

**THE SOUL OF COLOMBIA: LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT OF THE LAND**

A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Master of Arts in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change

by

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## **Abstract**

### **The Soul of Colombia: Listening to the Spirit of the Land**

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In this creative project, I used Colombia as a case study to show that accessing the dreaming and sentient realms of this land can be healing to citizens of a country that is entrenched in an identity of violence and hopelessness. A diverse group of 31 participants was selected from various geographical areas of the country to take part in a guided meditation to find one's earthspot, and then experience its message for the individual and the country as a whole. Documentation is in the form of a video that captures the testimony and the messages participants in this project experienced as a result of their connection to their earthspots. The language of the documentary is Spanish with English subtitles. It is intended for the Colombian people and the people of the world, to open to the possibility of connecting to their earthspots and exploring the sense of guidance, direction, and awareness of the messages our earth has for us at this moment in our history, as well as facilitating understanding about ways of being that can contribute to peaceful coexistence with ourselves and with our planet. Results indicate that the land spoke from an Elder's perspective, inviting a magnanimous attitude and mindset towards other human beings and towards nature, honoring both the diversity and essential similarity of the Colombian people who took part in this study. The experience also suggested that listening to the land may offer an expanded sense of home not only externally in the traditional understanding of the word, but also internally as a deeper connection to self as well as a powerful sense of inner purpose.

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## **Roots**

Based on the role roots of plants have for their survival, nurturing, and growth, “root” is a metaphor I used to describe a sense of grounding. For roots to really do the work they were created for, they have to be deeply buried in the ground. There must be an intimate connection with the earth in order to derive all the nurturing elements needed to grow and survive. If we as people of Colombia have our own roots disconnected from the earth we stand on and from its sentient sense of direction, how can we identify or be clear about how to create an experience of peace and caring for Colombians and the earth under our feet? This part of the world has an aura of unique “totem spirits” that represent who we essentially are. I invited us to explore what that means through an earth-based experience.

The power of the earth is much more than what we have been trained to see or is obvious to human senses. The earth in this project is not only the solid material it is made of (consensus reality level) but also the dreamlike power it has over us whether we are aware of it or not (dreamland and essence levels). I believe the earth is a sentient being. It has energies and messages for all of us that connect to answers for particular situations or moods and their related sense of direction. The earth may also open the door to the processmind, a spiritual experience wherein we feel a sense of deep unity with ourselves, with humanity, and with all around us. I describe it as a sense of peace, presence, and connection to the Tao where we and the earth are one. All of this is possible if we are present and aware of the earth we stand on, the earth that supports and contains us all (Mindell, 2010, p. 26).

We have forgotten this is a possibility within our reach. The earth could really be part of our lives by guiding and giving us a sense of purpose and direction. This project was an invitation to remember the beliefs of our aboriginal people for whom the earth, the Pacha Mama, was the source of wisdom and creation. For them, the earth has been a source of life composed of guiding spiritual invisible energies that organize all aspects of existence (Mindell, 2010, p. 67).

I used Colombia as a case study to show that accessing the dreaming and sentient realms of this land can be healing to citizens of a country that is identified with violence and hopelessness. We as Colombians yearn for a new sense of identity that connects us to our land and to our people in a more meaningful way.

For two centuries Colombia has experienced armed conflict and violence of some kind: war, coup d'état, guerrilla, paramilitary, and narco-terrorism. Violence and war have been part of our history and our daily existence, permeating our lives so deeply that we have learned to live with its impact in many ways. One survival strategy has been to disconnect from it, and to take the killing, kidnaping, torture or disappearance of family or friends, or the destruction of homes and infrastructure as part of "what is" in this country. We deal with it on our own and move on. It has become part of our identity, along with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness about a possible peaceful solution.

Through connecting with our earthspots, with our roots and the totem spirits of our land, a different perspective was offered to the Colombian people to remember who they really are and how they can contribute to create a peaceful coexistence. Results of this project helped awaken our collective consciousness towards our land as a source of

guidance and direction, and also reconnected us to our own individual inner power, to our eldership, and to our shared responsibility to shift our history and identity of violence.

