New Medium Reinforces Movement
Computer Networking and Indigenous Organizations

When Peru and Ecuador began military skirmishes on their shared national border, SAIIC received via email a statement from CONAIE denouncing the fighting and calling for international assistance for the Indigenous communities in the conflictive area.

This in only one of an increasing number of cases in which Indigenous activists are beginning to utilize computer networks. Computer networks can be used to educate people about Indigenous realities and to build stronger organizations. The Internet, a system of inter-linked computer networks which stretches around the world, is becoming a powerful organizing tool for Indigenous organizations and communities.

At this point it is relatively rare for Indigenous organizations in the South to utilize computer networks to advance their goals. Some people have a romantic attitude toward Indians and Western technology, and argue that people are less Indian if they use computers. But as an Aymara from Bolivia has argued, we will not be less Indian because we are using a computer. It is a tool, and it can be used in a positive way to achieve justice and liberation for our people.

The telephone, and then the invention of the fax machine revolutionized communications throughout the world. For Indigenous activists, faxes improved communications between organizations and with support groups in North America and Europe. Faxes, however, require expensive international calls which limit their usefulness. Computer networks represent a new technological breakthrough which completely changes the form in which we communicate. Today, with a computer and a modem (which are becoming cheaper and easier to use) it is possible to maintain virtually immediate contact with people around the world. Normally, it is possible to connect to the Internet with a local call and maintain contact with people around the world without spending money on long distance toll charges.

Indigenous activists are now taking these means of communication into our own hands. SAIIC has always been committed to the goal of communicating to the public an Indigenous perspective on issues which affect us. We have accomplished this through various means of communication such as *Abya Yala News* and urgent action alerts distributed through mailings and by fax and phone. SAIIC is now making the transition to using email and Internet resources to achieve these same goals. We can use this technology to educate others about our reality and to mobilize international public opinion against human rights abuses and on other issues which we face. We should also look for ways to use computer networks to more effectively communicate among ourselves in order to share information and to develop organizing strategies.

Computer networking resources can be divided into three main categories. First, private messages called

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In the last issue of Abya Yala News (Vol. 8, No. 4), two short stories about SAIIC's efforts to use computer networks and the Internet to advance its organizing work included incomplete or misleading information. On the News from SAIIC page (p. 39), there was a typo in the name of SAIIC's PeaceNet conference. The actual name is "saiic.indio." Also, SAIIC's Home Page on the World-Wide Web is at http://www.igc.apc.org/saiic/saiic.html. You can find an electronic copy of SAIIC's brochure by pointing a gopher client to gopher.igc.apc.org and selecting "Organizations on the IGC Networks Gopher" and then "SAIIC." The brochure is also available in the ftp.igc.apc.org FTP site in the "pub/orgs_on_igc" directory and by sending an email note to "saiic-info@igc.apc.org."

Also, a story on the Internet for Native Peoples Conference (p. 35) did not include complete information for subscribing to these lists related to Indigenous issues (please note that the -l in saiic-l and native-l is the letter "l" and not the number one):

saiic-l (send a message "subscribe saiic-l" to majordomo@igc.apc.org; this list mirrors the saiic.indio conference)

Indigenous Knowledge (send a message "sub indknow <Your Name>" to listserv@u.washington.edu)

NativeNet (send a message "sub native-l <Your Name>" to listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu)

In addition to these lists, Internet users may wish to check out the following electronic archives:

NativeWeb (http://ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu/~marc/nativeweb.html)

Fourth World Documentation Project (http://www.halcyon.com/FWDP/fwdp.html)

Native American Net Server at UW-Milwaukee (gopher to alpha1.csd.uwm.edu and select "UWM" then "Information" and finally "Native American Net Server")

Native American FTP site at Cornell University (ftp to ftp.cit.cornell.edu and change to the pub/special/NativeProfs directory)

If you have any questions about any of these items, please contact Marc at the SAIIC office.

