Fourth Andean Meeting of Peace

The contribution of indigenous languages from education to peacebuilding

Conclusions and Recommendations

Date: July 3-4 2019
Place: Auditorium
       FLACSO Ecuador

Jointly with:

With the support of:
I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The UNESCO Office in Quito and Representation to Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela organized and coordinated three previous editions of the Andean Meeting of Peace. The "First Andean Meeting on Culture of Peace" was held in the city of Quito, Ecuador, on December 9 and 10, 2013; the "Second Andean Meeting on Culture of Peace: the role of Education for all" was held in the city of Cali, Colombia, on October 16 and 17, 2014; and the "Third Andean Meeting of Peace: Contributions from education for the reconstruction of the social fabric in Colombia", was held in Bogotá, Colombia, on November 3 and 4, 2016. The Andean Meetings of Peace share the central goal of promoting a platform for dialogue, reflection and exchange in the context of building a culture of peace and nonviolence, and the corresponding intersections with education, interculturality, the value of peace, the socialization of citizen ethics and the principles of Global Citizenship, promoted by UNESCO.

The “Fourth Andean Meeting of Peace: the contribution of indigenous languages from education to peacebuilding”, held in the city of Quito, Ecuador, on July 3 and 4, 2019, took place in the framework of the “International Year of Indigenous Languages - 2019”. This international year was declared on December 23, 2016, during the seventy-first session of the UN General Assembly. This International Year places global attention on the critical risks that indigenous languages face and their importance for sustainable development, good governance, culture of peace and reconciliation, quality of life in accordance with cultural specifications, intercultural dialogue; as well as the reaffirmation of cultural and linguistic continuity, the effective exercise of fundamental rights, and the quality and scope of political participation.

In pursuit of its mandate to lead and support actions aimed at building peace with a Human Rights based approach, the UNESCO Office in Quito and Representation to Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, the National Council for the Equality of Peoples and Nationalities, the Polytechnic University of Loja (UTPL), the UNESCO Chair on Culture and Education for Peace of the UTPL, the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ecuador, UN Women Ecuador, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO - Ecuador), with the support of the National University of Education (UNAE), the University of Cuenca and the Ibero-American Institute of Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Andrés Bello Convention Organization (IPANC-CAB) organized this fourth edition of the Andean Meeting of Peace, with emphasis on the contribution of indigenous languages to peacebuilding from mother-tongue education and the role of indigenous communities in building a culture of peace, connecting the issue of peace with the recovery, preservation and promotion of indigenous languages.

The event presented an interdisciplinary and plural agenda. It reflected the complexity of the issue of indigenous languages in the context of cultural diversity and sustainable development, highlighting the intersections with core questions, such as human rights, territory, gender, interculturality, vitality of indigenous languages, education, autonomy and self-determination of indigenous communities, as well as peacebuilding and the role of traditional methods of mediation and conflict resolution, among others. The meeting counted with the participation of national and international experts, as well as researchers on the subject, community leaders and members of indigenous communities. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also participated in the meeting.

Moreover, the "IV Andean Meeting of Peace" is part of the seven preparatory seminars for the “International Congress on Education, Indigenous Languages, Territories of Knowledge and Interculturality” to be held on October 17 and 18, 2019 at the National University of Education.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main conclusions and recommendations of the "IV Andean Meeting of Peace: the contribution of indigenous languages from education to peace building ":

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, VITALITY AND REVITALIZATION

1. A language becomes extinct when it ceases to be the first language that children learn at home, because the last speaker who learned the language from his ancestors has died in the last five decades. A language is endangered when it is on a path towards extinction. UNESCO (2005). "Language Vitality and Endangerment":

...
UNESCO has developed the platform "Interactive Atlas of Endangered Indigenous Languages", available online for public consultation: http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/es/atlasmap.html. This resource allows the monitoring of extinct and threatened languages in the world, based on the measurement of their vitality, and on the global trends of linguistic diversity. Its objective is to raise awareness among policymakers, speaking population communities and the public about the problem of endangered languages and the need to safeguard the linguistic diversity of the world.