I invited a group of Colombians to participate in an exercise of connection to their earthspots. By accessing their dreaming and sentient levels of awareness, they were able to discover new meanings about themselves as Colombians, and their potential to create a better present and future for all of us and for the land.

The land of Colombia has borne witness to many years of violence. This same land holds answers to long-standing conflicts and may guide us to think about ourselves and our roles in ways we had not yet thought of.

I hoped by listening to the spirit of our land that we would be inspired to discover new perspectives for our lives and also regain awareness of the earth we stand on. Humans have disconnected from the spirit of the earth. Lack of awareness has resulted in catastrophic consequences towards our planet and all living things, including humans.

### **The Product**

The product I deliver is a creative project in the form of a video that captures the testimony and the messages participants in this project experienced as a result of their connection to their earthspots. The language of the documentary is Spanish with English subtitles.

### **The Process**

A group of 31 people from different parts of Colombia representing age, geography, social, and gender diversity were invited to sit together in small groups and experience a guided meditation that would lead them to connect with the deepest part of themselves and their earthspot. Permission to be filmed and capture their verbal

testimonies recounting the experience each one had was requested and granted. The participants were representatives from different geographical regions of the country: the Pacific and Atlantic regions, the Coffee growing region, the Andean region, the Plains, and the Amazon and the Southern regions.

The meditation started with me sharing information about the history, impact, and costs of the armed conflict in Colombia for 5 minutes to set the context. After this, I invited participants to begin the guided meditation exercise (Mindell, 2010, p. 71). The guided meditation was the same for all groups and its steps are as follows.

1. As preparation for this exercise, take a moment to feel the earth underneath you, the earth around you; relate to the earth in a way that feels natural.
2. Sit down or stand, whatever is more comfortable for you; now I am going to ask you: where in your body is the deepest part of yourself? Focus your breathing there to deepen your sensation of this place... savor that sensation for a moment and notice a special presence that comes out of your body from that place.
3. Amplify that experience with your breathing; notice the images that emerge, what kind of presence is characteristic of that deeper part of yourself? Imagine it, feel it, listen to any sound or smell any aroma.
4. Connected with that presence, ask yourself with what spot of this Colombian land is that presence associated? It may be many so choose one for this exercise.
5. Go to that place in your imagination, walk it, observe it, feel it.

6. Now, become that place; what is it like to be that place? How does it feel?

What type of energy does it have? What kind of presence does it have? As you are the spirit of that place, what message do you have for all Colombians regarding their long history of war and violence?

7. I am going to invite you to share: Who are you (as that place / give the name of that place) and what message do you have for all Colombians?

8. Now, what message do you (earthspot) have for . . . (name of participant)?

For some participants, the message for all Colombians shared after the exercise was similar to the one experienced at the personal level. Some kept their personal message to themselves, and all group members shared the message for the Colombian people.

I began this meditation process with a researcher's mindset, wanting to know more about the impact the connection to their earthspot would have for these individuals. To my surprise, I discovered that after each session, I was deeply touched by an amazing sense of unity and connection with a bigger presence than myself, humankind, and the earth itself. This was the experience for most participants as it became a spiritual encounter, and an experience of eldership. Experience in this project happened on three parallel levels: consensus reality level (the geographical earthspot) and the dreamland and processmind levels (the sentient presence within each one of us and our earthspot).

### **The Audience**

This video is intended for the PWI community to share the experience of applying an earth-based method in a South American country with a group of its inhabitants to create awareness about themselves as individuals and as citizens of their country,

Colombia. It is also intended for the Colombian people and people worldwide, to open to the possibility of connecting to their earthspots and exploring the sense of guidance and direction offered. Awareness of the messages our earth has for us at this moment in our history may facilitate understanding about ways of being that can contribute to peaceful coexistence with ourselves and with our planet.

