

## Argentina

# HISTORICAL REUNION OF THE MAPUCHE NATION

After one hundred years, the first reunion of the Mapuche nation took place in Neuquen, Argentina. Over a hundred lonkos, spiritual leaders of Nagmapu, Chile, and over 200 traditional leaders of different communities in Argentina met to analyze the situation of marginalization and oppression that the national states of Chile and Argentina are imposing on the Mapuche people. They also reaffirmed their historical rights of existence as a nation, the rights to exercise their traditional law and speak their own language, and

agreed on the creation of a Mapuche flag. The reunion ended with a ceremony with the participation of more than a thousand people.

A complete report will be published in the next SAIC newsletter.

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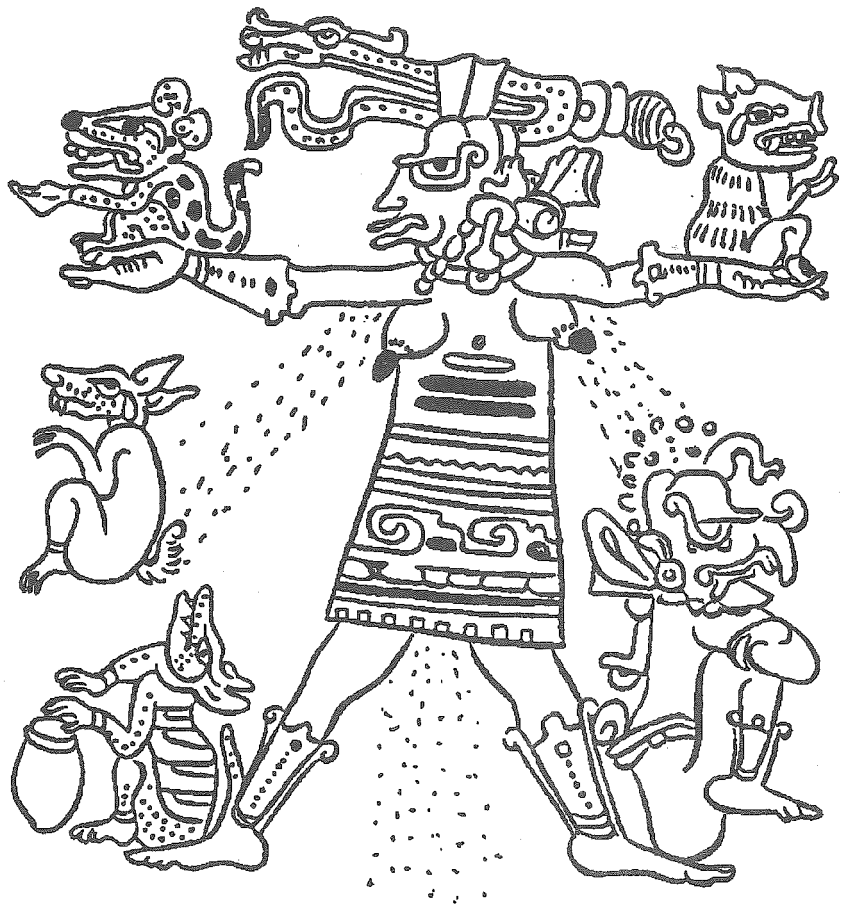
walked and canoed there from their communities 150 miles away on the Peruvian border. Men, women and children nervously set out from Puyo on the 11th in the pouring rain, holding leaves and plastic over their heads to keep dry. When they entered a community, throngs of people met them, offering donations and support.

On their fourth day out, they were greeted by musicians and a fiesta in the Indian village of Salasaca. The community had built bamboo huts in the center of town for the marchers to rest. The "Salasacas" opened all public facilities to them and greeted them with speeches of solidarity.

Over one-half of the marchers' enormous needs for firewood, food, drink, blankets, clothing, shelter and medicine were met by donations from communities along their route. In a press release, the Indians stated, "Our historic walk has definitively changed the relations between Indian people and the white/mestizo society: the demonstrations of solidarity with our objectives are a clear sign that it is possible for us to live side-by-side, respectful of unity within our diversity."

Many of the marchers came down with severe colds and were treated by one of the doctors and/or shamans accompanying the march. The people of the Pastaza rainforest are accustomed to a very warm climate at near sea-level. During the march, they had to climb to altitudes of up to 14,000 feet where the nights were sometimes below freezing.

In reaction to the gala jubilee celebra-



tions being planned by governments and corporate interests throughout the Americas and Europe to mark the 500 years since Columbus began the process of colonization of Indian

lands, leaders of the march declared, "Now is the time for de-colonization, the time to recognize our rich cultures and build a new Ecuador."