



# SABYA YALA NEWS

VOLUME 11, No. 1, SPRING 1998

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH AND MESO AMERICAN INDIAN RIGHTS CENTER

## Eco-Justice & Health:

Indigenous  
communities  
at risk

Gold, Greed  
& Genocide  
in the  
Americas

A Poisoned  
Culture:  
the Case of the  
Huichole  
Farm Workers

Linking Indian Peoples of the Americas





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**\*Abya Yala is the Kuna word for Continent of Life which includes all of the Americas.**

**Correction:** We apologize for our mistake in the article "Indigenous Nations at the United Nations" found on pages 32-35 in the Volume 10, Number 4 "Fall 1997" issue of Abya Yala News. We had stated that "At this point, no Indigenous organization has been successful in obtaining such a consultative relationship with the ECOSOC." There are actually 12 NGOs recognized by ECOSOC with a consultative status. They are: 1. Indian Treaty Council (1977) 2. The World Council on Indigenous Peoples 3. World Indigenous Association 4. Inuit Circumpolar Conference 5. The Council of Four Winds 6. Indigenous Council of South America 7. National Council of Indigenous Youth 8. The Cree Grand Council (Quebec) 9. Indian Law Resource Center 10. International Organization of Indigenous Resources Development 11. National Secretary of Services for Aboriginal and Island Peoples 12. Sami Council.

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The South And Meso American Indian Rights Center

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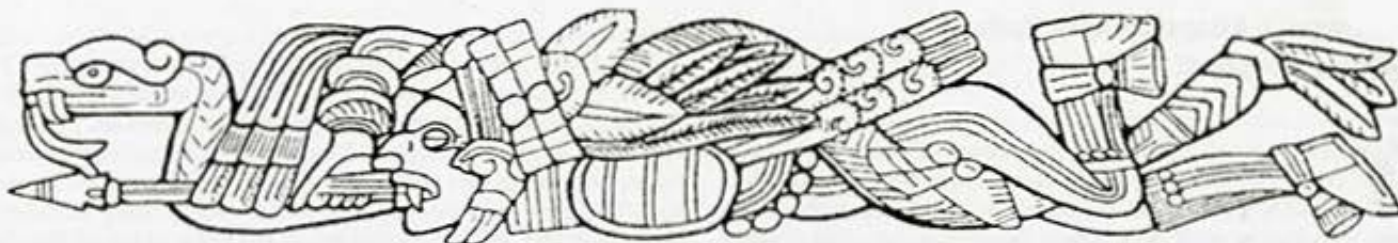
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In this issue we examine the issue of Environmental Justice as it relates to the health of Indigenous peoples by looking at the social impacts of multi-national development on Indigenous land. Resource exploitation in the form of mining, oil and timber exploitation, nuclear power plants, hydroelectric dams, toxic waste dumping and pesticide use not only cause serious environmental damage but also negatively impact the health of both Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

Cases of environmental injustice abound in Latin America, where the last frontier of natural resources remain buried in Indigenous territories. Mining, oil and logging companies move onto Indigenous lands to exploit our resources, disregarding health and environmental regulations, causing pollution and contaminating the land, air and water that results in grave consequences on the health to our communities. Our native communities across the Americas are particularly susceptible to industrial development and exploitation due in part to the lack of official recognition of the lands we occupy.

In an analysis of the pernicious effects of gold mining on Indigenous communities in the Americas, we include an article that uncovers the health affects of the gold mining process on Indigenous peoples in the western United States and in Brazil. We see how similar the pattern of mineral exploitation has been in these two areas of the continent and how disastrous its results.

The link between environmental justice and health is detailed in the article on the effects of pesticides on Huichol farm workers in Northern Mexico. The article on the Cerro Colorado mine in Panama outlines the proposed contamination that would result from renewed mining in Ngöbe-Buglé territory. We also include an article on environmental racism in Native North America which discusses the current threat of toxic dumping on Indigenous land.

As almost every oil concession in the Amazon has been on Indigenous territory, oil activities have resulted in chemical contamination of the rivers, deforestation, a decline in food resources and medicinal plants, cultural breakdown in the form of alcoholism, violence, prostitution, rape, loss of communal work practices and new diseases and illnesses resulting from the exploitation and influx of foreigners into our territory. In the article on oil exploitation in Urarina territory in Peru, we see how increased oil activities have resulted in disease importation and new strains of fatal diseases affecting the Urarina. In her interview with SAIIIC, Dr. Letty Viteri discusses some of the effects of oil exploitation on the health of Indigenous communities in Ecuador.

