

SACHA YACHANA RESEARCH CENTER

The Sacha Yachana Research Center (CISAY) was created in February 1992 as the scientific arm of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP). It was established to advise OPIP and its member communities and associations on issues related to the management and conservation of ecosystems in the indigenous peoples' territories of Pastaza.

The goals of CISAY are:

- To conduct studies of indigenous peoples' territories and their natural and managed ecosystems

- To research cultural and ecologically sound socio-economic development plans for Indigenous communities

- To evaluate governmental and non-governmental organizations' economic development projects for Pastaza that affect indigenous peoples' territories.

- To evaluate governmental and NGO scientific projects within Pastaza's indigenous peoples' territories.

- To develop guidelines for scientific research, socio-economic development, resource extraction, and conservation within indigenous peoples' territories in Pastaza.

CISAY's finances and management are independent from OPIP. However, CISAY is accountable to the policies emanating from OPIP's congresses and assemblies. A diagram of CISAY's internal organization follows.

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR CISAY'S SCIENTIFIC TEAM

1. A workshop for team pre-candidates will take place in Puyo in May 1992. The theme of the workshop will be: natural resources and environment, traditional Quichua knowledge, environmental policy.

2. Candidates will be chosen because they are: bilingual (Quichua/Spanish); at least high school graduates; inclined to work



on environmental issues; and, experienced in community activities and organizations.

3. Team members will be chosen among those who have: good training, a commitment and understanding of indigenous and environmental issues, understanding of the national mestizo/creole society and the other ethnic groups of Ecuador, and also on the basis that they exercise their traditional and cultural practices.

Currently, CISAY is formed by Leonardo Viteri, Director; Alfredo Vargas, Hydraulic Engineer; Wilfrido Aragon, Zootechnist; Olga Pineda, Research Assistant; Maritza Toala, Secretary; and Ricardo Grefa, Cartographer.

THE ORGANIZATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF PASTAZA (OPIP)

OPIP was established in 1978 by the Quichua, Achuar, Shiwiar, and Zaparo peoples of Pastaza. It is formed by 148 communities with a population of nearly 20,000 people.

The grass-roots members of OPIP are

organized in centers (settlements); and associations (groups of centers). The first authority of OPIP is the Congress which meets every three years with delegations from each community. Additionally, there are annual assemblies and ordinary bi-annual assemblies. OPIP also has a board of directors elected by the Congress which are: President, Vice President; Director of Promotion and Organization; Director of Territories and Natural Resources; Director of Education, Science and Technology; Director of Community Health; Director of Community Development; and Director of Women in Development.

The goals of OPIP are:

1. To promote the unity and develop the organization of the peoples of Pastaza.

2. To obtain land rights to our ancestral territories from the government of Ecuador.

3. To develop policies for conservation and sustainable management of natural resources on our territories, for the benefit of indigenous people and for the rest of humankind.