

The Roots Meeting in Nairobi 2005 –

Maria-Conchita's Story

Introduction: A Ceremony for Our Common Future

In November 2004, I had the great privilege to be part of the International Roots Meeting at the Children's Meeting Place in the UN headquarters in Nairobi, marking the starting point for the process leading up to the first World Championships in Co-operation in Stockholm 2006. This week in Kenya contained everything that makes life worth living: Astonishing experiences of the nature and wildlife in the country of the Maasaian, inspiring meetings with people from all different kinds of cultures, enriching visits and study trips for learning purposes – as well as deeply meaningful ceremonies for our common future. In the end of the week, when we ignited the fire symbolizing the spirit of this Championships, I felt that I was part of something truly historical. We were planting a seed that will grow and spread throughout the world! The ceremony brought together children, youth and decision makers in a beautiful demonstration of global partnership and co-operation.

At the same time, the meeting place was rooted as a global arena for dialogue and vision in the spirit of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and Agenda 21. This manifested the original intentions of the place around the great Acacia Tree – The Mother Tree – in the presence of Senior UN managers and local leaders from around the Victoria Lake and from different parts of Sweden. Once again, I was reminded of the power of ceremony as a universal human language, building bridges across borders, nations and continents. This is a part of an ancient wisdom that is being kept alive by the Origin people from across the world. The ceremonies we held functioned as door-openers and planted a common vision in the souls and hearts of all the 300 people that were present. This vision of a sustainable future will guide the work towards the World Championships.

The Ceremonial Team

My role was to be a part of the Ceremony team that planned the ceremony. We worked hard during the whole week, together with the local leaders, to bring our different cultures and perspectives together into one will and intention. The team represented Origin people from the four different directions: West, North, East and South. I brought my experience from the Q'ero People of Peru in the west and was also responsible for the contacts with the Aboriginal People of Australia in the south. The other members of the team were Harriet Nordlund of the Same People from the north, Soenam Jamyangling from the Tibet in the East and Kajsa Dahlström, President of the Globetree. One of our responsibilities was to bring ceremonial rocks from the different people to the meeting place in Nairobi. The purpose of these rocks would be to form a safe circle around the ceremony place, together with the smaller rocks that each participant brought to the meeting. In the middle, the intention was to create a ceremonial fire place, built by rocks from

three sacred African mountains. We were very pleased when all of the rocks finally arrived on time for the ceremony!

The Ceremony Day, Part 1: Preparatory Ceremonies

In the morning, before any other people had arrived, the four of us in the Ceremony team gathered at the Children's Meeting Place to greet the Mother Tree. It was a beautiful and sunny day, despite the rain season. We had come to know each other as soul mates during the week. I thought of the wisdom I had received from my teachers in the Q'ero Nation. According to their tradition of co-operation – Ayni – it is important that the wisdom from all the cultural traditions of the world meet and mix in our time, in order to find the best possible way to live in harmony with Pachamama, Mother Earth. Our work in the ceremony team was a living example of this kind of co-operation. I also thought of the words that Violet, one of my new friends and member of an "Elder's Council" of the Aboriginal people, gave me before I went to Nairobi: She said that her people in their visions had seen this day as the beginning of "Global unification and healing". I felt humble and expectant.

The Aboriginals had given us permission to work with the sacred oca colours that they sent among with their ceremonial rock and textiles. I mixed the colours according to their instructions, expressed a blessing and mixed them with the soil around the tree, as a gift. I put aside some of the colours, since Soenam on the night before had received a vision of a Tibetan mandala made of Australian oca colours. A mandala could be described in the same way as a despacho of the Q'eros: A visible prayer, expressed in a ceremonial piece of art. Soenam led the team in the creation of the mandala. In the end, Kajsja formed a spiral in the middle of it to fulfill Soenam's vision. In this way we were able to integrate the different traditions in a truly global ceremony of co-operation! This lay the ground for a successful day.

