

**Trinity College**

**Student leader:** José Ginocchio Moraiz (Davis scholar, Trinity College)

**Title:** Documentary: "*The Owners, The Keepers and The Masters*".

**Location:** Salta, Argentina.

**Range of execution:** Summer 2021 to November 2021.

**Expected general impact:** Through a documentary and advocacy activities: urge for a peaceful and expeditious solution to conflicts afflicting marginalized indigenous communities in Northern Argentina, raising awareness about the issues and promoting social cohesion among the various actors.

**Partners:** Franciscan Civil Association Pata Pila, Amnesty International Trinity Chapter, La Voz Latina<sup>1</sup>.

**Context:** The Wichi are an indigenous people that inhabit the Chaco region in Northern Argentina. Among their core values there is a principle of non-accumulation. To them: humans are the keepers of land, animals and forest but everything belongs to metaphysical beings called "The Owners". Partly from this, stems their practice of moderately taking just what is needed from the forest, in this way they allow the environment to re-generate and preserve its natural resources. However, the possession of land and resources has been relentlessly disputed by "The Masters": industrial farmers, loggers, the government and other groups. This led to the unprecedented environmental degradation of the second largest forest in the continent, destroying native vegetation at an average rate of more than an acre per minute (WWF). For the Wichi, this meant the disruption of their means of survival. No longer able to access food and water due to the imposed fences and the environmental degradation: malnutrition became rampant in the communities. News of children dying from starvation left the government no choice but to declare the emergency, the Red Cross pointed out that 53% of the children in the communities eat only once a day and the UN coordinator for Argentina compared the food insecurity to the famine in South Sudan. With their life and culture under threat, the communities sued Argentina at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The court delivered a judgment in which it declared "the international responsibility of the Argentine Republic for the violation of diverse rights of 132 indigenous communities"<sup>2</sup>. The reparations ordered by the court include the removal of all fences and the relocation of non-indigenous groups from the area. Social tensions have been rising as Argentina requested for the 22<sup>nd</sup> time a prorogation to abide the court's resolution.

**Excerpt of dramatized script for the documentary:** In the middle of the remote Argentinian Chaco an elder indigenous woman tells the children about the Owners and the Keepers. In the precarious house of sticks and adobe, the children carefully listen to the grandmother's story:

- When the fruits of this land you rip, the fish from the river you pick or the animals of the forest you kill, do not get tricked, as the *lëwukw*<sup>3</sup> are the Owners of those things. Respect and the *mahnyëy tẽ ipe hohnat*<sup>4</sup> we shall keep as my grandmother and her grandmother did. Take only what you need because greed will make you sick and the forest ill. "-

Miles away, the Masters bring down the trees, tossing artificial seeds and wiring the ground bits by bits. Their beasts voraciously eat every inch of the forest where the family lives, every day pushing them more to the rims. The UN hears about the atrocity and the government tries to hide the extreme poverty. The gatherers play the lottery on desolated "private property" and the Masters count their profit with ferocity. The elder woman and her family are now hostage in the land that used to sustain them. They are the Keepers of the land of the Owners and the servants of the Masters that exploit it.

**Film as a tool for sustainable peace building:** Film can create conversations even if the subjects never sit with each other. The cinematographer captures the perspectives and with a couple of clicks the editor stages a debate. Subtitles are added so everyone understands the discourse and artistic choices help the audience empathize with the struggles of the characters. Afterwards, you can screen the artificial debate so the subjects can see each other's perspective. This is the unique capacity of film to generate dialogue and understanding which are the foundations for peace building. This tool is especially relevant for scenarios like the one described in this project, where narratives collide and there are linguistic, environmental, legal and social barriers that prevent conversations. In this context: a film is not only a movie, it is a tool for understanding, for seeking justice, for amplifying unrepresented perspectives and to bring visibility to an issue that demands immediate attention. In order to promote peace sustainably, you must first foster dialogue. This is why film is the chosen tool for this project.

<sup>1</sup> Student organization dedicated to promote Latin-American voices and cultures at Trinity College.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen\\_400\\_ing.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen_400_ing.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Deities or metaphysical owners.

<sup>4</sup> Natural resources.