## **Literature Review**

### **History of Violence in Colombia**

G. Sanchez (2003) writes in his book, *Pasado y Presente de la Violencia en Colombia (Past and Present of Violence in Colombia)*, that Colombia has been a country with permanent endemic war since the civil wars in the 19th century all the way to the 20th century, where “la violencia” (the violence)—how the armed conflict is named today—gets triggered in the context of the permanent crisis that this country has lived in since the 1940s. Over the decades, it has been a confrontation between the dominant class and the more subordinated ones. The violence in the last decade was characterized by multiple armed actors with acts of terrorism, kidnaping, massacres, drug trafficking, and children being recruited to guerilla and paramilitary lines.

What has been the cause of all this violence? It is impossible to point to a single cause, and that has made it difficult to understand and eradicate the conflict itself. We can, however, point to several contributors: the state’s struggle for control, rivalry and intolerance between political parties, religious intolerance, citizens’ absence from political participation, and lack of knowledge of citizens’ rights in a weak state where violence became a way to solve problems. A deep sense of economic and political exclusion for a large part of the population, and more recently narcotraffic also contribute.

This complexity has made it hard to identify the opponent, and therefore find effective ways to deal and interact with it, given that the role of the victim is the only one clearly identified.

In recent times, the armed conflict has been dominated by guerrilla factions (FARC and ELN) that started as a socialist movement to overthrow the mainstream and was supported by Cuba and communist ideals. They have been effective at finding international support from leftist groups and have grown a strong economic structure to support their activities as a result of extortion, kidnaping, and narcotraffic. The second leading armed group is the paramilitary (AUC). Initially they were security guards sponsored by landowners to defend their farms and their lives from the guerillas, and then evolved as an independent violent group. Both groups are powerful and have been fighting each other for control of the territory and the narcotraffic business that gives them almost unending amounts of economic resources. The third party in this armed conflict is the Colombian army for whom war has been the only way to deal with these groups.

Chernick (2008) talks about the Colombian reality explaining that

what is really surprising about the Colombian case is not how different each stage of violence has been (in the country's history) but its continuity. To begin with, each stage of the conflict has fed the following one and the actors of one period have become the actors of the next one. (p. 19)

Violence has become part of the social dynamic in our country and has brought a sense of helplessness regarding the possibility of peace. Many approaches and two peace processes have been tried, yet none has had positive results.

A new peace process began in January 2012. The way this new process is being presented to the Colombian people and approached by the negotiators is the same as we have observed in the past failed peace processes. The same dynamic is in relationships

and in the field of this country: two powerful forces at the negotiation table (government and guerrilla) trying to get as much as each one can get from the other, and the Colombian citizen, with no real power, voice, or representation in the negotiation process. The roles of the powerful and powerless, where the powerful gets to say what and how things must be done and the powerless gets to obey and nod in agreement with a bitter feeling about the complete lack of rank awareness from the powerful forces, I believe are big contributors to the never ending cycle of violence in this country. The ghosts at that negotiation table are the dead, the displaced, the tortured and the kidnapped, the raped women, and the children forced to become killers. The pain of the powerless citizens who witness a battle for power and domination, where their hearts and souls have no voice to bring awareness because what is at stake in the current peace process are human beings, not points in an agenda of either side, is also in the field.

### **Sentient Earth Awareness and Processmind**

Sentient awareness for me is the capacity to be conscious of my own feelings and impulses, with channels open to that information so I can act and guide my life on it. It is an awareness present in my body that gives me a sense of purpose and direction, connected not only internally but also with a bigger presence or processmind (Mindell, 2010, p. 6).

In essence, the processmind experience, the sense of complete unity and connection to ourselves and to all around us, is possible because of that inner sentient awareness and the experiencing of the processmind inside each of us. In other words, it is a deep and very personal experience. Connecting to an earthspot, or the magical and inspiring place each one has on this planet, is a doorway for that spiritual connection

where deep awareness and meaningful answers can be found. The earth has a sentient quality: it is alive and there are specific energies connected to each earthspot that can guide and inspire our lives. These energies of interconnectedness exist beyond our human understanding and can be felt through our sentient body.