This edition of the Atlas has allowed a broad access to its content for the first time, as it facilitates interactivity and provides a timely update of its data coming from information provided by users.

UNESCO is currently working on enhancing the online version of the “Interactive Atlas of Endangered Indigenous Languages” to launch the “UNESCO World Atlas of Languages”. The platform will cover the work from academics and public and private organizations, also incorporating by the very first time a wide range of linguistic materials, services and solutions available for public use by Internet. The “UNESCO World Atlas of Languages” will contribute to safeguard the linguistic and cultural diversity, as well the global documentary heritage in several languages, and will reinforce the practices and experiences for implementing the “UNESCO Recommendation on the promotion of universal access and multilingualism in the cyberspace” (2003).

The long-term objective is to contribute to safeguard the linguistic diversity of the world and to promote multilingualism in cyberspace by effective application of Information Technology and Communication (ICT). This initiative aims preserving the language resources, providing access and disseminating these elements through on-line platforms, learning communities, collaborative spaces and other resources provided by ICTs, with a strong component of cooperation from the institutional networks and commitment from the civic society.

2. UNESCO proposes a holistic and interdisciplinary methodology for measuring the vitality of indigenous languages. This methodology takes into account nine factors in order to determine the vitality of a language: Factor 1 – Intergenerational Language Transmission; Factor 2 - Absolute number of speakers; Factor 3 - Proportion of speakers within the total population ; Factor 4 – Shifts in domains of language use; Factor 5 - Response to new domains and media; Factor 6 - Availability of materials for language education and literacy ; Factor 7 - Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use; Factor 8 - Community members’ attitudes towards their own language; Factor 9 - Type and quality of documentation. UNESCO (2005). “Language Vitality and Endangerment”: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf

The use the conceptual frameworks conceived and tested by expert groups specialized in the issue of indigenous languages is recommended, such as the aforementioned UNESCO document "Language Vitality and Endangerment". These frameworks provide a methodological blueprint that allows the application of a standardized knowledge system to gather and analyze information as a resource to identify a language, understanding its situation at a given time, and to compare the situation between languages. The resource of comparison provides opportunities to replicate successful cases in the revitalization of languages.

3. The danger of the disappearance of a language may be the result of external forces, such as military, economic, religious, cultural and educational subjugation, or it may have its cause in internal forces, such as the negative attitude of a community towards its own language. Often internal pressures have their origin in external pressures, and some hinder or prevent the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. UNESCO (2005). "Language Vitality and Endangerment": http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf

Likewise, in globalization dynamic, climate change is raising as one of the main threats to the survival of indigenous peoples due to its serious and growing effects on indigenous communities’ subsistence
Within the framework of the “International Year of Indigenous Languages - 2019”, UNESCO advocates for the revitalization and conservation of indigenous languages, in the light of known data about the possible extinction of a significant number of them: about 400 million people in 90 countries speak about 7000 languages. Among these, almost half (2680) are in danger of disappearing in the next 100 years if nothing is done today.

The revitalization of indigenous languages involves a synergistic effort that integrates communities, families, speakers, academia, civil society, international and specialized organizations and governments. In this sense, public policy works as a mandatory framework for action and articulation, providing a guarantee of rights for the full exercise of diversity, the normalization of the integration of heterogeneity and the practice of a language as a legitimate manifestation of identity.

In this context, governments are recommended to consider the following in their actions: 1.- Create and strengthen entities dedicated to the research and promotion of indigenous languages; 2.- Implement linguistic policies from the communities and monitor the teaching and training processes of indigenous language teachers; 3.- Promote the use of indigenous languages in all public and private institutions and services; 4.- Make the necessary legal advances in policies of identification, dissemination and valuation of indigenous languages; 5.- Promote the creation of materials and books in indigenous languages; 6.- Develop a common frame of reference for the teaching of indigenous languages in Latin America, taking local realities into consideration.

