



**Jason Pogacnik: NATO Consensus Builder and Strategist**  
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**How has your ability to connect with others supported or influenced your work?**

The greatest strength of my organization, NATO, is unity. Nothing moves forward without agreement among 31 (soon to be 32) nations, normally with different priorities and agendas, in multiple committees. In addition, the constantly evolving threats and global challenges we face coupled with equally dynamic ends, ways, and means to address them are driving ever-greater degrees of inter-connectedness and interdependence. To the need for consensus, this adds a requirement for extensive coordination across the organization with civilian and military staff on nearly every issue. But behind every national position and every staff point paper is a person, and I've learned that email is almost never the best way to get to yes. Developing and nurturing personal connections over the phone, or, even better, coffee breaks (especially in Europe), can work wonders!

**“In the workplace, this (Waldorf experience) fosters what I believe to be an entrepreneurial spirit in a broad sense - encompassing, to name a few qualities, greater openness to new ideas, capacity to embrace and learn from failure, ability to listen, focus on continuous improvement, and professional skepticism.”**

Nita June is an AWSNA Alum Contributor

## Tinkuy: A Transformative Relationship of Reciprocity

*By Julie Meade*

As Román Vizcarra lifts the panflute to his lips, the classroom quiets. He has commanded the attention of 20 second graders with his soft spoken but powerful presence, sharing stories from his childhood in the Andes mountains of Peru. Now, he takes a breath and begins to play a traditional Andean song, holding the flute in one hand while keeping the beat on a drum with the other. It is a mesmerizing mix of movement, sound, and rhythm emanating from a single musician. The children are captivated.

It's the spring of 2021, and Vizcarra, a Quechua educator, activist, and founding member of Kusi Kawsay Andean School in Pisac, Peru, is spending several days at Marin Waldorf School as part of a two-week-long trip to the San Francisco Bay Area. His visit to California is one of the many exchanges that have taken place through the Tinkuy Project, a special relationship of respect and reciprocity that has developed between students and teachers at Marin Waldorf School, the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training (BACWTT), and Kusi Kawsay over the past ten years. Through an organic program of cultural exchange, Waldorf students and teachers have engaged in mentorship, discussion, and learning across two continents.

“We call the program tinkuy, which in my tongue means encounter. A basic value that we practice in the Andes is reciprocity, called ayni,” explained Vizcarra in 2021. “I'm continuing the relationship and connection we have with the teachers here, who have been coming to Peru and sharing knowledge they have in the Waldorf ways. With a lot of gratitude, I'm bringing them the experience of my culture, in the moment when more of these encounters between humans are needed.”



Lucia, an Amaru master weaver, welcomes a student from California to her village.

The Tinkuy Project started in 2013, but the story begins over 20 years ago, in Peru's Sacred Valley, where five families had the vision to open an Andean school that would serve local Indigenous children. Fielding Wood, a founding member of Kusi Kawsay, explains, "The backbone for our academic experience is Waldorf pedagogy, which is more similar to education found in Indigenous communities in that it is integral, holistic, hands-on, and rhythmic. The experience is personalized, honoring each child and what they bring to this world." Today, there are close to 100 students at Kusi Kawsay, kindergarten to 11th grade, who learn within the context of their native culture, with music, dance, weaving, sacred geometry, the Quechua language, and the Andean agrarian ritual calendar intertwined into the academic program.



A view of the town of Pisac, Peru, from Kusi Kawsay.

The Tinkuy Project took shape after Wood connected with college friend Megan Neale, director of Marin Waldorf School in San Rafael, California. Through Marin Independent High School in San Rafael, Neale arranged a trip to Kusi Kawsay with a group of students—most of them graduates of Marin Waldorf School—to study ancient civilizations with Ken Smith, current director of the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training. Leading up to the trip, students delved into the ancient civilizations of the Americas in the classroom. On the ground in Peru, they experienced the culture directly, working alongside and learning from the descendants of the great civilizations they'd been studying.

In the mornings, visiting students were assigned to classrooms at Kusi Kawsay and volunteered at the organization's organic farm. In the afternoons, they visited museums and archeological sites, including Machu Picchu, Tambomachay, and Saqsaywaman, marveling at the work of the great civilizations they had studied. They made a blood-pumping ascent to 12,000 feet to visit the remote mountain village of the Amaru, master weavers who have chosen to live communally, in the ancient Andean way, without influence from the modern world. It was a transformative experience.

"We developed a mood of exchange," says Ken Smith. "There are some things they could learn from us, and there are a bunch of things we could learn from them." Over the years that

Ken Smith examines textiles made by traditional Amaru artisans.



Marin Waldorf School alums sketch at Machu Picchu during a visit to Peru.



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followed, the relationship continued to develop as Neale and Smith returned to Peru with students in BACWTT's teacher training program; a class teacher and pedagogical director of Kusi Kawsay spent extended time in California, as did a Peruvian exchange student from the school; teachers from Bay Area Waldorf schools visited Kusi Kawsay as mentors; and BACWTT invited Roman Vizcarra and Fielding Wood to guest-teach several courses on ancient Andean cosmology.

**"It is very urgent to really hear and listen to the other voices, like ours, in this diverse world," Vizcarra tells the assembled faculty. It is this spirit that Tinkuy continues. There is still so much to learn.**

"It's one thing to connect to a big idea. Going in person meant so much—it changed everything," says Kristine Deason, veteran teacher from Marin Waldorf School and a faculty member at BACWTT, who visited Kusi Kawsay twice as a mentor teacher. She describes the relationship with Kusi Kawsay as having a "musical quality," with each side listening to what the other has to say. A part of that dialogue is understanding how Waldorf curriculum can change to become, in Smith's words, "more honest to a global perspective." At Kusi Kawsay, where the eurocentric worldview is eschewed, teachers have the opportunity to examine what's seminal in Waldorf education, acknowledging, as Smith says, "the wonderful depth of the curriculum and the ability to make adjustments according to new knowledge and new experiences."



On a bright, blustery spring day in 2021 at Marin Waldorf School, the faculty gathered on campus in a grove of valley oaks to meet with Román Vizcarra. Dressed in a white blouse, his waist-length hair tied into a slender braid and tucked beneath a woven cap, he discussed the non-hierarchical worldview of the Quechua people, and how wisdom comes from a diversity of thought, beliefs, and practices.

Teacher Kristine Deason tries on a traditional Andean skirt while visiting the Amaru community in Peru.



The entrance to Kusi Kawsay in Pisac, Peru.

He then recounted a moment from his morning visit to the eighth-grade classroom, where he lectured about the ancient Quechua people and their intimate connection to nature and the spirit of the earth. He detailed their advancements in astronomy, architecture, and agriculture, as well as their highly developed organizational

systems. He also spoke about the realities of European colonization in Perú and across the Americas, which was characterized by greed and violence.

After listening to Vizcarra speak, a student raised her hand to ask why the European invaders were unable to see the gifts of the native people when they arrived in the Americas. Vizcarra was visibly moved as he recounted the moment. "When she asked that question—why do you think the explorers didn't see it? Why didn't they understand? Wow, that made my whole trip," said Roman. "I'm glad whenever the children learn to question things. If you don't doubt, if you don't ask questions, you never go anywhere. She got it."



Teachers from Marin Waldorf School and BACWTT visit Tipón.

"It is very urgent to really hear and listen to the other voices, like ours, in this diverse world," Vizcarra tells the assembled faculty. It is this spirit that Tinkuy continues. There is still so much to learn.



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