As shown by the Parallel Conference on Mining and the Community in Quito and the Women and Mining Conference held in the Philippines, Indigenous people are networking with each other across the Americas and across the globe to educate and organize ourselves to confront the massive consequences of large-scale mining affecting our health and our territories.

As the widely disparate examples of resource exploitation discussed in this issue show, the effect of these activities on the health and culture of Indigenous peoples cannot be denied. Nor can we ignore our deep spiritual connection to the land. Throughout our conversations with the Native people who are facing these crises on their lands, most noteworthy was the spirituality that they brought to the discussions of these issues. The emphasis on the sacredness of the land, water and air and their determination not to allow their land or their children to be contaminated.

While resource exploitation companies are still not held accountable for the damage they cause to our cultures and national governments fail to enforce international laws and conventions designed to protect our rights, we continue to struggle to achieve self-determination. In this and every issue of *Abya Yala News*, we are sharing news directly from the Indigenous communities in the hopes of fostering a better understanding of the issues facing our peoples.

*SAIIIC Board of Directors*



## Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast Update: Logging Stopped!

**T**he 16th of February, Nicaragua's Environment and Natural Resources Ministry withheld permits to SOLCARSA, the Korean Lumber company, declaring their logging concession null and void. Two years ago, the Violeta Chamorro government granted a 153,000 acre concession to SOLCARSA, a subsidiary of the Korean transnational Kum Kyung (see *Abya Yala News*, Summer 1997, Vol. 10, No.3, Pg.34). The rainforest concession violated laws protecting the right of Indigenous communities of the North Atlantic Autonomous Zone (RAAN) to control their natural resources. The recent declaration has come after the Nicaraguan Supreme Court has ruled that the logging concession is unconstitutional for a second time. The Korean logging giant has already paid 1 million dollars in fines for violating logging regulations.

For the Miskito and Sumo people, the eviction of SOLCARSA is the first step towards recognizing their constitutional right to title their lands. Armstrong Wiggins, a Miskito lawyer at the Indian Law Resource Center said that "this was an important battle, hard fought...but to keep this from happening again, we have to press now for the demarcation of all Indigenous lands in Nicaragua."

*Information from: Resource Center of the Americas and Global Response: globresponse@igc.apc.org*

## United Nations Investigates Human Rights Abuses Against Indigenous Peoples in the United States

**I**n February 1-4, Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, the UN Special Rapporteur of Religious Intolerance of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, met with traditional Dineh (Navajo) elders to investigate charges of human rights violations by the United States government. A contingent of various non-government organizations, most of them faith based, were invited by the Dineh to participate in the event. More than one hundred people sat on the dirt floor of a hogan listening to testimonies about religious violations. This was the first time that the United States has ever been formally investigated by the UN for violations of the right to freedom of religion.

Abdelfattah Amor came in response to a formal complaint filed by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) on behalf of the Sovereign Dineh Nation of Big Mountain, Arizona focusing on forced relocation and its impacts on religious freedom. The religious rights of the Dineh Nation are threatened by the British-owned Peabody Coal Company (PCC), the world's largest privately-owned coal company, which operates the Black Mesa/Kayenta strip mine in the heart of Black Mesa. Over 4,000 burial and sacred sites have been destroyed as a result of strip mining. There is no protection given to Dineh burial grounds and sacred sites. Members of the community are barred access to certain sacred sites to pray, which interferes with their ability to practice their religion, which is land-based and site specific.

The Dineh community's long history of resistance reached a pivotal point in 1974, when the US Congress approved the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act. The previous arrangement of dual ownership of the lands by the Dineh and the Hopi complicated the mining companies ability to seek land leases for coal extraction. This new law, sponsored in part by the mining industry, resulted in the forced relocation of 12,000 traditional Dineh from their land. In 1996 the US government attempted another Dineh-Hopi settlement act that offered land leases to a few families while authorizing the forcible relocation of those who did not qualify for a lease permit. The Dineh are feeling the pressure to resettle to open more land for mining.

