

## Indigenous Leaders Awarded Goldman Environmental Prize

On April 18, 1994, Luis Macas president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and Mathew Coon Come, grand chief of the Cree were awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in San Francisco, California.

The prize includes a no-strings attached \$60,000 grant. Macas was recognized for his role in the 1990 Levantamiento Indigena (Indigenous uprising) in Ecuador which forced the government to seriously negotiate the conditions for oil drilling in the Ecuadorian Amazon. He was also praised for his role in the negotiations between CONAIE and the Ecuadorian government which resulted in a sweeping settlement giving Indigenous nations title to three million hectares of rainforest in the Amazon.

Coon Come has worked for decades to oppose the Quebec government's monumental plans for hydroelectric dam building in James Bay. Both these struggles put Indigenous and environmental organizations against some of the world's most powerful forces. With these awards, the Goldman foundation has helped give world attention and stature to these leader's struggles. Following is Luis Macas' statement at the ceremonies.

*...With the arrival of western civilization the plundering of natural resources was initiated as was the takeover and destruction of our mother earth and the exploitation of our people. This intensive and irrational exploitation of natural resources caused not only impoverishment of the earth but has generated poverty and the violation of human rights among our people in the South. The culture of capitalism and avarice has forced itself on nature to achieve its goals no matter what the sacrifice. As a result, we are now experiencing an accelerated process of true global collapse.*

*As inhabitants of this planet, it is vital and urgent to stop these crimes against nature and life and work to re integrate ourselves with the natural world so as to redirect our path toward a more respectful and harmonious relationship with it. These beliefs motivate us to defend our mother earth and resist her destruction with her. Therefore it is important that we gain title to territories which will guarantee their protection, not only for us, but for the benefit of all life... We have to oppose destruction and death with justice, sustainable development and life.*

## Indigenous Groups in Argentina Push for Rights Under New Constitution

The fifteen Indigenous nations in Argentina are carrying out a country-wide mobilization in response to the opening of a process for constitutional revision. Indigenous groups are pressuring the national congress to finally include an article stating their rights under the constitution. Indigenous organizations held two assemblies regarding the issue of constitutional reform and have drafted a proposal for rights to be included in the new constitution.

The proposal's most important points were recognition that Indigenous peoples existed before the creation of the National state and birth of the provinces; the recognition of the Argentinian Republic as a pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural state; the inclusion of rights to communal land ownership as well as control of all natural resources found in these lands; the right to educate their children in their own language and culture; and finally, the deletion of part 15 of article 67 of the current constitution which states that the government should "maintain a peaceful relationship with the Indians and promote their conversion to Catholicism".

After drafting these proposals, representatives of all the Indigenous communities presented a declaration to the national congress to urge inclusion of these changes in the new constitution.

## Innu Activists Blockade Hydro-Quebec Roads

Innu from the Coalition for Nitassinan (their traditional lands) supported by observers set up camp on May 29, blocking the access road which Hydro-Quebec intends to use for construction of the massive Sainte-Marguerite III (SM III) hydroelectric project. Hydro-Quebec officials have reportedly sought an official injunction against the blockade in order to remove the protesters.

The SM III project would be built in Innu territory along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. It would flood over 450 square km. and, possibly contaminate this area with the toxin methyl mercury. Innu fear this contamination will render the region's fish, one of their main food sources,