**Specific Objective 1 (SO.1):** Generate and capture dialogue through a documentary that encompasses the voices of the pertinent parties and raise awareness about the brutal marginalization of indigenous communities in Salta. **SO.1 Activities:** A.1 **Pre-production**, A.2 **film production**, recording interviews and scenes, A.3 **Post-production** editing of the material, A.4 Translation and subtitling from native languages to Spanish and English, A.5 Screening of the documentary in the communities (Once pandemic conditions allow).

**SO.1 Indicators of impact and expected value:** I.1 #(number) of hours recorded / At least 12 hours, I.2 # of interviews recorded / at least 11, I.3 # of minutes after post production/ at least 70, I.4 # of screenings / at least 3.

**Specific Objective 2:** Utilize the film and its distribution to press for governmental and civil action towards abiding the resolution of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case Lhaka Honat<sup>5</sup> V. Argentina. **SO.2 Activities:** A.1 Distribution of the material through various channels, A.2 Social media campaign to raise awareness, A.3 Presentation and screenings, A.4 Creation of a petition for the abiding of the court orders, A.5 Letter writing event, A.6 Release of the documentary as an open source.

**SO.2 Indicators of impact and expected value:** I.1 # of visualizations of the material / 2000 (initial expectation), I.2 # of petition signatures / 100 (initial expectation), I.3 # of letters and communications to authorities / 40 (initial expectation), I.4 # of presentations and screenings / at least 7.

Calendar	May and June	July	August to November	Longer Term
SO.1	A.1	A.2, A.3	A.2, A.3, A.4	Report
SO.2		A.2, A.4	A.2, A.4 A.5, A.3	drafting
				A.5
				A.1, A.6

**Expected interviewees:** Chiefs of the indigenous communities, President of Lhaka Honat, president and/or director of Franciscan Civil Association Pata Pila, Attorney involved in the case, Secretary of International Relations of the Salta Province<sup>6</sup>, UN consultant that works for the abiding of the resolution of the court, members of the indigenous communities, indigenous rights specialist, distinguished anthropologist/ experts, president of Siwok Foundation<sup>7</sup>, members of the creole communities<sup>8</sup>, to name some.

**Team composition:** Franciscan Civil Association Pata Pila: NGO tackling malnutrition in the indigenous communities. Role: Grant access to the communities, provide contacts, interviews and assist with logistics.

Amnesty International Trinity Chapter: Coordinate petition signing campaign, film material distribution, presentations at universities, amplification through social media, letter writing for the compliance of the court resolution and publications about the state of the situation.

La Voz Latina: Student organization dedicated to promote Latin-American voices and cultures in Hartford, CT, USA. Role: Distribution and amplification of all the material via social media and various events.

Student leader: José Ginocchio Moraiz. Role: general coordination, establish the connections, directing, recording and editing the material, report confection and social media campaign oversight. Previous experience: Director and producer of documentary about social cohesion and criminal gangs of El Salvador (also a one-person crew), author of *"To Reach the North"* (project of international cooperation with the European Union for economic resilience, water accessibility and food security for 2250 people from the mentioned indigenous communities). Previously worked with the in-situ partner organization.

**Risk assessment and mitigation plan:** 1. Covid19: High risk worldwide. Mitigation: the student leader will be already working with Pata Pila as an intern at the location when the project starts, it is expected that the student will be vaccinated against Covid19 due to his role as a humanitarian worker during the entire spring semester. It is expected that the film will be directed, produced and recorded by the same student<sup>9</sup>, mitigating the risks to a minimum. 2. Lack of interviewees: Low risk. Mitigation: It is expected that the student leader will carry out an in-situ internship with Pata Pila and an independent study about the topic (as part of Trinity College program) during the entire spring semester, thus, developing connections and securing access to the pertinent interviewees. The location is the student's home province and he has previously done worked with several organizations. Because of this some of the connections with the expected interviewees are already established and the general risks of the project are reduced.

<sup>5</sup> Juridical personality of the indigenous communities in the case against Argentina at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

<sup>6</sup> Appointed as the focal point for the socio-sanitary emergency declared by the government (decree 140/20).

<sup>7</sup> NGO working for improving water accessibility and food production in the communities.

<sup>8</sup> Group of non-indigenous people that inhabit inside the communal indigenous property and have to be re-located from the area.

<sup>9</sup> The student has previous experience in one-person film productions, volunteers that might want to help will only be allowed if COVID circumstances are proven to be safe for everyone involved or if they help remotely (with post-production for example).