

## Kimeltuwe: Developing intercultural education strategies for Pehuenche communities in Chile

Fernando Dowling, Professor, University of Chile (corresponding author)

Kimeltuwe Project Coordinator from 2014 to date.

*fedow@uchilefau.cl*

(+56) 984952740

*Avenida Portugal 84, Santiago, Chile*

Pauline Claramunt, Master's Candidate, Columbia University

"Kimeltuwe" is a research-based project that aims to advance the implementation of intercultural education in Chile by supporting rural indigenous Pehuenche communities who are jeopardized by the lack of access to education, aligning with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal; Guarantee an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities<sup>1</sup>. The initiative's framework is based on the Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples<sup>2</sup> and the Declaration of Indigenous Rights<sup>3</sup> to guarantee communities' rights to access infrastructure and intercultural education and thereby contribute to the knowledge interchange between generations through participation in "formal" education systems.<sup>4</sup>

The project has been carried out in the town of Icalma, which corresponds to the geographical area with the highest concentration of Pehuenche communities in Chile. The Pehuenche culture, that owns its name to "people of the Pehuen"<sup>5</sup> in mapuzungun<sup>6</sup> is part of the Mapuche<sup>7</sup> historical culture which could be territorially defined as the communities that inhabit the banks of the Biobío River in the Andean mountain range of the VIII and IX regions of southern Chile. The Mapuche in Chile represent around 10% of the total population and, approximately 0.5% of them are considered as Pehuenche. Icalma is located in the commune of Lonquimay, where 49.1% of its population lives in a under the poverty line; in addition, 76.87% of Lonquimay's total population self-defines as Mapuche -this, because the Indigenous Law does not recognize the Pehuenche as an ethnic group.<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, the Project began as an academic and practical research with an interdisciplinary perspective between the Faculties of Philosophy and Humanities, Social Sciences and Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Chile. It aimed to support Trawün Longko Association, which represents 6430 people, 14 communities and 15 Longkos<sup>9</sup> in their initiative to develop an educational project that includes cultural aspects and infrastructure to strengthen

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<sup>1</sup> UN, Target 2015

<sup>2</sup> ILO, 1989

<sup>3</sup> UN, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Williamson 2015 / Valdebenito 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Pehuen, fruit from conifer of araucariaceae origin considered sacred tree for its great size and longevity.

<sup>6</sup> Mapuzungun or Mapudungun is the traditional spoken language for Mapuche culture.

<sup>7</sup> Mapuche means "People of the Land" in Mapuzungun (Mapu = earth, Che = people)

<sup>8</sup> D. Astroza, D. Carrasco, I. Muñoz, A. Sepúlveda , 2012

<sup>9</sup> The "Longko" represents a Mapuche traditional authority, the leader for each of groups of families (lof). The role transfer is usually transferred by a common ancestor.

Pehuenche communities. Trawün Longko Association was created in 2005 to resolve many issues Pehuenche communities face. The congregation of a group of Longko is meaningful, within the Mapuche world each Longko is recognized as traditional authorities and represents the values of the community. In Lonquimay, the Longko are designated by family tradition and the role and function has been passed down by generations and are recognized as such in their “lof” (traditional territory in which they live).

Icalma is located in the sixth most economic vulnerable municipality in the country<sup>10</sup>, while it is geographically isolated and considered an extreme weather condition area during winter. 60 percent of Icalma’s Pehuenche population does not have access to education, which contributes to the abandonment of territories by young people, cultural loss and a decrease in local economic development rates. Additionally, Pehuenche organizations in Lonquimay commune criticize that the current educational system focuses in cultural assimilation, monolingualism, and monoculturalism of the curriculum that are configurations that have consolidated the progressive loss of mapuche-pehuenche identity in children.

The intercultural educational initiative sets a collaborative framework between academia, indigenous communities and nonprofit organizations to develop a specific intercultural educational project for the Pehuenche community in Icalma. The goal is to open a dialogue and define the essential cultural aspects needed to be considered for the development of these communities. The project incorporates an interdisciplinary approach to design an intercultural educational curriculum as well as adequate infrastructure to host inclusive education that represents Pehuenche culture.

