

Coming-of-Age Ceremony and Tikuna Indigenous School Education: Memories, Identities, and Community-Based Learning¹

*Rosalina Davila Larrondo*²

*Adnilson de Almeida Silva*³

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the *Festa da Moça Nova* (Coming-of-Age Ceremony), a rite of passage of the Tikuna people held in the Indigenous Community of Santa Rosa, in Tabatinga, Amazonas, and its contribution to differentiated, intercultural, bilingual, and community-based Indigenous school education. The celebration, which marks the transition of a girl into adulthood, is also understood as a pedagogical space in which ancestral knowledge, collective memory, and community values are transmitted. The research employed a qualitative, descriptive, and phenomenological approach, including interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers, participant observation, and the analysis of theoretical frameworks on the subject. The objectives were to describe the stages of the ritual, analyze its symbols, reflect on its educational dimension, and investigate how it may be integrated into the school curriculum. The findings indicate that the *Festa da Moça Nova*, in addition to being an element of intangible cultural heritage, strengthens Tikuna identity and contributes to school education grounded in the people's cosmogony and traditional knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous School Education. Interculturality. Cultural Identity. Community-based Pedagogy. Coming-of-Age Festive Ritual of the Moça Nova.

¹ English version by Suzanna Dourado da Silva. *E-mail:* suzannadourado@gmail.com.

² Indigenous person of the Kokama people. Master's student in Geography at the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR). Porto Velho, Rondônia, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9079-8070>. *E-mail:* larrondorosalina@gmail.com.

³ PhD in Geography from the Federal University of Paraná. Professor in the Department and Graduate Program in Geography at UNIR. Porto Velho, Rondônia, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2555-0861>. *E-mail:* adnilson@unir.br.

*Festa da Moça Nova e Educação Escolar Indígena Tikuna:
Memórias, Identidades e Aprendizagens Comunitárias*

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa a Festa da Moça Nova, ritual de passagem da etnia Tikuna na Comunidade Indígena Santa Rosa, em Tabatinga-AM, e sua contribuição para a educação escolar indígena diferenciada, intercultural, bilíngüe e comunitária. A celebração, que marca a transição da menina para a vida adulta, é compreendida também como espaço pedagógico, onde se transmitem saberes ancestrais, memórias coletivas e valores comunitários. A pesquisa utilizou abordagem qualitativa, descritiva e fenomenológica, com entrevistas a professoras indígenas e não indígenas, observação participante e análise de referenciais teóricos sobre a temática em questão. Os objetivos foram descrever as etapas do ritual, analisar seus símbolos, refletir sobre sua dimensão educativa e investigar como pode ser integrada ao currículo escolar. Os resultados apontam que a Festa da Moça Nova, além de patrimônio cultural imaterial, fortalece a identidade Tikuna e contribui para a educação escolar enraizada na cosmogonia e nos saberes tradicionais do povo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Escolar Indígena. Interculturalidade. Identidade Cultural. Pedagogia Comunitária. Ritual festivo da Moça Nova.

*Fiesta de la Moça Nova y Educación Escolar Indígena Tikuna:
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RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza la Fiesta de la Moça Nova, ritual de paso de la etnia Tikuna en la Comunidad Indígena Santa Rosa, en Tabatinga-AM, y su contribución a la educación escolar indígena diferenciada, intercultural, bilingüe y comunitaria. La celebración, que marca la transición de la niña a la vida adulta, es comprendida también como un espacio pedagógico, donde se transmiten saberes ancestrales, memorias colectivas y valores comunitarios. La investigación utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, descriptivo y fenomenológico, con entrevistas a maestras indígenas y no indígenas, observación participante y análisis de referentes teóricos sobre la temática en cuestión. Los objetivos fueron

describir las etapas del ritual, analizar sus símbolos, reflexionar sobre su dimensión educativa e investigar cómo puede integrarse al currículo escolar. Los resultados señalan que la Fiesta de la Moça Nova, además de patrimonio cultural inmaterial, fortalece la identidad Tikuna y contribuye a una educación escolar enraizada en la cosmogonía y en los saberes tradicionales del pueblo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación Escolar Indígena. Interculturalidad. Identidad Cultural. Pedagogía Comunitaria. Ritual festivo de la Moça Nova.

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Introduction

The Tikuna people, situated in the tri-border region of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, preserve rituals of profound significance within their collective memory. Among these is the *Festa da Moça Nova* (Young Woman's Ritual), which marks the transition from girlhood to adulthood. Beyond celebrating femininity, this ritual serves as a locus for the transmission of knowledge regarding territory, kinship, the forest, spirituality, traditional diet, chants, and dances.

