holistic Science for Good Living: An Introduction]. Ecuador: CEDA.

Gorban, M. et al. (2011). *Seguridad y Soberanía Alimentaria* [Food Security and Sovereignty]. Buenos Aires: Colección Cuadernos.

Haverkort B., et al. (2013). *Hacia el Diálogo Intercientífico: Construyendo desde la pluralidad de visiones de mundo, valores y métodos en diferentes comunidades de conocimiento* [Towards an Inter-scientific Dialogue: Building from the Plurality of Worldviews, Values and Methods in Different Knowledge Communities]. La Paz: Agruco/Plural editors.

Ministry of Education of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. (2019). *Diálogo Intercientífico de la teoría a la práctica* [Inter-scientific dialogue from theory to practice]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. (2009). *El Vivir Bien como respuesta a la crisis global* [Good Living as a response to the global crisis]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. (2010). *Vivir Bien* [Good Living]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. (2010). *La Tierra no nos pertenece, nosotros pertenecemos a la Tierra* [The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Ministry of Health of Brazil. (2015). *Saúde e Ambiente para as populações do campo, da floresta e das águas* [Health and Environment for rural forests, water and people]. Brasilia.

Monsalvo, J. (2012). *Cartas con Alegremia hacia una nueva civilización* [Letters with Allegremia to a New Civilization]. Argentina: Krómik grafica integral.

PAHO/WHO. (2019). Universal Health in the 21st Century: 40 years of Alma Ata. Report of the High-Level Commission. Washington.

PAHO/WHO. (2017). Policy on Ethnicity and Health. 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference. Washington.

ORAS-CONHU. (2010). *Aún nos cuidamos con Nuestra Medicina: Inventario sistematizado de las prácticas sanitarias tradicionales existentes en las poblaciones originarias de los países andinos* [We still take care of ourselves with Our Medicine: Systematized Inventory of Traditional Health Practices in Native Populations of Andean Countries]. Lima.

ORAS-CONHU. (2019). Andean Intercultural Health Policy 2019. Lima.

ORAS-CONHU. (2019). Andean Health and Climate Change Plan. Lima.

Pengue W., et al. (2018). *Agroecología Ambiente y Salud: Escudos verdes productivos y pueblos sustentables* [Agroecology, Environment and Health: Productive Green Shields and Sustainable Villages]. Santiago/Buenos Aires: Henrich Boll Stiftung.

Rist S., editor. (2016). *Ciencias, diálogo de saberes y transdisciplinariedad: Aportes teórico-metodológicos para la sustentabilidad alimentaria y del desarrollo* [Science, knowledge dialogue and transdisciplinarity: Theoretical and methodological contributions for food and development sustainability]. La Paz: Agruco/Plural editors.

Rojas J., et al. (2009). *El Buen Vivir: Construye Vida en tu Habitat* [Good Living: Build Life in your Habitat]. Havana: Impresión Feriva S.A.

Rosing I., et al. (1995). *Diálogos con divinidades de cerros, rayos, manantiales y lagos: oraciones blancas Kallawayas* [Dialogues with divinities of hills, rays, springs and lakes: white Kallawayaya prayers]. La Paz_Bolivia.

Tapia N., editor. (2008). *Aprendiendo el desarrollo endógeno sostenible: Construyendo la diversidad biocultural* [Learning sustainable endogenous development: Building biocultural diversity]. La Paz: Agruco/Plural editors.

Viaña J., et al. (2009). *Interculturalidad crítica y descolonización: fundamentos para el debate* [Critical interculturality and decolonization: foundations for debate]. Bolivia: III-CAB