

Alum Jason Pogacnik: NATO Consensus Builder and Strategist

Interview by Nita June

A member of NATO's international staff for 12 years, Jason Pogacnik writes political-military advice for consensus decision-making on NATO command and control, force posture, and warfare development aspects of the Alliance's most significant military adaptation in a generation. Previously, he developed and supported the implementation of policies to enhance resilience, to accelerate the delivery of national, multinational, and collective military capabilities and to maintain the Alliance's technological edge. Earlier in his career, first with the US government and then NATO, Jason conducted evaluations to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of a wide range of defense and national security activities and programs. Jason holds degrees in foreign service, international relations and public administration from Georgetown University and Syracuse University and currently lives in Brussels, Belgium with his wife and son.



How do you feel that your Waldorf education affected/impacted your professional journey? (inspirations, teachers, friends, lessons, style of teaching, trips, etc)

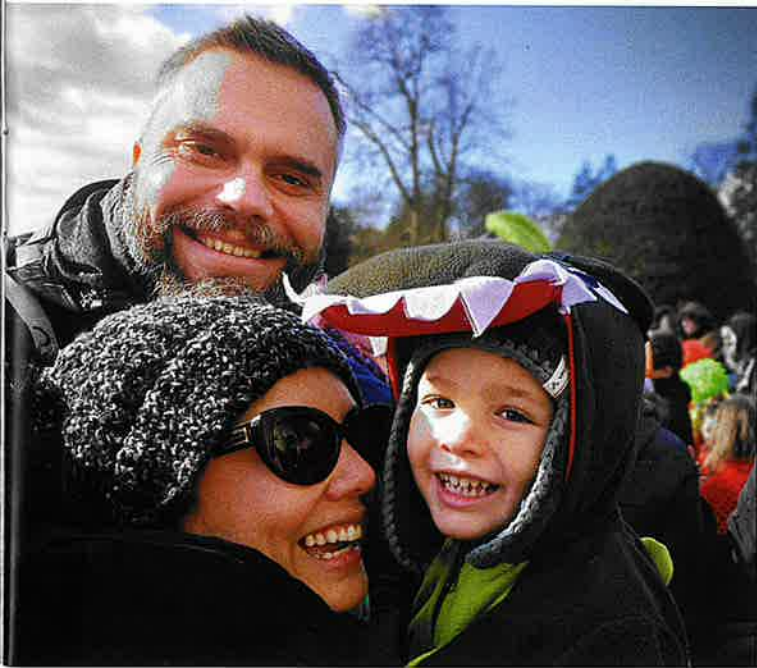
The open and supportive Waldorf environment encourages the full development of whatever learning process works best for you, which builds confidence and ability during our most formative years. My professional journey took me overseas early on, to the NATO International Staff – a wonderful place to work for many reasons, but not typically a career organization due to the value placed on rotation of staff. Drawing on the foundation built during my Waldorf education, I've successfully reinvented myself several

times, having excelled equally in very different roles ranging from technical to strategic and political, covering both civil and military aspects of the Alliance's work. As a result, I've not only been granted the opportunity to contribute directly to the safety and security of the more than one billion people NATO protects, but the privilege of doing so for as long as I wish to stay in Belgium.

What skills or capacities (perhaps learned while at Waldorf) do you feel support you most in your work today and why?

I would say that the Waldorf focus on the individual made learning fun. In the workplace, this fosters what I believe to be an entrepreneurial spirit in a broad sense - encompassing, to name a few qualities, greater openness to new ideas, capacity to embrace and learn from failure, ability to listen, focus on continuous improvement, and professional skepticism. These qualities promote success in a public sector bureaucracy just as well as they do in a start-up, and will do so more and more as hiring managers increasingly value them over years of experience in a specific area. In my case, they have enabled me to see things others missed, to enact major change where previous efforts repeatedly failed, and to influence key outcomes by rapidly building trust among senior leaders, colleagues, and staff alike.

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How has your ability to connect with others supported or influenced your work?

The greatest strength of my organization, NATO, is unity. Nothing moves forward without agreement among 31 (soon to be 32) nations, normally with different priorities and agendas, in multiple committees. In addition, the constantly evolving threats and global challenges we face coupled with equally dynamic ends, ways, and means to address them are driving ever-greater degrees of interconnectedness and interdependence. To the need for consensus, this adds a requirement for extensive coordination across the organization with civilian and military staff on nearly every issue. But behind every national position and every staff point paper is a person, and I've learned that email is almost never the best way to get to yes. Developing and nurturing personal connections over the phone, or, even better, coffee breaks (especially in Europe), can work wonders!

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Nita June is an AWSNA Alum Contributor

Tinkuy: A Transformative Relationship of Reciprocity

By Julie Meade

As Román Vizcarra lifts the panflute to his lips, the classroom quiets. He has commanded the attention of 20 second graders with his soft spoken but powerful presence, sharing stories from his childhood in the Andes mountains of Peru. Now, he takes a breath and begins to play a traditional Andean song, holding the flute in one hand while keeping the beat on a drum with the other. It is a mesmerizing mix of movement, sound, and rhythm emanating from a single musician. The children are captivated.

It's the spring of 2021, and Vizcarra, a Quechua educator, activist, and founding member of Kusi Kawsay Andean School in Pisac, Peru, is spending several days at Marin Waldorf School as part of a two-week-long trip to the San Francisco Bay Area. His visit to California is one of the many exchanges that have taken place through the Tinkuy Project, a special relationship of respect and reciprocity that has developed between students and teachers at Marin Waldorf School, the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training (BACWTT), and Kusi Kawsay over the past ten years. Through an organic program of cultural exchange, Waldorf students and teachers have engaged in mentorship, discussion, and learning across two continents.

“We call the program tinkuy, which in my tongue means encounter. A basic value that we practice in the Andes is reciprocity, called ayni,” explained Vizcarra in 2021. “I'm continuing the relationship and connection we have with the teachers here, who have been coming to Peru and sharing knowledge they have in the Waldorf ways. With a lot of gratitude, I'm bringing them the experience of my culture, in the moment when more of these encounters between humans are needed.”



Lucía, an Amaru master weaver, welcomes a student from California to her village.