This ritual encompasses multiple formative dimensions: the body, orality, spirituality, environmental stewardship, collectivity, and intergenerational bonds. Consequently, it is not merely a symbolic event, but a complex social practice that generates situated learning, rooted in the cosmogony and social organization of the Tikuna people. In this sense, the *Festa da Moça Nova* can be understood as a distinct form of community-based pedagogy, wherein learning occurs through lived experience, observation, participation, and the guidance of elders.

However, despite the legal recognition of Indigenous School Education as specific, differentiated, intercultural, and bilingual – as established by the 1988 Federal Constitution, the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB, 1996), and subsequent legislation – a

significant gap remains between normative principles and the curricular practices effectively implemented within Indigenous schools. In many contexts, curricula remain structured around Western frameworks, with limited incorporation of the epistemologies, rituals, and endogenous modes of knowledge production of Indigenous peoples.

Given this scenario, this article is guided by the following central question: In what ways can the *Festa da Moça Nova* be understood as a pedagogical practice integrated into Tikuna Indigenous school education, contributing to the development of intercultural, community-based curricula rooted in traditional knowledge?

The investigation is grounded in authors who advocate for the centrality of the community as a formative space. These include Melià (1999), for whom Indigenous education is, above all, communal; Baniwa (2019), who asserts the right of Indigenous peoples to a school connected to their life projects; Munduruku (2000, 2012), who emphasizes the pedagogical dimension of Indigenous cultural and political processes; and Krenak (2019), who problematizes the modern separation between humanity and nature while proposing an education that reconnects subjects with their territories and ancestries.

Based on these contributions, this study aims to analyze the *Festa da Moça Nova* as a formative space and discuss its pedagogical potential for Tikuna Indigenous school education. Specifically, it seeks to: (i) describe the stages and symbolic meanings of the ritual; (ii) analyze its educational dimension, considering the knowledge, values, and memories transmitted; and (iii) reflect on its potential integration into the Indigenous school curriculum from a community-based and intercultural perspective.

In doing so, this article aims to contribute to the debate on Indigenous curricula, framed not merely as adaptations of Western school models, but as distinct epistemological constructions anchored in traditional ways of life, rituals, and Indigenous modes of teaching and learning.

Indigenous School Education

Indigenous School Education in Brazil has been a field of intense struggle and transformation. The 1988 Federal Constitution and the 1996 Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB) represent fundamental milestones; they guarantee the preservation of these peoples' knowledge, recognize them as distinct ethnic groups, and ensure the right to specific and differentiated school education. Furthermore, Law No. 11.645/2008 mandated the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture within the basic education curriculum.

By recognizing ethnic plurality, the 1988 Federal Constitution also introduced the notion of Indigenous peoples as legal subjects (*sujeitos de direitos*), thereby breaking away from the assimilationist view. The 1996 LDB expanded this framework, establishing specificity and differentiation as core principles of Indigenous School Education. These regulations are linked to the recognition that cultural identity (Hall, 2006) is not fixed, but is constructed over time through collective memories and practices – a reality that demands curricula capable of engaging with such dynamics.

However, the implementation of these regulations still faces significant obstacles, such as precarious school infrastructure and the lack of adequate teacher training for this educational modality. Medeiros (2012, p. 52) observes that while the role of Indigenous peoples in national history is undeniable, the impact of this movement on history teaching remains limited, with Indigenous perspectives appearing in textbooks only in supporting roles. Research by Silva (2001, p. 115) suggests that Indigenous teachers should become researchers of their own societies, enabling them to critically examine standard teaching materials.

The construction of specific curricula that include cultural practices in consonance with each ethnic group is a primary objective, requiring the active participation of Indigenous communities in educational planning

processes. Decree No. 6,861 of May 27, 2009, regulates Indigenous School Education and defines its organization into ethno-educational territories.

The National Curricular Referential for Indigenous Schools (RCNEI), drafted in 1998, served as a reference point; however, some teachers advocated for educational projects that prioritize the use of mother tongues. The Indigenous school seeks to be a space for dialogue, transitioning from a tool of hegemonic imposition to a facilitator of intercultural relations. These teachers are, for the most part, Indigenous educators trained and organized through the Indigenous social movements of the 1970s and 1980s – a period marked by the strengthening of struggles for territory, identity, and cultural and educational rights.

