



# **SOUTH AND MESO AMERICAN INDIAN INFORMATION CENTER**



**Newsletter** Vol 6 Nos 1&2, Spring & Summer 1991, \$3



"America Discovers Itself!"

*Mural by Bolivian painter and musician, Carlos Arrien.*

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Mail: PO Box 28703  
 Oakland, California 94604  
 Office: 1212 Broadway, #830  
 Oakland, California 94612  
 Phone: (510) 834-4263  
 Fax: (510) 834-4264  
 Peacenet E-mail: saiiic@igc.org

### SAIIC Staff:

Coordinator: Nilo Cayuqueo  
 Newsletter Coordinator: Peter Veilleux  
 Office Manager: Eva Aguilar Veilleux  
 Development Coordinator: Karl Guevara Erb  
 Special Projects Coordinator: Karin Morris  
 Accounting: Quipus  
 Radio Program Coordinator: Carlos Maibeth

### SAIIC Board of Directors

Nilo Cayuqueo (*Mapuche-Argentina*), Gina Pacaldo (*San Carlos Apache/Chicano*), Carlos Maibeth (*Miskito-Nicaragua*), Wara Alderete (*Calchaqui-Argentina*), Xihuanel Huerta (*ChicanIndia*), Guillermo Delgado (*Quechua-Bolivia*), Lucilene Whitesell (*Amazonia Native-Brazil*)

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# Editorial

SAIIC's commitment to the Indian peoples of the Americas, and our non-indigenous supporters, reaches its eighth year with a renewed sense of affirmation and accomplishment. The original purpose of SAIIC has been to serve as a liaison between Indian people of the South and Indian people of the North, to act in solidarity with our relations and to educate the people of the world about the current issues faced by Indians of the South. The pan-Indian unity forged today is but the confirmation of a 500 year-old Indian prediction: the meeting of the Condor and the Eagle.

More and more Indian people are speaking for themselves, voting for themselves, fighting for their rights and their territories. Such struggles continue to have a high price as we are still bearing witness to assassinations of Indian people: men, women and children.

Indian unity has been strengthened by our shared reflections on the quincentenary commemoration: celebratory attitudes are definitely being questioned. Resistance activities are more and more in the forefront of the media. Everyday, we receive many calls from people wondering how they can participate in the 500 Years of Resistance activities. There are many dynamic groups springing up across the continent, organizing marches, street theater, exhibitions and discussion groups about the Indian perspective on the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the invasion. We are encouraging people to focus on particular struggles. It's fairly easy to oppose the celebration of a genocidal invasion, but it's much more effective to support the legal recognition of specific Indian lands and rights to practice an indigenous religion, a judiciary system and/or economics etc.

The Indian movement has also been successful in actively reflecting on what we, as human beings, are doing to our environment, and amongst ourselves, to human beings. We have found allies amongst environmentalists, African Americans, popular movements and even religious organizations in our struggles against national governments, international corporations, financial institutions, manipulated media, and the distortion of history. The reporting of human rights abuses is having an impact. Some governments are willing to re-think their devastating policies and international banks are willing to consider the fatal policies that endanger Indian lives and the environment. Even such international bodies as the United Nations and the European Community are beginning to adopt socio-economic policies which recognize the rights of indigenous people. These actions cannot yet be seen as triumphs, and so, the systematic questioning of official plundering must continue until irresponsible development and environmental and human exploitation is stopped. It is clear for us at SAIIC, that new projects for sustaining our environment, self-valorization of Indian men and women, and strategic alliances with non-Indigenous peoples are important for assuring safety, unity and justice for Indian people in the coming 500 years. However, this alliance must be established with conditions of equality among all the sectors. Some groups within the popular movement of South & Meso America persist in their attempts to reduce the Indian cause to just a class struggle by imposing their agendas and political framework, minimizing all political dimensions and aspirations of Indian peoples. The continental indigenous movement will not tolerate more political manipulation from any sector, as has happened historically. Fundamental principles, such as the right to self determination of peoples, Indian peoples in particular, are the foundations for understanding and building a strong alliance, based on mutual respect.

The articles in this issue report on the importance of continuing to organize, to link struggles, to re-think strategies, and in this manner, engage others to listen to the essential wisdom of our elders and ancestors. The Indian struggles of the American continent show that this is not an easy path, but a renewed energy is clearly evident, one that is envisioning a new and better future. We at SAIIC renew our commitment to strategize for change, and invite all to join us in this endeavor.





## SNOW PREVENTS EVICTION BY LUMBER COMPANY

### *Pehuenche Organizing Pays Off!!!*

(Chile) The 150 Pehuenche of the Quinquen Valley (see SAIIC Newsletter, Vol 5, Nos 3&4, p. 16) lost their 30 year battle for legal title to their lands on July 16th, and then the Chilean President changed the picture again by proposing to turn the valley into a national park. A Chilean court ruled against the Pehuenche and gave the Quinquen Valley, the home of the sacred and endangered araucaria trees, to a lumber company.

Nine feet of snow blocked the mountain pass leading to their valley, which prevented the police from evicting them. Julio Meliñir stated, "The police forces can come at any moment and they can arm themselves for war with this community, because we don't want to leave this place, we're going to defend ourselves. If they arm themselves, not only Indians will die, police are going to die too."

That was before an unprecedented turn of events which took place in August. President Patricio Aylwin of Chile sent a bill to Congress proposing that the Quinquen Valley be turned into a national park - overriding the court decision and the claims of the lumber company and allowing the Pehuenche to stay.

It is widely believed that the measure will pass in the Chilean Congress. The Pehuenche say that the bill is a landmark for Indian rights in Chile. For leaders like José Meliñir, years of struggle have borne fruit.

When the issue came to a head recently, Meliñir made frequent trips to the Chilean Capital of Santiago to lobby politicians and get press coverage. He states, "In times past, our ancestors fought with physical force, but now, you have to fight in another way. You have to fight with paper, because now we know the language of the white man, and we know how to write, and we can write letters, and whatever else we have to do."

He goes on to say that the bill constitutes a precedent. As many as 60 other land claims may eventually be presented to the government by representatives of the 600 thousand Indians in Chile. "This is just the beginning. If we solve the problem of Quinquen, I think we are going to begin to find a solution to

other problems, in the same way. And that's what is important for our people." He remains cautious, waiting for the national park to be officially sanctioned by Congress. "Quinquen is a symbol of the struggle of the Indians, of our people. So that's what we're struggling for. I can only hope that Chilean society would realize once and for all, that the authorities, who have always discriminated against us, would realize that this must not happen again...

**Please write today to encourage President Aylwin k. continue pushing for this important legislation**

**President Patricio Aylwin  
President of Chile  
Palacio de la Moneda  
Santiago, CHILE  
Phone: 56-2-714-103  
or 56-2-717-054**



The flooding, which is projected to be 14 kilometers in length, would directly result in the relocation of 600 indigenous peoples and 300 non-native Chilean peasants. Road-building and excavation for construction materials would displace another 400 Pehuenches. Three of the six proposed dams would irreversibly destroy over one-half of Pehuenche territory. It's estimated that the flooding of the scarce flat and arable fields on the banks of the river will do away with almost all of the subsistence agriculture practiced in the region.

The construction of roads and other structures is already having major effects on the physical landscape, and is causing culture shock in this formerly isolated region. Major tourist development of the reservoirs created by the hydroscheme is likely. Around the world, this type of development has been accompanied by environmental contamination and degradation, the loss of land ownership by poor and indigenous people, and dramatic changes in local subsistence economies. Already there is evidence that local landowners are using bribery and corruption to take advantage of the need to prove legal title to the land and claim traditional indigenous lands as their own.

Human and cultural rights are guaranteed by international laws by which the new government in Chile portends to abide. The social and economic council of the United Nations has prepared a Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights which affirms the collective right of indigenous peoples to exist without being forced to assimilate, the right to their traditional property and lands, the right to indemnization, and protection against discrimination. The International Labor Organization has issued a similar document, signed by many heads of state including Chile's President Aylwin, manifesting their intention to respect the rights of indigenous peoples. Moreover, Chile's proposed new indigenous legislation reaffirms the right of Native people to maintain their ethnic identity, cultural customs, and the right to live on their ancestral land.

In compliance with the most fundamental human rights principles, the government of President Aylwin and the IFC must reject any project which could adversely affect the traditional way of life of the Pehuenche and Mapuche people. Because ENDESA is privatized and the Pangué Dam project has already been approved, there are limited avenues for Chilean organizations to apply domestic pressure. Still, they are hopeful that coordinated international pressure applied to the World Bank, ENDESA and President Aylwin, will give them leverage to convince the government to re-evaluate the project.

**Please take action today!!! Write to the World Bank, encouraging them not to fund the Pangué Dam project:  
Barber Conable, World Bank, 1818 H Street NW  
Washington, DC 20433, Fax: 202-477-6391**

## **BIO-BIO DAMS THREATEN PEHUENCHE**

(Chile) The mountainous river basin of the Bio-Bio is the ancestral land of the Pehuenche Indians. Their right to cultural and economic survival is now being seriously threatened by the proposal of Chile's electric company, ENDESA, to build a series of six dams on the Bio-Bio. Approval for the first of the dams has already been obtained, but full-scale construction has been delayed pending a decision by the International Finance Corporation (the private sector wing of the World Bank) on whether to provide 25% of the Pangué Dam's funding. Chilean and international environmental and indigenous organizations have sounded a warning that the social and ecological costs of the project far outweigh any potential benefits. Perhaps the greatest indictment of the project is the fact that the Pehuenche, whose subsistence is directly tied to the river and its banks, have been almost entirely left out of the planning, assessment and decision-making process. At the eleventh hour, they have been told that their future is in perilous danger.

If approved, the IFC loan will be the beginning of the end for the 5,000 Pehuenche inhabiting the region. Part of the Mapuche indigenous society that once inhabited much of southern Chile and Argentina, the Pehuenche are still living traditionally. The subsistence activities of the Pehuenche are carried out along the banks of the river and its tributaries where they live, cultivate, raise livestock, and celebrate their religious ceremonies.

The proposed Pangué dam would have multiple direct and indirect consequences for the Pehuenche people.

## A Great Leader Dies



(Chile) On July 31, Melillan Painamal died in Temuco of a heart attack. He was a Mapuche Indian leader, and founder of several organizations. He had been organizing the Mapuche people for over 30 years and was the foremost organizer in the Southern Cone during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, during the bloody Pinochet dictatorship, he founded the Centro Culturales Mapuches (CCM) with the goal of unifying the Mapuche people in their defense against the oppressive regime. This led to massive opposition of the Pinochet decree which divided Mapuche traditional lands. Until he died, he worked at the CCM. Melillan strived his entire life for continental Indian unity.

As Melillan Painamal returns to the Mother Magnu in the spirit of N'gnechen (the creator), his presence lives on in the struggles of Indian people throughout the world.

## CALCHAQUÍ INDIANS UNITE AMIDST STRUGGLE AND CONFRONTATION

(Argentina) In the Calchaquí valley of the Province of Tucumán there are approximately 25 Indian communities, all of whom have a long history of struggle. The Diaguita-Calchaquí people waged an implacable war of resistance against the Spanish invaders. In 1716, in order to end the hostilities, the kings of the Spanish Crown signed a treaty with the Indian chiefs, who were led by the Cacique Chapurfe. By means of this *Cedula Real* (a treaty signed by the King of Spain), titles were granted and Calchaquí sovereignty over their land was recognized.

Today, however, the Argentine government does not recognize this treaty. Calchaquí lands are being usurped by landowners who obtain new deeds issued by accomplices in the government. The landowners charge rent from the villagers and if they cannot pay, their animals or harvests are taken away and they are thrown off their lands.

The present environment is one of confrontation and struggle. In July of this year, representatives from the communities of Amaicha, Quilmes, El Paso, Los Chañares, El Carmen, El Bañado, Anchillo, Anjuana, Talapazo y Colalao met together to develop a joint work project. They issued the following declaration:

*Taking into account the proximity of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish conquest and the historical situation of the indigenous communities of the Calchaquí valley where we find ourselves continuing to resist the loss of our lands and our culture, we have decided to work together to recover and strengthen our organizations.*

*We are conscious of the fact that it is only through organizing all of our communities that we will achieve the strength needed to demand respect for our rights to the land, for our cultural pautas (values), our traditions and our methods of work and organization.*

*The struggle to regain our lands began with the conquest, and was achieved in 1716 by our ancestors. From then until now, the struggle has not ceased. After the independence of Argentina from Spain, the land was lost to usurpers who took advantage of it for personal gain. A gain we had to defend our rights, and this time we achieved the recognition of national authorities (the protocols of 1857 and 1896). It is based on this latter recognition that we defend our territories today.*

*In spite of all of this we maintain our culture, our work on the land, our veneration for Pachamama (Mother Earth), our own music, our own methods of artesanry, and a spirit of community which is reflected in our patterns of land tenancy and organization.*

*Faced with these needs, and given that the heirs of the conquistadores of five centuries ago are organizing a festive commemoration of what have been five hundred years of subjugation, exploitation, and even genocide, those of us who have endorsed this project have resolved to join our voice with that of all of the peoples of America who continue to resist and demand justice and respect for our fundamental rights.*





Woman wearing a Calchaquí shawl.

# La Pachamama - Artful Resistance

(Argentina) One form of resistance and organization in the Calchaquí valley is based on the production of crafts. The Supply Cooperative for Regional Artesans, "La Pachamama," has as its objective the recognition of the technical and economic value of artesanry.

*Our craft cooperative was formed in 1986. At that time we didn't know anything about what it meant to form a cooperative, we simply felt it necessary to join together. In reality, we already were working together. Our shop had existed for more than 15 years, and people used to come together here in order to display their products. When we began talking about forming a cooperative, the objective was to turn artesanry into a means of making a living. There are many artesans who cannot work because the necessary materials don't exist.*

*We try to preserve what is autochthonous to our region. All of the artesans are local, from neighboring areas. Our artesanry consists primarily of weavings, but we also work with baskets made of "simbol" and "poleo" (local plants), and wood and leather, and there are also several potters. We use traditional techniques and natural dyes. All kinds of weavings are made: tapestries, ponchos, blankets, "puyos" (ponchos woven with thick wool), carpets, pullovers, stockings and shawls.*

*This legacy of our ancestors is something that we don't want to lose. They didn't know of synthetic dyes. They wove with the materials they had at hand, and this is what we want to preserve. Natural dyes are very consistent and cheaper too.*

*Locally, we are developing a plan to supply the materials needed for the creation of our crafts. We have bought raw materials, wool, and looms. We have 42 members. We have grown considerably. The main problem right now is commercialization, because we still don't have a market. At the present time we are only selling locally. What we would like to be able to do is, for example, to go to expositions, to go to other areas in order to sell our things.*

(Josefa Balderrama, President; Rumaldo Olivar, Secretary)

**if you would like to support "La Pachamama" Cooperative by purchasing artesanry, inviting its members to an exposition, offering training or consulting in marketing techniques you can contact:**

**Cooperativa Pachamama  
Ruta 307 Km 118, Amaicha del Valle  
4137 Tucumán, Argentina**



Calchaquí carpet from Cooperativa Pachamama. SA/ / C Photo

Two children in El Paso, Argentina.

SAIIC Photo



## EL PASO ISSUES PLEA FOR ASSISTANCE

(Argentina) The survival of the Calchaquí community of El Paso is seriously threatened by a lack of water. Community members have requested financial help in order to construct a well which would supply various communities of the area. The cost is \$25,000. If you have information about possible financial sources, please contact:

**Lucio Pachao/Francisco Chaile  
Comunidad de El Paso, Fuerte Quemado  
4141 Catamarca, Argentina**

# ANDES



*Drawing courtesy of CONAIE*

## PARAMILITARY ATTACKS IN COTOCAXI

(Ecuador) A series of attacks on indigenous communities in the state of Cotopaxi began on September 21st. One indigenous leader was assassinated, and several others were kidnapped and injured. On the 23rd of September, CONAIE (the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador) issued a press release denouncing these attacks by paramilitary groups.