Part 2: Unification Ceremonies

When all of the participants had arrived, the main ceremonies began with the children mixing water from many different regions of the world, including many Swedish areas. The water was mixed in a bowl that is especially designed for this ceremony – Our United Water Ceremony – which the Globetree organisation had carried out on several international meetings and UN conferences for many years. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has contributed to this ceremony with water from the UN in New York, and cosmonauts and astronauts have brought water from their space trips. In the ceremony in Nairobi, some part of the water was given the Mother Tree. As part of the Unification Ceremonies, the children also invented creative ways of linking the different trees on the UN area to each other. Each tree is dedicated to a specific history, person or purpose, so this was a way for the children to bring the different parts of the world even closer to each other. As an example, one of the trees is dedicated to the former Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh.

Part 3: Prayer to the Earth (Despacho Ceremony)

I was responsible for the creation of this “visible prayer”, in the way that I have been taught by my teachers from the Q’ero Nation. Harriet and Soenam assisted me while they were learning the Andean tradition. In this ceremony, all of the 300 participants contributed with blessed leaves from the UN garden, written prayers and wishes, drawings and all kind of colourful creations – expressing the personality of each participant – and formed a symbolic gift to Mother Earth and the spirits of the different cultures. The process of forming a despacho is similar to the one of creating a mandala; It requires the same kind of focus, concentration and presence in order to integrate the prayers and intentions into the piece of “art” that is created. I performed the work on top of ceremonial textiles from the Q’eros, the Aborigines, the Maasaian as well as sacred bark from Kenya.

As a completion, I wrapped up the despacho, formed a beautiful present and said a prayer over it with my “mesa” in my hands (a mesa is an Andean “portable altar”, a bundle of ceremonial items). This despacho ceremony was appreciated among both children, youth and adults since there is so much space for personal creativity. Now, the despacho was ready to be delivered to the “Spirit world” through the element of Fire, but first we had to complete the last part of the ceremony and build the fire place in “The Seven Stones Ceremony”.

Part 4: The Seven Stones Ceremony

In this part of the process, an African traditional fire place was formed by rocks from three sacred mountains: Mt Elgon (Uganda), Mt Kenya (Kenya) and Kilimanjaro (Tanzania). This ceremony came out of the dialogue between Kajsa Dahlström and the local African leaders who claimed that in order to carry out a dialogue about the future, there has to be a fire place. The people from the different mountains – Ugandians, Kikuyos and Maasaian – had brought the rocks all the way from the mountain tops to the Children’s Meeting Place. It is interesting that all Origin People seem to have a very special relationship to their mountains and rocks!

In this ceremony, some adults and children from each culture were responsible for placing their rocks on the ceremony place. First, the three African rocks were put in place in the middle, forming the traditional fire place. We, the members of the Ceremony team, were guardians of the rocks in the outer circle from the four directions. We told the stories of our different rocks and Harriet were performing the traditional ”jojk” song of the same people. Everobody contributed with their personal stones and help forming the outer and the inner circle around the fire place. I was very moved by the whole ceremony which was carried out with a lot of dignity and beauty. The Maasaian ignited the fire in their traditional way: with a stick and a piece of wood. The small fire was carried by Kajsa to the fire place where she handed it over to the three women wathing over the central ceremonial rocks.

The despacho, with all of its prayers, wishes and dreams, became the first ”food” for the fire. When it was burning steadily, the women put a bowl with fresh cow milk and seed in it,

symbolizing nourishment and life power for all living beings of the world! This Stone- and Fire Ceremony became a worthy beginning of the journey towards the First World Championships in Co-operation.

Some Symbolic Coincidencies...

Some special things occurred during the day, which added an extra symbolic touch to our work. In the beginning, an eagle landed on the top of the Mother Tree where it remained during the whole ceremony, like it was watching over us. That felt like a good sign! Another unexpected thing happened when the fire was lit: At first, the smoke turned in all four directions – like it was greeting the Origin people from the North, the West, the East and the South as well as all the people present at the place – before it turned upwards and disappeared into the sky. In the normal flow of events, one wouldn't be so happy to be surrounded by smoke. But when Kajsa reminded the people that this smoke contained the dreams and the prayers of all the children, everybody could see the situation in another perspective! The meeting between the Origin people and the children was also very symbolically charged: Our process took off in the "Roots" of humanity and was guided by the dreams of the children from different parts of the world. In this way, we could all feel the presence of the vision of "Unification and healing" that Violet from the Aboriginals talked about.