In the case of the Tikuna (Magüta) people, the collective leadership of their organized teachers is noteworthy, especially through the work of the General Organization of Tikuna Bilingual Teachers (OGPTB). Established in 1986, this organization played a pivotal role in advocating for bilingual education, producing teaching materials in the mother tongue, and developing pedagogical proposals anchored in culture and territory. The entity consolidated itself as a regional reference in the formulation of endogenous educational projects, articulating the relationship between school, community, and the Indigenous movement in the Upper Solimões River region.

Furthermore, Indigenous leaders and intellectuals began to occupy space in academic and political debates starting in the 1990s, contributing to the theoretical and normative consolidation of Indigenous school education. Among them, prominent figures include Gersem Baniwa, whose academic output intensified in the 2000s, focusing on interculturality, territoriality, and public policy; Daniel Munduruku, active since the 1990s, dedicated to the valorization of Indigenous narratives and intercultural education; and Graça Graúna, also active since the 1990s, working at the intersection of education, Indigenous literature, and ethnic identity.

The strengthening of these proposals was further propelled by Indigenous teachers' organizations, such as the Commission of Indigenous Teachers of Amazonas, Roraima, and Acre (COPIAR), founded in 1988, and the Council of Indigenous Teachers of the Amazon (COPIAM). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, these groups participated actively in the discussions that laid the foundation for Indigenous school education policies in the post-1988 Federal Constitution period.

Interculturality and Decoloniality in Indigenous School Education

Interculturality is the central concept for Indigenous school education, as it acknowledges and values cultural differences. The recognition of diversity, along with the promotion of dialogue and negotiation between cultures, is a necessary element for questioning hierarchical structures. The perspective of decolonial pedagogy and anti-racist intercultural education, as discussed by Oliveira and Candau (2010), is fundamental to the construction of counter-hegemonic and differentiated curricula. This approach values Indigenous culture, ways of life, and knowledge systems –historically silenced by colonization. Furthermore, Walsh (2009) discusses critical interculturality as an ethical-political project.

Critical interculturality implies recognizing the cosmogony of each people as a constitutive part of the educational process. Cosmogony, understood as the set of origin narratives that explain the relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality (Eliade, 1992), is central to the Indigenous curriculum because it provides the ethical and symbolic horizon within which knowledge is organized. By prioritizing the mother tongue and ancestral knowledge, the school becomes a space of cultural continuity rather than rupture.

The promotion of bilingualism is essential for strengthening Indigenous languages. For instance, the Guarani Mbya Indigenous Teacher Training Program prioritizes the use of the Guarani language in all its

modalities and focuses on the development of bilingual teaching materials and resources. The co-officialization of Indigenous languages, such as Baniwa, Nheengatu, and Tukano, in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas, exemplifies this pursuit of linguistic and cultural valorization. The mother tongue is a vital pedagogical instrument; its use ensures that school education is bilingual and intercultural, recalling historical trajectories and reaffirming the identity of these peoples.

Indigenous teacher training is indispensable for strengthening curricular and collective autonomy in the construction of intercultural and differentiated curricula. Several studies address this theme, such as Indigenous teacher training in Pernambuco and Acre (Silva, 2015), as well as proposals from the University of the State of Amazonas (Bettioli, 2017). These teachers, alongside cultural elders and knowledge holders (*mestres da cultura*), act as bridges between oral tradition and school practices.

Rites of Passage, Memory, and Cultural Identity as Pedagogical Spaces

The *Festa da Moça Nova*, as a rite of passage among the Tikuna people, is part of a rich diversity of ceremonies practiced by Indigenous peoples to mark transitions between life stages. The “girl-to-woman” rite of passage among the Kawahib (Amondawa), for instance, involves the “preparation and fabrication of bodies” and the transmission of teachings and responsibilities for adult life, as described by Almeida Silva (2010). The Paiter Suruí also perform rituals such as the Mapimaí, which address various life transitions in which the (re)construction of intrinsic values related to territorial defense, territoriality, culture, and spirituality contributes decisively to identity formation and cultural continuity. The mention of the “Ritual Mapimaí: Creation of the World of the Paiter Suruí” in academic titles suggests its cosmogonic importance (Almeida Silva et al., 2012).

Rites of passage, according to Van Gennep (1978), are universal social practices that mark the transition from one phase of life to another and are structured into three stages: separation, liminality (margin), and incorporation. In Indigenous contexts, these rites mark transitions both culturally and biologically, ensuring the transmission of ancestral knowledge, as each stage involves teachings about the body, territory, spirituality, and collective belonging.