The latest series of events have their origins in a long-standing conflict over land rights. A decree dating back to 1825 granted five indigenous communities the rights to 15,000 hectares of land. Rights to 300 hectares of this land are being disputed by a group of local landowners, who also have legal property titles. In order to dislocate the indigenous communities from the land in question, the owners have organized armed paramilitary groups to terrorize Indian inhabitants. The army has also participated in the campaign of violence, as demonstrated by the recent detention and torture of Jose Maria Cabascango (unrelated to Julio), the human rights secretary of CONAIE. The escalating violence throughout the region, and the persecution and death threats made against Indian communities have made it impossible for the people of these communities to travel freely and safely.

On September 21st, at about 230 in the afternoon, a teacher by the name of Feliciano Tercero was travelling to the community of Churo Lozan for a meeting on bilingual school programs. He was attacked by a group of approximately 400 armed people, led by the powerful landowner Washington Albán. One Indian man, Virgilio Ganzino, was assassinated. Many others were wounded, and ten people were kidnapped, including Feliciano Tercero. Up until this moment, nothing is known of their fates.

Following this confrontation, the paramilitary bands went to the villages of Chine and Churo Lozan and launched a violent attack on those communities. Community members were beaten and mistreated, houses, possessions and property were destroyed, and animals were stolen.

**Write to the President of Ecuador, and demand: 1. The complete dissolution of armed paramilitary groups in the countryside. 2. The detention and prosecution, to the fullest extent possible, of the people responsible for the attacks.**

**Presidente Rodrigo Borja, Palacio Nacional, Quito, ECUADOR**

**Telex: 393-223-75 PREREP ED**

**Please send copies of your letters to SAIC and to CONAIE at Los Granados 2553 y Av. 6 de Diciembre, Quito, ECUADOR.**



# Three Indian People Elected to National Constitutional Assembly

(Colombia) Three delegates were chosen to represent Colombia's 600,000 Indians in the National Constitutional Assembly (ANC), responsible for reforming the Colombian Constitution. Alfonso Peñas Chepe, Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado and Francisco Rojas Birry were elected to the newly formed ANC. This is a major step for a nation which passed a law in 1890 which set a target date of 50 years to "civilize the savages." The struggle for Indian rights has gained new impetus with the plans to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in Santo Domingo. In his first speech before the assembly, Birry, an Emberá Indian elected as a delegate on December 9, declared: "We, the Indians of Colombia, reject with all the anger we have built up over hundreds of years, the 'celebration' that the West wants to make in 1992 of the great ethnocidal saga"

Representing 80 Indian groups, from the Amazon forest to the Andean highlands, the three Indian delegates proposed that Colombia's new Constitution accord Indians rights to bilingual education and to political and economic control over recognized homelands. They also demanded that Indians be judged by Indian courts and Indian judges and that seats be set aside for Indian representation in Colombia's Congress.

The rewriting of the Constitution was begun in February and finished on July 5th. Among the propositions approved by the Assembly was the political and administrative decentralization of the country. The indigenous representatives presented and passed a proposal for "relative autonomy," which guarantees their survival as peoples with characteristics which differ from the rest of society. The recognition of territories which traditionally have been inhabited by indigenous peoples and are isolated from the political and administrative arena of the country was also obtained. A degree of autonomy in administrative justice was also adopted, whereby indigenous peoples will be implementing their own traditional forms of justice.

The new Constitution was in danger of not being approved because of the additions by the indigenous representatives. Due to increased lobbying and an outcry of support from indigenous communities, the proposals were approved.

Selections from the new Colombian Constitution are as follow:

*Indigenous lands are collectively owned... According to the Constitution and law, indigenous territories will be governed by councils formed and ruled according to the use and customs of their communities and will exercise the following functions... Design the*

*policies, plans and programs of economic and social development within their lands, and in harmony with the National Plan of Development... The exploitation of natural resources located in indigenous territories will take place without dividing the cultural, social and economic identity of indigenous communities. In the decision to exploit such resources, the government will facilitate the participation of representatives of the respective communities.*

In addition to territorial reforms, education, health care, and all projects, investments, and services affecting indigenous peoples will be carried out with their participation, input and subject to the approval of indigenous authorities. The 64 indigenous languages of Colombia were officially recognized, requiring the state to train bilingual teachers for community schools.

The multi-ethnic and cultural diversity of Colombia is also recognized and protected by the Constitution. As a permanent guarantee of the political-institutional recognition of the indigenous peoples of Colombia, a special electoral body was formed. Two posts of the 102 senatorial seats, along with one of five posts in the Chamber of Representatives will be permanently provided for indigenous delegates.

The changes taking place in Colombia today are not only of great significance to Colombians, but to Native peoples of the entire continent, especially when one considers that indigenous peoples were not even mentioned in the last Constitution, written in 1886.



# WHY WE ABANDONED OUR GUNS Quintin Lame Speaks

(Colombia) Last April 9th, Alfonso Peña Chepe, Indian representative of the Armed Movement "Manuel Quintin Lame," took an oath before the plenary session of the National Constitutional Assembly. In this way, he became the 74th member of this governmental body.

The Indian people of Quintin Lame in the Department of Cauca are negotiating with the Colombian government in order to come to a peaceful solution to the armed conflict there.

After seven years of armed struggle, they abandoned their arms on May 31st. The following ten reasons were given as to why they decided to change their strategy:

1. The indigenous struggle of Colombia is a result of the injustices within Colombian society. We have decided to compromise with the people of Colombia in order to search for a political solution to the social, judicial, cultural and economic conflicts and in order to achieve social justice.

2. We want to contribute to democracy in a civil society, by working towards the elimination of the roots of violence.

3. The historic opening of the National Constitutional Assembly serves as a starting point in the reconstruction of a new country which recognizes the existence of different cultures.

4. After 500 years of cultural resistance, the presence of Francisco Rojas Birry, Lorenzo Muelas and Alfonso Peñas Chepe in the National Constitutional Assembly demonstrates that Indian people have strong support from their communities as well as from other sectors of the population.

5. The presence of indigenous representation in national politics is one more step in the defense of our identity, due to the struggles of our ancestors such as Caciqua Gaitana, Quintin Lame, and Alvaro Ulcué.



Design by Jaime Tenjo

6. The Colombian guerrilla movement has decided to follow the path of dialogue and political negotiation rather than the armed struggle of the past.

7. We want to encourage dialogue, political negotiation and a peaceful solution instead of the conflictive one which has kept us out of the political arena.

8. In Colombia, we are building a democratic system where it is our duty to contribute our solidarity to an alternative to the system which consisted solely of liberals and conservatives for many years.

9. After 500 years of being massacred and plundered, we Indian peoples of the Americas will continue our struggle in a new way to prevent new forms of colonization.

10. Indigenous communities, peasants and other popular sectors will establish a civil society, with great socio-political strength, which will offer an alternative, and seriously deal with the roots of violence.

Source: *Unidad Indígena* #99, May, 1991

# Culture, Identity & Plurinationality

## || ... in my case I am first of all Schuar and then I am Ecuadorian."

(Ecuador) On June 29, 1991, Ampan Karakra of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) made the following speech at a conference on Communication Among the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

We all talk about 'culture' and 'Latin-American identity' and 'national identity' and all of our different identities. It is important for us to talk about this. I believe it is easier for indigenous people to talk about identity, because it is of great concern to us. As workers and Indians, we are told that we are peasants and as such, to be incorporated into the greater society. We are from the country and the city and we are all told that we are Ecuadorian. What does this mean? Some times I have asked myself, and replied that in my case I am first of all Schuar and then I am Ecuadorian.

When talking about identity, some say that it is our clothes, others say it is our language. Up to now, the question of how many Indians are in Ecuador is not known. The state provides one figure; CONAIE provides a different figure. The state says that if one is dressed in Western clothes, then one is no longer an Indian. Just because I am wearing Western clothes, I lose my identity. Another part of identity is values. We always talk about values, but which values are the real ones? The only thing I can say is that I was taught that national values are the ones we have to follow. It is for this reason that we have to learn Spanish and struggle to act as the national society does, to eat as they eat. It's as if our Indian culture has no value. We are taught one history, the history of the arrival of the Spanish, their civilization. The Catholic religion is the only one to follow and we Indians exist only to be conquered. The Catholics arrived first, and thought: 'those pagans must be baptized. They must be made Christians...'. Then the Protestants arrived, and they began to fight over our communities.

We have become strangers on our own lands. In the Amazon, for example, in a province which was created in 1964, we are required to have land titles. While we have been the owners of these lands for thousands of years, others come along and say they own them because they have lousy pieces of paper! It is for this reason that we say we must have more authority.

In South and Central America, we are called 'Hispanics' or 'Latin Americans' even if we don't have a trace of European blood! Not so long ago we Indian people had no defined organizations. We called each other brothers. The linguists, missionaries, historians, anthropologists, called us 'peasants,' 'ethnic groups,' 'aborigines, natives.' Then they gave us specific names, endless denominations.

We Schuar were called *Quiwan* or *Jibaro*, the Huaorani: *Aukas*, the Chachis: *Kayapas*, the Yumas: *Canelos*, the Tsachilas: *Colorados*. Just because the Tsachilas paint themselves red, they were called Colorados, but that color is not their identity! Even so, we indigenous people always knew who we were. In the case of the Schuar, one says 'I am Schuar.' Then what does the term *Schuar* mean? It means *human*, an *equal*. That is identity.

Our compañeros of the left tell us that this issue of identity will disappear when the social classes disintegrate, when we all become equal. I have my doubts about this. I think that identity will disappear only when humans disappear. I've seen this issue of identity playing a big role in the Soviet Union. Seventy years of socialism and look at the confrontations taking place over the issue of identity. That is why I get nervous when we talk about a 'plurinationality society.'

Within the indigenous movement, we must analyze identity and class. Obviously, we identify with the poor, exploited class. However, within this class, we Indians are the most marginalized and racially discriminated against. The government claims that it is illegal to discriminate, but in reality, racism is everywhere. In the market, you can hear talk of 'the ugly Indian.' We have to fight against this. We are told that the indigenous movement will displace White people. Many times we have said that we are going to talk about identity and class, but many of our compañeros do not want to, because they think that we are going to hurt their feelings and this will create enmity. And so we do not talk. We've had so many years of

(continued on page 44)



Ampan Karakra speaking about identity.

Photo by Melina Selvertson



# INDIGENOUS LEADER TORTURED IN IMBABURA

(Ecuador) On June 11, 1991, José María Cabascango, 28 year old human rights secretary of CONAIE (the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), was detained by the army while travelling by car during a tour of local indigenous communities. He and others travelling with him were transferred to the Ecuadorian investigative police office in Ibarra. Cabascango was held until June 13 and was subjected to torture, including being hung from the thumbs, blows to the ears, mock executions and death threats.

During the last few years, there have been numerous land conflicts in the province of Imbabura involving indigenous communities and large landowners, some of which have resulted in the expulsion of these communities from land on which they were living. A large number of paramilitary groups have emerged in the area and appear to act against the Indian communities, either in combined operations with the army or police or with the acquiescence of the government. The killing, torture and harassment of many community members and leaders have been committed by these groups. For example, on December 19, 1990, Indian leader Julio Cabascango (not related to José María) was killed, apparently by a paramilitary group. The government initiated an inquiry and detained two people (one of whom escaped) believed to be responsible for the murder. Indian leaders are requesting not only that those responsible for the shooting be brought to trial but also those on whose behalf they acted.

On June 11, the Indian communities of the province of Imbabura declared a 48 hour strike. Such strikes usually involve road blocks but are non-violent in tactics and are usually supported by the local church, student unions and other organizations, as in this case. During the two day strike, 17 indigenous people, including José María Cabascango were detained, and about 12 others injured, reportedly by members of security forces.

The purpose of the strike was to request the intervention of the state into the land conflicts that affect Indian communities; to request the disbanding of paramilitary groups; to request the bringing to justice of those responsible for the 1990 killing of Indian leader Julio Cabascango; to request government investment in the region's infrastructure; and to request assistance for the growing problem of cholera in the area.

*Source: Amnesty International*



Please write to the Ecuadorean authorities:

- expressing concern at the reported torture of Indian leader José María Cabascango,
- noting that torture is forbidden under Ecuadorean legislation and that Ecuador has also ratified international treaties that oppose its use, including the UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- asking for a full and impartial inquiry into the allegations of torture, that the nature of the findings be made public and, should the allegations be sustained, that those responsible be brought to justice.

Write to:

Dr. Rodrigo Borja Cevallos  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio del Gobierno  
García Noreno 1043  
Quito, ECUADOR



## Uru-Chipayas: Organizing for Linguistic / Cultural Survival

(BOLIVIA) Although declared extinct by linguists, the ancient language of Puquina is spoken by at least 10,000 people in the Desaguadero River valley. Thirty-two families from Uru-Chipaya-Murato, one of the oldest and smallest Andean communities, are organizing for linguistic / cultural survival. In an interview with SAIIC, Lorenzo Inta, a representative of Uru-Chipaya-Murato, described several projects being planned by the community. Among these are a gathering to reunite all the speakers of Puquina, a Native school directed by community members and a linguistic documentation project. He went on to say that they are in need of technical, educational, and financial support and collaboration for these projects.

**If you can provide assistance or  
would like more information, write to:  
Proyecto Cultural Uru  
Taller de Historia Oral Andina  
Casilla 9628  
La Paz, BOLIVIA**



## Traditional Authorities Proclaim Independence

(Bolivia) Oruro is a mining city, known since colonial times for its large silver and tin deposits. Second in importance to the huge deposits of Cerro Rico in Potosi, Oruro has been forgotten since the collapse of tin prices on the international market.

In April 1991, the 5th Council of Traditional Authorities gathered five-hundred *jilaqata* and *cacique* (native authorities of Andean indigenous communities) in Oruro. These representatives met in order to proclaim their intent to fight for the reconstruction of the Quechua-Aymara nation. Many of their communities have never been enslaved by colonists. They maintain that the Bolivian government answers to a centralized, oligarchic structure which is artificially imposed over indigenous structures. In this way, they proclaimed their independence from the Bolivian Government.



## Native Radio Broadcasters Face Many Obstacles

(Bolivia) The Independent Association of Aymara Indian Radio Operators (AREAL) began the process to broadcast in the Aymara and Quechua languages in the Oruro and Potosi regions one year ago. Ismael Mamani and Rogelio Pari, both active members of AREAL, informed SAIIC of the barriers they face to broadcast in Native languages. The quest for a license to broadcast has been futile, governmental obstruction is rampant, and competition with non-Indian NGOs for a frequency is very high.

AREAL is searching for technical and financial support in order to continue broadcasting independently. Especially needed is the exchange of related experiences, cassette tapes and tape recorders. If you are able to offer resources, please contact AREAL at:

**Asociación de Radios Aymaras  
Casilla #9628  
La Paz, BOLIVIA**

# AMAZON



*Drawing courtesy of CONAIE, bilingual education department.*

## OIL WARS IN THE ECUADORIAN AMAZON!

### An Interview with Leonardo Viteri

(Ecuador) Leonardo Viteri, of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) and the Organization of Indigenous People of Pastaza (OPIP) visited the Bay Area last Spring, on a speaking tour of North America. He is a Quichua Indian from the community of Saragura in the Province of Pastaza in Ecuador's Amazon region. Approximately 200,000 Indian people live in this region, with the Quichuas numbering around 90,000. Other groups include the Shuar, Huaorani, Cofanes, Siones and the Secoya. The following is excerpted from an interview between SAIIC and Leonardo.

*SAIIC: I understand that you come from a large family. Are all the members of your family actively involved in the defense of the rights of Indian peoples?*

Yes, we worked first of all to achieve unity in our methods and politics at the level of the family. This allowed us to obtain the necessary backing and support for our work and also to involve the whole family in the cause of indigenous peoples. I do come from a large family -I have nine brothers and sisters, and we are all working with different organizations and focusing on distinct areas of work.