This article presents the different phases and lessons learned through the development of Kimeltuwe project, which includes a pedagogical and architectural approach. Currently the project is in the stage of transferring land from Pehuenche communities to the municipal government in order to obtain project feasibility and funds in accordance to the existing political structures and policies in place in Chile. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at University of Chile is developing a degree in Mapudungun pedagogy for 2019 in order to better prepare professionals for intercultural education. The main approaches and lessons learned to date will be explored in the following three sections: (i) Developing an Intercultural Education Project, (ii) Implementing an Intercultural Educational project and (iii) Designing an Intercultural Educational Center for the Pehuenche community in Icalma. Merging knowledge from social science, public policy and architecture the project has advanced for more than four years in continuous collaboration between Pehuenche communities, academia, nonprofits and governmental agencies that support the initiative and implementation of this innovative approach that could set precedent for the inclusion of indigenous populations towards sustainable development in Chile.

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<sup>10</sup> *Social Observatory 2015, Ministry of Social Development, Chile.*



Figures 1-2: Location for the Kimeltuwe Educational Center, Icalma, Lonquimay. Chile.

## 1.- Developing an intercultural education project

Intercultural education consists of the inclusion of cultural diversity in the educational plans of a country. However, the cultural and linguistic hegemony of national states has been the norm in Chile, which has left out from the construction of a "national identity" the knowledge and values related to the ways of life of the historical cultures such as the Mapuche. Therefore, an adequate "intercultural" educational policy consists of linguistic incorporation to foster integration and inclusion and the allowance of alternative educational models directed by traditional educators. Beyond the incorporation of historical languages as a priority it is necessary to align with the Convention 169 that supports the implementation of educational models with a greater curricular autonomy in its own territories. It becomes relevant to further develop a comprehensive definition of intercultural education and actions that goes beyond the current efforts of the Ministry of Education in Chile, which is limited to offering one class in the historical language when the enrollment of indigenous students exceeds 20 percent of a class.<sup>11</sup>

In order to develop an adequate intercultural educational project for the Pehuenche community in Icalma, is essential to consider the collaboration between indigenous communities, academia and nonprofit organizations to open a dialogue about specific needs and interests of the community, focusing on the problem of inequality and their right to develop their own identity.

Currently, the indigenous population in Chile represents 9 percent of the total population (CASEN 2013). From nine historical cultures recognized in the country, only four still maintain their vernacular language, which is considered essential for the development of a culture and it has been systematically forced to homogenize alongside the process of construction of the Chilean Nation-State.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, Ministerio de Educación, Mineduc 2018*

<sup>12</sup> *Ministerio de Desarrollo Social Subsecretaría de Evaluación Social, 2015*

The process of universal schooling and migration from the countryside to the city has had a sustained decrease in the indigenous population, promoting assimilation and the loss of native languages to communicate. Today, only half of the indigenous population over 60 years old understands their native language, and fewer children and young people have a minimal understanding of the language that allows the transmission of knowledge in their culture (Casen, 2015). Over time, the indigenous young population migrates to cities and elderly population cannot transfer their language risking their culture to disappear. Taking in consideration that between 2009 and 2015 the indigenous population that speaks and understands their language went from 12% to 11%, and it is projected that this figure will continue to fall over time (Casen, 2015),<sup>13</sup> projects that encourage intercultural education have a relevant role in supporting indigenous communities and cultural diversity.

### ***a) Relevant aspects of the Chilean educational model***

The Chilean educational model has been graded with one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America (96%) having a positive ranking in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports. However, the Chilean educational system stands out as the most unequal and segregated by socioeconomic standard out the sixty-five countries analyzed by PISA. The principles on which the Chilean educational system is based has a high discriminatory impact in students depending if the students attend to a public school, a subsidized school or a private school depending the individual economic situation, the parent's choice, selection, and others.

The curricular contents of educational programs in Chile are mandatory, establishing the idea of a monocultural state. The lack of inclusion of public policies regarding the identity of indigenous communities builds a gap between these two worlds. School desertion and learning difficulties push them towards marginality and poverty<sup>14</sup>. For instance, Mapuche communities (which includes Pehuenche communities) represent 88% of the entire indigenous population that inhabits the Chilean territory, and the percentage of population that consider themselves bilingual with the Mapuzugun as their first language, is only 15.6% meaning that 63% have lost their original language and it is only spanish speaking (Conadi-Utem, 2008).