In other words, within Indigenous contexts, while certain bodily transformations – such as growth, puberty, or aging – may serve as temporal references, it is the ritual that socializes these changes, attributing symbolic, educational, and spiritual meaning to them. Thus, it is not the biological body in isolation that defines the passage, but rather the set of cultural practices that inscribe the body within the territory, collective memory, and the people's cosmology.

These rites function as pedagogical spaces in which ancestral knowledge, collective memory, and community values are transmitted. During periods of ritual seclusion, numerous teachings, counsel, and future responsibilities are conveyed. Traditional knowledge is constituted and transmitted through orality; it is not bound to written forms but inscribed within the materiality of spoken language. In this sense, orality functions as an institutionalized archive within Indigenous societies.

While traditional knowledge is transmitted through orality, writing may be used as a complementary means to record the knowledge of elders for younger generations, as reported by Alfredo Zoró (apud Leandro, 2016). Collective memory, as defined by Halbwachs (2006), refers to the ways in which social groups actualize and transmit past experiences in order to strengthen their identity. In Indigenous contexts, memory occurs primarily through orality, understood as a “living archive” (Souza, 2016).

Indigenous peoples have transmitted their traditional knowledge, blessings (*benzimentos*), dance chants, origin stories, mythical narratives, and broader cultural knowledge through memory, inscribed

in diverse materialities (Souza, 2016). Thus, cultural identity, as Stuart Hall (2006) reminds us, is not static but constructed through the interaction between tradition and transformation. For Indigenous peoples, this identity is anchored in cosmogony and community practices which, despite external pressures, remain pillars of their ways of life. The *Festa da Moça Nova*, therefore, condenses these elements: a rite of passage, the transmission of knowledge, the renewal of collective memory, and the strengthening of identity.

The Festa da Moça Nova as a Framework for the Tikuna Indigenous School Curriculum

By being incorporated into the curriculum, the *Festa da Moça Nova* can contribute to the construction of a living curriculum (Candau, 2012), in which pedagogical practice is nourished by community experiences rather than external content alone. In this sense, the Indigenous curriculum can be conceived as a space for articulating memory, cosmogony, and ancestral knowledge, as these elements contribute to the cultural continuity of the people.

The *Festa da Moça Nova*, by marking the girl's transition to adulthood and serving as a locus for the transmission of ancestral knowledge and community values, is a powerful example of how Indigenous school education can and must be rooted in the people's cosmogony and traditional knowledge. Integrating such a ritual into the school curriculum means building a differentiated curriculum that addresses and considers the specificities of the school and its community. In this regard, Almeida Silva et al. (2013) highlight that, among the Paiter Suruí, the young woman's ritual represents an educational process that articulates traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and community values, ensuring the continuity of collective identity.

From a Freirean perspective, liberatory education (Freire, 1981) advocates that the curriculum should be as close as possible to students' lived realities – that is, rooted in what provides meaning in their lives – in order to help form conscious and critical citizens. Methodologies based on generative themes and project-based pedagogy, which value students' knowledge and experiences, are well suited to this integration. The community, including leaders and cultural elders and knowledge holders (*mestres da cultura*), must be an integral part of the construction of the Indigenous Political-Pedagogical Project (PPPI), ensuring that pedagogical practices reflect community needs and future projects. As Baniwa (2019) reminds us, the Indigenous school must be understood as a space for identity affirmation and cultural continuity, rather than as an imposition of external models.

Rather than standardized curricula, Indigenous school education can adapt to the sociocultural diversity of each ethnic group. Thus, the *Festa da Moça Nova*, as intangible cultural heritage, can serve as a guiding thread for a curriculum that preserves Tikuna identity while promoting the continuity of their ways of life.

The practical activities of the ritual – such as the crafting of ornaments and the preparation of flutes, drums, maracas, and graphic patterns (grafismos), as well as the production of handicrafts and the narration of their stories – can be incorporated as disciplines and projects. This ensures that knowledge is transmitted not exclusively within the school, but across all spheres of community life. For Walsh (2009), such curricular practice is only possible through the adoption of a decolonial and intercultural pedagogy, which values difference as a source of strength and breaks with the homogenizing logic of Western schooling.

Methodology

The research followed three articulated methodological approaches, adopting a qualitative and descriptive design through semi-structured

interviews with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous female teachers, who reported their perceptions regarding the educational role of the *Festa*. Participant observation was also employed, involving direct engagement with the ritual and the recording of chants, dances, graphic patterns (*grafismos*), foods, and symbolisms, all understood as pedagogical elements.