**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION FOR INTERCULTURALITY**

5. Interculturality is an epistemic alternative that implies an outlook from heterogeneity, as the basic principle for policies and dialogue actions, in the light of Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

In the context of this epistemic alternative, the emphasis is placed on basic transformative actions: 1.- Enrich educational conceptions, practices and policies of the region; 2.- Explore alternative ways of thinking about education and knowledge (modernity and technical-scientific rationality); 3.- Recognize and legitimate indigenous knowledge (decolonize knowledge); 4.- Transcend folklore and focused policies; 5.- Promote a genuine dialogue between cultures and knowledge; 6.- Enrich educational policies and practices by making them more inclusive.

6. Education for interculturality implies rethinking the educational system and processes, in search of the following objectives: 1.- Counteract the prevailing view on education and development through the reaffirmation of a humanistic and integrated vision of both; 2.- Re-contextualize the principles for the governance of education, in particular the principle of education as a public good; 2.- Place the needs, desires and aspirations of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups at the center of public policy decisions, in an act of justice and to rectify their historically subordinate condition.

7. The advances in Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru in the field of intercultural education highlight a progressive shift towards the incorporation of intercultural alternatives accounting for social heterogeneity and the reconciliation of access and permanence opportunities in the education system, with cultural and linguistic specifications. This journey began with the homogenization project of Hispanicization and has advanced towards Bilingual Intercultural Education (IEB). OREALC / UNESCO Santiago (2017) "Indigenous knowledge and educational policies in Latin America: exploratory analysis of how worldviews...

---

1 Some languages are prone to be “revitalized” or even “brought back to life”. It is interesting to review the case of Hebrew, a liturgical language previously extinct, that offers a successful example on how to revive a language up to the point to transform it in the official language of a country, Israel. Hebrew passed from being a language reserved for liturgical practice used in confined spaces by a limited community, to an official language of general use, closely linked to the identity and culture of the Israeli people.
8. In spite of the advances in the region, there are pending challenges and lags to overcome, among which we can underline: 1.- Deeper knowledge of indigenous peoples; 2.- Transcend stereotypes: accept diversity; 3.- Research on knowledge: together with indigenous peoples; 4.- Decent work for teachers: working conditions and training; 5.- Incompatibilities: meritocracy and standardization (evaluation) / Static definitions; 6.- Gender and social roles: care, home and crafts / knowledge; 7.- Accumulation of disadvantages: rurality, gender, disabilities; 8.- Dialogue conditions: respect and autonomy, legitimation, deconstruction of privileges and exploration of different worldviews.

9. Overcoming these challenges and lags requires: 1.- Moving towards epistemic dialogues with indigenous knowledge in education; 2.- Incorporating the different worldviews as a premise of interculturality; 3.- Advancing in gender equality and inclusion; 4.- Strengthening the commitment of States to the promotion of public policies for the revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages.

In this regard, interculturality is not built unilaterally, in fact, not only indigenous peoples are intercultural, society in general must be built under this mainstream criterion of interculturality.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND GENDER

10. Tradition has contradictorily placed the emphasis on the exercise of rights of indigenous peoples in differentiation, separation and exclusion in decision making. Having a different view also means concretizing the fundamental role of women in the construction, continuity and extension of the exercise of rights. This role must be projected in the intergenerational transmission of the mother language by women, drawn from their daily narrative, their own practices that connect to the territory and that are protected by the language, and from their symbolic capacity as the maternal link with their territories.

11. The role of women in giving continuity and revitalizing indigenous languages is essential to the intergenerational transmission mechanism. Thus, policies and actions for the revitalization of the language should start from the consideration of the key role women play in the social context, from the initial experiences of socialization in the family environment, to the intermediation in the vital processes of relationships and development.

12. The speakers’ valuation of their own language is a fundamental element in the use and transmission of the language. It involves a process of transferring a positive value in practical and subjective terms (the first in relation to the usefulness of its usage and the second in relation to the appreciation and pride for a culture), centered in the family context, and in the guardianship role women play in that context. In this sense, the revitalization of the language implies the emphasis on the relevance of women’s participation in the early processes of communication, socialization of knowledge and transmission of practices in the language itself.

13. Languages are basic vehicles for indigenous women in the opening of opportunities for development and self-realization, based on autonomy and personal assessment of their own cultural and social resources. In this sense, development opportunities focused on girls, young and adult women should be placed in their cultural specifications and linguistic interests, without disconnecting them from social and economic dynamics.