### ***b) Praxis of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Chile.***

The institutional framework for Intercultural Bilingual Education in Chile is generated after the enactment of the Indigenous Law in 1993. Within this framework arises the Bilingual Intercultural Education Program (PEIB) of the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), which officially begins in 1996 focusing in supporting schools inserted in indigenous communities in rural areas.

Much criticism arose from the concepts and implementation of the PEIB program, starting with the lack of clear objectives to guide the policy action that operated with the same standard

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<sup>13</sup> R. Carvajal, D. Dresdner "Cultura Mapuche en el Currículum Nacional: El Pulso de la Interculturalidad en Chile" Thesis, University of Chile. Santiago, 2013

<sup>14</sup> S. Carihuentro, 2007.

logics that govern the Chilean educational system. In addition, the conceptual definitions of indigenous education, intercultural education and bilingualism (Pardo and Valenzuela, 2011) and the teaching processes given by the national guidelines difficult the incorporation of language and cultural element becoming a nonsystematic practice and hard task for professors. For instance, studies that evaluated the policy, point out that classroom teachers, in general, understand interculturality as a practice of assimilation of indigenous people to the national ideology, and many of these teachers do not value the cultural belonging of indigenous students.<sup>15</sup>

**c) A bottom up approach for intercultural education in Pehuenche communities.**

The Pehuenche communities are affected by the lack of accessibility to education and by a monocultural approach, which implies the need for younger generations to migrate to other communes and provinces that offer secondary education. Families send their kids to study away from home when they turn thirteen or fourteen years old generating a break in the methodological channels of traditional education ngüneluwün (mapuche education) which relies on the transferred knowledge from the füchakeche (elders) to the wechekeche (youth).

In reaction to these difficulties that impact directly the continuity of Pehuenche culture and traditions, the Indigenous Association Trawün Longko developed a proposal to manage a "Pehuenche-Mapuche Participation Plan to design Kimeltuwe (school) as an Institutional educational project in Icalma Lonquimay, Region of Araucanía, 2015." With the support and guidance from an interdisciplinary team, including anthropologists, professors, linguists, architects, lawyers and, social workers, the communities confronted the limitations of the current educational structures and started a dialogue around the meaning and implementation of an intercultural education. The reflections and dialogues held in the territorial Trawünes (informative meetings) not only served to define a set of criteria for an intercultural education project that should be framed in the pedagogical project that the Ministry of Education required, but also allowed the generation of guidelines for an integral and intersectoral proposal. The project was presented in June 2015 to the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) including a pedagogical and architectural approach. After several meetings with policy makers and authorities, the project found support and began to determine its feasibility and the availability to invest in infrastructure in indigenous land in Icalma.

The intercultural education project includes, in one hand, a pedagogical approach with two main phases that address the challenge in a long-term perspective. The first action is to support an existing academic program for specialization in intercultural education at Universidad de Chile, by incorporating the language of Mapudungun in their curriculum. The second phase is to design the curriculum for complete pedagogical studies in Mapudungun that is currently being developed with the support of the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at University of Chile.

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<sup>15</sup> Bahamondes and Chiori, 2000; Sichra, 2002

The architectural approach is related to the design, construction and management of an educational facility located in rural territory that belongs to Trawün Longko Association. The first stage of this process was to determine the feasibility of the project in terms of number of students, and the population that would receive the benefits of the infrastructure. Additionally, legal studies were executed to determine land property issues and the feasibility to transfer land from indigenous communities to the government in order to be able to fund this project as public infrastructure.

The pedagogical and architectural approaches are based on the provisions of national and international declarations regarding the importance of the intercultural education approach (Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, ILO 1989) where the incorporation of indigenous communities in the curricular design of educational programs, as well as the design of the establishments should be done around their local methodologies that become an essential element for validation.