Connection to earth as a sentient being and seeking answers from that connection is explored by Mindell (2007), in his book *Earth-Based Psychology*. Because of earth-based body awareness, we have the capacity to perceive the world as a sentient being, as a “dreamlike entity” (Mindell, 2007, p. 13), one that without us consciously knowing how, prompts in us the impulse to move before we even move. The direction that we take or the paths we choose are preceded by sentient awareness of the earth even though we are unaware and usually disconnected from it. Mindell (2007) presents the perspective that even though “we are located in our bodies we are also located, through non-locality, at other places on earth and the universe. . . . In a way, we *are* the directions, we *are* the area around ourselves” (p. 13).

The shaman Don Juan quoted by Mindell (2007), referred to our planet as “sentient earth” (p. 14), and as a gigantic “sentient being subjected to the same forces we are” (p. 14), a living being with awareness and direction for us if we become part of it.

By moving with the earth’s sentient awareness we align ourselves with the direction it intends for us—that is, with the Tao of the moment. Our sentient awareness belongs at the same time to the entire earth, to the universe in which we live (p. 14). . . . Our experiences are intimately connected with the world, with the universe itself. . . . At some level our awareness and the earth’s are inseparable. (Mindell, 2007, p. 19)

If we are in connection and aware of the dreaming realm of the earth, we could notice flirts, signals, impulses manifesting from the sentient earth that can guide us towards the

answers we need in the moment, developing path awareness and noticing feelings in space and directions. Our everyday consensus reality mind may think this is impossible.

Indigenous and aboriginal groups had no compasses or maps to guide them, surviving only with their intuition or body wisdom (Mindell, 2007). “Aboriginal people moved with special, sentient, earth-based awareness. They identified their bodies with the earth feeling as their dreaming bodies connected to the dreamlike nature of earth. Today most of us are oblivious of our earth-based sense” (Mindell, 2007, p. 51).

In modern society, we live disconnected from the earth as a sentient being. It has become an object of exploitation, rather than a source of connection and awareness that can help us with answers and meaning for our lives, our countries, or even the planet itself. It is not in our modern mindset to even consider the possibility of connecting to the earth and looking for answers on a regular basis as it had been in the aboriginal peoples’ mindset.

How different our conversations regarding the preservation of our planet would be if we were willing to invite the earth’s wisdom and messages to those conversations. If we are able to consider our earth as a powerful source of guidance that can help us, it is because it has answers for itself and for humans.

### **Learning From the Perspective of Aboriginal People**

Carlos Castaneda (1974) in his book, *Las Enseñanzas de don Juan (The Teachings of Don Juan)*, writes about how Don Juan (a Yaqui shaman) insists that he must find the perfect earthspot to sit down because there was a “good place” and a “bad place.” The good one was called “the place” and the bad one “the enemy.” He explained to Carlos how these two places were key to the wellbeing of a man, especially if he was

searching for knowledge. He said that “the mere act of sitting in your own right place, gave superior strength; the enemy instead, weakened you and could even cause your death” (as cited in Castaneda, 1974, p. 50). For Don Juan, it was important that his student found his own earthspot in order to connect to its true power. In turn, this implied an intentional search for the “good place” and finding ways to connect and feel its message with awareness.

Natalia Jaramillo Giraldo (2010) evidences how the conception of sacredness of the land is fundamental to the cognitive organization of the indigenous group Iku in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. The Sierra Nevada is a chain of mountains located at the northern part of Colombia close to the Caribbean, named Gonawindúa by the indigenous groups that have lived there since pre-Hispanic time, and also represents their Sacred House. The Mamo are specific men of this indigenous group responsible for communication between the spirit and the material worlds. For them, all that exists originated in their Sacred House, the Sierra Nevada, and there, fathers and mothers are represented in the hills, the rivers, the lagoons, and all aspects of the geography.

These indigenous groups see the land as the “code that contains all regulations that allow each individual’s existence and guarantees the permanence of life” (Giraldo, 2010, p. 5). In the worldview of the Iku, each object alive or made by men, has an origin—represented in the spiritual fathers—and a law or “kunsamu,” found in specific earthspots in the Sierra Nevada, that allows one to understand, rationalize, and give sense to the world (Mamo Juan Marcos Perez as cited in Giraldo, 2010).