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email (or e-mail, which is short for electronic mail) are sent through computer networks. This correspondence is similar to the regular mail, faxes, and phone calls which organizations such as SAIIC have traditionally used to communicate with board members, supporters, and other organizations. The advantage of email is that it allows the sending of mail messages and computer files virtually instantaneously and often cheaper than other means of communication.

A second broad category of information on the Internet is that which is distributed via listserv lists, PeaceNet conferences, Usenet News Groups, etc. They operate like newsletters to which people subscribe and then receive regular mailings. These subscription lists are useful for distributing news reports, urgent action alerts, announcements and other information which may be of a dated nature. It is for these purposes that SAIIC established the saiic.indio conference on PeaceNet last fall.

A final broad category of information available on the Internet is that found in electronic archives, including FTP, Gopher, and World-Wide Web sites. Organizations can use these archives to post an electronic copy of a brochure describing the group's work, manifestos and declarations, past issues of newsletters, and other information which may have on-going value for the organization, its supporters, and the public at large. For example, SAIIC has placed a copy of its brochure on PeaceNet where people desiring more information on the organization can access it via FTP, Gopher, or the World-Wide Web.

Often weak infrastructure and the lack of basic services such as phone lines, particularly in remote areas, makes developing computer networks very difficult. In Africa activists are beginning to hook up to low-earth orbiting satellites in order to connect to computer network resources. For example, the NGO Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) has assisted organizations in remote areas of Tanzania where there is no electricity or phone service to communicate via email and the Internet. From most anywhere in the world, a person with the appropriate equipment can send and receive messages twice daily via a low orbit satellite. These low-earth orbiting satellites have not been used extensively in Mexico, Central and South America. Using this technology, Indigenous people can create their own computer networks in order to strengthen their organizations and defend their way of life. 🌀

Native American Radio Talk Show Debuts

American Indian Radio on Satellite (AIROS), which started programming for and about Native Americans last fall to Native-owned and public radio stations, began a daily Native talk show on June 5.

George Tiger, Muscogee (Creek), hosts Native America Calling, a live call-in program that explores the full range of Native American life and culture, with topics such as tribal politics, art, music, humor, storytelling, gaming and religious freedom. The one-hour daily program can be heard on tribal and public radio stations in the United States each Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. Eastern time.

Native America Calling is produced at public radio station KUNM on the campus of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. It is a co-production of the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium and the Alaska Public Radio Network.

Listeners can stay abreast of new programs developments and new stations coming on line by calling the Native America Calling Hotline at (907) 566-2244.

Sixth Annual Indigenous Environmental Network Conference

One hundred and forty six Indigenous nations and organizations from the Americas gathered in Chickaloon, Alaska (June 19-22) for the Sixth Annual Indigenous Environmental Network conference. The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) organized this conference.

The goal of this conference was to unify Indigenous peoples in their work to protect the Earth Mother and its natural resources and strengthen Indigenous organizations.

During four days of the conference, participants gathered in seventeen workships dedicated to themes such as territories, protection of natural resources, militarization, the Human Genome Diversity Project, and NAFTA. The final three days were dedicated to the presentation of treaties on the rights of the Indigenous peoples.

For more information, contact: Indigenous Environmental Network, Tel: (218) 751-4967, Fax: (218) 751-0561.

Second Coalition Conference on International Health

Building on the enthusiastic response to the first conference held last November, the Canadian Society for International Health and the Canadian University Consortium for Health and Development will hold the second CCIH from November 12-15, 1995, at the Radisson Hotel in Ottawa. The conference theme is "Health Reform Around the World: Towards Equity and Sustainability." Sessions will include paper presentations, symposia, workshops, poster sessions, and round table discussions.

Contact the CCIH Coordinator at Tel: (613) 730-2654, Fax: (613) 230-8401, or e-mail: CSIH@fox.nstn.can.