*SAIIC: When did you begin to organize yourselves at the regional and national levels?*

In the Amazon region, the Shuar Federation was the first to undertake a broad and significant process of organizing. Thereafter, indigenous peoples like the Quichua, Cofanes, Siones and Secoya, and most recently the Huaorani, have organized themselves. The Quichua people of Pastaza have been organized since 1978, and we form part of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP).

*SAIIC: Can you describe in greater detail what CONFENAIE is, and whom it represents?*

CONFENAIE is a regional, non-governmental organization of indigenous peoples. It represents six nationalities that live in the Amazon region, specifically the Quichua, the Shuar-Achuar, the Huaorani, the Cofanes, the Siona, and the Secoya. CONFENAIE was established in the Amazon 11 years ago, and it is the representative organization of the majority of indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

*SAIIC: What has been the impact of the petroleum companies on indigenous peoples?*

The government's oil policy has provoked the plunder of 5,200,000 hectares of indigenous territory in the last twenty years, because it has awakened the ambitions of outsiders to come in and grab land. Immense areas of land have also been given as concessions to timber companies, to agribusiness companies cultivating African palm trees, to tourist companies, and to the armed forces. At present, the oil companies are occupying some 3,080,000 hectares. Their operations exploit the entire Amazon region. The presence of the companies also implies cultural changes because at times our people go to work for the companies. This creates an economic dependency, and also transforms their way of thinking. Other life-styles, other attitudes

toward work, nutrition and social behavior are adopted, all of which diverge totally from the culture of our people.

*SAIIC: When did the incursion of the petroleum companies begin in the Ecuadorian Amazon?*

The petroleum problem began for indigenous peoples as far back as 1926. Since that time we have been waging a petroleum war in the Amazon. Confronted by our permanent opposition and struggle, the companies have withdrawn on several occasions, but in 1970 they returned with much greater force. This date marks the beginning of the oil boom in the Amazon, which has been one of the most complicated and conflictive periods of our time, and also one of the most destructive in terms of the region and the cultures of indigenous peoples.

*SAIIC: Why have indigenous territories been militarized?*

Those who stand in opposition to the interests of indigenous peoples are very concerned by the accelerated process of organizing being carried out by indigenous peoples of the Amazon and throughout Ecuador in general. Through the creation of regional confederations, such as CONFENAIE in the Amazon, ECUARUNARI in the Sierra, and COICE in the coastal region, we have been able to unite and successfully organize ourselves at the national level. CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous

Nationalities of Ecuador, represents the synthesis of all of the regional organizations. Through CONAIE, we are able to struggle and put forth, as a united front, our proposals to the Ecuadorian State in order to seriously discuss and find solutions to the problems that have built up as a result of 500 years of oppression. The militarization of our territories and the persecution of indigenous peoples is also due to the struggle ignited by the indigenous uprising of June of 1990. The policy of repression which the Ecuadorian government has adopted has caused many problems for us.

*SAIIC: What companies are operating in the Amazon?*

There are more than 22 oil companies operating in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Fifteen of these are from the United States. Texaco, which has been there for almost twenty years, is the company that has caused the greatest ecological and social damage in the region. ARCO, which is also present and operating in the territory of Pastaza, has militarized its block in the face of opposition from the



*Photo by M. Hegeman*

*Leonardo Viteri on his visit to North America.*

*(see Leonardo, p. 45)*



## A VICTORY FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

(Peru) On September 19th, the Peruvian Minister of Energy and Mines publicly announced that Texas Crude had decided not to sign a contract to explore for oil in Lot 61, home to some 180 Amazonian indigenous and non-indigenous river communities for whom the park and its resources constitute their sole means of survival.

One year ago, newly-elected President Alberto Fujimori signed a landmark environmental code prohibiting the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources and banning oil drilling in the nation's parks and reserves. In April of 1991, under pressure from powerful economic interests, Fujimori reversed his position and granted the Houston-based Texas Crude Incorporated a vast tract of rainforest, known as Lot 61. Opposition to the Corporation's plans to begin oil exploration developed immediately as national environmental and indigenous groups discovered that over three-quarters of Lot 61 lay within the Pacaya Samiria reserve in Peru's northern Amazon jungle. It is the oldest and largest protected area in Peru's national park system.

The prospect that Pacaya Samiria - already contaminated by the activities of petroleum companies allowed to operate in the reserve prior to the passing of the environmental code - could be further jeopardized galvanized local, national and international opposition. In June, a local priest, along with AIDSESEP (Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Peruvian Amazon) organized a general strike in the jungle town of Iquitos, and succeeded in briefly paralyzing the community. Two months later, AIDSESEP issued a declaration denouncing the Peruvian government's manipulation of environmental codes and its willingness to grant transnational corporations a degree of security never

accorded to Peru's own citizens. A document prepared at AIDSESEP's 15th General Assembly stated that "neither the people nor the environment bear the responsibility for the extreme poverty our country faces. While this poverty may indeed require urgent remedies, actions which threaten to irreversibly destroy food and natural resources cannot be justified, particularly since the presumed wealth which will be generated will never be seen by the people." Internationally, San Francisco's Rainforest Action Network launched a joint campaign with Global Response to bombard Texas Crude headquarters with letters protesting the proposed project.

The President of Texas Crude cited numerous reasons for the corporation's decision, including: the threat of legal action by the Peruvian Environmental Law Society (SPDA); the "substantial number of letters endeavoring to discourage exploration for environmental reasons" (over 1000 letters were sent!); and the recent letter sent to President Fujimori by 54 Peruvian house representatives and senators showing their disapproval of the contract.

In early October the Peruvian Ministry of Energy and Mines began negotiations with the US-based Santa Fe Energy Resources Company for two other oil exploration lots, both outside of Pacaya Samiria. Although the contract has yet to be signed, and must be approved by the full Peruvian cabinet, it is considered likely that the project will be given the go-ahead given the extreme economic situation Peru is confronting. It is important to note, however, that Santa Fe Energy and Resources specifically opposed any contract involving areas within national reserves or parks, stating that the environmental concerns were too great.





# A MESSAGE FROM THE HUAORANI

*(Ecuador) Under increasing pressure from indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon and environmental organizations within and outside Ecuador, Conoco Oil Company announced on October 11 that it was withdrawing from all oil development in the region of the Amazon that comprises the traditional territory of the Huaorani Indians. Conoco's decision came three weeks after the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights heard arguments by SAIIC coordinator, Nilo Cayuqueo and Lauri Adams of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. They argued that actions by the government of Ecuador approving Conoco's massive oil development project in the heart of the Huaorani's traditional lands violates the Indians' basic human rights to life, health, home, family, and culture.*

*The following letter was sent to Conoco by the Huaorani organization in the Ecuadorian Amazon (ONHAE). See issues Vol 5 Nos 3&4 of the SAIIC Newsletter for more information on the Conoco - Huaorani case.*

General Manager  
DuPont - Conoco Company  
United States of America

Dear Sir:

The Organization of the Huaorani Nationality of the Ecuadorian Amazon Region (ONHAE), in an extraordinary meeting held on the 10th and 11th of January, 1991, adopted the following resolutions:

1. That oil exploitation in the Huaorani territory must be prevented, because the pollution has killed many animals, fishes and plants, and has produced many diseases. That is what we have seen, and it is threatening the life of the Huaoranis.

2. That the oil companies enter our territory without taking us into account. That they come in and do their work despite the fact that they know we have the property rights over this land, disrupting our organizational process; the Conoco Company wants to work by itself, using, in an isolated fashion, Huaoranis from Cononaco and Yasuni.

3. That the Conoco Company is discussing the fate of the Huaoranis in meetings in which the Huaoranis are not present and that we are treated as if we are guests. We must not be treated as guests when the discussion is about our lives. We must correct this situation, because our lives are on the line.

4. That we, the ONHAE, ratify our opposition to the construction of any roads in Huaorani territory.

5. That the drilling of oil wells pollutes the rivers.

6. That the Huaorani culture survive and prosper. We do not want companies to come and civilize us.

7. That we do not want to be deceived by the oil companies.

8. That we are aware of the problems of the world. Despite these, we will continue to defend our land.

Awaiting your response to Caja Postal 17-21-166, Quito, Ecuador, we remain sincerely,

Ram'n Huanoni Coba,  
President, ONHAE

Moi Enomenga Nantohua,  
Vice President, ONHAE

Eugenio Quemperi C.  
Secretary, ONHAE



## **Flu Threatens to Annihilate the Nukak**

(Colombia) One of Colombia's last nomadic peoples, the Nukak, are being decimated by outside diseases. Their numbers have already been brought dangerously low by continual attacks from colonists and coca growers. Over 100 Nukak have died from flu over the last three years. Now their children are threatened by cerebral malaria - which is usually fatal.

As one of Colombia's last nomadic tribal peoples, the Nukak's future depends on their land being legally recognized and colonization halted. But the Colombian Government has not recognized 90% of their land, and taken no steps to protect the Nukak from hostile invasions.

The Nukak have had little non-Indian contact. What contact they have had has proved devastating. With a population of around 1100, the tribe cannot afford more losses.

In 1987 approximately 20 Nukak were attacked and killed by colonists in the north of their territory. The survivors of the massacre fled to the south, deep into the heart of their rainforest lands. At the same time, another group had been attacked by coca growers. The survivors of these two groups joined up and emerged out of the forest on the outskirts of the town of Calamar. However any Nukak who had lived in the area were killed off by colonists during the 1940's rubber boom. It seems that other Nukak had been shot at by the Colombian army from the air; they were mistaken for coca growers or left-wing guerillas. Meanwhile 20 Nukak children had been stolen by colonists to work as unpaid laborers.

The disoriented survivors of the 1987 massacre - mostly women and children - only spoke Nukak, so could not speak with the townspeople about the attacks. They were unused to life outside the rainforest and became depressed and sick. A missionary from the extremist US-based organization, New Tribes Mission (NTM), arrived, claiming to speak Nukak. It then emerged that NTM (whose activities amongst tribal people worldwide have done untold damage) had had a base in the north of the Nukak lands for at least 12 years.

The Colombian government's response to the Nukak's plight has been totally unacceptable. Despite protests, the government flew some of the Nukak back to the New Tribes Mission base. They were already infected with the flu virus after living in Calamar. The Nukak have no resistance to this new disease and no way of treating it. At least 109 Nukak have died as it has spread through their territory. They were returned from the NTM base to their forest homes with no medical care and no protection from further attacks. As well as the first cases of cerebral malaria in children living near the NTM base, cholera has also appeared in the region.

The Nukak traditionally live in the headwaters of the Infrida and Papunaua rivers and the southern basin of the River Guaviare.

The Nukak will only survive if their rights to all their lands are fully recognized and properly enforced. The Colombian government must also initiate a health project for the Nukak.

Please write courteous letters urging the Colombian government to title all of the Nukak's lands to them, an area of approximately 1 million hectares in Guaviare province. The government must ensure that there is no further colonization of Nukak lands. A properly funded health project must be initiated, to allow small medical teams to treat the Nukak before more of them die. Every effort must be made to recover those Nukak children who have been captured by colonists.

*Source:: Survival International*

**Please send your letters to:  
Señor Dr Cesar Gaviria, Presidente de la Republica  
Casa de Nariño, Carrera 8 No 7-26, Bogotá,  
COLOMBIA**

**and to:  
Dr Fernando Corrales Cruz  
Centro Administrativo Nacional , Edificio INCORA  
Gerencia General, Bogotá, COLOMBIA**

# 1000 INDIANS MARCH TO PROTEST ARMY'S KILLING OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

(Colombia) Last November the principal Indian leader of the Arhuaco Indians, Luís Napoleón Torres, his brother, Angel Maria Torres, and another Arhuaco, Hugues Chaparro were travelling by bus from the local city of Valledupar, the Colombian capital of Bogotá. They were going to protest to government authorities about army and police harassment of their communities.

At a stop along the way, near the town of Curumaní, soldiers forced the three off the bus and took them away. The bus driver reported this to the local police but they appear to have done little or nothing. Two weeks later the Indians' bodies were discovered in three different places - all had been severely tortured.

About a thousand Indians later marched to Valledupar in protest and to take the bodies back to the mountains for traditional funeral rites. Two of the dead were traditional *mamo* (shamans) and all were highly respected Indian leaders.

On the same day as the three leaders disappeared, another Arhuaco, Vicente Villafañe, and his brother had their house searched for arms - none were found. They were taken to the army base in Valledupar where they were beaten and tortured. Two days later, November 30th, one of

them was taken by army helicopter to the Indian community of Vindivameína (Santo Domingo) where soldiers searched houses, shot their rifles into the air, and stole food from the school and equipment from the health post.

The Colombian army views all peasant and Indian communities as potential guerrilla collaborators. In other areas of Colombia, guerrillas themselves have killed Indian leaders who refuse to affiliate with their particular anti-government group of which there are several. In many areas the Indians suffer at the hands of both the rebel and government forces.

A Colombian court has begun an investigation into the killings but this is unlikely to bring any results without a show of support for the Indians and protests at the violations of their rights.

Please write to the President of Colombia, protesting the army's killing and torture of Indian people.

**Señor Presidente**  
**Dr Cesar Gaviria, Presidente de la Republica**  
**Casa de Nariño, Carrera 8 No 7-26**  
**Bogotá, COLOMBIA**



## Gran Chaco Indigenous Peoples Call for Land Commission

(Bolivia) Indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco region of the Bolivian Amazon have requested the Bolivian government to establish a commission to demarcate their territory. In an open letter to President Jaime Paz Zamora, the Mataco and Tapieté peoples, who live on the banks of the Pilcomayu River, informed the President that they conducted a general assembly last November (1990) in Villamontes. At the end of the gathering, they issued a resolution calling on the President to take immediate measures to halt the injustices and abuses they are suffering at the hands of colonists.

The resolution denounces the "...total paralysis of our attempts to acquire property rights and land titles, a process that has been detained by the National Agrarian Reform. We demand to be treated the same way as our Sirionó brothers and sisters at Ibiato. The Sirionó have been able to press for the approval of Supreme Decree # 22609 which declares as 'indigenous territory' the lands they inhabit." Indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco explain

that the agrarian reform paper work has been suspended. They are accusing the government of stalling the approval of previous documents. The Mataco and Tapieté said that in July of 1980, agrarian reform officers instructed them to proceed with the land title paper work and that native authorities visited the Indian communities to explain the objectives. With economic aid from the Swedish Mission in Bolivia, along with the approval of the agrarian reform officers, they initiated the paper work along legal paths. They paid the required fees to the local judge Hilda Palavisino, a secretary, and a land surveyor. The local judge is now advising cattle ranchers and pits them against the Indians. She has been responsible for the legal curtailment of paper work that was to benefit the Mataco.

In the meantime, the Mataco and Tapieté say that the governmental commission must be formed by the Ministry of Peasant Affairs, the Indigenist Institute, CIDOB (Indigenous Confederation of Eastern Bolivia) and representatives of the Mataco and Tapieté. They warn against colonizers encroaching on their lands. They also denounce Judge Hilda Palavisino for bias towards cattle ranchers because of her friendship and familial ties. "If our petition falls through, and is not resolved favorably and immediately, the Indigenous Peoples of the Gran Chaco will adopt other de facto measures," they warn.

# "We Need to Survive!"

## A Message from Davi Kopenawa Yanomami

*(Brazil) Davi Kopenawa Yanomami visited New York in April and met with the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the World Bank to explain the effects gold-miners are having on his people, the Yanomami of the state of Roraima in the Brazilian Amazon. He also met with many groups on the east coast to help raise funds for a Yanomami health project.*

*The following are excerpts from a statement made by Davi Kopenawa Yanomami to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights last September in Demini, Brazil.*

My name is Davi Kopenawa Yanomami... I am a Yanomami Indian. I want to send my message to those who are friends and who are helping us to defend the forest. I want to talk to the people who do not know the problems of the Indians in Brazil. We Yanomami Indians have lived in this forest for a very long time, for much longer than any White or non-Indian person. We used to be free and we did not have any kind of illness. We were not sick at all.

During that time there were no non-Indians around here. They were far away. We Indians did not know that the non-Indians would give us so many problems... I am talking about the gold miners who come here and take out our fish, the animals... and devastate the forest. That is what I am talking about... They have invaded our territory. They first came in 1987. They killed four Yanomami at Paapiu. From there they spread out into the territory with small airplanes and helicopters... and they

rolled into the forest. They are now all over the territory.