During the research, two interviews were conducted between April 9 and 11, 2025: one with a non-Indigenous teacher and another with a young Indigenous woman residing in the community, who actively participated in the *Festa da Moça Nova* and provided photographic records of the ritual. The research also benefited from the direct participation of the first author of this paper in specific moments of the ritual; she was present during the event's preparation – when invitations were extended to relatives and Indigenous kin – and observed the performance of chants and the beating of drums. Furthermore, she participated in the harvesting of urucum (*Bixa orellana*), a fruit whose seeds are used to produce the pigment applied in the graphic patterns and paintings during the celebration.

In dialogue with the Indigenous worldview, the study sought to understand how meanings emerge through the lived experience of the *Festa*, without reducing them to external analytical categories. This methodological triangulation made it possible to apprehend the *Festa* both as a cultural ritual and as an integral educational experience, in which body, memory, territory, and spirituality are articulated.

In this sense, the use of multiple methodological strategies proved fundamental to valuing the voices of the research participants and avoiding fragmented or reductionist interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation. By integrating Western academic perspectives with Indigenous epistemologies, the investigation promoted an intercultural exercise in knowledge production, respecting the complexity of the ritual and recognizing the legitimacy of local narrative discourses as sources of scientific knowledge.

Results and Discussion

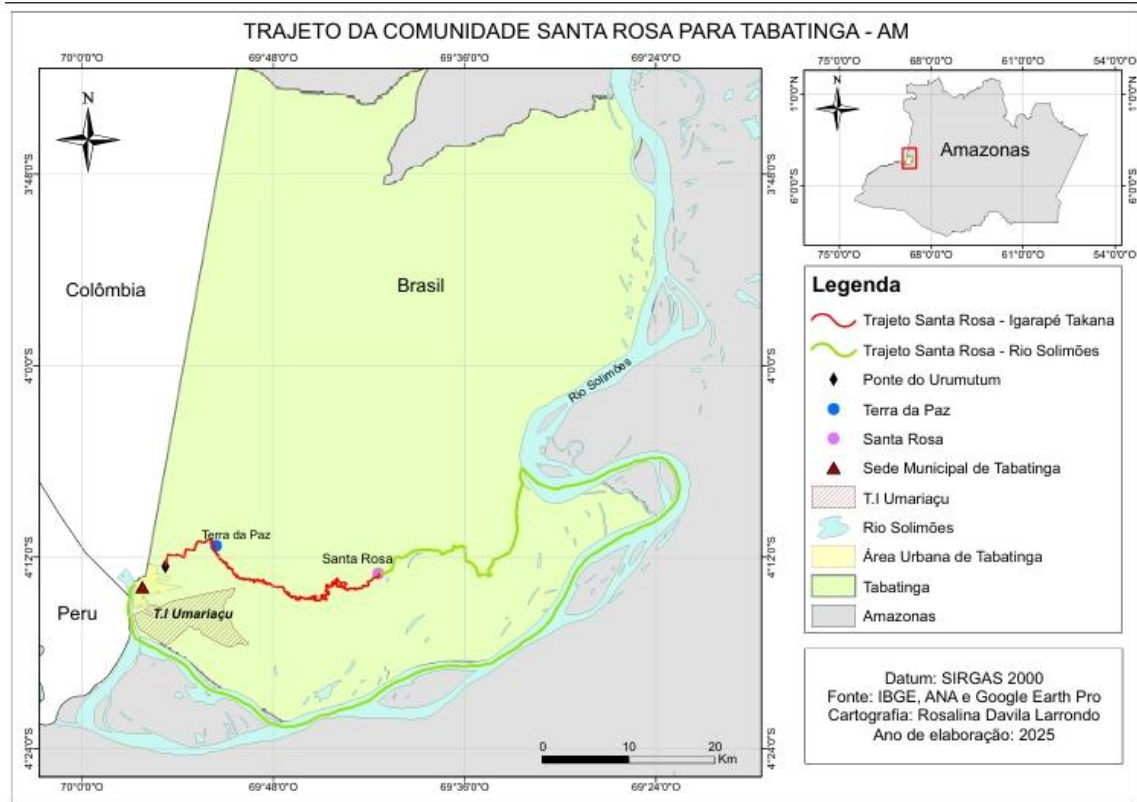
The Santa Rosa Indigenous Community is situated in the municipality of Tabatinga, Amazonas, within the tri-border region of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. It is located on the left bank of the Tacana Igarapé (creek), within the Évare I Indigenous Territory, which encompasses the municipalities of Tabatinga, Santo Antônio do Içá, and São Paulo de Olivença. The area is inhabited by the Tikuna and Kokama peoples, with Santa Rosa being one of the Tikuna communities in the region.