14. Within the gender mainstreaming framework, it is recommended to strengthen capacity building initiatives with a focus on gender. As an example, the School of Afro and Indigenous Women, has implemented a project between the Intercultural School of Indigenous Diplomacy of the Universidad del Rosario and the University of New York, aimed at expanding leadership and incidence of indigenous women at local, national and international levels, among other initiatives. This recommendation extends to promoting research and systematization of updated and relevant data on the situation of indigenous women, such as the report on violence against indigenous women in Colombia by the Intercultural School of Indigenous Diplomacy of the Universidad del Rosario.
INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND PEACE BUILDING

15. The construction of a sustainable peace is an urgent task and, at the moment, in the process of change, after its arrival on the international agenda since the early 1990s, when it was closely linked to the idea of strengthening the State and the dissemination of democracy. The approach, very much based on Western culture, was called the liberal peacebuilding consensus, which today is in the process of transformation.

16. In this regard, the contributions of indigenous cultures, based on ancestral practices with evidence of success and comparable to those proposed since the nineties of the twentieth century, are located in a new context that favors two lines of work, already under way and with large possibilities for growth: 1.- Changes in the way of addressing the theoretical and practical role of indigenous peoples, with an emphasis on the internationalization of traditional methods of conflict resolution, advocating for the learning of lessons from the past, for effective and relevant work and advocacy. It is especially suggested to review and take advantage of the contributions of the Manila Declaration, signed on the “International Conference on Conflict Resolution, Peace Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous People” (Manila, December 6-8, 2009): [https://www.twn.my/title/manila.htm](https://www.twn.my/title/manila.htm); 2.- Hybridize indigenous knowledge for the transformation of conflict with the new approaches on mediation, resolution and transformation proposed today.

In this sense, it is important to promote the translation of resources from indigenous cultures for peacebuilding, in audio, images and video into non-colonial indigenous languages.

17. Based on what is mentioned on paragraph above (No. 16), it is recommended to support academic initiatives for the creation of an open platform that collects and systematizes in a verifiable and coherent way and validates the experiences on management, resolution and transformation of conflicts that arise from indigenous peoples and cultures, thus fostering dialogue and hybridization with the rest of the proposals and experiences.

18. An approach and action scheme is put into consideration as an alternative for building a sustainable peace based on indigenous cultures and practices: 1.- Seize the moment, despite systematic oblivion and that agreements on indigenous issues have the lowest degree of compliance within all agreements arising from negotiated peace processes in the last thirty years; 2.- Claim partial successes, through concrete, systematized and validated examples; 3.- Present good examples of international treaties that have helped achieve sustainable peace for native peoples, therefore examples that have worked and that are important precedents of peacebuilding; 4.- Recover indigenous methods for mediation and conflict management in order to hybridize them; 5.- Good understanding of conflict and peace: a.- Good “peace anthropology”: understanding of peace as “systems of peace”, that is, derived from different factors and social relations between parties; b.- Intertwined factors for peace systems (peace building); c.- Understanding the conflict: dispute or antagonism between parties that believe they have incompatible objectives about something or someone; understanding of peace and scientific mainstream consistent with the dialogue of ancestral knowledge.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND TERRITORY

19. There is a link between the practice of a language, from the rights based approach, and the territory as a platform for the construction of culture and transmission of the language. This is basically characterized by the richness of knowledge derived from local livelihoods and environmental resources management. This is especially the case for indigenous communities, whose life develops in close connection with the territory.

Hence, given the central importance of the territory in the sense of belonging and in relation to indigenous languages, it is recommended that decisions about exploitation and development projects that affect it, always consider an essential component of consultation and participation of indigenous communities. It is important to ensure that the opinion of the members of the communities that could be affected by decisions and that could suffer changes in territorial configuration is heard. Such consultations should also consider environmental impacts and the effects on livelihoods, as well as the projection of this impact on the social fabric, cultural diversity and language as a vehicle of culture.
It is worth mentioning that consultation should be free and informed, in accordance to “Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. The United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights”, and on the language of indigenous communities as an expression of the full enforcement of their linguistic rights. 

