

MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE P'UREPECHA

COSMOVISION: PHOTO ESSAY

DIGGING IN: FACILITATING DIALOGUE AND ACTION

KEY THEMES AND TERMS

P'urepecha people and territory, medicinal plants, ethnobotany, pharmacology, healer, animism, totemism, biological and genetic heterogeneity, functional biodiversity, agroecological complex, polycultures, agroforestry, monocultures, spiritual values, calendars (solar, agricultural lunar, astronomical, ritual or festive), invocations, supernatural beings, chia, corn, landraces, equilibrium, divinatory techniques, intercultural syncretism, Spanish *conquistadores*.

CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description*: What stories are told? How did you feel reading them?
- *Personal Connection*: How can you connect this story to your personal experience or stories in your family?
- *Common Themes*: What social issues/themes are raised in these stories? Is there a common issue shared across contexts?
- *Social Analysis*: What are the historical and social processes that created this situation?
- *Planning for Action*: What can be done? How does this inspire me to change my actions?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- How would you describe the worldview of the P'urepecha? How do they understand nature and human relations with the natural world?
- Maria says that the holistic vision of the P'urepecha is "based more on ecological exchanges (with nature) than on economic exchanges (with markets)." Discuss what you think she means.
- What are the various ethnobotanical uses of the great diversity of plants in the territory?
- Why did Maria stop doing the healing work with plants? What are the demands of this work?
- What are some of the obstacles to the use of natural medicinal plants in your context?

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Take a walk around your neighbourhood. After reading the examples of medicinal plants that Fulvio introduces, can you find any of the medicinal plants that he describes? Photograph some of the plants and research their uses through the online global inventory PlantNet, a plant identification review that can be downloaded as an app.

INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

What are the different cultural training and practical skills that Fulvio and Maria bring to their joint work with plants?

What are the ways that Maria and Fulvio are passing on their knowledge to their children?

Maria talks about intercultural syncretism in their healing practices that are derived from the process of acculturation in colonial times. What are some of the ways that the rituals they describe combine both Catholic and P'urepecha symbols and practices?

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Try making a tea from one of the plants you've learned can be used for ordinary illnesses such as colds, headaches, stress, etc.

Research the pharmaceutical industry in your country. Do corporate research on one company to find out the sources of their medicines and their earnings.

The ETC group has long monitored the "Gene Giants" (who aggregate control over seeds, agrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, genomics and food processing and retailing). What relationships does this company have with other agricultural companies?

What can you find out about any campaigns challenging the power of pharmaceuticals or the biopiracy of companies that exploit Indigenous knowledge of plants for their own profit?

DIGGING DEEPER: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION

VIDEO

Chris Buenos. (2017, Oct. 18). [Botanical insecticides Dr. Fulvio Gioanetto](#). Youtube.

BOOKS & ARTICLES

Berne Declaration, Pro Stevia, CEIDRA and the University of Hohenhem. (2015). [The bittersweet taste of stevia](#). Public Eye.

Friedmann, H., & McNair, A. (2009). Whose rules rule? Contested projects to certify 'local production for distant consumers'. In S. M. Borras, M. Edelman, & C. Kay (Eds.), *Transnational agrarian movements confronting globalization* (pp. 239-265). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Murray, D. (2019, Sept. 9). [20 awesome medicinal plants native to Canada](#). Slice.

Turner, N. (2006, February 7). [Indigenous peoples' medicine in Canada](#). The Canadian Encyclopedia.

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

- [ETC Group](#)
- [Navdanya](#)
- [Creators Garden Blog by Joseph and Kristy Pitawanakwat](#)