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Inga Leader Hernando Chindoy Visits Amsterdam for Two Dialogues on Biocultural Peace

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Listening to the Earth: Inga Leader Hernando Chindoy Visits Amsterdam for Two Dialogues on Biocultural Peace

by Maurizia Mezza and Mieke Lopes Cardozo

25 November 2025

In November 2025, the Amsterdam Centre for Conflict Studies (ACCS) at the University of Amsterdam hosted two powerful encounters with Hernando Chindoy, Inga community leader from the Piedemonte Andino Amazónico region in Colombia. Founder of the Wuasikamas – Guardians of the Earth initiative and the Ëconêêrã International Pluriversity, Chindoy works to promote alternative political and spiritual responses that foster biocultural peace—a vision grounded in the comprehensive safeguarding of life and the recognition that all beings are interconnected.

In two events supported by ACCS, Chindoy shared the transformative journey of his community in Aponte, Nariño, a region once deeply affected by narcotrafficking and armed violence. In the early 2000s, the Inga people

made the radical decision to replace poppy cultivation with coffee and to begin listening again to the Earth.

“We realised that what we were planting was not only poisoning our bodies,” Chindoy said, “but also the Earth, our common home—and the lives of others around the world who consumed the drugs we produced.”

This recognition sparked a collective process of healing. The community came to see how local extraction and illicit economies were connected to wider systems of exploitation—illegal mining, environmental pollution, and social fragmentation. Through the Wuasikamas and Ëconêêrã initiatives, they began reclaiming ancestral knowledge and practices as pathways toward reconciliation and planetary care.

The first event, held on Tuesday 4 November at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), brought together more than forty participants—students from the BA in Anthropology and International Development Studies, MA and PhD researchers and UvA staff, and guests from outside academia—for an intimate conversation on how genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide are interlinked. A moving discussion followed Chindoy’s talk: How can we

grieve collectively? What does grief mean for those who have been displaced from their land?

Chindoy reflected that there is no single formula. In Aponte, collective mourning began through the revival of language and traditions. Yet he also reminded participants that "the Earth is one—so even if you are displaced from your territory, you are never truly outside it. Wherever you are, you remain connected to the same body."

On Friday 7 November, over fifty people gathered at Zone2Source in the Amstelpark for a more embodied encounter. Many participants came from the Sandberg Institute and art-based programmes, as well as from the University of Amsterdam. Chindoy guided a sensory exercise inviting participants to connect with the territory of Amsterdam—the soil, the water, the Amstel River. As the group moved together in silence, many described feeling a profound emotional resonance: a sense of belonging and co-responsibility toward the Earth and each other.

Through his presence and words, Hernando Chindoy reminded us that caring for the planet is not an individual task but a collective responsibility —one that begins with learning to listen, to grieve, and to act together. Education, he suggested, must itself become an act of care: a way of reawakening our connection to the Earth and to one another, cultivating the awareness that we are all part of the same living body.

This event was supported by an ACCS Seed Grant from the University of Amsterdam, awarded to Mieke Lopes Cardozo, Hernando Chindoy, Camila Gueneau de Mussy, Maurizia Mezza and Esther Miedema.

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The Amsterdam Centre for Conflict Studies (ACCS)

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