20. Language is a vehicle for the construction of identity, the awareness of belonging, the collection of practical knowledge and good practices, self-esteem and autonomy in decision making. Therefore, language is closely linked to the territory as a space of knowledge and wisdom, not only as support and generation of livelihoods.

In this regard, it is recommended to work in favor of the conservation and transmission of ancestral knowledge, as well as for the set of good practices in the management of natural resources upon sustainability criteria and observance of its conservation, keeping a balance between usage and replacement. In sum, it is recommended, within the framework of sustainable development, that these conservation, transmission practices constitute a central element in the territorial management of indigenous communities.

21. The effect of external forces linked to the intensive use of natural resources as an impact factor on the territories and on indigenous communities can affect the exercise of rights, decision-making on one's own life context and of course, the availability of resources. When this happens, the intermediation of ancestral knowledge is also affected, certain decisions tend to homogenize the context, diversity is lost, and distances between indigenous people and their territories, their culture and their language are created.

22. In consequences, this recommendation points to the relevance of legitimizing political decisions on indigenous communities’ territories by driving wide participatory processes. Such decisions also should be taken by balancing the territory sustainable management, cultural and linguistic specificity of indigenous communities, self-determination in environmental and social impact decision making, and short-term economic profit.

23. In view of the above, it is recommended that education in the context of the territory takes into account the early awareness raising of a sustainable way of life, considering the “Eco-literacy” approach.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND PUBLIC POLICIES

24. The effective impact and sustainability of the exercise of rights of indigenous peoples requires having a framework of practical, purposeful and sustained institutionalization that is fully integrated and instrumented in the public policy structure of governments and administrations. The definition and development of public policies that consider the role of indigenous peoples constitute a fundamental starting point for the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, however, such public policies must be specified in practical and operational actions in daily public management.

25. A comprehensive public policy in the field of the rights of indigenous peoples must consider interculturality as a conceptual and inclusive framework for transformative action for the full exercise of rights. In doing so, it must start from an integrating criterion of diversities that normalizes differences, overcoming the fragmentation of the logic of the exercise of rights by sectors.

26. The design of public policies connected with the cultural specificities and the demands of the indigenous communities should be based mainly on their active participation, starting from an on-site diagnosis in order to systematize reality based on communities’ own expression, the implementation of frameworks of collaborative execution between government agencies and communities, and the measurement of relevant variables.

27. The scope and sustainability of public policies requires the availability of financial resources as operational support for their effective implementation. It is strongly recommended to consider the issue of indigenous rights as a priority in budgetary programming connected with development plans.
ARTICULATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

28. The effectiveness of actions regarding indigenous languages implies the articulation of actors and counterparts, the active exchange of knowledge and practices, and the building of synergies between them.

29. In this sense, it is recommended to activate an initiative that facilitates the mobilization, connection and exchange of good practices and local experiences through a network. The network structure facilitates a collaborative environment for the exchange of experiences, knowledge and wisdom, as well as the identification of lags and possibilities for cooperation.

30. Likewise, it is recommended to foster the official declaration of the “Decade of Indigenous Languages” from the spaces of interest and action, through an inclusive and diverse perspective and with the coordinated action of indigenous communities, central and local governments, academia, civil society organizations, international organizations and technical cooperation, aiming for this global initiative to be led by Ecuador.

31. The academic sector is a space for building, mobilizing and transmitting knowledge in connection with the dynamics of reality. In this sense, the academia can and should contribute to elaborate and sustain the proposal of other approaches aiming at the incorporation of indigenous peoples, emphasizing the recognition of the particularities of the habitat and worldviews in the exercise of rights. The closing of the gap and the exclusion between national plans / projects and indigenous peoples also involves the construction of conceptual frameworks, in order to systematize these approaches that advocate for a different viewpoint and a story told from the perspective of indigenous peoples.

In this regard, it is advisable to activate concrete proposals from the academia such as: multilateral development cooperation and specific training/certification programs to affirm ancestral knowledge, initiatives at community schools for linguistic revitalization, as well as proper accompaniment by the academic sector.