Paula Saravia, ‘Care struggles: the role of Indigenous health activists in the fight against HIV in Chile.’

This work would not be possible without the generosity of RENPO’s leaders and members of care. Their activism has helped them reconnect with their indigeneity, as one man told me, “Meli Lawen Lawentuchefe” in Lampa, Chile. The meeting was organized by Red Nacional de Personas Optimistas (RENPO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, which has been crucial in negotiating alternatives for reclaiming and de-centering biomedical models of care. RENPO actively unsettles such framings of care by connecting relationships of care for indigenous HIV/AIDS patients to other claims for community well-being, such as sustainable food systems and environments. One example was the role of RENPO activism in Chiloé island, where its leaders played an important role in the public health officials seeing indigenous peoples in Chile. RENPO has developed several strategies, including listening sessions during meetings where members share experiences and emotions. In this essay, I examine the work of RENPO, an indigenous organization of patients and their work in pushing for changes at the national level that could help access culturally informed care.

Methodological Overview

RENP0’s everyday forms of care. Ruth Antipichun, one of the founding members of RENPO, received a masters in social anthropology at Universidad de Chile (1995-2006). In her dissertation research focused on understanding modes of engagement in anthropology and public health. She completed her doctorate, with the help of the members of RENPO. In this piece, I analyse how their way of responding to the HIV pandemic, RENPO has developed several strategies, including listening sessions during meetings where members share experiences and emotions. In this essay, I examine the work of RENPO, an indigenous organization of patients and their work in pushing for changes at the national level that could help access culturally informed care.

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