## **2.- Implementing an intercultural educational project**

One of the most complex elements in this project was the dialogue and inclusion of Pehuenche communities' needs to the agenda of the regional and municipal governments. Most of the time, public institutions in charge of approving educational projects in Chile (Mineduc and Mideso)<sup>16</sup> are circumscribed within regulations and institutional political structures that limit their abilities to address complex issues such as interculturality. The cultural hegemony of public policies is due to the fact that they are designed and constructed from a national and non-plurinational conception, which is a challenge for any project that addresses interculturality between indigenous communities and the predominant culture. In this case, the idea of developing an intercultural educational project based on a bottom up proposal from indigenous communities is an innovative project to set precedent for future policies.

During the 2015-2017 period, the work consisted in the development of a feasibility study and pre-design to obtain financing approval from the Ministry of Social Development, a governmental entity in charge of approving public funds for social projects. Within this period, various difficulties arose, some technical and regulatory, and others political and cultural.

### ***a) Relevant phases that structured Kimeltuwe project***

1. ***Elaboration of an Intercultural proposal that includes a diagnosis and analysis of technical feasibility:*** To define the technical aspects of this project, the participation of a multidisciplinary team and experts and professional teams of the University, Seremi and the Emergency Architecture and Human Rights Foundation was essential. In this stage the project justified the relevance of investing public resources in a multicultural educational project reviewing these arguments with authorities such as the Seremi (Mideso) who supported this process.

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Development, 2018.

2. **Build a relationship and a dialogue with strategic authorities to build political support:** In this stage we held several meetings with authorities such as the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), Ministry of Social Development (Mideso), Deputies of Lonquimay district, Mayor, Governor of Malleco and Mayor of Araucanía. All of them were relevant actors in order to move forward and to better understand the political complexities for the development of this process. While some authorities supported the project, others were clearly opposed or not interested in this agenda. After a sufficient level of "political support" was achieved the scenario for its approval became clearer.
3. **Validation of the indigenous community as the responsible organization to manage the "Educational Center":** This stage focused on the legal aspects that will permit the indigenous communities to manage the educational facility that related to the objective of intercultural education and local development. Two steps are key to achieve this goal; first, to comply with the governmental requirements to support an educational center, the Trawün Longko Association is in the process of transferring land to the Municipality of Lonquimay, which will administer the school for a 5-year period. After this period, the administration will be hold by Trawün Longko Association. Second, TWL association is required to become an Educational Corporation acknowledging the responsibilities and documentations to comply with this status.
4. **Co-creation design process that integrates cultural Pehuenche elements:** This stage focuses on maintaining the dialogues and knowledge exchange between stakeholders to co-create the curriculum and architectural project. In this stage, every stakeholder, including the professionals from different disciplines that are in the process of developing the technical educational and architectural projects, government officials and other organizations, must participate in the Territorial Trawünes (traditional meetings) learning to respect and consider the cultural aspects of these events. The most challenging aspects are the need for flexibility in deadlines and the participation of professionals in indigenous community protocols, such as the Nüttram, which is the space where different perspectives meet and confront each other until they reach unanimous agreements.
5. **Implementation of the educational center.** Once the project is accepted and approved by communities and authorities, the funds will be allocated. A request for proposal to outline the requirements for this specific project needs to considerate agreements to become locally sustainable and adequate for the community. Finally, the construction needs to address a limited period of time related to a public contract ranging from 9 to 12 months.
6. **Shared monitoring and evaluations through a socialization process between indigenous communities, professionals and authorities:** This stage focuses on maintaining the dialogues between stakeholders that play a fundamental role in monitoring and executing the operation. Implementing an intercultural education project

requires a constant monitoring process and evaluations that include qualitative and quantitative aspects of the curriculum, while also understand the multiple functions of the facility in terms of space, activities and attendance. Different criteria for evaluation and monitoring strategies need to be part of the dialogue and agreements with indigenous communities.

### ***b) Community validation and governance challenges***

Since 2014 when the project started, many authorities changed at regional and municipal levels. The rotation of stakeholders and their specific agendas became a challenge because they do not necessarily prioritize intercultural projects. Several times, new partnerships needed to be established to find support and find political will to advance this project. The continuous work done by the Trawün Longko Association, and the support of universities and nonprofit organizations allowed the process to continue and overcome temporary adversities.



Figures 3 and 4: Formal presentation of Kimeltuwe project to national to Ministerial Secretary of Education, 2015.