In addition to being the primary source of destruction for traditional Dineh burial and sacred sites, the coal strip-mine has created several environmental problems. The mine threatens the sole source of water for the communities in the region. The coal from the Black Mesa mine is mixed with water and transported 273 miles through a slurry line to the Mojave Generation Station in Laughlin, Nevada. To function properly, the slurry line must pump up to 1.4 billion gallons of water each year from the Dineh aquifer.

In his four-day visit, Mr. Amor heard from Indigenous nations in Arizona on other matters as well, including: the University of Arizona's placement of telescopes on top of Mount Graham, a place sacred to the Apache people; uranium mining on the high plateaus of the Grand Canyon, which is sacred to the Havasupai and many other Indigenous peoples native to Arizona. Nevertheless, Mr. Amor refused to validate or refute any allegations until he had time to digest the documentation and testimony he had received from more than one hundred and fifty people in his four day visit. Amor's report from his U.S. visit will likely be heard by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in March 1999. It is possible the UN may release the report to the public by the end of 1998.

The aides to the state's congressional delegation in Arizona said they had never heard of Amor nor had any idea why he had selected Arizona to investigate the subject of religious intolerance.

*For more information please contact: Marsha Monestersky, Consultant to Sovereign Dineh Nation, Co-Chair, NGO Human Rights Caucus at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (718) 349-1841  
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## Roraima, Brazil: Forest Fires Reach Yanomami Territory

**T**he raging fires sweeping the Amazon have reached the Yanomami's dense jungle territory. For the past two months, fires set by subsistence farmers to clear their land have ravaged the savanna highlands of Roraima state. The devastating fires are coupled with one of the worst droughts the region has ever faced. Thousands of Macuxi, Wapixana, Taurepangi, Wai Wai, Pemon, Maiongong and Patamona peo-



ples are also threatened as the drought has ruined their crops. The fires are now eating their way into the jungle, which is usually far too humid and wet to burn. According to meteorologists, El Niño may be affecting the bizarre weather, which has caused flooding in Brazil's south and drought in the Amazon region to the North.

Roraima has not seen rain for five months, and the winds push the flames quickly through the forest aided by the extremely low levels of the rivers and creeks, natural firebreaks. At this writing, the fires had already entered seven miles into the Yanomami's vast territory along the Brazil-Venezuela border. The rivers in the area have dried up to such an extent that health care providers are unable to reach Yanomami villages affected by malaria. The fires come at a time when the garimpeiros, poor gold miners who swarmed into Yanomami lands by the tens of thousands in the 1970s and 80s, have finally been remove by the government this January. Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa Yanomami has appealed for help to stop the fires from encroaching further into the jungle and destroying any villages. He expressed concern that the fires will open the way for gold miners and landless farmers who would normally be stopped by the dense jungle.

The Conselho Indigena de Roraima (CIR) has appealed to the international community for disaster aid to help fight the severe conditions created by the fires and drought. As part of their solidarity campaign, CIR is trying to drill wells, build water canals and provide food for the Indigenous peoples in Roraima, where the fires have already consumed 25% of the state's forests.

Please contact CIR at: [cir@technet.com.br](mailto:cir@technet.com.br)

## Ecuador- Indigenous People Push for Ratification of ILO Convention 169

In Ecuador, Indigenous people kicked off the month of February with demonstrations and marches to pressure the government to ratify the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 that recognizes the rights of Indigenous and Tribal People. Their recent efforts include the massive march of more than 1,500 Indian that arrived in Quito on the 4th of February. On Feb. 5th interim President Fabián Alarcón sent Congress his report on the issues addressed in the convention. Congress is now debating the ratification of the international accord.

Since it was ratified by the International Labor Organization in Geneva in 1989, the close to 3.5 million Indigenous people in Ecuador have been fighting for its ratification. Indigenous leader Miguel Llucó, congressional representative of the Pachakutik Plurinational Movement, has continued to raise the issue of ratification of the convention in Congress. Llucó says that there was "an unjustified delay on the part of the executive branch" in handing over the convention to Congress for ratification. For the 11 Indigenous nations in Ecuador, a country of 11 million inhabitants, the ratification of the Convention is fun-

damental, and represents the first time that the multiculturalism of the nation has been legally recognized.

To comply with the Convention, the government must consult with the Indigenous communities before instituting any project that could affect the communities directly. The State is also obliged to establish the means through which the communities can participate freely in decision-making with government authorities.

