



INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT

▶ T A C A N A INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

▶ L E C O INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

# TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT, CULTURAL REAFFIRMATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES





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## The recovery and reaffirmation of indigenous languages

Territorial management plans provide a framework for the development of strategies to revalorize and strengthen the cultural identity of indigenous peoples in Amazonian Northern La Paz Department. The recovery of native languages is a key element of this process, articulated through actions to encourage the rescue, dissemination, and practice of native language within communities.

As part of the implementation of the Tacana Peoples' Sustainable Development Strategy (2001-2015), linguistic research was carried out to regularize and standardize the Tacana alphabet. Research involved documenting and describing the grammatical aspects of the language. This, along with the creation of the Tacana Language and Culture Institute (ILC) and the Tacana People's Education Council, has guided content for the Regional Curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education in 2016. These efforts are reversing the loss of the Tacana language and seek to revitalize the Tacana culture.

The Tacana Language and Culture Institute promotes the training of bilingual teachers and has so far trained 111 teachers (70% Tacana) from seven educational units in Tumupasa, San Buenaventura, Ixiamas, and Rurrenabaque. In this process, the elderly people of the communities that still speak Tacana collaborated with the recovery of everyday language. To support these activities, bilingual educational materials were developed: more than 10 Tacana language training books, a dictionary, children's stories, and a wildlife monitoring notebook. An interactive DVD, "The Tacana Peoples World," is also being prepared with support from APCOB and WCS and will be disseminated in the national educational system.

Likewise, efforts have been made to recover and strengthen the Leco native language. Within the framework of the Leco Apolo TCO Life Plan, a first linguistic map was created to show the current status of the Leco language. It was found that the language is in decline and in immediate danger of disappearance. Additional work compiled a basic vocabulary and recommended further actions to recover the language, including story collection, the preparation of bilingual materials, and use of the Leco language in school curricula.



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## The elaboration of handicraft products from recovered art traditions

Objects produced by the Tacana and Leco cultures, while utilitarian in nature, also have aesthetic and religious functions. Palm leaves, bamboo, and other plant fibers are transformed to make quality baskets, bags, hats, fans, and mats. Local clays are also used to produce pitchers, pots, and jars.

Tacana women used to carve and sculpt small human and animal figures from wood and tree bark. Currently, they continue to work with wood as part of the recovery of their craft traditions. Similarly, the artisans of Atén, in the Lecos Indigenous Territory, continue the tradition of carving wooden animal figures.

Woven textiles using wild cotton was a highly-developed craft in the Tacana culture. Most designs were religious references and/or decorative images from nature. They showed the connections between human beings, nature, and spirits – for example, the jaguar's footprint. These textiles were used to make hammocks, bags, belts, and ribbons.

The Tacana Indigenous Women's Council (CIMTA) works to recover Tacana textile art by supporting women artisans to produce woven cotton textiles that incorporate Tacana signs and symbols. This activity is part of the Tacana Territorial Management Plan. Training activities strengthened the capacity of 25 Tacana women for weaving bags, cases, and backpacks of high quality cotton and to market them locally and internationally.



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## 'La fiesta' as a cultural expression of the Tacana and Leco Peoples

'La fiesta' has traditionally been a form of cultural expression in both the Tacana and Leco cultures. Accompanied by flute, drum, and bass drum, original Leco dances represent stories of hunters with feather decorated arrows. Dance has also had an important place in the traditional festivals of the Tacana People. Some of most significant are the tiritiri, kalawayas, chama, and zampoñeros, which are presented at the Cross, Holy Trinity, and Carnival festivals.

The promotion of cultural activities in festivals by involving school children and providing traditional dress helps to revalorize these traditional dances and generate the interest of young people. Also, the inclusion of these dances in community enterprise tourism packages, combining culture with nature, adds cultural value to the visitor experience.

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## The reaffirmation of cultural traditions through natural resource management

The indigenous Tacana and Leco peoples have developed productive systems that combine tropical agriculture, harvesting, hunting, and fishing. The Tacana still practice traditional hunting rites directed at animal spirits known as "edutzis" to ensure their conservation and a successful hunt.

Agriculture was historically based on cassava, peanut, corn, sweet potato, bean, and chili pepper crops grown in gardens and patios. Sowing and harvest times were great celebrations and accompanied by song and dance. With the settlement of Franciscan missions, new crops were introduced, such as banana, citrus, coffee, and rice, as well as livestock such as cattle, sheep, and horses.

Household gardens remain spaces where a variety of crops are grown for food, medicine, and ornamental and artisanal purposes. In combination with more intensive small holding agriculture, household gardens play an important food security role for Tacana and Leco families, as well as a reaffirmation of indigenous agricultural knowledge and practices, thereby helping to strengthen cultural identity.

# CULTURAL REAFFIRMATION

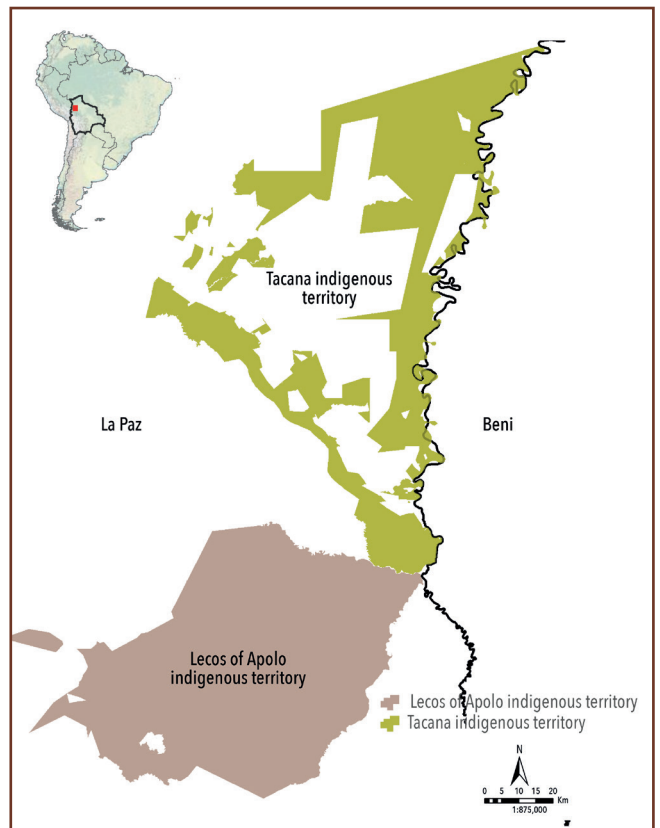
Language, myths, traditional celebrations, customs, and artistic production are creative expressions that bear witness to the deep cultural roots of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region of Bolivia. Culture instills a sense of belonging and preserves traditional knowledge of land and natural resource management that in turn create a respect for forest, wetlands, and wildlife. The need to keep culture alive, to reclaim it, and strengthen its values within communities is a driving principle within indigenous territorial management.

## The importance of territorial management for cultural reaffirmation

- Keeps alive culture and strengthens the cultural identity of indigenous peoples.
- Permits the recovery of native language and traditional cultures.
- Contributes to the preservation of knowledge and natural resource management and conservation practices.
- Favors the connection of local knowledge with alternative economic development, such as handicraft production and community-based ecotourism.

## TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT IS ORIENTED TO REAFFIRM THE CULTURE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### Tacana and Leco of Apolo indigenous people in northern La Paz



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