### **3.- Designing an Intercultural Educational Center for the Pehuenche community in Icalma**

Participatory processes allow the construction of collective knowledge by the exchange of ideas and perspectives from communities, technicians and politicians. This collaboration allows to design intervention strategies that are more likely to address overall needs and various agendas. However, aligning stakeholders becomes a challenge and the validation of participatory processes does not necessarily facilitate the interaction between the different parties involved. Under this scope, integrating academia and research projects to understand and visualize the diverse actors and complexities becomes a strategic perspective with a positive result for students and communities.

In order to define priorities and cultural aspects that influence the design an educational center for Pehuenche communities the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Chile supported the project by holding a research-based studio in 2015. The goal for this practicum experience is to

understand the Pehuenche community's learning processes and cultural elements that need to be considered to approach an architectural proposal. The main challenge is to participate in a process that installs the collective values and knowledge of the community as part of the design and creative process. In this scenario, the students are exposed to the role of architect-actor instead of architect-author, which relates to the process of social transformation by becoming an active element in the community<sup>17</sup>

A second step is to define the methodology to implement a co-creation process to fully design the architectural project incorporating the traditional protocols and cultural elements that are relevant to the Pehuenche communities.

**a) Experience and findings related to the practicum architectural design studio held in University of Chile in 2015.**

The theme for the architectural studio was interculturality in indigenous communities, which focused on the Mapuche-Pehuenche communities in Icalma. It encouraged students to learn from a different worldview and traditional leaders (Longkos). The workshop was based on a cooperation agreement between the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities and the Trawün Longko Association, continuing with the guidelines of the agreement to propose an educational model from the indigenous communities based on the rights established in the 169th Convention. Therefore, the students are challenged to develop an architectural proposal contextualizing the place, geography and culture, and reflecting about the international standards associated with goals 4 and 10 of Sustainable Development.

The deliverables for the studio focused on the inclusion of social and cultural aspects of the Pehuenche culture, considering rurality, the relationship between the natural environment and daily basis activities, their cosmovision and, understanding the balance between identity and nature as essential aspects of Pehuenche's identity. The design proposals for the educational center required students to include local development activities to strengthen Pehuenche cultural values. The students participated in multiple territorial Trawünes (meetings) sharing and understanding local expectations of their conceptualization of an intercultural education and the description of spatial relevant elements and spatial-symbolic representations.

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<sup>17</sup> Dowling-Toro, Participatory Design, FAU research University of Chile 2008



Figure 5 : Architecture studio site visit, Icalma 2015.



Figures 6 and 7: Workshop session with students in Icalma 2015.

During the site visits and activities with the community, the team recognized many relevant elements associated with the Pehuenche identity. The architectural proposal based on intercultural education considered key elements for their programmatic and design process, among them: space for non-traditional medicine, the need for local tourism skills , the potential of local gastronomy and crafts as an economic resource, the close relationship with flora and fauna in a daily basis, traditions and ceremonies, livestock production and the tradition of

“Veranadas”<sup>18</sup> and “Invernadas”<sup>19</sup> which relates to the seasonal mobility of communities according to weather conditions.

Moreover, many other elements of identity are related to the landscape; the Andes mountains, pampa of Patagonia, millenary forests of the pehuen<sup>20</sup>, sacred trees and tributes to rivers and lakes. These aspects were recognized by the students during the site visits and were incorporated into the intercultural and architectural program that has been presented to the Ministry of Education.



Figures 8 and 9: Architectural proposal developed by students from University of Chile 2015 (Nicolás Bertoni and Patricio Muñoz)

Based on the academic learning experience in Pehuenche communities, the practicum studio finalized with preliminary proposals made by the students which generated a dialogue and tools to discuss a future co-creative design process that considers "Pehuenche knowledge" as the basis.

## **b) Developing a co-creation process with Pehuenche communities**

In order to materialize the design of an architectural project under a co-creation process, a research project was presented to the National Fund of Culture in 2015 to develop a methodology with specific cultural aspects for Pehuenche communities. The objective was to recognize and incorporate non-written knowledge and the validation of strategies and tools associated with an architectural design process.

