

Dayana Blanco

- I am Dayana an Aymara Indigenous woman from Bolivia. I belong to the Ayllu J'acha Karangas.
- My father is from the Indigenous community: “Turco Marka” known as: “the South American Capital of Camelids.”
- My mother is from Vito, where we have our sacred Uru Uru Lake. Both communities are part of the J'acha Karangas Ayllu.
- I spent my childhood in both my parents’ communities because we belong and must take care of both.



Turco

- Known as *the South American Capital of Camelids* because we are fully dedicated to the llama's raising.
- My grandparents always told me that they used to practice the non-monetary exchange of goods with other communities called, in Aymara dialect: "Trueque", i. e., we give dried llama meat (llama jerky) in exchange of potatoes, vegetables, and diverse grains.
- Turco is unique because our llama meat has the highest quality and best taste! So far, we elaborated dried llama meat in small quantities only the necessary for the "Trueque."





In our community meetings, called “cabildos,” all the community members share needs and challenges or debate and define community goals for each year. During one of these *cabildos*, the sister Hilaria from my community raised her hand and enacted that youth and, even, many families are leaving the community because of economic constraints. Also, she said that there is a lack of job opportunities due to that many community members do not have other option for surviving than migrating.

- At that moment other women supported sister Hilaria’s comment. They urged our current community authorities to work on a project that focused on lowering the migration rates and helping to generate more job opportunities within the community.

- That year our authorities led by the idea of our Mama T'alla (woman leader) elaborated dried lama meat called “*Charque de Llama*” into a fair in a near city, 3 hours driving, from our community. Over there, the authorities, through the departmental authorities, got a free booth, so that we can offer our *Charque*.
- We elaborated our dried lama meat, as a practice that we learned from our elders. However, we never imagined that it would help us to create job opportunities and income for our community.



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- After the history of how we started, I want to explain how we elaborate dried llama meat, a practice passed from generation to generation
 - We follow the next steps to produce it,
 - First, from the fresh llama meat, we slice it so it get dehydrated faster. It can take from 1 - 5 days, if only one person is slicing a whole llama.
 - Second, we salt the slices, to then exposed it to the sun heat.
 - We have built solar tents where we leave the meat in the tents for five days, and the sun will dehydrate naturally the meat
 - After that, we put the dry meat into the oven to soften the dry meat
 - Then, we beat the dry llama meat, so it can have a fine texture. Then, it is easier to chew it.
 - The final step is to put the treated llama meat, or **Charque**, into a hermetic bag to keep it fresh.



- The initiative founded for the community leaders from Turco has helped us overcome economic barriers. For example, it gave young people, like me or Jimena, a place where we can work and honor and practice an indigenous tradition rooted in the Traditional Knowledge of my Aymara ancestors.
- It is a job opportunity for around 3000 members of the community
- Every year, the authorities who take on the responsibility are focused on expanding our community entrepreneurship.
- Successfully, we have received the support of WIPO which has guided us to obtain our collective mark which will be enacted and approved this month, which is pivotal because it protects the sacred Indigenous Knowledge that we have as a community for the natural elaboration of *Charque*.

Vito

- In my mother's community, the reality is quite the opposite. Things have changed a lot over the time.
- I was fortunate to spend my childhood and teen years learning from both communities
- Vito used to have a clean lake which was the source of life for more than seven Indigenous communities. It was also the habitat of more than 5 species of birds. It used to host more than 12 0000 flamingos every year.
- Illegal mining, plastic pollution, and climate change have endangered the life of our sacred Uru Uru Lake which used to give us fresh water.



- With my community, we mobilized ourselves to petition the local authorities and the Bolivian government to take urgent action and prevent the disposal of hazardous material into the Uru Uru Lake –and– life of this sacred ecosystem.
- In addition to petitioning the authorities, we decided to organize ourselves as the youth to restore our sacred Uru Uru lake.
- Though we faced uncertainty in tackling the contamination and heavy metal pollution threatening our cherished Uru Uru Lake, we chose to harness the power of Indigenous knowledge alongside modern science for its preservation.





- So, in one of our many meetings, Ale, an active young member of my community, proposed to try *Totora aquatic plants* into the polluted lake's waters.
- In the past, our ancestors used the Totora to purify the water for cattle raising. In this case, is that Totoras are transplanted to polluted channels that discharge into our lake.
- As ancestral heritage, we were certain of the cleaning properties that the native aquatic plants Totoras have, but there were not scientific backup so far. It increased our fear to prove to the public that they would survive in a contaminated environment.
- Nevertheless, as young people, we characterize as being stubborn with our goals, and our goal was to restore our once-pristine Uru Uru Lake, so that, we overcame this fear.

- We maximized all the available resources that we had at that moment. First, we built floating rafts made of plastic bottles which, we found thrown in the Uru Uru Lake as garbage. They helped as recycled rafts to sustain floating the transplanted native aquatic plants, so that they adapt and not perish in these polluted waters.
- Once, we had the floating rafts ready, we placed the just transplanted Totoras babies (*Tepes*), and the rafts are important because the Totoras roots, in the beginning, only must touch the surface of the water (they should float not to sink) and when they start to grow their roots start to reach the channels or river bed.



- First, we implemented 300 Totoras into the polluted waters. We organized ourselves to care for Totoras, in groups, so that, during the first couple of months, every week they are cleaned from the plastics, protected from being devoured by cows or other animals.

- After three months, Totoras are strong enough. Rooted and resilient to take over, independently.

- For us, it is proof that the knowledge that our ancestors had to heal nature and the practices for living well are powerful and are helping to overcome disastrous climate situation.



- We implemented in the Uru Uru Lake about 3000 Totoras.
- Our goal is to continue with our work and restore the lake fully.
- These community initiatives prove the pivotal role that we have, as Indigenous Peoples, contributing the positive, sustainable, Mother-Earth harmonious, change.
- We are millenary knowledge-holders.
- We are the backbone of our economies, and our traditional knowledge and must be considered in every space.
- *Jallalla!*

