

## STRUGGLE IN ARGENTINA:

# WICHI HUNGER STRIKE FOR LAND RIGHTS

**O**n September 16, 1993 a delegation headed by Octorina Zamora, president of the Wichi Ka Puce Hi Cooperative launched a week long hunger strike to protest their lack of participation in a government Land Commission relegated to partition lands in Argentina. This is the second hunger strike initiated by the Wichi community of lot 55 since last year. The territory in question spans 15,000 hectares and is located within the vast terrain of the San Martin de Tabacal sugar plantation.

After a week of protests, President Carlos Menem stated he would meet with the Wichi representatives in one month. However, due to the public pressure that ensued, the President agreed to a sooner date. He also assured the protesters that he would speed up the legal process for the proposal of land adjudication which has been approved by Congress but has remained shelved for a year. The Wichi also requested that the Governor "mediate a dialogue between the criollos (non-Indigenous) and Indigenous communities so that the appropriation of land could be done without conflict."

The Wichi, Iyojwaja, Nivacle and Kom Lec Nations have been fighting for rightful ownership since 1946; the first year they came to the nation's Capital to reclaim land titles.

source: Agencia el Tribuno, Buenos Aires

## WAVE OF GUARANI SUICIDES CONTINUES

**A**ccording to the Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI), sixteen Guarani Indians have committed suicide this year, continuing the cycle of deaths in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, in the Center-West region of Brazil (22 suicides were reported in 1992 and 17 in 1991). Out of the 16, six were under twenty years of age.

Deprived of their land and unable to live according to their traditional culture, despair and alienation run rampant within the Guarani population. Many communities have been expelled from their territories leading to mass migrations and overpopulation. In the Dourados Indian Area, where most of the suicides have occurred, close to 9,000 people have been forced onto 3,530 hectares. Until land issues are resolved, the sense of helplessness that pervades throughout Indigenous communities will simply worsen.



illustration by Peter Gourfain