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<sup>18</sup> Azócar, Gerardo. “Conflicts for control of Mapuche-Pehuenche land and natural resources in the Biobío highlands, Chile”. *Journal of Latin American Geography*. V4(2005):74 - “ the “veranadas” are areas used in summertime for grazing by their cows, horses, goats, and sheep. Between May and September, they are covered in snow. In October, the melting begins to open these areas, permitting the development and growth of new grass”

<sup>19</sup> Azócar, “Conflicts for control of Mapuche-Pehuenche land and natural resources in the Biobío highlands, Chile”, 74 “the “invernadas” are sheltered lands which provide refuge for the animals during the winter and where the families are established a large part of the year. In these locations, the families survive on subsistence agriculture, principally cereals, oat, wheat, and small gardens.”

<sup>20</sup> Pehuen, sacred tree of great size and longevity, conifer of araucariaceous origin.

Regarding the relevance of active participation of communities three phases are essential to recognize cultural protocols, ceremonies and, spaces that lead to social activity within Pehuenche territory: (i) Identify design parameters and relevant elements of spatial and architectural configuration, associated with the traditional teaching ngüneluwün. (ii) Record the gathering of information and unwritten knowledge shared by the communities in the field work. (iii) Support the Mapuche-pehuenche participation plan for the design of the institutional educational project kimeltuwe Icalma-Lonquimay, presented by Trawün Longko Association.

Using multiple techniques to elaborate descriptive planimetry, photographs, background and oral records, allowed a better communication with Pehuenche communities. However, it is essential to incorporate professionals that are native speakers of mapuzugun who are used to work in intercultural environments in order to ensure that communication and understanding of communities' lifestyles and any essential criteria related to spaces for "learning and teaching" are considered. Including interludes to understand the linguistic elements, codes and cultural practices of the communities will avoid misunderstandings and help the process of trust building between the actors and communities.

#### **4.- Conclusion**

Many indigenous organizations in Chile and Latin America recognize that governments lack of adequate public policies to guarantee self-determination in terms of allowing spaces for the protection of identity, language, territory, customs, livelihoods, local economy and sustainable development, education, among others, not respecting the 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO, 1989).

Kimeltuwe, as an ongoing project, considers a holistic conception of intercultural education and architecture, working towards the construction of a space that allows Pehuenche communities to develop their culture in their own territory. Therefore, it is a response to a demand to reduce inequality, to appreciate cultural diversity and, a cultural contribution to sustainable development, aligning with the implementation of the sustainable developments goals 10 and 4, respectively.

From the project's experience, both from the work with the communities and the feasibility management and approvals, two main elements are identified that serve as reference for other projects that are developed around interculturality concepts.

**The projects that arise from the indigenous communities and rely on the institutions and professional groups come out of a unidirectional communication, being in themselves, spaces of interculturality and dialogue.** For example, the possibility to participate in "Trawünes Territoriales" allowed to diagnose the economic and social situation of the various Pehuenche communities, recognizing the impact of extreme weather conditions and isolation, and the impact of lack of access to education forcing young people to leave school or migrate to cities becoming ethnic minorities, which are exposed to the loss of identity and links to their communities and families of origin. Loss of affective ties and the link of these with the daily life of rural subsistence

was highlighted; they produce an incalculable impact, gradual and systematic abandonment of their territories, and therefore a decrease in the generational renewal of the population.

**It recognizes the need for flexibility on the part of public educational institutions, which are generally restricted by norms and symbolic charges, associated with a predominant culture, restricting the possibility to carry out initiatives that arise from indigenous communities.** In Chile, the mechanisms to define technical, normative and institutional criteria in a project's design and their execution lack flexibility and capacity to adapt to other cultural realities. In this sense, public projects tend to solve demand problems from the city, the urban is the cultural way of solving global needs and not particular realities from groups or communities with their own identity. In this way, the understanding of the meaning of Convention 169 responds to create the possibility of a space of their own, forcing the modification of rules and "ways of doing" to which we are accustomed.

Finally, the innovative nature of the project is highlighted. Although it is still ongoing, it has already surpassed several stages, leaving lessons and experiences associated with complex processes that sometimes does not coincide with the expectations of projects that have been developed previously. This project continues under development and is supported by the Pehuenches communities in Icalma, Universities, and independent professionals who believe in the search for a sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

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