We Yanomami Indians are very worried because we do not have the authority of the President... we have to ask the government to change the situation and to take the gold miners... out of the area.

I have asked FUNAI (the Brazilian Bureau of Indian Affairs) many times and all the authorities, including former President Sarney, when he was President... to take out the gold miners... but the only thing they did was to promise and to keep promising things and not do anything.

Instead, they let many other gold-miners come in... and they did not take them out. Sickness also came with the gold miners. Because of the mosquitoes that bite them and then bite us, we are now having all of this sickness. The sickness called malaria is very strong, and I think at least 1000 Yanomami have died already. Even more than 1000. That is what I think.

Now our rivers.. our streams... are dirty. The Yanomami do not know about mercury...

Mercury is used by gold miners to clean the gold... It goes back to the river and the fish that the Yanomami eat and the water that the Yanomami drink is mixed with mercury. When they eat and drink that they get sick.

Those gold miners are also poor people. Like us, they are not rich. I feel pity for them because they come here, because their bosses send them here, and they just



*Davi Yanomami on his visit to North America. Photo: Jane Wholley*

obey them. Around Surucucus, there are a lot of gold-miners. The federal police have not taken them out. They tried, but what they did was to get the nice gold-miners out, not the bad and mean ones.

I am a Yanomami Indian who understands the non-Indian world. I keep asking President Collor to expel the gold miners from our territory. President Collor has been to Surucucus, but... only to a military base... That is the only thing he saw. President Collor knows that the situation is not good. So I am asking other people to continue pressuring the Brazilian government to help expel the gold-miners.

I spoke to the United Nations, which gave me an award. I told them that the prize did not help my people. So I am asking the UN to help the Yanomami people to pressure the Brazilian government to remove the gold-miners from our area. Also, we want the Organization of American States... to help us as friends.

I don't think it is just the Brazilian government. You should pressure every government in the world because they are all alike, and they should help us... Protect the Indians, protect the rivers, the mountains, the forest. We need to survive.

It is very important for them too. It is not only the Yanomami but also the non-Indians. We all depend on the land. So if they do not protect the land, all of humanity will die.

To you whom I am sending this message, what I am asking is to do something to help the Brazilian Indians, and also all the Indians of the world, because the Indians want to live in peace. Not only the Indians who live in the forest, but also the Indians who live in the city and the non-Indians who are living in the city are suffering because the government should pay attention to all of us and do something to help us.

I am going to say something else... about the 19 islands of Yanomami land that former President Sarney demarcated. We Yanomami Indians do not want to live in islands. We want to be safe. The gold miners are going to enter our islands... We need a continuous area and a big area in order to be able to fish and hunt and live well. We want all of our land united.

In regards to the government operation that is supposed to take out the gold miners... they have not taken out all of the gold miners. The operation has stopped because the government says that they do not have money... I know the government authorities, the Brazilian authorities, and I know the politicians and I know the way they work. My feeling is that they do not want to take the gold miners out... What they really want is to be here and exploit our resources. That is why they do not want to solve our problems.

*(See Davi, p . 45)*

## Some Ground is Made in the Struggle for the Construction of a Yanomami Park

President Collor finally obeyed the Brazilian court decision and revoked former President Sarney's illegal decrees dividing Yanomami territory into 19 'islands' and create three illegal mining reserves. But optimism about a decision on a Yanomami Park soon diminished when Collor announced he was setting up a group to study Yanomami boundaries. On April 19, National Day of the Indian, he signed a decree calling for a proposal for the demarcation of the Yanomami territory to be presented to him within six months.

During President Collor's visit to the United States in June, environmental and Indian support groups informed him that the evacuation of the gold-miners in the Yanomami area had been paralyzed and the gold-miners had again invaded an extensive part of the Yanomami territory. Upon returning to Brazil, Collor fired FUNAI president Cantidio Guerreiro Guimaraes.

Meanwhile, the government planned to begin on July 19, the third operation to expel the gold-miners from the Yanomami territory using a sum of \$1.8 million. The government's plans for the gold-miners is being questioned. It was reported that the intention is to incorporate several thousand expelled gold-miners into agricultural projects. If the projects are set up near the Yanomami area, it is certain that they will re-invade the territory.

Sydney Possuelo, the new president of FUNAI published a resolution on July 22, 1991, calling for the demarcation of the Yanomami territory as a contiguous area of 9,419,108 hectares, located in the states of Roraima and Amazonas. This was signed by President Collor. The government is estimating that it will cost \$6 million to demarcate the territory.

### Last Minute News!!!

**On November 14, President Collor de Mello granted "permanent rights" over 36,358 square miles to the Yanomami!!!**

## **Brazilian Army Recruits Yanomami Indians**

Several Yanomami Indians are "serving" in the Brazilian Army at the Maturaca post, located in the state of Amazonas. The one-year enlistment of the Yanomami is part of a strategy by the Brazilian Armed Forces to "integrate" indigenous populations into the "national community."

The military commanders' strategy is based on the ideas of "national sovereignty" and "national security." They fear that Indian groups will form their own nation inside the Brazilian territory. In July, Roraima governor and former brigadier general Ottomar de Souza Pinto, compared the Yanomami situation to the Kurds in Iraq. The relationship between the Yanomami and the military in the Maturaca region is similar to that of the Yanomami and the gold-miners.

The army wants to increase its presence in Maturaca. That is why soldiers are building an illegal road between the city of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira and the post in Maturaca. Five kilometers of the road have already been completed. The road is illegal because it cuts through the Pico da Neblina National Park and the military has not even presented an Environmental Impact Report to the government environmental agency.



## **Tikuna Massacre Update**

(Brazil) March 28th marked three years since the Tikuna massacre, when 14 Tikuna men, women and children were shot to death at the command of logger, Oscar Castello Branco, near the city of Benjamin Constant in the state of Amazonas, in the Brazilian Amazon.

This was the most serious documented massacre of Brazilian Indians in the last twenty years. The 15,000 Tikuna on the upper Solimões River form the largest Indian nationality in Brazil. In recent years, they have suffered increasing incursions by loggers, commercial fisheries, and local elites on their lands. At the same time, their organizing in defense of their traditional lands has grown stronger.

Since 1988, legal investigation of the crime has slowly proceeded in Benjamin Constant. At the end of last year, the judge responsible for the case indicted all of the accused, who are now to stand trial before a local jury, chosen from the residents of the city.

The general opinion in the city, however, leads us to believe that this will not be an impartial trial. Most of the local people have shown support for the logger, who is well-known in the region. In general, there is hostility towards the Indians and their presence in the area.

Consequently, the Tikuna and their support organizations are requesting that the judge and the public prosecutor ask the Tribunal of Justice of the state of Amazonas for a change of venue. It is hoped that the trial will be held in the state capital of Manaus.

The local judge and prosecutor - the only authorities who can legally make the request - are reluctant to do so. If this situation continues, the likely outcome is impunity for the defendants, who would be tried in Benjamin Constant, and very likely, be absolved.

We request that concerned individuals and organizations send letters or telegrams to the authorities noted below, requesting that the Tribunal reexamine the Tikuna massacre case, keeping in mind the hostile attitudes towards Indian people in the city of Benjamin Constant and that a change of venue be granted.

### **Please send these letters to:**

**Exmo. Sr. Dr. Luis Henrique Braz  
Juiz de Direito da Comarca de Benjamin Constant  
Forum de Benjamin Constant, 69630 Benjamin Constant, AM, BRAZIL**

**Exmo. Sr. Dr. Sergio Medeiros  
Promotor de Justica da Comarca de Benjamin Constant  
Forum de Benjamin Constant, 69630 Benjamin Constant, AM, BRAZIL**

**Exmo. Sr. Dr. Gaspar Catunda de Sousa  
Desembargador Presidente do Tribunal de Justica do Amazonas  
Rua 10 de julho, no. 833 Centro, 69007 Manaus, AM, BRAZIL**

**Send copies of all correspondence to:  
Ambassador Marcilio Marques Moreira, Brazilian Embassy  
3006 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA  
Fax: 202-745-2728**

# UNI, CIMI AND OTHERS SIGN AGREEMENT TO COOPERATE

(Brazil) July 21-24, the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro held an Indigenous assembly in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, in Amazonas, Brazil. Ten indigenous organizations of the Rio Negro participated in the assembly, as well as Manoel Moura, director of Coordinating Group of Indigenous People of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), and Ailton Krenak, of the national office of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI). The local and national indigenous leaders at the meeting signed a letter of agreement, with significant implications for the future of the indigenous movement in Brazil. A translation of the document follows.

1. Considering that this meeting of indigenous organizations of the Rio Negro, called by FOIRN - the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro - has broad participation of local leaders, throughout the directorates of the associations;

2. Considering the presence of representatives of the directorate of COIAB (Coordinating Group of Indigenous People of the Brazilian Amazon);

3. Considering the presence of representatives of the National Coordination of UNI (Union of Indigenous Nations), and the themes and proposals discussed at this meeting;

We resolve:

a) to sign this protocol defining an agenda for work on three levels of organization;

b) to prepare a common agenda to formulate a program for structuring the local, regional and national indigenous movement;

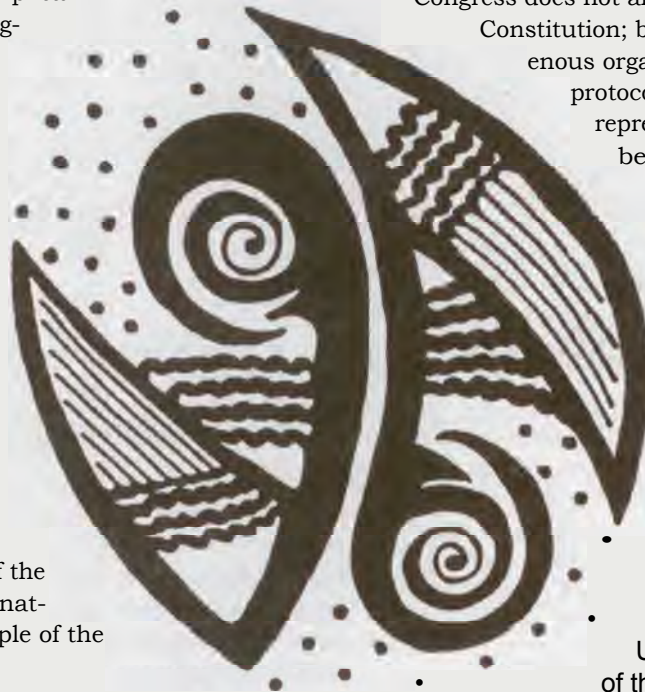
c) to declare together a public commitment, with all of the legally constituted indigenous organizations, associations, councils, etc., to define the form and date to convene the voting members of each organization for the definition of the model of national organization that we want, and its structure and mandate;

d) to inform all our grassroots supporters through the channels of communication of the groups that support

the indigenous struggle of the positive result of the meeting and the urgent necessity of having a civil organization;

e) to communicate with the groups that support the indigenous struggle, in order that they cease the dissidence that hinders the indigenous movement when they undertake parallel programs of a paternalistic, academic nature;

f) that the indigenous organizations and support groups are responsible for national mobilization so that the Congress does not alter indigenous rights assured by the Constitution; being in agreement, all the indigenous organizations represented sign this protocol. (signed by 34 indigenous leaders, representing the organizations listed below)



- UNI - Union of Indigenous Nations (National)
- COIAB - Coordinating Group of the Indigenous Organizations of Amazonia
- FOIRN - Federation of the Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro
- ACIRI - Association of the Indigenous Communities of the Rio Icana
- ACITRUT - Association of the Indigenous Communities of Tarawa, Rios Vaupes and Tiquie
- UNIDI - Union of Indigenous Nations of the lauarete District
- UCIDI - Union of the Indigenous Communities of the lauarete District
- UNIRT - Union of Indigenous Nations of the Rio Tiquie
- ACIBRN - Association of the Indigenous Communities of the Lower Rio Negro
- AINBAL - Balaio Indigenous Association
- ACIRNE - Association of the Indigenous Communities of the Rio Negro
- AMITRUT - Association of Indigenous Women of Tarauaca, Rios Vaupes and Tiquie
- ARCINE - Rural Association of Indigenous Communities of the Rio Negro

In agreement with item d), the support groups listed below sign:

- CEDI - Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information
- NDI - Nucleus of Indigenous Rights
- CIMI - Indigenous Missionary Council



# AN URGENT PLEA FROM THE SURUÍ

(Brazil) The Suruí Indian people of Rondônia, represented by the Metareilá Organization of the Suruí Indigenous People, sent SAHC the following communiqué to publicize their current situation.

*We are... located at kilometer 50 in the municipality of Cacoal and live on our traditional lands in six villages. Our population is estimated to be 511 and we have been in contact with the national society for over 20 years and have adapted many of the customs of this society.*

*The majority of us wear western clothes, know the value of money, and eat foods that are different from our traditional diet. In 1978, the Suruí lands were invaded by colonists. After many*

*conflicts and many casualties among both colonists and Indians, we succeeded in expelling the colonists from our reserves without governmental support.*

*Currently, we are concerned about security. The Suruís of Rondônia are suffering many threats and even murders. Recently a Suruí Indian was killed by gunmen hired by ranchers who had invaded the indigenous reserve of the Zoró Indians (The Suruís allied themselves with the Zoró Indians in order to expel the colonizing ranchers).*

*The Suruís of Rondônia have suffered much persecution at the hands of the ranchers, politicians and police of the Municipality of Cacoal. The government has not taken a single measure regarding these persecutions. Meanwhile, the Suruís live with danger and anxiety, fearing more massacres as long as there is no justice.*

## Suicides Plague the Guarani-Kaiowa

(Brazil) Suicide, almost unheard of among Indians in the past, is a disturbing new phenomenon among the Guarani-Kaiowa people in Brazil's western state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Early this year Maura Ramirez, a 15 year-old, hung herself from a tree on the reservation. Her sister, Helena, one year older, had done the same a few months earlier. Since last year, 25 Guarani-Kaiowa have committed suicide and 37 others have attempted it according to statistics from FUNAI (the government's National Indian Institute). Anthropologists blame this on the loss of land and cultural identity in the face of an invasion by ranchers and farmers. More than half of the traditional lands claimed by the Guarani-Kaiowas have been settled by outsiders. "What we are seeing is a culture in agony, pleading for help," said anthropologist Maria Aparecida de Costa Pereira, who recently completed a study of the tribe.

Violence and disease have decimated Indian people since Pedro Alvares Cabral and the Portuguese arrived in Brazil in the 16th century. A native population estimated at 5 million in 1500 has been reduced to 220,000 today. The 7200 Guarani-Kaiowa who live on an 8,000 acre reservation have been experiencing increasing pressures in the past few years. Currently the land they have is not enough to sustain their subsistence farming. Judges are hostile to indigenous claims, and readily accept white landowners' property deeds, which are often obtained fraudulently. Ambrosio, a Guarani-Kaiowa leader asks: "What documents do they want from us beyond our flesh and blood? We were born here, as were our mothers,

fathers and grandparents, who are buried on this land."

The current situation makes the young men leave in search of work as migrant farmers, to cut sugar cane for one of the alcohol distilleries that dot the region, or to migrate to the cities. Since eligible mates are scarce many Guarani-Kaiowa young women seek work in Dourados, a city of 80,000 near the reservation. Many of them work as maids or prostitutes, only to be rejected after returning to their people. Many of those who have committed suicide did so shortly after returning to the reservation from outside work - or while drunk.

Some Guarani-Kaiowa are abandoning traditional faiths and joining Pentecostal sects in the area. Eduardo Leao, an official with the Roman Catholic-linked Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), claims that the Guarani-Kaiowa believe that they will go to their father's house after they die, where they will be able to live in the traditional manner. "So suicide is not a negation of life but a way of prolonging it."