In the Constituent Assembly, which was seated in late December and is charged with rewriting the Ecuadoran Constitution, members of the Pachakutik movement, center-left parties and former President Osvaldo Hurtado (1981-84), head of the People's Democracy party and speaker of the assembly, have promised to defend the ILO convention. In its debates on plurinationality, the assembly is considering the issues addressed in Convention 169 including such topics as: juridical plurality, which would permit Indigenous communities to have their own laws, legal codes and sanctions, and provide legal recognition of some decisions made under traditional justice systems, although many aspects of these decisions would be subordinate to Ecuadorian law; making the official government representative in a locality an elected post in Indigenous territories, rather than a political appointee of the provincial governor; making Quichua a national language, on the same level as Spanish, while less-widely spoken Indigenous tongues would be recognized as official languages in the areas where they are spoken; allowing Indigenous communities to organize themselves according to their own traditions.

Even if Ecuador joins the eight other Latin American countries that have ratified Convention 169, signing this international agreement is not a guarantee of compliance. Llucó cites the example of Mexico, who ratified the accord in 1990 but is now persecuting the Indigenous communities in Chiapas. Many Indigenous leaders think that it is necessary to incorporate the Convention into the national constitution. According to Llucó "Congressional recognition is fundamental, but it is only the first step."

The recent discussions in Congress surrounding the ILO Convention 169, have sparked nationwide debates about multiculturalism and what it means to be a multi-ethnic state. "Our norms are part of a survival system that has nothing to do with western laws. That is why it is imperative for Indigenous communities to be given the power to resolve their own internal conflicts. For this reason, it is indispensable that the constitution include judicial plurality. Obviously there is a need to create a law to harmonize general legislation with that of the Indigenous communities, where matters of justice are also decided collectively and where the entire community participates" Llucó concluded.

Information from: *Noticias Aliadas, Peru*





# **Gold, Greed & Genocide in the Americas California to the Amazon**

◆ *by Pratap Chatterjee*





*"The white warriors went across in their long dugouts. The Indians said they would meet them in peace so when the whites landed the Indians went to welcome them ... Ge-Wi-Lih said he threw up his hand ... but the white man fired and shot him in the arm ... (s)he said when they gathered the dead, they found all the little ones were killed by being stabbed and many of the women were also killed by stabbing ... (t)his old lady also told about (how) the whites hung a man on Emerson island ... and a large fire built under (him). And another ... was tied to a tree and burnt to death"*

—William Benson, Pomo historian, recounts massacres at Clear Lake, California, May 1850

*"A group of loggers and miners near the town of Pontes e Lacerda ambushed and violently assaulted at least 14 Katitaulhu Indians in the Sarare reserve. The loggers subsequently looted the Indians village, damaging a health post and school and stealing money, tools and vehicles belonging to the Indians. Supporters of the Indians, who have attempted to mobilize federal officials to comply with court orders to remove the illegal loggers and miners from the reserve subsequently received death threats and intimidation. The Katitaulhu were also threatened with further violence by the invaders. Medical reports state that 14 Indians were wounded, many by having been tied up and beaten."*

— Environmental Defense Fund report from Mato Grosso, Brazil, November 1996

**T**housands of kilometers, and almost a century and a half, separate the two violent incidents against the Pomo peoples of California and the Nambikwara peoples of Mato Grosso, Brazil. Yet the root cause for both incidents was exactly the same: settlers in search of gold.

The Clear Lake incident was a direct outcome of the arrival of Charles Stone and Andrew Kelsey, two ranchers who arrived at the lake in 1847, who captured and bought hundreds of Pomo, forcing them to work as slaves. Kelsey forced Pomo men into the mountains as virtual slaves to help him look for gold. Eventually two Pomo cowboys, Shak and Xasis, took the law into their own hands and executed both settlers bringing the wrath of the United States army upon them in the incidents described above.

The Katitaulhu are one of 12 Nambikwara subgroups, whose lands were first invaded in the 1970s when the

World Bank-funded BR 364 road from Cuiaba in Mato Grosso to Porto Velho in Rondonia was opened by Brazil's military government. Decimated by epidemics and forcibly relocated to make way for the road, the Nambikwara died in great numbers making desperate pilgrimages in an attempt to return to their traditional lands. Some 6,000 gold miners invaded the Sarare reservation in the 1990s seriously polluting major watercourses in the area, disrupting local fishing and hunting, spreading malaria and viral diseases. The incident described above is just one of many attacks on the Nambikwara in the last two decades.