The sacred palaces in the Sierra Nevada have the function of setting and orienting the vital space of the community because they are considered the centers of world-order

and worldview. For the Iku, the gods or Spiritual Fathers are inhabitants of the hills, the lagoons, the caves, and of all the sacred places. These are key places the Mamos have identified as biologically strategic for the equilibrium of the ecosystem, and also as important places to reflect on the sentient world and the properties of nature. In other words, the land gives the Iku the sense of who they are in all spiritual and worldly orders; it gives them their deep sense of who they are and what life is about. The sacred places are a source of authority and power in the physical, metaphysical, ecological, and social realms.

In her work with the Iku (Aruhaco) indigenous group of the Sierra Nevada de Santa, Giraldo Jaramillo (2010) explains that

each rock, each turn of the river has for us a deep supernatural meaning. The entire landscape is impregnated of the presence of the past, from the creation of the universe to the memory of a grandfather that has recently died. From the heroic mythical deeds to the reminiscence of the elders that still tell the tales of Colombian civil wars and the episodes of the past century where there were mamos that could transform themselves into jaguars. (p. 2)

This article provides the perspective of the aboriginal people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia regarding their sacred view of the earth and their territory. They too have a concept of earthspot with a specific totemspirit and spiritual meaning.

Myriam Jimeno, Jose Leandro Guetio, Angela Castillo, and Daniel Varela (2011), in their research of the Nasa indigenous community located in the Naya river in the southern part of Colombia in the Cauca province, draw from a dialogue with one of the community's elders, Jose Dolores Guasquillo, who speaks here of the colonizing of the land of the Naya:

When we got to the Naya there was a huge cloud that brought thunder and rain. Then Leandro Guetio (one of the members of the community) said: I am going to Corinto to bring a doctor that can move that cloud . . . the dense fog covered the

plain because the mountains were jealous. The spirits of the mountain started to feel jealous when they sensed people that were not from the jungle, and the only way to calm the skies was with the work of a traditional indigenous doctor. (p. 16)

For this indigenous community nature is sacred. Connection to sentient earth and universe awareness guides their everyday lives and informs important community decisions.

The above literature presents context for the deep spiritual meaning and power we all can access when we are connected to the earth's processmind. We can find a clear and deep sense of meaning and direction. Our own aboriginal people in Colombia have guided their personal, spiritual, and community lives with a deep sentient earth-based awareness that called them to revere and protect nature as a way to protect their own lives and that of their communities. They sought answers from the dreaming and sentient realms of the earth. They have had the awareness needed to feel and listen to the message their land and natural world had for them. Such awareness of our aboriginal people is not far from today's Colombians. It is here for us to use it and learn from our ancestors.

If we as Colombians can find and identify our power spots, we can discover new perspectives about ourselves and about our land. We have listened to many voices, especially those coming from outside our own people or the voices of local "experts" where this problematic is treated as a case study. It is as if the role of expert or the role of foreign diagnostics and perspectives about how to end war and conflict were wiser than the common citizen, and certainly, we have been far from listening to the spirit of our own land—unthinkable to most of us. There is a power that needs to be picked up by the people of this country. Their voices need to be heard, as does the power of the more sentient wisdom of our own land, because they are also expert voices.

I believe the spirit of our land has powerful messages for us as inhabitants of this north-west corner of the South-American continent. Our mountains, our rivers and lakes—this land we stand on and that sustains our daily existence has answers for our personal lives and our peaceful coexistence. For this to be possible, we must connect to ourselves, to our bodies: our sentient channels of awareness.

If we continue seeking answers outside of the common people and representing only consensus reality approaches disconnected from the essence of who we are at a deeper level, we may be trapped in dealing with a foreign formula that perpetuates this vicious cycle of violence and war. This land is our signature field: it has the power we need to find our own solutions which implies consulting a different level of awareness, the parallel world (Mindell, 2007, p. 11) of sentient reality that can help us challenge the status quo as we know it today.