FUNAI officials say they cannot legally set aside more land for the Guarani-Kaiowa, but Leao criticizes the government for ignoring the constitutional guarantees of protection for indigenous lands and cultures. "Defending the tribe doesn't require anything extraordinary, but simply obeying the law. If the federal government doesn't do something soon, the Guarani-Kaiowa are going to disappear."

*Source: San Francisco Examiner, by Ken Silverstein*



# MESO AMERICA



*The Kuna have a unique level of autonomy due to a long history of resistance.*

## **A Message from the Kunas United for Mother Earth**

(Panama) My name is Atencio Lopez Martinez, and I belong to the Kuna nation of the Kuna Yala region of Panama. I am here in North America to find out more about the work of our northern brothers and sisters and to investigate ways we might be able to coordinate our actions. I would like to share with you an account of what is happening to our people in Panama, in particular the Kuna people.

There are approximately 40,000 Kuna living on the islands in the Kuna Yala Region, in the northeast of Panama on the Colombian border. The region of Kuna Yala comprises more than 360 islands, of which 52 are inhabited. There is a very small percentage of Kuna who reside in the jungle outside of the jurisdiction of Kuna Yala, in the province of Panama. They also are struggling to have their territory (known as the Kuna Region of Madungandi) demarcated. Those of us who live on the islands or in the coastal areas of the Caribbean have a certain autonomy with respect to other indigenous groups and state policy.

We obtained a level of autonomy, which is unique among indigenous peoples, by fighting against the police and the colonial army of Panama in 1925. Many of our grandfathers lost their lives to the white invaders, who wanted to keep the Kuna people as their slaves. Among others, Nele Kantule and Coman led this uprising. They proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Tule, which was never actually formed, but we obtained the autonomy we continue to exercise today, albeit with many problems. We do not assess national taxes amongst our own peoples, and what we assess from non-Kuna people goes toward the development of our communities. With respect to our internal governance, we strongly enforce respect for traditions and customs within our communities. In the political realm, we have the General Kuna Congress, which

unites all Kuna people and organizations. Every six months the problems of our people are reviewed in this congress. During the rest of the year our communities and organizations work independently. Distinct political and even ideological positions are respected. What unites us is the defense of our region, our Mother Earth, and our culture.

The Kuna Region of Madungandi is being threatened by the invasion of non-indigenous colonists. Those who live in the jungle region are on mountainous lands which are less productive, the result of a forced relocation in 1974 and 1975 by the former government of General Omar Torrijos. The government decided to build a hydroelectric dam in the region in order to supply electricity to the republic. Ironically, today, our brothers still do not have electricity. They do not enjoy any of the benefits of this so-called "technological development."

They live in the province of Panama, under the direct administration of the authorities of that province. Their situation worsened in 1974 and 1975 when the government of Omar Torrijos flooded their territories and turned them into an artificial lake. Now the lake generates approximately 45% of the country's electricity. The cultivated lands of the Kuna were flooded, the people were displaced to inhospitable and less productive areas, and they received little compensation for their losses. In contrast, the colonists or invaders were relocated to better parts and given compensation for the loss of land and cultivated areas. Since the origins of this problem nearly 20 years ago, the stealing of lands from the Kuna has continued. Today, it is led by wealthy landowners and cattle ranchers who manipulate disputes between poor people and our brothers in order to eventually take over the land themselves. These invasions have increased since the US invasion of Panama, as a result of the confusion and lack of applied justice.

On the 10th of July, 1991, the Kuna of Madungandi began a series of peaceful protests, an uprising. The Panamanian authorities immediately stated that the "Kuna indigenous people, using heavy weapons, have risen up... to destabilize the present government." This became the pretext for the governor of the province to request the police intervention in order to repress the Kuna. Fortunately, their false claims were disregarded and confronted with courage by our brothers, with the support of the Kuna Yala.

The Kuna who live on the islands engage in subsistence production. The men generally work in fishing the seas and agricultural production, in particular the production of coconut, which is our main source of cash income. We sell coconuts to Colombian ships, and many of us exchange it for food products. The Panamanian government has done little or nothing to purchase coconut from us and to look for a solution to the deep economic crisis affecting our regions. Amongst our people, we continue to barter for food products, which contributes slightly toward alleviating the crisis. The women, in turn, dedicate themselves primarily to the home and to the care of children.

*(See Atencio, p. 45)*



## The Kuna Speak about 500 Years of Resistance

(Panama) Our organization, along with other indigenous organizations in Panama have coordinated the 500 years campaign in a united way. We see 1992 as a time to commemorate not only 500 years of resistance, but also to reinforce ties of unity amongst ourselves. This will enable us to better confront our enemies who try to divide us and deny our existence. It is for this reason that we recognize the struggle of other poor and marginalized sectors of our country. Like us, they fight for their survival and for respect of their rights. However, we do not tolerate those non-indigenous organizations that want to capitalize on the 500 years campaign for political purposes. They want to use indigenous peoples without understanding and recognizing the nature of our struggles.

We do not deny the struggle of other sectors of Abya Yala (continent, in the Kuna language). On the contrary, our continent will be free only when all sectors... are free. However, there are attempts to undermine the unity among indigenous peoples by using us when we are in the limelight, and simultaneously giving priority to other struggles.

I believe that 1992 should not be seen as the end of the indigenous struggle. Instead, we must realize that our struggle will continue beyond 1992, until there is recognition of all of our rights of self-determination for our territories. This must be understood by those popular groups who support us. They should not see in the struggle of indigenous people, the opportunity to achieve their own aspirations. We are in solidarity with them, and we thank them for their solidarity. And we recognize that there are divisions amongst indigenous peoples, but in spite of all of these, 1992 should be a year for monumental unity, in order to challenge our enemies. Our Mother Earth is being beaten, and her children should be united to defend her.

In Panama we have a 500 Years National Committee composed of indigenous and non-indigenous groups. The indigenous peoples include the Kuna, Guaymie, and Embera. We want the Committee to be composed not solely of people from the capital and big cities, but rather people from the communities of our regions. We are proposing a National Gathering to deal with many issues, including that of greater unity in order to defend our rights and demands to the national government.

I would like to call on all of our brothers and sisters of the continent to keep our fists high - together we will advance along a path of unity and liberation of our peoples.

# **SUMO & MISKITO TIMBER GIVEN TO TAIWAN COMPANY**

(Nicaragua) An agreement of economic cooperation was made between the Chamorro government and the Taiwanese government where Taiwan has pledged \$100 million to cover part of the arrears payments on Nicaragua's foreign debt - plus an unknown amount of aid to the Ortega army.

Shortly after, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, son of President Chamorro, and present Ambassador to Taiwan, brought Fernando Chan, the front man for the Taiwanese firm Equipe Enterprise, Ltd., to General Humberto Ortega to seek a logging concession. Ironically, Chan, a Nicaraguan, was reportedly the business advisor for the late Hope Somoza, wife of the former dictator Anastasio Somoza, and for their son Tachito.

Equipe Enterprise solicited a renewable 20-year forestry concession for the exploitation of 470,000 hectares of tropical forest in northeastern Nicaragua. It is 1,814 square miles, an area about the size of the state of Delaware. They will be cutting approximately five trees per hectare per year.

Under this agreement, 200,000 hectares of forest will feed a pulp paper mill and 270,000 hectares of forest will feed a plywood and lumber mill, both to be installed by Equipe Enterprise. The Taiwanese also requested exoneration from taxes and rights to the acquisition of infrastructure at discounted prices.

On the evening of August 5, 1991, before departing for Taiwan, and after being authorized by Antonio Lacayo, Minister of the Presidency, Mr. Patricio Jerez, Vice-Minister of IRENA (the natural resources department), signed an exploitation contract with Equipe Nicaragua, S.A. President Chamorro's government continues to deny that such a contract was signed.

Local communities and those in charge of regional planning were not consulted. Although most of the 470,000 hectares belong to the state, they include some of the traditional territories of the Sumo and Miskito Indians.

A concession of this type ignores the rights of the indigenous communities to use and enjoy their natural resources and to participate in the decision-making, increases the commu-

nities' social problems and destroys the ecological system, the rivers, the soil, the wild animals and their historically natural habitat.

Both the Sumo and Miskito communities have strongly opposed this concession and have stated that this project will further endanger their homeland, making their survival even more difficult. Sumo leaders have written a letter asking the international community to help them protect the forest.

The authorities of the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic have filed a protest claiming the concession violates their rights as established in the Law of Autonomy and the Constitution.

They demanded the "immediate suspension of all action in this case, full disclosure of the details of the contract, and the establishment of a national law regulating the use of natural resources before any concession is put into effect." They have further stated, "A failure to comply with these demands will force us to exert our rights to defend our patrimony."

**Please write letters of concern to President Violeta Chamorro, Antonio Lacayo and General Humberto Ortega c/o the Nicaraguan Embassy, 1627 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington DC 20009 and send a fax to Jaime Incer, Minister of Natural Resources in Nicaragua, (IRENA) at 5052-31274.**



# SUMO LEADERS DENOUNCE TIMBER CONCESSIONS



(Nicaragua) The following letter, denouncing the concessions was written by Sumo leaders and sent to Mark **Plotkin** of Conservation International.

Managua, September 4, 1991

Dear Friend:

We form part of a Sumo commission that is making inquiries to learn the terms of the contract signed by the government of Nicaragua and the Taiwanese company Equipe Enterprise, Ltd. We understand that the concession is of 375,000 hectares.

Our forest is being sold off and we have not been consulted on the utilization and destruction of the forest.

Throughout history, Sumo people have struggled to preserve their traditions and their dignity. Our traditions - cultural, ecological and religious - have not been respected. All the past governments utilized our natural resources without regard for the well-being of our communities.

It would be important to reflect upon the true situation of the indigenous people, about the role of human rights defenders, and especially about the national laws and the role of the indigenous legislators.

With regard to the rights and the struggles of the indigenous people, what is the relationship between democracy and human rights? How do human rights fit in? Do we or don't we have any rights?

We urge the international community to lend its support. This is not just an issue of conservation, but an issue of human rights.

In the name of the Sumo People, we hope that you will continue to help us.

Ernesto Almendares

Ronas Dolores



# **THE NGOBE (GUAYMÍ) CALL FOR AN EGALITARIAN AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN PANAMA**

(Panama) The Native lands of the Ngobe (Guaymí) people are located in the mountain range of Veraguas, Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro as well as on the island of Escudo Veraguas. This critically poor region is being invaded; the Ngobe are being subjected to an unjust and foreign judicial system and are struggling to survive in an inhospitable atmosphere with inadequate health care and education.

The Ngobe consist of some 110,000 people, the largest Native population in Panama. Their history of resistance and contributions remain unrecorded in the official history of Panama. Their demands for justice are not acknowledged by those in power, and they are economically discriminated against by a system which covets the natural resources found on Ngobe land.

The Ngobe have struggled for two decades to legally obtain title to their land. Known as the Guaymí region, the approximately 13,000 square kilometers is where they have subsisted for thousands of years and historically developed their culture. They have lost vast areas of fertile lowlands to wealthy landowners. This has resulted in an unjust, discriminatory and prejudicial relationship with local and national governments. Even in the high mountain ranges, their lands are not secure. Transnational corporations have opposed the legal entitlement of the Guaymí region because of the mineral, energy and forestry resources found there.

At a seminar on Human Rights, organized by the Guaymí Liberation Front on June 1, 1991, the Guaymí Native people and peasants presented a declaration demanding the legal recognition of the Guaymí region, a denouncement of the inefficiency of the judicial administration and human rights violations. A few days later, the Panamanian Cabinet Council announced Resolution 043-91, authorizing the Executive Body to sell Escudo Veraguas Island.

This sacred island is located in the Caribbean, inhabited by Ngobe, is a rich biological ecosystem, similar to the Galapagos Islands. Government officials ignored the presence of indigenous people, and proceeded with negotiations without their consultation. They described the Island as an "uninhabited, swampy marshland," and

"property of the State," and as such, "negotiable for sale." They have yet to recognize its historical, sacred and ecological value.

In disregarding Indigenous land rights, the present government has demonstrated an incoherent and deficient policy. This tendency is indicated by a recent debate of the Legislative Assembly regarding Escudo de Veraguas Island: where they advocated the supremacy of commercialization over the rights of Indian people.

The Ngobe stated that the upcoming quincentenary is a "celebration of the Conquest of America and without the legal recognition of the Guaymí Region, the Ngobe are considered intruders on their own lands..." The Ngobe firmly maintain their struggle to disseminate information on the reality of indigenous people. They denounce the institutionalized genocide and discrimination of these five centuries of colonialism.

In a letter calling for solidarity from the international community, the Ngobe state "It is our responsibility as Indians to create a national consciousness, to collaborate in a peaceful and compatible manner, to respect human rights and to form an egalitarian and participatory democracy."

**Please send letters calling for the legal recognition of the Guaymí Region to the President of Panama and copies of these along with letters of solidarity.**

**Comarca Guaymí  
Asesoría Legal Guaymí  
Lic. José Mendoza Acosta  
Apartado 153 Zona 1  
Panama, República de Panama  
Telephone: 011-507-24-9502**



# A Silent Strategy

## "The Clothes that We Wear"

*The following is excerpted and translated from the book, *La Ropa Que Usamos*, by Daniel Eduardo Matul Morales, and published by Liga Maya Internacional, Apdo. Postal 584 Código 1100, San Juan de Tibas, Costa Rica.*

*"Our Maya humanity has a beginning, a start, an origin. We have a history." Aj Pop*

For us, the Maya people of Guatemala, the clothes we weave and wear are an eloquent representation of our historic continuity. Within them, we record abstract and cosmic principles in mathematical and geometric figures, some simple, others so complex as to be unidentifiable, all presented in extraordinary colors.

The ideas represented in our clothes, beyond their aesthetic sense, carry a central theme which corresponds to the Cosmos, which brings us to the basic source of Maya thought. It gives us a formula to interpret humankind, our relationship with nature, and with God. We use this formula for connecting the present and the past, and to remind us of our uncompromising decision to be free and original, like our ancestors.

Our clothes are genuine, well-defined, and revealing of our philosophy, customs, value system and collective consciousness. The fact that we wear them daily makes them an instrument for historic projection; it is a powerful social discipline.

The main idea behind the clothes we wear has its roots in the original reflections of our civilization which can be traced back five to six-thousand years ago. The idea is that when a human is born, s/he is completely integrated into the Cosmos. Humankind and nature only make up tiny

parts of the total Cosmos. While conserving this cosmovision in our clothes, we are complying with our people's mandate.

So the beauty and colorfulness of our weavings are not merely aesthetically pleasing, but a brilliant way of keeping our writings and fundamental symbols alive.



*Photo by Jane Mintz.*

However, there is also a desire to protect these symbols from the greed of outsiders. Thus, in our weavings we often present these symbols for the world to see, but they go undeciphered and overlooked. They remain mute for those who don't understand their meaning, but they are evocative elements when you know how to interpret them. Often, their main message remains hidden to those whose narrow vision impedes them from tuning into the ancient expression of our collective art.

It must also be mentioned that our art is not "art for art's sake," which would be absurd. Our woven messages are a silent strategy, within which is found a deep and fruitful knowledge which promotes respect and searches for equilibrium among people and

nature. This equilibrium guarantees human survival.

Thus, with our colors and designs, we have been struggling for five centuries against the destruction of our historical, social, psychological and mythological concepts.

With plants, flowers and vegetables, we attempt to form consciousness of, and appreciation for the natural environment, in which everything has great value. It was nature's interaction with humankind which gave birth to our civilization. Our weaving is our way of admiring the world, but at the same time, we are transformed each day,

as the entire world is, even though it appears the same each dawn.

Our clothes carry symbols that teach one to respect one's place of origin, social status, and mythology. Some symbols, like those of Cobán, tell of the romance between the Sun and the Moon in the framework of a magic scene of leaves, birds and clay pots. In this legend, the Moon wove for the Sun, a gift which told of the day's events. In this way, we learn that life is nothing more than the weaving of time.

We have suffered since 1524, when the invaders arrived. Our clothes have served as an expression of our solidarity and identification wherever we go. This is why we have kept our Native dress.

