

Cultural Survival Canada:

Research, Education, and Advocacy in Biocolonial Times

Around the world, Indigenous peoples are the caretakers of sacred knowledge about the unity of all living things and life processes, from genes, microorganisms and species, to human societies and the ecosystems in which we live. These gifts of the Creator have enabled our peoples to survive five centuries of colonialism and to continue to nurture an extraordinary diversity and richness of life, even within our much diminished land base. Our sacred relationship with Mother Earth is also vital for humanity as a whole as the world seeks ways to rebalance human needs with respect for the environment.

Today, however, the gifts of the Creator are under siege by corporations and governments attempting to make life itself another form of private property. This new wave of colonialism seeks to open one "last frontier" for economic globalization: the expropriation of our knowledge and the privatization of sacred plants, animals and our own genes.

Cultural Survival Canada (CSC) is an autonomous charitable organization supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination and territorial integrity. In the face of this new wave of colonialism, we are engaged in research, public education and advocacy around issues of biotechnology, intellectual property rights, and other aspects of the international trade in genes and Indigenous knowledge. CS Canada also supports advocacy and capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening Indigenous peoples' ability to intervene in international fora where policies on biocolonialism are being shaped.

Biodiversity and Human Rights

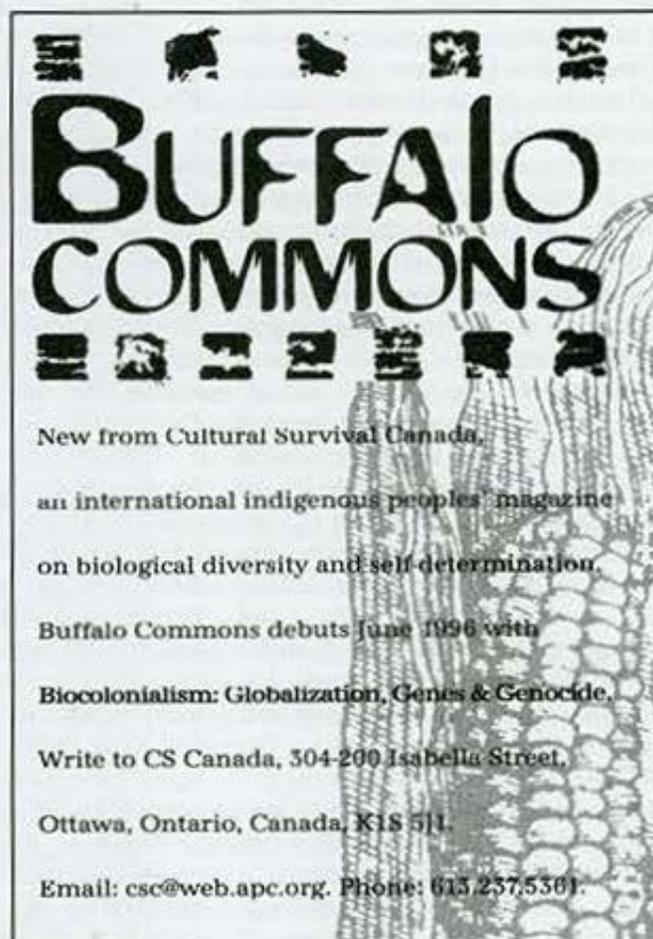
CSC is working closely with Indigenous peoples' organizations around the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Liepzig, Germany, June 1996), the FAO's Food Security Summit (November 1996, Rome), UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee and, critically, the next meeting of the signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (November 1996, Buenos Aires).

The CBD is a binding intergovernmental agreement ratified by 138 states, including the majority of states in South and Meso America. While the Convention does include some recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples over our knowledge and innovations, private and public interests in the North are clearly poised to use the Convention as a framework for expanded privatization of plants, ani-

mals, and genetic material from biodiversity rich regions, and of the associated knowledge-systems of Indigenous peoples. Whether the Convention becomes a mechanism for protecting Indigenous peoples' rights or a tool for entrenching biocolonialism will depend to a large extent on the negotiations set to begin in November in Buenos Aires where the Conference of the Parties to the CBD finally has Indigenous peoples' rights on agenda.

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**BUFFALO
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an international indigenous peoples' magazine
on biological diversity and self-determination.
Buffalo Commons debuts June 1996 with
Biocolonialism: Globalization, Genes & Genocide.
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