### **Approach**

I developed a video that gathers the testimony of Colombian citizens from different geographical parts of the country. The impact the exercise of earth-based connection had on these people located in specific places on this land with regard to their approach towards a solution of this long history of violence and their empowerment to shift our identity of conflict was explored.

### **Limitations**

An important concern during this process was that even though I talk about representatives from the Colombian population, only a small sample could be included. I knew that a larger sample was desirable but it was not possible for practical reasons. The biggest concern for me was about making sure participants felt free to give or not their

permission for their image and their verbal testimony to be filmed. I started by explaining to the participants the purpose of this work and asking them for their verbal answer to the question of whether they agreed or not to be filmed and recorded with the intention of the video to become a public product. With that intention, I also gave them my contact information in case they changed their mind. Then I made a written format for people to sign and found that they were uncomfortable with that level of formality. So I contacted some of them, again by phone, and checked that their agreement was still on. In the case of the guerrilla and paramilitary representatives, they requested that only their voices be recorded and no filming to be done for security reasons.

In all cases, I explained I would be willing to have someone else play their part in the film, if they felt more comfortable. All participants agreed to appear in the film except for the guerrilla and the paramilitary representatives who agreed to record only their voices.

A small camcorder was used in the process along with a basic microphone and a voice recorder to make sure technology would not intimidate participants. Even though this was accomplished, the lack of sophisticated equipment impacted the quality of sound and image in some sessions.

### **Results and Findings**

I traveled to different parts of the country thinking that the geographical place would have an impact on the earthspot people chose. I thought people would choose a spot in the geographical area where we were doing the meditation. Except for 3 participants who chose the actual place where we were standing for the exercise, the rest chose geographical places far away. They were able to connect deeply with their

earthspot, recreating it with their feelings and senses as if they were actually there and as if they actually became it. Recreating their time and space experience in the moment confirmed for me the nonlocal experience of places on this earth.

Earth-based awareness is far from our awareness in today's world—nevertheless, as soon as people were invited to connect to their earthspot, a sentient level of awareness was present for all participants. A sense of a personal life path with associated feelings and body awareness or even a dreamlike vision about themselves emerged for most of them. It was very impactful for me to witness how the awareness present for the indigenous participants regarding earth awareness was similar to the one present for the other participants, who do not have a cultural practice of earth-based awareness. For all participants, it was not only dreamlike but also real in consensus reality. This also confirmed we all have the capacity to connect to the sentient and dreamlike experience of the earth if we are open to that possibility.

I was highly impacted by the fact that all experiences without exception brought out the best of all individuals, their high dream for themselves, humanity, and our environment, regardless of life experience of violence or disempowerment for some of them. It was a consistent and positive experience for all participants. The connection to their earthspot gave them access to a state of mind to think outside their usual mindset. The earthspot was the Elder and it saw solutions and had a perspective of human beings that did not include war and confrontation, guiding them in the direction intended for each one of them since the beginning of their life on this earth. When they connected to their earthspot, they were connecting to the deepest part of themselves reflected in nature, where they accessed a magnanimous attitude towards all forms of life in this planet. From

that metaposition, it was possible to see solutions that included everyone and created unity, with a sense that we all are one and we are all the same. When I saw this, I asked why it is so difficult to remember this in our everyday lives? Maybe the earth we stand on is the key to change our frame of reference towards ourselves and towards appreciating life in all forms.

One of the insights for me during this process happened by realizing the amazing amount of books, papers, videos, documentaries, and in general, all sorts of publications as well as nongovernmental organizations, government and private entities, all dedicated to solve the problem of armed conflict and violence in Colombia. Many have sacrificed their lives for this cause and millions of dollars have been poured into the analysis, diagnosis, and implementation of initiatives to end war and armed conflict in this part of the world to no avail. Definitively, consensus reality solutions have fallen short. We must be able to inspire and lead the exploration of a different path where sentient reality allows us to gain awareness of how to deal with the consensus reality problem of war and violence in a very different way than it has been dealt with so far. Connecting to our earthspot may be one way.

