

# THE MAPUCHE AND THE LOCAL

As with every human activity, the mapuche people also continue to evolve and develop in different ways, according to their environment and the context around them, looking for symbols that reflect their unique and local identities. Just like a Chilean person from Santiago is not the same as a  
5 person from Puerto Montt, the mapuche communities share common customs and traditions, but they have also created, adapted or integrated different and singular aspects of their contexts into their culture.

On the previous pages, we have shown various aspects of mapuche people which are common to them no matter the geographical areas where they  
10 live. In the next section, we will describe ways in which local mapuche people have created their own identity by either having their own flag, that represents their community, or by using a different musical instrument that distinguishes their music from other groups.

## Mapuche flags

On page 5 of this book, you were shown the Mapuche Flag called  
15 *Wenufoye*, which was created in 1992 after a call carried out by the Council of All Lands. Apart from the Wenufoye, other flags were created on that date to represent the different mapuche territories in Chile, such as the **Williche** (**willi**=south, **che**= people) flag (fig 1).

Apart from the williche flag (fig. 1), you can see how the local identity is  
20 symbolised in the flag of the General Council of Chiloé, and the flag of the mapuche-williche people of Osorno.

**FIG. 1 LOCAL MAPUCHE FLAGS**



Flag of the Williche territory

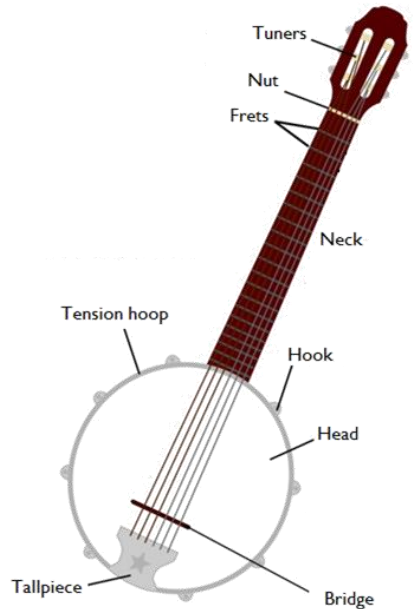
Flag of the General Council of Chiloé

Flag of the mapuche-williche of Osorno

## The mapuche banjo or bandio

As with the flags, the mapuche also have slowly incorporated a musical instrument into their daily life – the banjo.

- 25 The banjo was introduced in America by black slaves coming from Africa in the 17th century to what is now the United States. It was originally made of a half pumpkin covered by leather to which a wooden neck and strings were attached.
- 30 This instrument became part of American folk music in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the pumpkin had been changed for a ring covered with a patch of rawhide on one side.
- 35 The result of this was a mixture of a percussion and string instrument having a neck to which metal frets were added.



- 40 During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the banjo appeared in different musical events in the South of Chile, especially in the coastal area of Osorno Province. Due to its attractive sound, the mapuche people started to build their own banjos. At first, they used an old saucepan, which was covered with goat rawhide on one side and they added a neck made of wood from native trees, such as, *lingue*, *mañío* or *boldo*, and strings.
- 45

- Nowadays, a mapuche banjo is made of a metal ring having a patch of rawhide of a sheep, goat or cow in one of the sides, while the other side remains open. The neck is installed across the diameter of the ring (as shown in the picture on the right).
- 50



Then the tallpiece and the bridge are fixed to the instrument by using screws. Next, frets are put into the neck as well as the nut (made of animal bone or plastic). Then, the tuners are put in it. The mapuche

55 banjo has six metal strings which are tuned in the same way as a guitar.  
Unlike the acoustic guitar, a pick is used to play the banjo.



Due to the fact that the banjo can be easily made, it became popular and accepted as part of the traditional rituals of the mapuche people in Osorno and its surroundings.

As you can see, the mapuche traditions can also change to give way to new customs and traditions. They may incorporate already known items,  
65 such as the banjo, or they may create new symbols to represent their own identity, such as the flags. However, these new changes have one and only objective, which is to bring to light their own way of expressing as a mapuche community or people – the importance of the local.