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KSAPÁI: FOSTERING ASTRONOMICAL KNOWLEDGE IN CHILE BY MERGING ART, HISTORY
AND SCIENCE.

Abstract

Promoted by the ALMA Observatory, the largest astronomical project in existence, the Ksapái project (*The Dark Night* in Kawesqar) is an initiative aimed at elevating astronomical knowledge in Chile through the fusion of science, art, and historic sources. Recognized globally for their celestial splendor, Chile's exceptional skies have traditionally offered a unique setting for the development of modern Astronomy. What is less known, both at local and international level, is the ancient link between cosmology and the Chilean native culture. This knowledge gap about past heritage calls for national and international recognition, as understanding these connections can enrich our appreciation of both scientific astronomical phenomena and indigenous legacy. In this project, Art is proposed as the bridge between these two worlds.

Indeed, artistic crafts are one of the most effective approaches to share astronomical and historical insights. Delving into the cultural tapestry of the extinct Selknam and Kawesqar peoples, eradicated in the 18th century by European colonizers, this paper describes the Ksapái initiative, and unveils the connection these cultures held with the cosmos. At first, the two cultures are presented based on historical knowledge: Selknam marked seasons using celestial occurrences, while the seafarer Kawesqar relied on lunar observations to navigate the world's southernmost sea.

The current project is managed and developed through thematic Open Days and Workshops for general public organized in community centers in the city of Punta Arenas, Patagonia. The activities focuses on exposing visual arts about the Selk'nam and Kawésqar identities, paying attention to take accurate historical reconstruction into account. Also, with the supports of the ALMAs sound bank (an initiative that seeks to interpret and decode the frequencies of the Universe) viewers are immersed in a multi-sensory experience that celebrates the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous people and their relationship with the universe.

The Ksapái initiative expected outcomes are the promotion of appreciation for native astronomy in Chile, the advancement of the rescue and preservation of Kawésqar and Selk'nam culture; and the enhancement of international knowledge about Latin American indigenous astronomy and its cultural perspectives on the universe through art.

The Ksapái project shows that combining science, history, and art can revive lost knowledge and strengthen humanity's bond with the cosmos. Furthermore, the project's guidelines and best practices can inspire similar initiatives worldwide, highlighting the importance of ancient cultures under the starlit canvas.