The Évare Igarapé, whose name means “Sacred Creek” in the Tikuna language, is considered a primordial site of fundamental spiritual and cultural importance to the Tikuna people.

According to their cultural and spiritual values, it was from the waters of the Évare that the cultural hero Yo’i fished the first Tikuna people, who self-identify as Magüta (“people fished with a rod”). Thus, this creek represents the symbolic origin of humanity in Tikuna tradition. The Évare is not merely a watercourse; it is a sacred space of connection with ancestry, spirituality, and cosmogony, where cultural practices and rituals – including the *Festa da Moça Nova* – are performed. This reaffirms its significance for cultural identity and the transmission of traditional knowledge.

Figure 1 displays the location of the Santa Rosa Indigenous Community within the Évare I Indigenous Territory. It is within this space that the relationship between territory, natural resources, and the community’s sociocultural practices becomes evident.

Figure 1: Location of the Santa Rosa Indigenous Community.



Source: IBGE, ANA, and Google Earth Pro (2025).

Figure 2 displays the Santa Rosa community and the course of the Tacana Igarapé. Founded in 1970, the community preserves significant cultural traditions, most notably the *Festa da Moça Nova* – a ritual that celebrates the transition of girls into adulthood. The ritual functions as a community school, bringing together practices of oral knowledge, chants, dances, traditional foods, and graphic patterns (*grafismos*) that strengthen collective memory.

The *Festa da Moça Nova* unfolds in distinct stages; the initial phase consists of the invitation and the preparations for the celebration. This is the process that the first author observed firsthand and is described below:

On the day I participated, I observed that the young woman's family members set out in a group through the community, playing small Tutu drums and maracas while singing traditional songs to invite residents to the festival. Following the invitations, everyone moved into the forest to locate the urucum tree, from which the fruits were harvested. The fruits were placed in an *aturá* – a traditional basket crafted from liana fibers – and carried to the young woman's house. There, they were deposited in the center of the house while participants sang, played drums, danced in a circle, and drank the traditional beverage, symbolically marking the preparation of the festival. Subsequently, the extraction of the seeds from the urucum fruit began using bamboo splinters, collecting them in calabashes (*cuias*). These seeds were set aside in containers to extract the red pigment used for the young woman's paintings and graphic patterns – a fundamental stage of the ritual. (Larrondo, April 2025).

Figure 2: Santa Rosa Community.



Source: Google Earth Pro (2025).

This initial process reveals that the *Festa da Moça Nova* does not merely begin on the central day of the celebration; rather, it involves a set of preparatory actions that articulate community coexistence, spirituality, and the relationship with nature. Urucum (annatto) emerges as a central element, laden with meanings: it is food, it is pigment, and it is a symbol of life and cultural continuity.

From the perspective of Indigenous school education, this initial phase can be understood as a privileged space for community learning, in which different fields of knowledge intertwine: botany, arts, music, culinary traditions, spirituality, and traditional knowledge. It is a non-formal yet highly structured pedagogical process that transmits values and practices essential to collective identity.

The *Festa da Moça Nova* constitutes a central ritual moment in the lives of Tikuna girls, marked by practices of profound cultural significance:

The young woman's ritual, which takes place when girls transition into adulthood, consists of a period of seclusion during which they remain under a mosquito net for seven to fifteen days. In the past, hair cutting was performed more rigorously – strand by strand – but today only a direct cut is made, followed by dances around the initiate. The ritual is, in a sense, compared to the *feira de 15 anos* (debutante ball) of non-Indigenous society, as it also marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood. There is an extensive process of preparation that includes traditional beverages such as *pajuaru*, *pajuaru* broth, and *caçuma*, which are indispensable. The festival extends throughout the night with dances and chants and concludes on the second or third day with a great feast (*comilança*), a moment when the game meat obtained by the community's men is shared collectively. It is a rich experience that allows participants to step outside their own reality and engage with another culture. Body

painting with *jenipapo* is also performed; I myself was painted, and the designs remained on my body for approximately 20 days. It was a rewarding lived experience that teaches respect for traditions and cultural diversity. (Larrondo, April 2025).