For a very long time, the colors and figures we use have been chosen carefully without arbitrariness. They are the result of systematic observations. The four cardinal points illustrate this well. North is represented by white, because the clouds are believed to come from there. The moon is also symbolized by white and the North. The South is symbolized by yellow, in tribute to the fertility of corn and the legend of the Cosmic Tree which bore fruit in the union between the Sky and the Earth. The cross, in our ancient tradition, represents the four winds, the direction of the heavens, the four sides of our corn fields, and the four cardinal points. When the cross has leaves on it, this symbolizes a very tall tree which, according to the Pop Wuj (Popol Vuh - the sacred book of the Quiché Maya), bore the fruits of life. This cross is clearly visible in the sky on starry nights in the South. The East is symbolized by red, the color of hope. It represents sunrise and eternity. West is symbolized by black, the death of light and the restive period begun at day's end.

So we see it is no coincidence that in our lives today, the link between people and their clothes remains ever strong, prevailing in Maya thought, because they bring us physical comfort and spiritual satisfaction.

Archeology confirms the development of our garments. The murals of ancient Maya ceremonies in Bonampak provide testimony of how leaders, priests, chiefs and others of historical standing wore many kinds of precious jewelry, deerskin sandals, and woven clothes. The lower body was covered by an apron-like garment embellished with brocade, embroidery, feathers and jewels. The upper body was covered with a huipil, shells, necklaces, beads, jade, metal and gems.

Today, the huipils of Chimaltenango, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, and San Pedro Ayampuc display a design

called "rush mat," which is the same as the one which appears in the sculpted figures of Stele 'H' of Quiriguá. In most huipils, the square is brocaded in a diamond position. This can be seen in Lintel 24 at Yaxchilán. Similarly, the jacket which appears in the woman's outfit at Yaxchilán is found stylized on many of the weavings of the Western and Central Highlands.

Figure 54 of Codex Trocortesiano clearly shows Ixchel, the goddess of the Moon, weaving at her loom. The loom is tied around her waist and to a tree, exactly like Mayan women today. Weaving has always been a sacred task. Usually, when a new piece is begun, a prayer is offered to the heart of the sky. And still, as before, our people value the role of the Maya woman as a historical thread that carries our deepest cultural roots.

Our mythology states that Itzamná, founder of Uxmal and Chichén Itzá, had Ixchel as a consort. Ixchel was the one who taught us to weave, and also taught embroidery to her daughter, Ixchebel Yax.

Spanish colonists gave vague, foggy descriptions of our clothes. Of course, this had to be the case; how could they understand a culture they ridiculed and discriminated against?

We are sure that if we had abandoned wearing our clothes, they'd have been instantly hoarded away in museums. Today, wearing our cherished clothes makes us the focus of discrimination, humiliation, scorn and persecution in our country. The children of the invaders want to destroy the Maya culture. Our children are prohibited from wearing their own dress to school, yet the invader portrays as quaint our abstract vision of the world and of life. The selling of our clothes is a very big international business today. The majority of the merchants are ruthless non-Indian people who do not understand, nor care to understand the ancient symbolism.

However, after 500 years of oppression, our custom of weaving our clothes is still going strong. As time goes on, we find our designs and colors more beautiful, and they introduce us to a vast universe of composition which reveals the chronicles of Maya Life, from the earliest times to the brilliant future. They are the testimony of our legitimate right to exist as a civilization, as a culture, and as a people.



# ASSASSINATION OF INDIAN LEADERS IN HONDURAS



(Honduras) Vicente Matute and his colleague Francisco Guevara were killed September 30. They were both leaders of the Xicaque people and Vicente Matute was president of the Federation of the Xicaque Tribe (FETRIXI), the president of the Honduran Advisory Council for the Development of Autochthonous Ethnic People (CAHDEA), and the general coordinator of the Commission for the Confederation of Ethnic People of Honduras. The tribe has been developing legal claims to the government and landowners who have been increasingly encroaching on Indian lands to cut timber. Lawsuits were successful in providing legal rulings and precedents for retention of indigenous control over their lands.

The news was received by the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH) and the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared People of Honduras (COFADEH).

On September 30, 1991, at about 5:00 AM in Plan Grande Village, in the Department of Yoro, the two leaders of the indigenous peoples of Tolupan (Xicaque) were executed while travelling in a truck. They were both "riddled with bullets when they decelerated in order to cross a narrow pass. The perpetrators were staked out nearby, in the shrubs of the pass."

The assassinations are evidently the result of declarations made by the two leaders **at a** press conference last September 18th, in which they drew attention to death threats by landowners Eugenio Chavez, Nando Murillo and the mayor of Dulce Nombre de Culmi, Silvio Marin Juarez, against 130 families of the Pech Tribe, located in the Municipality of Dulce Nombre of Culmi, Olancho Province. At this conference, Matute declared that the Xicaque Tribe of the Yoro department face similar problems, adding that one of FETRIXI's members, Marcelino Polance, was wounded by two men dressed in civilian clothing. *Source: AFSC*

## **Please urge the Honduran Government:**

- 1) To defend and guarantee the right to life of the inhabitants of Honduras, as provided for in the Inter American Convention on Human Rights,
- 2) To investigate and clarify these extrajudicial executions and to punish the parties found responsible.

Send your pleas to:

Rafael Callejas, Presidente de la Republica  
Palacio Nacional, Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
Phone: 011-504-22-82087, Fax: 011-504-37-96-56.

## **First National Encounter of Indigenous People and Campesinos Held in El Salvador**

(El Salvador) The First National Encounter of Indigenous People and Campesinos was held in Sonsonate on September 6-8, and organized by the National Association of Indigenous Peoples (ANIS), the Anthropological Center of El Salvador (CIADES), and the Ecumenical Ministry for Development and Peace (MEDEPAZ). The main themes were: appropriate technology, indigenous legislation, ecology and culture. Among the participants were international organizations, government representatives and the national press.

The goal of the meeting was to recuperate indigenous cultural values such as language, history and overall culture, in order to promote development on education, ecology and appropriate technologies which can apply to indigenous cultures as well as to the rest of the nation. This was an effort initiated by the indigenous peoples and the campesinos of El Salvador. Among the activities were the inauguration of an indigenous school, workshops on human rights, indigenous rights, and indigenous legislation, and appropriate technologies and natural resources.





# MORE CERJ EXECUTIONS IN GUATEMALA

(Guatemala) Amilcar Mendez Urizar, the leader of the Council of Ethnic Communities Runujel *Junam* "We are all Equal" (CERJ), was the victim of an attempted abduction and CERJ member, Camilo Ajqui Jimon was the victim of an extrajudicial execution on April 14th, 1991. Amilcar Mendez was about to get into his car on the Calzada (Avenue) Roosevelt in Zone 11 of Guatemala City, at 7:30 am on 15 April, when he was approached by four men in civilian clothing, wearing dark glasses. Two of the men attempted to seize him, but he managed to escape when people in the vicinity intervened. One of the men reportedly told Amilcar Mendez that he was going to die. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety, as well as for the safety of other CERJ members.

CERJ was formed in July 1988 to protect indigenous people's rights. It has been particularly active in protesting at peasants being forced to join in the ostensibly voluntary Civil Defense Patrols (PAC). Article 34 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which recognizes the right to freedom of association, states that no-one may be forced to serve in self-defense groups. The authorities maintain the patrols are voluntary, but there are scores of cases where peasants who have not wished to participate or have tried to withdraw from them, have been labeled "subversives" by the army and subjected to harassment, death threats and extrajudicial execution. The abuses have been carried out by uniformed soldiers as well as by men in plain clothes, believed to be members of the security forces or acting under their orders.

CERJ has, since its foundation, been the target of a wide range of human rights violations. Since March 1990, at least 8 members are known to have been killed in circumstances suggesting official involvement. This figure includes the recent killing of Camilo Ajqui Jimon and two further members of CERJ who have been killed since President Jorge Serrano Elias took office in January, 1991.

*Source: Amnesty International*

## COSTA RICA FINALLY RECOGNIZES INDIANS' CITIZENSHIP

(Costa Rica) President Rafael Angel Calderon last week formally signed into law a bill facilitating citizenship cards for thousands of undocumented Costa Rican Indians who for years had been denied citizenship. Many Indians were born in remote areas far from Civil Registry centers, so they never obtained the necessary papers to be granted citizenship. Once they have their citizenship cards, they will be eligible for Social Security health care and bank loans, benefits previously denied them.

"After 500 years, we are being recognized as Costa Ricans," said Pablo Sibar at a stirring ceremony attended by hundreds of Indians in San Jose's Parque de la Paz.

According to Enrique Rivera, president of the Teribe Indian Association of Terraba, the multinational fruit company Pindeco is growing papayas on land leased to it by a non-Indian inside the Indian reserve south of the Talamanca mountains in eastern Costa Rica. Much of the land reserved for Costa Rica's 30,000 Indian communities is being worked by non-Indians or has been sold off.

*Source: The Tico Times, by Edward Orlebar*

# 500 Years of Indian Resistance and the Popular Movement

(Guatemala) The "Continental Campaign: 500 Years of Indian Resistance and the Popular Movement" took place in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala from October 7-12, 1991. More than 200 delegates participated of whom about 130 were non-Indian representatives from popular movements and about 70 were Indian delegates from South, Central and North America. Some of the main topics of the agenda were: democracy, human rights, Indian rights, land and life, neocolonialism and self-determination, and women and youth.

**For more information, contact:**  
**Secretaria Operativa, Apdo Postal 7-B**  
**Sucursal el Trebol, 01903**  
**Guatemala, GUATEMALA C.A.**  
**Phone: 28932**

## **TRADITIONAL O'ODHAM OF MEXICO DEMAND RECOGNITION**

(Mexico) The O'Odham of Sonora, Mexico and the Tohono O'Odham Nation of southern Arizona are all one people, however they have yet to be fully recognized and respected as one sovereign nation by both the United States and Mexico. The Traditional O'Odham Leaders of Mexico are petitioning to the O'Odham Nation of Arizona, to recognize the O'Odham of Mexico as part of their nation, and the lands in Mexico as part of the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'Odham Nation.

The Traditional O'Odham Leaders of Mexico are presently exerting a major effort to recover or reclaim ancestral lands for the O'Odham during this six-year term of President Salinas de Gortari in Mexico. They are petitioning the Federal and State government agencies of Sonora and the Tohono O'Odham Council in Sells, Arizona that any dealings with the O'Odham of Mexico be presented to the Traditional O'Odham of Mexico first for their review and action on it. In this way, the traditions, culture, language and sacred sites can be protected.

For the past 100 years, the O'Odham of Mexico have protested the conditions in which they live under the Mexican government, the violation of their human rights and the invasion of their ancestral land rights. The National Indigenist Institute (INI) has collaborated more likely than not with the ranchers and drug traffickers who continue to usurp even more lands from the O'Odham of Mexico.

The Traditional O'Odham Leaders of Mexico were organized to face the problem of INI appointing hand-picked O'Odham and non-O'Odham to serve in official positions. There are inherent problems with this select few who have maintained an absolute control over the internal governance and over funds designated to benefit the O'Odham of Mexico's small economic development projects. These people have been dedicated to their own interests and those of the INI officials and not to the needs of the Traditional O'Odham.

The Traditional O'Odham of Mexico are now developing the "O'Odham in Mexico Program" which focuses on different areas such as community development assessment, land development assessment and legal intervention. They have entered the international arena with two petitions to the United Nation's Working Group for Indigenous Populations in Geneva.

**For more information and how you can be supportive of the O'Odham in Mexico Program, you may contact George Ignacio or Frank Mariano in Arizona at (602) 383-2249.**





*Playing homemade violins, Tarahumara men celebrate a bountiful harvest of corn.*

*Photo by Kit Hedman*

## **TARAHUMARA DEMAND RESPECT FOR THEIR AGRARIAN RIGHTS**

(Mexico) A group of about 200 Tarahumara, from the community of San Ignacio de Arareco, municipality of Bocoyna, marched through the streets of downtown Chihuahua to protest the violation of their agrarian rights. Their walk led to the government office, where they met with some officials, who arranged a meeting with the representative of the Agrarian Reform Department. Meanwhile, another group of Tarahumara walked into the Congress demanding that action is taken on this matter.

The Tarahumara live in communal societies (*ejidos* - a legal entity which is communally owned and operated, and recognized by the state). On October 3rd, 1991, Manuel Muela Mendoza, an official from the Agrarian Commission, was given a document dated August 19th, 1991, and signed by Hector Jaime Terrazas S., designated representative of the Agrarian Commission. The document cited the names of several *ejido* leaders, requiring them to appear at a court hearing on October 15, thus initiating a trial to separate the Tarahumara from their ancestral, communal lands. The document alleged that the Tarahumara had abandoned these lands.

Apparently the document was signed by four of the *ejido* leaders, who claimed Manuel Muelas Mendoza explained to them that the document would protect them from any possible violation of their rights to the lands. With this in mind, they signed the document which resulted in an Act of Dislocation. The document actually indicated that 144 Tarahumara had abandoned these lands two years ago. It turns out that the official stamp of the *ejido* was stolen by a delegate from the Ministry of Agrarian Reform.

At the Congress the Indians sat with the representatives and conversed in Raramuri and in Spanish. They claimed that the actions of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform had the sole purpose of stealing the land from the Tarahumara in order to use them for tourism. In one of their speeches to the Congress, they stated, "The Agrarian Reform is taking advantage of the fact that we are unfamiliar with the laws, procedures and bureaucratic language, and seeks to dispossess us of our lands. As we know, these lands are coveted for tourism." Members of Congress declared that this House did not have the power to solve the problem however, they promised their support in all the procedures and referred the Tarahumara delegates to the appropriate office.



# APACHE DEMAND HALT TO TELESCOPE PROJECT

## *Claim Violation of Cultural and Religious Rights*

(USA) All nine members of the San Carlos Tribal Council signed a letter addressed to the US Forest Service demanding an immediate halt to the Columbus Project, the construction of telescopes on Mount Graham in southeastern Arizona. The Apache cited violations of four federal laws protecting human, cultural and religious rights and freedoms. The list of law violators receiving the letter included the US Forest Service, the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, the Vatican, the German and Italian governments, and Ohio State University. The Vatican and German astronomers have already constructed a road, leveled trees and earth on the sacred Apache mountain and more desecration is planned.

*Dzil nchaa si an* is the birthplace of San Carlos Apache culture. Mount Graham is identified by Apache traditionals as the home of the Mountain Spirit Dancers who taught early Apaches their sacred songs and dances and where healing herbs and water are to be gathered. There are numerous religious shrines on the peaks of Mount Graham that date back over a thousand years. The Columbus Project threatens to destroy the home of the Crown Dancers and the sacred power of the mountain. Apaches and members of Zuni religious societies continue to voice their concern that sacred sites will be desecrated, interfering with the conduct of their religious ceremonies.

An earlier Tribal Council resolution stated that the project was:

*"...a display of profound disrespect for a cherished feature of the Apache's original homeland as well as a serious violation of Apache traditional religious belief. ...for generations our elders have instructed us on the sacredness of Dzil nchaa si an (Big Seated Mountain, aka Mount Graham) and its vital importance for maintaining the integrity of our Apache culture and tradition... Graham is essential to the continued practice of physical and spiritual healing by Apache Medicine-men/ women, and to their apprenticeship as competent traditional religious specialists..."*

The Tribal Council now states:

*"...massive amounts of ethnographic and scholarly material demonstrate the Apache's traditional and contemporary use of Dzil nchaa si an. Much of that material has been readily available to the Forest Service or has been in the possession of the University of Arizona. The fact that this important information was disregarded during the public review of the proposed project is disturbing. The University of Arizona and the Department of Agriculture have proceeded illegally and in bad faith in their construction of the telescope facility on Dzil nchaa si an (Mount Graham)."*

Ola Cassadore Davis, Apache Survival Coalition chairperson, asks "Why do the University of Arizona, German and Vatican astronomers violate the rights of Indian people?... When Pope John Paul came to Arizona (in 1987) he told us to preserve our culture... They would crush what is most sacred to us and our traditional ways.. Why do they now destroy the foundation of our spiritual heritage?"

