



News from SAIIC...

The Indigenous movement has grown immensely over the last decade, and the problems facing Indigenous people are as diverse and pressing as ever. In acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples' shifting political, economic and ecological realities, our information dissemination and networking activities have focused on supporting Indigenous organizing for territorial, environmental and human rights. We have also been busy improving our internal organizational structures to enable us to use limited resources most efficiently.

Being located in the US puts us in the privileged position to effectively distribute information, offer technical support and act as a communication link for Indigenous organizations. We do not try in any way to define or shape the decisions of Indigenous communities because that power legitimately corresponds to the people's grassroots organizations. Our role is to give those organizations and communities a voice here in the US and internationally.

Since January 1 this year, we have turned much attention to the situation in Chiapas, Mexico. The peoples of this region, which was bypassed by the first Zapatista revolution of 1917, may finally have the possibility to shape their own destiny. Outsiders have always sought to impose their priorities on the Maya of Chiapas. Now Indigenous peoples are fighting to take their destiny into their own hands. SAIIC offers support to the many Indigenous organizations in the state engaged in this struggle, as well as to the statewide council they have formed with campesino organizations.

Through networking, publishing information, and making our voices heard at events, conferences and meetings across the world, we are working to advocate for Indigenous peoples on other important issues as well. Board

member Alejandro Argumedo has actively pursued reforms in the International Biodiversity Convention. Wara Alderete also on the SAIIC board, is active in work relating to Indigenous peoples' health care and respect for traditional systems of healing. Board member Guillermo Delgado continues to participate in the development and organizing efforts of AIPIN, the first International Association of Indigenous Press. With the assistance of the Indiansk Mediasenter in Oslo, SAIIC has been providing fresh news on Indian issues to support organizations in Europe. SAIIC is pleased to have been able to help build the Abya Yala Fund, and to have hosted its founding meeting (see "Abya Yala Fund formed" in this issue).

SAIIC's Visitors & Exchange program continues to coordinate or otherwise assist in visits and speaking tours by Indigenous representatives. Most recently, Araceli Burguete, research coordinator for the Independent Indian People's Front of Mexico, made a tremendous impact during her California tour educating the public about the conflict in Chiapas from the perspective of Indigenous organizations working there. We were also fortunate to share in coordinating a joint solidarity tour of Indigenous leaders Leonardo Viteri and Hector Villamil from Pastaza Ecuador, as well as three representatives of COLPUMALI--the regional Maya organization in Chiapas. Jorge Matamoros, Miskito sociologist from Nicaragua presented information on the situation on the Atlantic Coast here. Last year, Rosa Jalja from the Coordinating Commission of Indigenous Women in Bolivia and Atencio Lopez, Secretary of the Kuna Nation, provided inspiration and advice at SAIIC's Board Retreat in Mountain Wolf, California and gave presentations throughout the country. Finally, we were

honored to have Mapuche elder Jose Luis Huilcaman here for a short time in November.

The Ford Foundation recently reported that less than 1/10 of 1 percent of foundation assets go to Native American/Indigenous programs. This report has helped shape efforts to increase our base of support among individuals and institutions as both donors and as subscribers to this quarterly journal. Support from the General Service Foundation has allowed us to spend concerted time and attention on our organizational needs and plan for future work. In the process, we have spent a considerable amount of time expanding and streamlining our computerized database. Two public awareness campaigns are planned for this year, one targeting individuals and one targeting foundations. One of SAIIC's goals is "To communicate the Indigenous perspective to policy and funding institutions whose work affects Indigenous people." We have therefore designed a mailing to foundations designed to raise their awareness of Indigenous issues, thereby, hopefully increasing the amount of support that goes to Indigenous organizations. We want to thank all of you who have hung in there with us throughout the years, despite the, at times, sporadic nature of our communications. It has been hard for us to focus in the midst of so many pressing issues facing our brothers and sisters in the South. We, however have never forgotten our supporters in the North. We are very grateful to the individuals and foundations that have supported us, including: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Foundation for Deep Ecology, Public Welfare Foundation, The Tides Foundation, Public Media Center, Victoria Ward, Jeffrey Bronfman, Maya Miller, Rosa Alegria and Billy Trice, Jr. Muchisimas Gracias