The practice of earth-based meditation and connection to the sentient and dreaming aspect of the land could become a ritual for all of us in this country and for all people on this planet. If we were to make this a routine practice of our daily lives, we could bring a new way to see ourselves, our communities, and our own country just as the participants in this meditative exercise did by becoming aware and giving voice to the messages from their earthspots. When asked to share these messages for all Colombians

regarding their long history of violence, this is what their earthspots had to say to the Colombian people:

- “Yes, it’s possible to live in peace, believe it’s possible.”
- “You must respect each other and imagine the other is you to be able to bring peace.”
- “You can live in selflessness and share what you have, you can not continue behaving as if what you receive from the earth is only for you to accumulate more and more, know what is enough and share.”
- “You must love your mother earth to be in peace.”
- “It’s vital to love and appreciate your own homeland and what it can give you, you must get to know the beauty of your own country first instead of go looking outside.”
- “You must work for the preservation of your natural resources, it’s a gift for all of you.”
- “You must not fear to work for the improvement of your own community, instead of waiting for others to solve your problems, do not be afraid to be the one to start the action and the discussion.”
- “At this time you need to reconnect to your child-like mind and spirit to begin anew and see the possibility of peace.”
- “You need to respect and honor your ancestors to reconnect to your roots.”
- “You need to honor your roots and, you must live in a way that nurtures freedom to be and express yourselves.”

These participants were not only speaking for themselves. They were speaking for me, for other Colombians, and also for other people in the world. They were manifesting a yearning from our planet and from humanity that needs to be expressed over and over again, until our level of consciousness is raised and we are moved collectively to do something about violence and destruction of life, not only in Colombia but also on our planet.

### **Contribution to the Field**

This work of connection to our “mother earth” to find answers for ourselves and for our country had never been tried before in this part of the world. Nor has it been intentionally researched in Process Work with people from a specific country. I forged new territory in Process Work research by applying this approach within a South American context, and expanded the cross-cultural application of Process Work’s earth-based methods. I also brought new ideas for its application with groups with the intention of a personal and country-identity focus, and thus contributed to the theory and also the practice of this approach.

Through this project, I could see that connecting to the dreaming spirit of this Colombian land may help to reconnect us to our own signature field, the power that moves us, and this may help us find new solutions to our current reality in a way that honors the spirit of our country.

As humans, we all share the same “mother earth” yet each of us represents a particular part of her. The way you do anything is an expression of your signature field, the power moving you, the earth spot “you come from.” (Mindell, 2010, p. 68)

In reading about Colombian indigenous people, it is clear they are connected to the dreaming realm of their land in a way that structures all aspects of their lives, and it gives

them a clear sense of meaning, belonging, and identity. This then is a valid approach not only followed by our indigenous ancestors. We all have the capacity to open our minds and our hearts and to experience a different reality that can illuminate new possibilities for peace, not only in Colombia but also for other countries where there has been a history of war and violence.

As I started the process of interviewing participants for this work, I found that it was easier for them to do this exercise in a group than it was individually. I invited participants to a meditation exercise where people closed their eyes and became intimate sharing deep emotions and personal messages in a group where they did not necessarily know the others. It was really important to create a safe container with the group, where the metaskills of love, connection, and vulnerability were key from me as a facilitator, as was the metaskill of framing the experience in a meaningful way for all. Additionally, listening to others' experience allowed the more shy participants to open up to talk about a subject that in itself, was far removed from participants' everyday lives or mindset.

I believe that the effect of collective live testimonies of the meaning and messages this land has for us, as Colombians, can create new awareness about who we are in a more sentient and dreaming way, thus connecting us to our roots and to our hearts. By doing this process in groups, we support our collective voice and witness its significance with others.