The account highlights the symbolic and pedagogical complexity of the *Festa da Moça Nova*, emphasizing the following central ritual elements: Seclusion and hair cutting – a rite of passage that previously held a more rigorous character (plucking hair strand by strand) and has since adapted without losing its essence regarding the transformation of the initiate's identity; Traditional beverages – *pajuaru* and *caçuma* (a fermented beverage based on cassava, *Manihot esculenta* Crantz), which are fundamental both as sustenance and as ritual elements that signify collectivity and cultural continuity; Collective feasting – the final banquet, featuring game meat brought by the community's men, which symbolizes abundance, sharing, and communal unity; and Aesthetic and symbolic dimension – body painting with *jenipapo* (*Genipa americana*) and graphic patterns (*grafismos*), which remain on the body for several days and represent not only beauty and identity but also the mark of lived experience, etched onto the body as social memory.

Furthermore, the intercultural experience – the comparison with non-Indigenous debutante balls – facilitates a pedagogical dialogue that bridges distinct cultural universes without diminishing the ritual's significance. The teacher's testimony further demonstrates how the experience is formative for both community members and those who encounter it as researchers or guests.

The account reveals the symbolic richness of the ritual and the historical adaptation of its practices. Hair cutting, once performed strand by strand and now conducted collectively and symbolically, demonstrates a process of cultural renewal without a significant rupture from tradition. The

mention of *pajuaru* and *caçuma* illustrates how traditional beverages function as ritual markers, strengthening the social and spiritual bonds of the collective. Similarly, body painting with *jenipapo* represents the inscription of the body into collective memory, functioning as a living pedagogy of belonging and identity.

From the perspective of Indigenous school education, this account demonstrates how the *Festa* can be interpreted as a community-based curriculum, in which the collective transmits values, practices, and knowledge through direct experience. The final “feast” (*comilança*), involving the sharing of game meat, translates into a pedagogy of the collective, while dance and graphic patterns (*grafismos*) present themselves as aesthetic forms of learning.

Thus, the account shows that the *Festa da Moça Nova* constitutes a living school, in which rites, foods, dances, paintings, and symbols form educational practices that strengthen Tikuna identity and collective memory.

During the festival, the girls undergo seclusion and ritual preparation, learning from elder women about cultural values, spirituality, the medicinal and nutritional uses of local plants, the crafting of ornaments, and traditional dances and chants. These practices reinforce identity and belonging while structuring practical and symbolic knowledge that can be incorporated into the school curriculum. The experience of the *Festa* can therefore be integrated into the context of Indigenous school education, as it serves as pedagogical content, a source of intercultural learning, and an instrument for strengthening Tikuna identity.

For the young Indigenous woman Marizane Lobato Bernaldo Tikuna (2025), the final stage of the *Festa da Moça Nova* is marked by the young woman’s emergence from the period of seclusion and the commencement of the public celebration:

At the end of the seclusion period, the *moça nova* (young woman) is placed inside a *curral* (enclosure), prepared within the festival house, so that the public does not see her until the precise moment of her presentation. This space holds profound symbolic and ritual significance; inside the enclosure, she remains surrounded by the gifts that her family will offer to the guests – primarily portions of game meat. Only then does the celebration take place, with the revelation of the young woman and the collective participation of the community. It is a moment of great anticipation, in which rituals, symbolisms, and acts of sharing converge to strengthen community unity and the cultural identity of our people. (Tikuna, interview, April 2025).

Figures 3 and 4, recorded directly by the interviewee herself, visually document specific moments of this ritual process. These images go beyond mere illustrations of the material and symbolic elements that comprise the ceremony; they serve as ethnographic evidence of how participants experience and represent the transition from childhood to adulthood. By capturing details of gestures, artifacts, and spatial arrangements, the photographs enrich the narrative and provide additional layers of interpretation for the analysis of the ritual.

Marizane's account highlights the importance of seclusion and the enclosure as liminal spaces of transition. The fact that the young woman remains invisible until the climax of the celebration symbolizes her passage into adulthood, as she is spiritually and socially prepared to assume new responsibilities. The gifts, such as game meat, **underscore** the centrality of nature and collectivity within the ritual, reinforcing reciprocity and the strengthening of communal bonds.

The photography conducted by Marizane (Figures 3 and 4) **reinforces** the pedagogical dimension of the ritual, as the visual record,

combined with orality, becomes part of the collective memory. For Indigenous school education, the young woman's experience demonstrates that the ritual is not only a lived cultural experience but also a practical lesson in cosmogony, community values, and territorial knowledge.