### Foundation of empire

Gold has been the foundation of empires throughout history and continues to be the root cause of many genocidal attacks against Indigenous people around the world. The Romans founded their empire on Spanish gold, the Spanish founded their empire on Inca gold, the

1849 Gold Rush was the basis of the foundation of the state of California and today the World Bank makes a profit supporting gold mines.

Pizarro, the Spanish conquistador, arrived in Cajamarca (now part of Peru) in 1532 to trick Atahualpa, the last Inca king, into an ambush that led to the collapse of his empire. One of the last acts of Atahualpa was an attempt to buy off the Spanish by offering them a room full of gold and two rooms full of silver. The Spanish accepted the offer but after they got the gold, they murdered Atahualpa and proceeded to raze the rest of the city to the ground.

Today the ransom room is the only surviving monument to the Inca presence but the region is still being raped for gold: it is the site of Yanacocha, the biggest gold mine in Latin America, which is run by Newmont of Colorado and funded by the World Bank. Almost 500 years after the Inca died defending their lands, the peo-



ple of Cajamarca are dying because of the contamination of local waters, and their lands are still being seized.

Yet economists, historians and media alike continue to celebrate the metal. In 1994 World Bank economists lavished praise on Peru for becoming the fastest growing economy in the world by inviting in the new gold mines. In 1998 historians and the media launched into a celebratory frenzy over the 150th anniversary of the founding of the state of California after the famous 1849 Gold Rush.

But for Indigenous communities the arrival of gold miners has always meant disease and death, whether it be among the Nomlaki peoples of north-western California in the 1850s or the Yanomami of the Amazon in the 1990s as the two examples below demonstrate.

### Deadly diseases

"They (the Native Americans) had been hiding in the hills. There was no rain for three years and fighting going on every day. No clover, no acorn, juniper berries or pepper grass. Nothing for three years. Finally the Indians got smallpox and the Indian doctor couldn't cure them. Gonorrhoea came among the Indians. They died by the thousands." — Andrew Freeman, Nomlaki historian, recounting the story of his peoples in the 1850s.

"The biggest problem for the Yanomami now are the garimpeiro (goldminers) who are in our land, and the illnesses they bring with them. Among them some have illnesses like flu, tuberculosis and venereal diseases, and contaminate my people. Now we are afraid they will bring measles and also AIDS, this illness which is so dangerous that we do not want it among us. But the worst illness for us is malaria, which comes in with the goldminers. The government's National Health Foundation say that 1300 Yanomami had got malaria up until May this year." — statement by Davi Yanomami, August 1997.

Some 60 percent of the estimated 150,000 native peoples of California were wiped out by famine and disease between the years of 1850 and 1870 while another 20 percent were killed by settlers. The rate of destruction of the Brazilian

Yanomami is terrifyingly similar, today there are an estimated 8,000 people left, a 60 percent drop from the estimated 20,000 who lived in the region just 20 years ago.

### Mercury Madness

Armed militia and deadly diseases are not the only terror that stalked the Native peoples of California in the 1850s and the Indigenous communities of the Amazon in the 1980s. Mercury, a highly toxic metal, used for centuries by small-scale gold miners to extract the tiny flecks of shiny metal from the ore, has also taken a major toll.

Mercury can dissolve as much as 60 percent of gold out of ore into a physical solution, known as an amalgam. This amalgam can be broken down quickly and easily by heating off the mercury, similar to the way salt can be recovered from sea water. This mercury vapor gets trapped in atmospheric moisture and precipitates down into local water supplies where it can poison fish and animals higher up in the food chain.

The California Gold Rush of 1849, perhaps the most celebrated in history, left a deadly legacy of an estimated 7,600 tons of mercury in the lakes, rivers and sediments of the state while over one thousand tons of mercury are currently being dumped by small miners in the fragile rainforests of the Amazon.

Just one gram of mercury poured into eighty million liters of water would be cause for concern under United States federal human health standards for drinking water and enough to contaminate a small lake. Mercury is a persistent toxin which can destroy fetuses, the human central nervous system, reproductive organs and immune system.

