

## **How has the government of Argentina formed narratives about the indigenous Yagan community in Ushuaia?**

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I traveled to Ushuaia, where I explored how the Argentinian government has created narratives around the world's southernmost residents or the Yagan indigenous community. I analyzed Yagan heritage contents exhibited by the Museo del Fin del Mundo and the Museo Maritimo which helped me grasp historical concepts of the region. Moreover, I went to the national park in Tierra del Fuego, the home of the Yagan. I found contrasting narratives represented by different sources, where the museums presented an outdated colonizing perspective which claims the extinction of Yagan people due to “failed civilization.” On the other hand, the historical signage in the Tierra del Fuego National Park shows that the Yagan community is still alive and thriving today. Ultimately, the research made me realize the interconnectedness of Yagan people with land and water, where their legacy persists in the national park, but also reminded me of the colonialist and neo-extractivist western ideas of development that still remain.

The items on display at the Museum of the End of the World give a basic overview of Yagan cultural heritage and this period of history. The museum has static exhibits and lack of diachronic information, which ignore the significant injustices and brutal torture that the Yagan people underwent as a result of the invasion of their homeland. At Museo Maritimo, the exhibition states that the colonizers described Yaganas “the most insignificant race of humankind,” “subhuman beings without a spiritual life” and used words such as “indolence, stupidity, degradation.” Additionally, the history section for the Yagan frequently uses words like “civilizing” and the poster claims “unintended extinction.”

However, the Tierra del Fuego National park’s educational signage tells that today the Yagan people are alive and features photos of the Yagan community from 2021 with more than twenty people. Nevertheless, from casual conversations with Ushuaia residents, most still believe the Yagan population is extinct. Apart from the intermittent reminders in museums, not much speaks of the culturally rich past in “the end of the world”. This shows the government’s disregard for indigenous legacy. It is important to remember that Yaganas were heirs of traditions rooted in the depth of time, they gave birth to a special relationship with nature, adapting themselves to the peculiarities of Tierra Fuego. The coast and the vastness of the sea, the steppe and the strength of the earth were the environment that shaped their character.

Currently, I am studying abroad in New Zealand and I see the contrast between indigenous land considerations and approaches. Here, the Māori culture and language is being revived and Māori are being incorporated into governments. Of course, it can never make up for the history, but it is a step in the right direction. It is a good example of how Argentina should move forward, as currently the southernmost residents in the world have no recognition other than in museums that look like they haven’t been updated in years. This image is consistent with the rest of Argentina, where the Mapuche and other indigenous communities are discriminated against.

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