Some Challenges in the Week-long Process of Co-operation

As I have described above, one of the challenges during the week was to integrate the traditions of all of the seven cultures that were represented in the Ceremony: Three African cultures and four from the different directions of the world. Some differences created some confusion in the beginning: For instance, the Aboriginals have a deep respect for the rocks in their neighborhoods and claim that it is not easy to find rocks that want to travel around the world, not to speak about the difficulties in finding rocks that even want to remain in another part of the world. In the preparations for this ceremony, there wasn't enough time to find a rock that would go to Nairobi and remain there. The compromise was to send a rock that could be a "guest" during the ceremony – the Yaboo. In the beginning, the team couldn't agree on how to deal with the fact that the rock couldn't stay. But when we understood the Aboriginal way of thinking, the situation resolved itself. Even if the rock had to be returned to Australia, the Elders Council of the Aboriginals had prepared it so that it would leave an "energetical footprint" at the Children's Meeting Place. In this perspective, it would remain on the place in an invisible form, charging the place with the ancient wisdom of its people. Later on, after the ceremony, the Aboriginals promised to send even another rock that will be able to remain in its physical form – as a way of expressing their understanding for the Western thinking which is more concrete and physical. Talk about Inter-Cultural dialogues...

Together with the Yaboo, the oca colours and the ceremonial textiles, the Aboriginals sent instructions about their ways of rituals and ceremonies. During the week, I lived day and night with all these different items and thoughts, including the rock from Peru. In the daytime I set with

the representatives from the other cultures to bridge our different perspectives, and in the nighttime I continued the work in the dreams... In the end, after many discussions and repetitions, we were able to gather around a common vision in a strong spirit of oneness and unification. In a parallell process, the children and the youth that would participate in the ceremony, met and worked with their own preparations and personal symbols.

The Tibetan Vision

Soenam, with his Tibetan wisdom, was the one that helped resolving the unclear situation with the "Yaboo". The night before the ceremony, he meditated with it for four hours. Finally, he received a vision that wasn't like anything he had experienced before: "I saw this huge cliff that was rising to the sky, like a huge pillar or tree. It was surrounded by water in all directions, as far as I could see. On the top of the pillar we in the Ceremony team were standing, outside a little house. Then I noticed a small spot above the horizon that was growing bigger and bigger, like it was approaching us. Finally I could see that it was a giant, two-headed eagle that was flying in our direction! When it was right above us, it dropped a small item like a piece of wood or a stone on the cliff where we were standing. Then it turned to me and gave me a broad smile!" Soenam felt that this was a clear and positive signal that the Yaboo truly had a place in the ceremony, with its special conditions... The same night he received the vision of the Tibetan mandala made of Aboriginal oca colours.

For me, I felt that the eagle was a symbol of the Aboriginals, coming all of the way from Australia to greet us and to confirm their partnership. Some months later, after the Tsunami catastrophe, the vision felt even more meaningful: Out of the crisis, there is a potential to develop true global co-operation to create a more sustainable future for all of us. The World Championships in Co-operation can be an expression of this, with the Origin people as the keepers of the visions together with the children of the world.

Epilogue: A greeting from the South

One of the most special meeting for me during the whole process, was perhaps the meeting with the Aboriginal culture. I was reminded about this through a funny coincidence some days after I returned to Stockholm. I was sitting alone in a small café, reading and trying to integrate all of my impressions and experiences from the trip. Then suddenly, a woman that I had never seen before approached my table and sat down in front of me – despite the fact that there were several free tables in the café. This is a very uncommon behaviour in the Swedish culture, so it aroused my curiosity. We started to talk and she got very inspired when I told her about the Seven Stones Ceremony in Nairobi. She said that it reminded her about a book she used to read to her children many years ago, about the meeting between a small boy and a "rock being" that was called Nargon. When I came home, I found the book on the Internet and was surprised to see that it was written by an Australian author, Patricia Wrightson... "in an Aboriginal spirit and way of viewing the world, people and nature." My meeting with the women felt like a whisper and a

greeting from this great people in the South.

I feel so grateful for having participated in this great experience and I look forward to the rest of the journey – to continue to be part of this grand, inner and outer adventure!

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