

# Indian Women



## Bolivia

# WILLING TO DIE FOR A SISTER AN INTERVIEW WITH CARMEN PEREIRA

*This report was given during the March 1992 CONIC conference of the Coordinating Body in New York. Carmen Pereira, leader of the Organization of Indigenous Women of Beni, discussed the situation in Beni following The Indigenous March for Land and Dignity to La Paz in August 1990, and the signing of the decree which recognized the territories of the communities of the area.*



Carmen Pereira (far left) in a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Center for Indigenous People

Photo SAIC

mountain where we make a chaco and plant tomatoes, rice, yuca and oranges for our daily sustenance.

We have organized watch posts in the forest so the loggers will not enter but it is difficult to control. The Indigenous women of San Ignacio together with the central organization have to go and see. We went in January and took away an eight horse power engine, two barrels of gasoline, two chain saws, their boat and their wood. This wood will now

benefit the community and will be sold to make a school, sanitary facilities and whatever else is needed.

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We women have only done this because, as we have said, we do not care if we die in order to get what we want. The

The cattle ranchers are still in the area. They are not going to leave until the government buys the lands from them because they have property titles. Now the government has to buy the land to give it to the Siriono people, something they have not done yet. Where I live in San

Francisco, the barbed wire has already reached the edge of the village. Now everything is flattened, the ranchers knock over the trees. The government decree is there but it is not being enforced. The logging companies also continue cutting wood. We have to travel far to plant, to the



Photo SAIC

Indian women at the CONIC meeting  
New York, March, 1992

logging companies are very abusive: They enter the communities and cut the wood in front of everyone.

There was a serious problem where they killed a child, Roy Juarez. This family, although it is Indigenous, has cattle and there was a cattle rancher who wanted to take their land. This rancher, who is from Sucre, sent one of his servants. As they did not find the father who had gone to the river, they shot and killed the six year old boy. The boy was with his little brothers, one who was three and the other who was one year old. The three year old grabbed his younger brother into his arms and ran to the mountain. From there he heard the shots and went to tell another family. When they got back the boy was dead. This happened in 1989 and there is a case which is still pending in court but nothing will come of it because this man has a lot of money to keep the lawyers quiet. For the Indigenous People there is no justice. For that reason we would like a law in Bolivia which would protect the Indigenous women and men.

The Organization of Indigenous Women of Beni is a member of the *Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women of Central and South America*, which is a communication and support network, by which Indigenous women can publicize and share our work, our problems and achievements. We also hold activities to promote the organization and participation of our sisters on a continental level.

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