This work with our sentient earth-based awareness can modify the way we perceive each other and the way we perceive our own land with the aim of discovering a new path of how to live in peace in this country. I hope this project planted that seed. As I did the work with a group of people, I was doing the work for me, for all Colombians,

and ultimately the world. People from the western hemisphere have forgotten how to connect to their sentient body as a channel of connection to the sentient earth. They have forgotten body and earth are one and disregard the sense of direction and guidance our earth has for all of us. The focus upon cognition and reason that rule this part of the world can't understand this as possible.

I witnessed how through the experience of connection to the earthspot very specific answers were found to solve problems of violence, and in general, issues we have not been able to solve through consensus reality approaches. The actions and ideas resulting from each individual's experience were specific and concrete enough to start an action plan that could lead to very specific results of peaceful coexistence. In a future application of this methodology I would recommend coaching participants to design specific actions and follow up strategies as a complement to the guided meditation described prior. I did this with some participants and they left with a clearer feeling of completion than with those I stopped after the sharing of their messages, since that was the original intent as I was collecting material for the video.

Violence and war start with conflicts that have not been dealt within each one of us, in our relationships, and in our field, and most of us are not aware of the extent of the damage this lack of awareness can cause. Through connection to our earthspot we are able to access the elder within, who can see from a metaview position what is required to live in peace with ourselves and with all forms of life on the planet including earth itself.

### **Conclusion**

This work helped participants deepen their experience with themselves and our land, and opened up their awareness channels to explore new earth-based answers and a

new earth-based sense of direction. As I moved forward with this work, it began to broaden my own consciousness and my own identity in connection to this land and my own awareness around the sickening and pointless dimension of war and violence in this part of the world. Our inability as humans to learn from this endless history of death and destruction of life shows how much we have yet to grow and evolve our level of consciousness to become the elders we all need to become to stand in a place of love and appreciation for all expressions of life. The earth itself has answers for us and can support our own evolution.

Mindel (2010) reflects on the dreamlike feeling of home:

For earth-based people, the Buddha mind is roughly analogous to the location on earth where they feel best or most at home. Knowing your processmind or earth-based “totem spirit” is a new experience for some, but it also an ancient form of consciousness linked to the space surrounding and between things. Every time you remember the land you love the most, you are “home.” (p. 77)

This is not only at home in the common meaning of the word but at home with ourselves, our relationships, and all that surrounds us. This video has created a sense of what home can be for its audience in this country. Those living in other parts of the world can learn from this earth-based connection experience in Colombia.

This land wants to be “seen” and communicate with us, and this project was designed to create that communication channel. We as “modern” citizens need a deeper connection to our earthspots and our signature fields on earth, in order to heighten our consciousness and inspire us to protect them and live in peace and harmony with the universe.

These messages recorded on the video have the key to bring the spirit of peace back to our lives, our country, and also the world. Men and women from Colombia have

answers to the direction we must take as a country to end the vicious cycle of violence that we have had for many decades—by listening to the spirit of our land. The answers are in our land and in our hearts—we just have forgotten.

At a personal level, this has been a deeply healing experience. I have been able to experience, in my soul and in my heart, by listening to all participants, how we are all the same despite the circumstances of our lives, and how our earthspot can allow us to bring out the elder within. We need to trust this earth-based solution for peace and awareness and embrace it as a possibility. My youngest son, Eduardo, 24-years-old, came with me to support the recording of my encounter with ex-paramilitary and ex-guerrilla representatives. After he listened to their high dreams and their messages from their earthspots he said to me: “You know, mom, oh my god . . . I could be any of them . . . I just had the privilege of being born into different circumstances . . . any of them could have been me.” In essence, we are all the same and our earth-based sentient awareness can be a doorway to this understanding.

The possibility to have a momentary glance into someone else’s soul and eldership, especially when we see the other as completely different, makes it impossible for one to see the other as our enemy or as separate. This was my experience with the ex-guerrilla and ex-paramilitaries, and with all participants in this process. They were just like me—we were the same. The healing energy of oneness accessed through our earthspots gave me hope for our country and for the world.

Connecting to the dreamlike and essence level of the earth became a spiritual experience that took me into a lucid altered state of unity and sentience. How can that be

maintained into everyday life? How can we not forget? This is an answer we all need to find together.

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