Franklin Stanly, Apache Medicine man, wrote "if the Vatican telescope is built, the Vatican will celebrate its telescope's completion next year and mark the shameful continuation of 500 years of cultural genocide against Native Americans.

The Columbus project is a collaboration between The University of Arizona, the Ohio State University and the Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory in Florence, Italy.

At present, the participating institutions are completing plans and technological development for the telescope. Construction is expected to be well underway by 1992, and to be completed by 1996. The site, which was approved by Congress in 1988, provides first-rate observing conditions and is relatively close to the astronomical research center located in Tucson, Arizona.

The Columbus Project telescope and instrumentation budget is \$60 million. The costs and the observing time will be shared equally among the partners. The construction funds will be provided by the Italian government and from private fund-raising efforts being coordinated by the two universities.

The San Carlos Apache Tribe states its firm and total opposition to the construction of a telescope on the top of Mount Graham and the Tribe stands ready to defend its constitutional rights if this project is allowed to continue.

**To support or request more information contact:  
Apache Survival Coalition  
P.O. Box 11814  
Tucson, Arizona 85734**



## **MILLIONS OF \$\$\$ FOR GENETIC SURVIVAL???**

A group of prominent North American scientists, part of the Human Genome Organization (HUGO), has set up a committee to study a plan to collect genetic material from 100 endangered peoples, including the Yanomami of Brazil. They estimate it will cost \$10 million to \$20 million over the next five to ten years. They say that the effort should start immediately, because "in another 10 years, it may be too late for tribes like the Yanomami, who are dying in large numbers from disease and environmental damage caused by gold mining in the Amazon forests."

We at SAIIC feel that there is much more to be learned from living indigenous peoples than can ever be learned from genetic samples. These enormous financial and academic resources should be used to assist the survival of indigenous peoples and their environments.

## **Native Pacific Islander Women Writing an Anthology**

The following message was sent to SAIIC just in time to make it into the Newsletter!

Native movements for sovereignty and decolonization are current issues throughout the Pacific from Hawaii to Guam, Belau (New Caledonia), Kanaky, Tahiti, Fiji and Aetearoa (New Zealand). There are more Native Hawai'ians, Samoans, and Chamorros in the United States than in Hawai'i, Samoa and Guam. This movement may from our Native islands does not mean we no longer identify as Pacific Islanders. We are women voyagers who have traveled across the ocean to Turtle Island, bringing our culture and tradition with us like our ancestors who sailed the oceans centuries ago. We are now writing an anthology of Pacific Island Native women. Join us!

**For more information contact Hinano K. Campton  
(408) 338-4678, or Teresia Teaiwa (408) 457-2581.  
Daughters of the First People  
PO Box 138, Boulder Creek, CA 95006**



# INDIAN WOMEN



*Photo: Kâthe Meetcen*

## First South and Central American Indian Women's Gathering Held in Lima

(Perú) The First South and Central American Indian Women's Meeting was held March 25-27 and hosted by the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (AIDSESP) with support from the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA). The organizing commission included active participation of indigenous women from Ecuador and SAIIC.

The participants, women from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Perú, stressed the importance of this event for Indian women throughout the Americas. "We, indigenous women, are progressing along with Indian men and our children in our struggle for rights to: land and the control over natural resources, traditional forms of law, autonomy and self-government, as well as against forced sterilization and all forms of exploitation, oppression and discrimination."

The conference presented an opportunity for Indian women to foster solidarity with Siriono, Moxatene, Chiman, Guarani, and Mestizo people of Bolivia, who shared information with the other participants about their 36 day march from the Bolivian Amazon to the capital of La Paz, to demand legal titles to their lands. Ashaninka women from Peru told of their continued enslavement today. The Yalalteca people of Mexico, the Mayas of Guatemala and the Nahuatl of El Salvador spoke about their struggles against wealthy landowners.

In this first meeting, organizational experiences were exchanged, solidarity and sisterhood was strengthened, and the organizational process for the coordination of work among Indian women was begun.

The following was written by SAIIC Board Member, Wara Alderete, on her return from the conference in Lima.

I have just returned from Lima, Peru where I attended the First South and Central American Indigenous Women's Conference. I would like to share with you my enthusiasm about the historical significance of the meeting.

As women occupying positions of responsibility within our organizations, or as community leaders, we had an opportunity to share a wealth of experiences such as the role that women play within our communities, the limitations that exist for the effective participation of Indian women in the decision-making process at the local, national and international level. Of utmost importance, we had the opportunity of developing together, concrete strategies for promoting the organization of Indian women.

It was agreed upon to build an international organization of indigenous women. We emphasize that our current priority is to work at the grassroots level, building step by step, to ensure that this process be truly representative and participatory.

Five task forces were formed and a coordinator for each task force was designated. We tried to avoid creating centralized structures that have yielded such harmful consequences in the past. At the same time, working in a decentralized way is a real challenge since a great input of resources will be needed for maintaining effective communication. This is a new experience and we expect that many adjustments will be needed along the way. Nevertheless, we feel satisfied that we are developing our own ways of organizing, with a spirit of solidarity, participation and honesty like our grandparents taught us.

It is worth noting that this was the first time that Indian women from South and Central America fully assumed the responsibility for organizing an international conference. Our brothers in Peru were amazed at the resources and support that the sisters from the organizing committee were able to gather. Among the accomplishments at the conference, for the first time in Peruvian history, Indian people were allowed into the House of Representatives (Senators), where we held the opening ceremony.

The sisters who managed the financial and organizational aspects of the conference are Shipibo and Aguaruna

Indian women from the Peruvian Amazon and deserve a great deal of credit as effective administrators and organizers. Quechua and Aymara women from the Peruvian highlands contributed work, experience and support.

Many obstacles lie in our path and we are well aware of them. We are also aware that we have responsibilities for our children and elders; that we are strong and have demonstrated our abilities, although often this has not been acknowledged or recognized. We realize that we need to improve our capabilities and that many other sisters must have the opportunity to acquire experience and training, so we can better work for the well-being of our people.

Not all the sisters we expected to participate were able to. Some sisters were prevented from participating because of restrictions and/or fear of the cholera epidemic. We received word from some organizations that they do not have women who are ready or experienced in attending international meetings. We will make special efforts to have direct contact with the women in these organizations since we believe there must be hard-working women supporting these brothers, but perhaps their work and capacity is not being recognized.

It is our goal in the near future to support and promote meetings, seminars, and training courses for (and by) indigenous women at the local and national level. The next South and Central American Indigenous Women's meeting will be held in Guatemala, but the date is contingent on the organizational progress at local and national levels. As we have said, we want to put our efforts and resources in organizing at the grassroots level.

In the spirit of our Mother Earth!



Photo: *Käthe Meeteri*



## INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF MEXICO 10 YEARS LATER

(Mexico) *The following was written by the Union of Yalalteca Women in Oaxaca and sent to SAIIC by Juana Vasquez.*

Indigenous peoples of Oaxaca and of Mexico have struggled to maintain a certain degree of community self-determination. This gives us dignity as men and women and protect us from the usurpation of our territories, and gives us the possibility to control our own destinies.

None can deny that, in almost 500 years of exploitation and constant oppression, that which is unique to indigenous communities has been almost erased and buried forever. This has happened not only in Oaxaca, but in all the Americas. Nevertheless, our enemies have failed. As we near the end of the 20th century, we Indian people are regaining the strength and courage to defend and reclaim our dignity and identity.

In Mexico, we indigenous women are still suffering the consequences of 500 years of colonialism, of economic exploitation, cultural domination, marginalization and social discrimination. We are confronting a strong power structure, maintained by men who hunger for gold, and who transform their will into laws, which makes justice into a business. As a consequence of this, many of our women and children are the victims when we are deprived of our rights to own land, the use of our forests and mines, our indigenous systems of justice, education, health and communication.

We indigenous women have survived due to the strong, sacred tradition which is our heritage passed on from our ancestors. The Zapoteca women of Yalalag have a system known as El Tequio, the center of all community traditions, in which women, men, children and the elderly participate... Unfortunately, politicians have institutionalized the Tequio as a strategy to impose government

programs and regulations on indigenous communities.

Zapoteca women of Yalalag are not indifferent to all these problems. We are involved in the enduring task of searching for solutions. We have woven our own history and continue weaving it, impregnated by great ideals which are nurtured by life's daily events and with strong effort and sacrifice.

The incorporation of Yalalteca women into the political struggle was significant. We have been participating quietly and humbly. On December 24, 1980, for the first time in the history of our community, more than 400 women began to consciously and vociferously participate in the struggle for community self-determination. We formed our own system of defense: The Union of Yalalteca Women.

On December 31, 1981, the union participated in occupying the Municipal Palace, in order to pressure the government into fulfilling certain promises to our communities.

In 1981, the union participated actively in political negotiations. In our first mass mobilization, most of our people journeyed first to the city of Oaxaca and then on to Mexico City. This helped us to overcome our fear of the authorities. It was at this time that we realized that we were facing not only local leaders, but also the official party, corrupt politicians and others in government. We recognized that we have to fight against many enemies.

In order to consolidate the process of democratic struggle, one of our first actions was to take control of our schools. Education in indigenous towns is linked to productive work. We introduced programs to study our language, culture and traditional production in order to become more self-sufficient. We became more conscious of our own history. For these purposes we created a Community



After ten years, we have democratically elected municipal authorities, the community of Yalalag is achieving its goals, and we are all participating.

After examining these long and hard struggles the Yalalteca women have endured, we know that indigenous women can contribute greatly to transform the economic, political, religious and cultural conditions of our society. This is our contribution to our future generations.

We have reflected upon our situation and have concluded that as women we are living in a very important period in history because we have begun to re-evaluate our indigenous cultures and reclaim our rights to preserve and develop them. In Oaxaca, with the spiritual strength of *Centeol* (the Corn Goddess), and of our ancestors we are re-evaluating indigenous philosophy.

We understand and share feelings with other communities of the world which are struggling for popular freedom and women's liberation.

Sadly, life for women in Oaxaca and Mexico is hard, bitter and tragic, but this does not mean that we indigenous peoples have lost the struggle. In fact, in the last 500 years, we have lost many battles, however we are privileged in that the roots of our community traditions go very deep and are sprouting. It is this spiritual strength which helps men and women to search for our true liberation.

We are concerned that certain Indian leaders, involved with organizations at the international level are not adequately representing our communities. We indigenous women must avoid supporting representatives which are based on personal interest. We propose overhauling these international organizations so that they be of use to our indigenous communities.

To conclude, we indigenous women have a long and difficult road to follow, it is a rough path because we are immersed in alien economic and political structures.

*For the respect to self-determination of indigenous peoples,  
For the dignity of indigenous women,  
For the solidarity of indigenous women all over the world.*

**Juana Vasquez Vasquez of the Union of Yalalteca Women Oaxaca, Mexico.**



## **Indigenous Women of El Salvador Demand Respect for Human Rights and the Mother Earth**

(El Salvador) *The following was presented by Rosa Leticia Caceres, the representative from the National Association of Indigenous People of El Salvador (ANIS) to the First South and Central American Indian Women's Gathering in Peru.*

We, the indigenous peoples, are suffering most from the lack of justice in our land. Not only is there a failure in the administration of justice, but we are also threatened with guns and with beatings. We believe human rights abuses signify the gnawing away of our rights as established in the Constitution, since these rights are violated day after day, not only by the army and the government but also by others who limit our ability to defend our most sacred individual rights. We continue to demand that the government and the FMLN observe the rights of each and every one of us and respect the rights of indigenous peoples as human beings.

We, the Nahuat, Lenca and Mayan indigenous peoples, demand respect from the army, the government and all other sectors of our society since we are the ones who nurture and cultivate the earth; we work the land with our own hands, and as women, we are the ones who carry our products to the markets to be sold.

The social problems we confront today began for Indian people in 1492, with the Spanish invasion. They came to divide us, to rob us of our culture and our beliefs; they created borders when they had no right to do so because the land belongs to us, the Indians, now and forever. They divided us and imposed their own habits and life-styles.

It is the indigenous people who carry the burden of the economic crisis that our country is experiencing. We know that all aid has been spent on bullets and ammunition and that a large part of the national budget is invested in the armed forces instead of being directed towards helping the poorest of the poor - namely, the indigenous people of the country.

We are also concerned by the increase in the price of basic grains and other general goods as a result of the devaluation of our currency.

We are struggling for the respect, conservation and protection of natural resources. This arises from an attitude of respect for nature such as that which we, the indigenous peoples, hold. Instead of destroying nature, we respect it.

The year 1492 for us marks the beginning of our persecution as Indians, the beginning of the invasion of our culture and of our Mother Earth. In response, we say: an end to the repression against the indigenous people of El Salvador! 500 years of death represent 500 years of resistance, and today we, the indigenous peoples, are here with greater presence and strength.

# CONFERENCES



## 500 YEARS OF INDIAN RESISTANCE EVENTS



In July 1990, 300 Indian delegates and non-Indian people participated in the First Continental Conference on 500 Years of Indian Resistance, organized by CONAIE (Ecuador), ONIC (Colombia) and SAIC in Quito, Ecuador. As a follow-up to the Quito Conference, a planning meeting for 1992 activities will take place in Panama from December 19-21, 1991. The meeting will be hosted by the Kuna United for Mother Earth and other local Indian organizations in Panama, and will be co-sponsored by Mapuche Council of All Lands (Chile), Confederation of Indian Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), Independent Federation of Indian Peoples (FIPI - Mexico), Council of Maya Organizations and Maya Cultural Studies Center (Guatemala), SEJEKTO - Voz del Indio (Costa Rica), Tonantzin Land Institute (New Mexico, USA), North American Indian Network and SAIC.

A few of the other 1992 activities are:

- Continental Indian Workshop, Guatemala, April, 1992 to analyze and plan activities for 1992 and beyond.
- Spiritual Gathering at Big Mountain, Arizona, USA, June, 1992.
- In October of 1992, there will be the *Second Continental Conference: 500 Years of Indian Resistance* in Panama

**For more information contact SAIC or the following:**

**Kunas United for Mother Earth**  
Apartado Postal 536, Panama 1, PANAMA  
Phone: 507 638 879, Fax: 507 273 525

**Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios (FIPI)**  
Apdo 28145, Mexico DF, MEXICO

**Tonantzin Land Institute**  
PO Box 40182, Albuquerque, NM 87916  
Phone: (505) 256-0097

## **International Conference of Indigenous Peoples on the Environment and Development**

A worldwide conference of indigenous peoples will take place May 18-30, 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The conference is scheduled immediately before the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, which will be held June 1-12, in order to devise and adopt a global environmental policy of sustainable and equitable development. The indigenous peoples conference will use the spiritual strength, understanding and expertise of Native people to assist in restoring and protecting the balance of nature. The conference will be an opportunity to share knowledge of the Earth which is based on an understanding developed over thousands of years. A new global consciousness that brings forth healing and harmony will have to be rooted in a deep understanding of all life. There is a need to shift the vision of humankind towards living systems. We need to maintain all races and nations to insure life.

**For more information, contact:  
International Indigenous Commission  
Center of Our Common Future  
Palais Wilson, 52, Rue de Paquis  
CH-1201, Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: 41-22-732-77-50, Fax: 41-22-738-50-46**

## **The First International Gathering of Indian Journalists**

*ETNIAS - For the Unity and Development of Indian Communities* will be hosting the First International Gathering of Indian Journalists in January, 1992, in the City of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Some of the objectives of the conference are to evaluate the role of the press in respect to indigenous struggles, to analyze, discuss and propose better communication and unity in the Native American press, and to critically analyze the significance of the 500th anniversary of the European invasion of the Americas.

Indian brothers and sisters from throughout the Americas who have experience with the press and are involved with the publication of Indian magazines, newsletters, newspapers, etc. are invited to attend the conference. Those people who are non-indigenous, but have been actively involved in the promotion and diffusion of the indigenous voice are also invited to attend.