Well over a century after the miners invaded California, decades after the

mines were shut down, fishing is still prohibited in Clear Lake, California, because of the heavy mercury contamination of the lake. Environmental experts on the tribal reservations in north-western California are realizing that they may have to seek help cleaning up the waste that contaminates the Trinity river.

Meanwhile nobody knows the full extent of the problems in the Brazilian Amazon but initial studies have shown that the levels of mercury in Tapajos river fish in 1995 were 3.8 parts per million (ppm), almost eight times the permitted federal maximum of 0.5 ppm. In 1989, fish in the Madeira river tested as high as 2.7 ppm.

### Good news, bad news

Fortunately, mercury is no longer used in California and the small-scale miners were recently evicted from the



Carrie Dann, Shoshone traditional elder. "To dig under the earth to get to that gold, to pump out that water to get to that gold, is a crime, it's a crime against humanity..."

Yanomami territory in January 1998 by the Brazilian army. There's more good news, the Macuxi peoples of Roraima, Brazil, blockaded roads in 1997 to successfully demand the removal of gold miners from their territory.

However, today the lands of Native peoples in North America are the subject of a new invasion of gold miners and the Indigenous communities of Latin America are next on the list as described below.



## Cyanide: the new terror

In the 1960s, Newmont corporation of Colorado teamed up with the United States Bureau of Mines to perfect a technique to extract 97 percent of gold from ore dug up in the deserts of Nevada using a chemical called cyanide. These desert lands, the sacred and traditional lands of the Western Shoshone, are now the source of half the gold in the United States today.

Corporations around the world have followed suit, using this cyanide technology together with the powerful explosives and massive earth-moving equipment that allows them to blast apart entire mountains, to take over the business of gold mining.

A teaspoonful of two-percent solution of cyanide can kill a adult human. Cyanide blocks the absorption of oxygen

Also poisoned by cyanide are the peoples who live on the Essequibo river in Guyana, where dead fish and hogs were reported in August 1995 after a waste water dam at the Omai gold mine broke and spilt 3.2 billion liters of cyanide-laced waste into the river in what is believed to be the biggest such disaster in history. Studies by the Pan American Health Organization have shown that all aquatic life in the four-kilometer-long creek that runs from the mine to the Essequibo was killed. Suspicious fish, cattle and even human deaths have also been reported among the people of Cajamarca, Peru, where Newmont is using cyanide to extract gold.

Meanwhile a number of other Indigenous and traditional communities throughout Latin America are being targeted for new gold mines like the Maroon community of Nieuw Koffiekamp in Suriname where Golden Star of Colorado

It is high time for people around the world to support these struggles and demand an end to the status of gold as a barbaric custom. As the leaders of the first peoples of the Americas have testified below, pure water, traditional cultures and life are more precious than all the gold dug up from under the ground.

"We have the right to put up opposition because history has made us skeptical of certain white men, because we have lost millions of human lives, millions of hectares of land and millions of tons of gold, silver and copper with no compensation," — Atencio Lopez, Kuna, Panama, August 1996.

"We want progress without destruction. We want to study, to learn new ways of cultivating the land, living from its fruits. We do not want to live without trees, hunting, fish and clean water. If this happens misery will come to our people.



by cells, causing the victim to effectively "suffocate." Adverse impacts of cyanide on fish have been reported at levels of 0.01 ppm, concentrations as low as five parts per billion have been found to inhibit fish reproduction, while levels of 0.03 ppm are known to kill fish.

Human beings can experience decreased respiratory and thyroid functions, cardiac pain, vomiting, headaches and central nervous system toxicity from oral exposure to low levels of cyanide. Short term exposures to high levels of cyanide compounds can cause breathing problems, central nervous system toxicity and gastro-intestinal corrosion.

This deadly chemical is being used today in North America on the lands of peoples like the Pomo in California, the Western Shoshone in Nevada, the Sioux in South Dakota, the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre in Montana. Also under threat are the Quechan in Arizona, the Paiute in Nevada, and the Colvilles in Washington state whose lands are being targeted for new gold mines.

(also the joint operators of the Omai gold mine in Guyana) have reportedly threatened and harassed community members by using live ammunition to frighten them away from areas in which the company is exploring for gold.

In Central America, the Panamanian Natural Resources Directorate reports that 70 percent of the approximately 20,000 square kilometers of Panama deemed to have mining potential is on land claimed by Indigenous groups. The government has already approved extensive copper and gold mining concessions within the Ngöbe-Buglé and Kuna territories.

