



Construction of Dam Forces Mapuches to Abandon Ancestral Lands

When the gates to the hydroelectric dam "Piedra del Aguila" were opened, an important part of the Mapuche community of Pilquiniyeu were covered eternally with water. The inundated areas included the cemetery, where our ancestors rest, as well as the site of many cave paintings. - the Indigenous Council of Rio Negro

(Rio Negro, Argentina)
Heralding the slogan, "Energy to Move the Country," Rio Negro's provincial government, moving full-speed ahead, signed a contract with the Hidronor Enterprise which allowed for the construction of a major hydroelectric facility at Piedra del Aguila. The facility is one of a series which are planned for the Limay River, stretching from the Rio Negro to the Neuquen Provinces in the South of Argentina. The estimated cost of the project is 1.2 billion dollars and is being financed by the Inter-American Development Bank. The project is expected to generate ten-percent of the country's total energy needs.

In addition to the sacred sites, the 9,300 inundated hectares included a fertile valley, containing extensive forest reserves, fruit orchards and the subsistence farms of 130 Mapuche people. The 29 homeless families were relocated to neighboring lands which the government expropriated. In addition to the land, the government promised these families new homes. Nevertheless, the only homes constructed thus far have been precarious emergency shelters. Clearly, the project budget did not include an allot-

ment for the families who lost their homes and farms in the flooding. The dam was built with such poor standards that a structural crack has already been detected.

The Latin American Council of the Social Sciences, FLACSO, said that the damning of these lands is "yet another step in the relentless process leading to the disappearance of the history and cultures of Indigenous peoples."

Please send letters of concern, today to:

**Ministro Edgardo Buyayisqui
Minis. de Recursos Naturales
Viedma, Rio Negro
ARGENTINA**