**For more information, contact:  
El Comité Organizador  
Primer Encuentro Internacional de Prensa India, ETNIAS  
Modero 67-611. Col. Centro, México 06000 DF, MEXICO  
Tel: 5-654-66-41, Fax: 5-208-69-33 (de revista Mira,  
Attn: Genaro Bautista, revista Etnias)**

## **Indigenous California Women: Visioning the Next 500 Years**

A gathering planned by and for land-based and urban Indian women whose tribes and bands are indigenous to the region of California. The purpose of the conference is to celebrate 500 years of survival, discuss common concerns, and to envision the next 500 years.

Several of the sessions will be open to the public, and anyone may attend these. You need not be Native American or a woman. You must come willing to put California Indian women at the center for the duration of the sessions, and to put other perspectives aside. In this way, California Indian women will be able to bring greater self-expression, insight, self-awareness and creativity to their own conference.

**For more information, contact:  
The Women's Center  
University of California  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064  
Phone: (408) 459-2072**

## **World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet**

From the community to the international level, women are coming together to ensure that we have an equal say when the fate of the Earth is decided at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil, and on into the 21st century. The conference will take place on November 8-12, 1991 in Miami, Florida.

**For more information, contact  
WEDO, 845 Third Avenue, 15th floor  
New York, New York 10022, USA  
Tel: 212-759-7982, Fax: 212-759-8647**

## **Non-Aligned Symposium on 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance**

On August 23-24, 1991, the Chicano Moratorium Coalition hosted the Annual National Conference of the National Chicano Human Rights Council (NCHRC). One of the resolutions of the conference was a call for a Non-Aligned Summit Meeting in February 1992. Regardless of our differences, the quincentenary Celebration is an opportunity to communicate with each other, and the rest of the world, our 500 year struggle. To plan this summit, a symposium will allow each of us to communicate on how our organizations' activities can be integrated into the Campaña de Resistencia -1992.

**For more information, contact:  
Chicano Moratorium Coalition  
PO Box 2031, Berkeley, CA 94702-0031  
Tel: 510-893-3181 Fax: 510-893-5362**



## Davi (continued from p. 21)

There are many people who are powerful. There are powerful gold miners... and authorities too, like Romero Juca, former president of FUNAI. He is responsible for letting the gold miners invade our territory and... for lots of killings of Yanomami... Something must be done to solve our problem because Romero Juca will not solve it. He does not like us...

Do the international authorities and people from the United States think it is true what they always say that the demarcation of Yanomami land is a matter of money, that they do not have money to do it?...

I am very worried about people abroad who... are giving money to Brazil... but not to help the Indians. This money that comes from abroad is helping the Brazilian government to oppress Indians. I am very worried about that.

Non-Indians are like ants. I know that non-Indians like our resources. They say that we have gold, we have lumber, and they say that they need that to help the people who live in the city. Well, we do not want them, and we do not want them here.

What we want is respect for our rights. We want them to leave us alone. We need help with regard to the health situation. In the beginning we did not need any help. We did not need any doctors, any medical doctors, any nurses or any medicine. But now we need doctors and nurses to help the Yanomami who are sick. We also need medicines because we used to cure ourselves only with 'shabori' [shamanism]... But that is not enough anymore, And we need medical doctors and medicines and help from non-Indian people.

We are worried because the non-Indians are not very much worried about us. They think that we are a different race. Therefore, they want to isolate us. They think we are bothering their work. We are preventing them from working here, so they would rather have us isolated. They do not worry very much about what is going on with us.

## Atencio (continued from p. 26)

They are a strong force in the economic survival of our communities. This is because of their involvement in the production of "molas," which is the art of the Kuna. Because the "molas" are being sold at national levels and exported to the US and Europe, they are achieving economic success at international levels. In many respects, the women have a greater capacity to organize themselves in cooperatives and to contribute to the economic survival of the Kuna family than the men do. This is why, when we speak of the Kuna economy, we speak of men and women as equals.

We have strongly safeguarded our spirituality and traditions. For example, we hold the *General Congress of Kuna Culture*, which unites the spiritual guides of all of our communities. They are highly respected by all Kuna people. They promote teaching and learning amongst the youth so that our rich traditions are not lost.

We, of Kuna Yala, are confronting serious problems along the Colombian border, where gold prospectors are invading our lands. We are also indirect victims of the confrontations which take place in Colombia between the guerrillas and the army. Violating all laws, both sides invade our region while the Panamanian authorities do nothing to stop them. The same thing occurs with the Yanqui (United States) army which often crosses our territory to go to the Panamanian border with the excuse of filling the vacuum created by the dissolution of the Panamanian army in 1989, following the invasion.



## Alvan (continued from p. 11)

domination, everybody is afraid that we will take a racist stand and that this will lead to a racial confrontation. For this reason, there has not been enough dialogue amongst the poor class. In meetings with laborers, peasants and intellectuals, it is important for us to talk so that we feel equal. We must, if we are from the same class, talk so that we can find a solution...

Plurinationality will only be possible with the total transformation of society. This is possible if, as in Switzerland, there are well-defined and recognized sectors. We understand that the problem is not exclusively indigenous. It is a problem which concerns all of us. In order to form such a state we must think carefully what it would be like. How would it be governed at the political, economic, social and cultural levels? If we find that the workers are on one side, the indigenous on another and other sectors on other sides, then it will not be possible... We must continually reconsider our struggle and include long-term goals in our strategy. We must work together and make compromises. We must coordinate our endeavors in this way or we will not succeed, even if we are united.

## Leonardo (continued from p. 15)

militarized its block in the face of opposition from the indigenous peoples of the zone.

*SAIIC: Is the military guarding the petroleum wells?*

Yes. At this very moment there are military troops guarding the oil wells, particularly those in ARCO's Block 10 and Occidental Petroleum's Block 15. The Conoco (a division of Dupont) company is also involved with petroleum exploitation in the Yasuní Park, territory which belongs to the Haurani.

*SAIIC: What is Conoco planning to do in the Amazon?*

Conoco wants to exploit the reserves it has found within the Yasuní Park, which are yielding some 40 thousand barrels of oil a day. In order to exploit these reserves the company wants to construct a highway through the park. There is strong opposition to this plan from indigenous peoples, ecological organizations in Ecuador, and the public in general, because it represents a serious threat to the ecological integrity of the Yasuní Park. For this reason Conoco has begun a series of maneuvers in the area - dividing communities, trying to cause confrontations between indigenous peoples allied with religious organizations and the military, the colonists, and companies with interests in the region - basically to confuse national and international opinion. At the same time, Conoco has begun to use environmental groups in the US, like the NRDC (Natural Resource Defense Council), or perhaps this group has offered itself to support the interests of Conoco in order to convince indigenous peoples to negotiate the extraction of petroleum in these territories. Arguments being used are: a) it would be impossible to get Conoco out of the region, b) Conoco's proposal for environmental regulation is better than anyone else's, and c) if Conoco leaves, other much more destructive companies like Braspetro from Brazil, will move in. With these kinds of arguments they have tried to pressure indigenous peoples and elicit their approval for the negotiations.

*SAIIC: We understand that CONFENAIIE has filed an international lawsuit against Conoco...*

Knowing the impact that the construction of highways and the activities of oil companies have induced, we have found it necessary to take action at an international level because our demands and our proposals are not heeded by the national government. We have considered it critical to take this issue to international forums. With the cooperation of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, an organization of lawyers in San Francisco, we have petitioned the OAS (Organization of American States) to intervene and mediate these conflicts. The problems between indigenous peoples and the Ecuadorian government are truly very big, and for this reason we believe that the mediation of an international organization like the OAS is important. In this way we can conduct serious discussions, that will result in solutions that address in the most

just possible way, the interests of indigenous peoples and of the society in general.

*SAIIC: 1992 is approaching... What does the future hold for Indian peoples and their relationships with the international community?*

We the indigenous peoples of Ecuador, are concerned by the fact that today, as we approach the 500th anniversary since the European invasion of America - the so-called "discovery of America" - the governments of the world still have not committed themselves to seriously think through the policies needed in order to construct a harmonious relationship with indigenous peoples. Oppression and exploitation still exist, and governments continue to permit genocide in indigenous territories. Now the process is not so blatant, it's not with rifles and bullets, but with other strategies which kill us culturally and physically - contamination of the rivers, destruction of nature, the looting of territories and natural resources, the imposition of religious and educational systems that are alien to us. Faced with this, we the indigenous peoples of the continent, have a moral and historical responsibility to take this date, the 500th anniversary, very seriously and to begin discussing future continental alliances. The continental conference held in Quito in July of 1990 was a very important precedent. If we want to keep moving toward the future with common proposals and objectives, it is necessary to continue our work at the continental level. Only in this way, can we create the groundwork and the conditions necessary for an alliance of indigenous peoples.



# SAIIC ACTIVITIES 1991

Since the 1990 Conference on 500 Years of Indian Resistance in Quito Ecuador, much of SAIIC's work has in some way involved the quincentenary. SAIIC remains active in the ongoing work of supporting the self-determination of Indian people, working for justice and protection of their rights.

## • Information Center

Besides producing the Newsletter, SAIIC issues human rights bulletins, collaborates with and contributes to publications of other organizations. At the office in downtown Oakland, SAIIC maintains a library of international books, articles, monographs and periodicals, as well as information about upcoming conferences, gatherings and events. The library receives Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines from almost every country of the American Continent. Currently SAIIC is working to catalogue and index the collection. SAIIC's library is available for use to the public by appointment, or the staff can reply to information requests on various issues, time and resources allowing.

To continue to strengthen the network of international Indian alliances, SAIIC is currently working on a directory of hundreds of Indian organizations in the Americas. Portions of the directory will be published in the Resources for Action Guide. Use of the directory, or its availability on disk or labels may be arranged with the SAIIC office.

## • Women's Project

The women's project brings Indian women together to further empower their community activism. The project also seeks to provide training and technical support to Indian women's groups. SAIIC has participated in several international Indian Women's gatherings, and helped organize the First South and Central Indian Women's Conference in Lima, Peru. Resolutions from that conference are now available, and a full conference report will be published soon.

SAIIC sent two women from the Board of Directors to address the "Healing the Earth Conference" sponsored by the United Nations Association in Vancouver, Canada. In November 1991, SAIIC attended the World Women's Conference for a Healthy Planet in Miami Florida.

The Women's project plans to bring Indian women from South and Central America in the spring of 1992 to participate in several Indian women's gatherings. SAIIC will also arrange training sessions for the women on funding, international networking and other issues.

## • Radio Program

As part of our information services, SAIIC is producing radio programs in Spanish for radio stations in Meso and South America. Beginning October 1991, SAIIC will produce quarterly tapes of interviews, news items and music to be distributed primarily to Indian broadcasters in the Americas.

## • Gatherings

SAIIC facilitates the participation of South and Meso American Indian people in conferences, meetings and events in North America, as well as the participation of North American Indian people in South and Meso American gatherings. In 1991, SAIIC hosted several meetings open to activists and the general public. Indian activists from South and Meso America frequently contact SAIIC on their visits to North America. With them, we arrange meetings, interviews, public events and provide general support such as accommodations.

## • Computer Networking

SAIIC is working on strengthening a network of communication and information sharing among Indian people. To serve this end SAIIC is co-facilitating a conference on Peacenet entitled *native. 1492*. At this time we are seeking to build an Indian editorial facilitation committee for this conference and other networking projects. SAIIC is seeking advisors from Indian organizations to help develop this computer conference.

## • 500 Years of Indian Resistance

SAIIC continues to send out information packets including newspaper clippings, statements from Indian groups, and information on key 1992 events. SAIIC has prepared an informational package on the alternative quincentenary for community organizers and interested people. SAIIC has provided speakers for many local and national gatherings on the quincentenary, among them a conference at the Columbia School of Journalism for the Media covering the Quincentennial.

In March of 1991, SAIIC helped organize several conferences in the Bay Area. The first was sponsored by the Bay Area '92 Indian Alliance and was held at D-Q University. The conference brought Indian people from all over the US as well as Canada and Mexico together to continue the networking begun at the Quito conference.

The second Conference was the 1992 All Peoples Network Conference, held at Laney College, to broaden the alliance to people of all colors. Participants included activists, educators, media, artists and local public officials. The conference established local Resistance 5001 Task Forces in various cities that continue working with municipal governments, education officials and political bodies on issues of racism, ecology, colonialism and justice for people of color.

# CLASSIFIED

## INDIGENOUS WOMAN

Indigenous Woman is an official publication of the Indigenous Women's Network (IWN), a continental and Pacific network of women who are actively involved in work in their communities. IWN emerged from a gathering of around 200 Indigenous women in Yelm, Washington, in 1985. Women came from the Americas, and the Pacific, to tell their stories, present testimony as to conditions, and look to strategies and alternatives to make a better future for our families and communities. We discussed the issues of political prisoners, land rights, environmental degradation, domestic violence, health problems, and other concerns, which are pressing in our community. We learned from each other and we found courage in the experience. We wanted to continue this work.

Four years later, the Indigenous Women's Network was formally organized by a group of women who were committed to keeping up the links between women working in their communities, and finding a way to strengthen that work. Our philosophy is to "work within the framework of the vision of our elders," and through this process, to rebuild our families, communities, and nations. This publication is one part of that process.

The Indigenous Women's Network is a membership organization comprised of Indigenous women (voting members), and others who are interested (supporting members). Membership dues are \$15 annually, for voting members and \$25 for supporting members which can be an organization or an individual. Both receive periodic updates, and our publication, which is intended to appear at least two times a year. Membership ordering / information can be obtained by writing to:

IWN, PO Box 174, Lake Elmo, MN 55042, USA

## COLUMBUS

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by John Curl

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## **SAIIC WELCOMES YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!**

Please pass on to us any information you come across on indigenous people's struggles for self-determination and quincentenary activities. We are always in need of photos, publications, newspapers, and articles pertaining to these issues.

All of our projects and programs are financed by donations. We are in need of financial contributions, and volunteer workers. Please contact SAIIC to find out how you can best help. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## **ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM SAIIC**

### **SAIIC T-SHIRTS**

T-shirts with the SAIIC logo in three colors, available in black and turquoise. "500 Years of Indian Resistance" printed above the logo. Please specify size (S,M,L,XL). \$12.00 (bulk discounts).

### **ENCOUNTER OF THE EAGLE & THE CONDOR**

Quito Gathering on 500 Years of Resistance

A video made at the conference in Quito, Ecuador, July, 1990. Includes interviews of Indians from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, and footage of conference in session. Comes with Quito Resolutions. Produced with Turning Tides Productions. Call SAIIC for more information.

### **500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE: RESOURCES FOR ACTION**

A packet of information for community organizers, teachers and other interested people with a directory of international organizations working on quincentennial activities, testimonials from Indian people in South & Meso America, educational resources and other tools for action. Call SAIIC for more information.

### **BECOME A SAIIC MEMBER!**

A SAIIC membership entitles you to receive the SAIIC Newsletter, Urgent Action Bulletins, notification of special events and 500 Years activities. Your membership also helps us to provide free newsletters and other services for Indian organizations in South & Meso America. A personal SAIIC membership for one year is \$15; institutional memberships are \$25.

### **AMAZONIA: Voices from the Rainforest**

A resource and action guide with a comprehensive listing of international rainforest organizations and Amazonian Indian organizations. The guide is supplemented by an overview designed to give added force to grassroots groups in the Amazon fighting in defense of the rainforest and basic human rights of the indigenous people there. Co-authored by SAIIC with Amazonia Film Project, International Rivers Network and published by the Rainforest Action Network. \$8.50 plus \$1.50 shipping (\$4.50 airmail). Also available in Spanish

### **RETHINKING COLUMBUS**

A special edition of Rethinking Schools, a magazine for educators. Published in collaboration with the Network of Educators on Central America, Rethinking Columbus offers 96 pages of resources and teaching ideas for kindergarten through college. Contributions by N. Scott Momaday, Joe Bruchac, Susan Shown Harjo, LaDonna Harris, Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, Bill Tayac, Rigoberta Menchu, Hans Koning and more. \$4 plus \$2 for shipping.

**South and Meso American Indian Information Center (SAIIC)**

PO Box 28703, Oakland, CA 94604



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