Interviews and observations indicate that the *Festa da Moça Nova* is experienced by the community as a true community school. Indigenous teachers report that the celebration can be incorporated into differentiated school education through multiple subject areas and fields of knowledge. In the field of **language and orality**, for instance, Tikuna narratives and chants stand out, strengthening the use and valorization of the mother tongue.

In the area of **history and memory**, the *Festa* enables the transmission of origin stories and the reaffirmation of the people's cultural continuity. In the field of **natural sciences**, the use of *jenipapo*, *urucum*, cassava, and other elements of the territory constitutes a source of knowledge regarding environmental stewardship and nutrition, as it articulates traditional wisdom with practical experiences.

Figures 3 and 4: Moça Nova Festival House and Enclosure;
Presentation of the young women for the ritual



Source: Marizane Lobato Bernaldo Tikuna (2022).

In the field of art and aesthetics, graphic patterns (*grafismos*), body painting, and dances constitute a pedagogy of the body, wherein learning occurs through gesture, sensibility, and expression. Finally, as a practice of community education, the *Festa* promotes the valorization of the collective, respect for elders, and the strengthening of social bonds, thereby reaffirming endogenous modes of teaching and learning.

Consequently, the *Festa da Moça Nova* reaffirms the Indigenous school as a space of cultural resistance and the transmission of specific values, presenting singular characteristics that enable the expression of collective representations and the materialization of the meanings that structure the Tikuna way of life.

Melià (1999) asserts that “the community is the true Indigenous school,” and the *Festa* actualizes this principle, as everyone teaches and learns collectively within it. It serves as an example of how education can be anchored in living rituals that integrate knowledge, practices, memories, and spiritualities. Thus, the event reveals itself not only as intangible cultural heritage but also as pedagogical heritage, capable of guiding Tikuna school education through a community-based, intercultural, and differentiated perspective.

Munduruku (2000) emphasizes that rituals ensure the continuity of collective memory and the autonomy of peoples, and the *Festa da Moça Nova* expresses this living bond of cultural resistance. Convergenly, Krenak (2019) stresses that rituals such as this remind us that “we are not separate from the Earth” and that education must reconnect young people with their origins and territory. In this sense, the *Festa* is configured as pedagogical content that reaffirms Tikuna identity and contributes to the construction of Indigenous school education grounded in interculturality, ancestry, and collectivity.

Through its symbolic representations, the *Festa da Moça Nova* expresses territoriality and modes of existence and manifestation in both geographical and cosmogonic terms. It mobilizes objective and

subjective elements that operate simultaneously as memory and as processes of teaching and learning. During the celebration, experiences are lived, knowledge is shared, and communal bonds are strengthened, enabling an understanding of the intersection of multiple practices within the space –territory. This learning transcends the material dimension due to the spiritual immersion and the cosmological meaning that structure the ritual experience.

Final Considerations

The research demonstrated that the *Festa da Moça Nova* constitutes, simultaneously, a spiritual and cultural ritual and an educational practice. As a rite of passage, it marks the girl's transition to adulthood; as a pedagogy, it transmits knowledge, values, and territorialities fundamental to the constitution of Tikuna identity. It is, therefore, an integral formative experience, in which body, memory, spirituality, and territory are articulated in the production of meanings regarding collective existence.

By aligning with the schooling process, the *Festa* contributes to the consolidation of specific and differentiated Indigenous education, guided by the principles of interculturality, the valorization of collective memory, and community strengthening. From this perspective, this study advocates for the necessity of public policies that recognize and support the integration of cultural practices within Indigenous school curricula, as rituals such as the *Festa da Moça Nova* are central elements in the holistic development of young people and the cultural resistance of their peoples.

The analysis also showed that the *Festa da Moça Nova* functions as a privileged space for intergenerational mediation, where elders transmit practical, spiritual, and ethical knowledge to new generations regarding the care of the collective, nature, and traditional territories. This dynamic reinforces the centrality of elders as guardians of memory and as fundamental educators in processes of cultural continuity.

Furthermore, incorporating the ritual into the field of formal education helps to challenge and reframe Western pedagogical models, which are frequently detached from Indigenous sociocultural realities. The valorization of practices such as the *Festa da Moça Nova* enables the construction of intercultural curricula that promote dialogue between different knowledge systems, question asymmetrical power relations, and reaffirm the right of Indigenous peoples to an education rooted in their worldview (*cosmovisão*) and their own ways of living, teaching, and learning.

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