Yet communities are fighting back across the Americas. The Assiniboine, the Colvilles, the Gros Ventre, the Sioux and the Western Shoshone have gone to court to protest the gold mines while the peoples of Latin America are also putting up a spirited opposition, from road blockades in Panama to complaints to international bodies by the Surinamese Maroons.

I hope that you will help me in this fight" — Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, Brazil, August 1997

"To dig under the earth to get to that gold, to pump out that water to get to that gold, is a crime, it's a crime against humanity, a crime against life, the very life upon which all people depend, not only people but we have other things out there— we have the deer, we have the eagle, we have the rabbits, we have all life out there and the gold mining today is going to destroy that, it is destroying that, the life for the future generations is going to be gone" — Carrie Dann, Western Shoshone traditional elder, spring 1997. ♡

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# A Poisoned Culture: the case of the Indigenous Huichol Farm Workers

◆ by Patricia Diaz-Romo and Samuel Salinas-Alvarez



Photo: Patricia Diaz-Romo

*Huichol children working in the tobacco fields.*



## Migrant workers and pesticides

The exposure to pesticides is one of the greatest risks that Indigenous migrant workers face. In Mexico, the tobacco companies with agroindustrial cultivation use enormous quantities of these dangerous agrochemical products without complying with the international legal restrictions designed to protect human life. The Indigenous workers are especially vulnerable to the pernicious effects of the pesticides for diverse reasons, among them the fact that they lack information regarding the dangers of exposure, because the contractors do not provide them with safety equipment, and because the conditions in which they live and work in the agroindustrial fields prevents them, for example, from bathing and from washing their clothes after being in contact with pesticides recently applied or with residual pesticides.

The cases of poisoning and death from pesticides count among the most

serious indicators of the situation which migrant workers encounter. In 1993 it was estimated that in each planting season approximately 170,000 field workers arrive in the valleys of Sinaloa. An average of 5,000 agricultural workers suffer from toxic poisoning as a result of the handling of, or prolonged exposure to, pesticides that are used in cultivation. Of the 35,000 agricultural laborers that worked in the San Quintin Valley of Baja California in 1996, 70% were Indigenous. Article 20 of the ILO Convention 169 emphatically calls for signatory governments to do everything possible to prevent workers from being subject to contractual working conditions dangerous to their health, particularly "as a consequence of their exposure to pesticides or other dangerous substances".

According to researchers, the majority of the Indigenous migrant workers who work in the agroindustrial fields in northern Mexico are: Mixtecos, Triquis, and

Zapotecs from Oaxaca, Nahuas, Mixtecos and Tlapenecos from Guerrero and Purh'epchas from Michoacan. The demographic data indicates a extremely serious situation. According to Estela Guzmán Ayala, women (34%) and children under 12 years of age (32%) constitute 66% of the Indigenous labor force in the agricultural regions in northern Mexico. Ruth Franco, a doctor specializing in work-related health and the coordinator of the Program for Day Laborers of the IMSS delegation in Sinaloa, estimates that 25% of the 200,000 workers in the Sinaloa valleys during the 1995-1996 season were children between the ages of 5 and 14. Of the children from southern Mexico, 63% are hired by intermediaries in their place of origin and the rest in the state of Sinaloa. Forty four percent of these child laborers are female and fifty six percent male. 55% of the child farm workers have been working in the fields for 1 to 5 years and 14% for over 5 years. At the conclusion of the agricultural season, 72% return with their families to their respective states, 20% remain in Sinaloa, and 9% continue along the migrant worker route to other destinations.

The extent of the indiscriminate use of pesticides has been frequently exposed and denounced in the Mexican press. It is estimated that thousands of used containers and toxic residues that are generated by the annual use of upwards of 8 million tons of pesticides are criminally disposed of in ad hoc trash bins, channels, drains, incinerators, and recycled to store drinking water. The harmful effects of pesticides on human health and on the environment have been clearly documented.



## Huicholes and pesticides

The Huicholes speak a language belonging to the uto-azteca linguistic family that also includes: Nahuatl, Hopi, Shoshone, Comenche and many other languages in a vast region that extends northward to the United States and southward into central Mexico. Some studies estimate that between 15 and 20 thousand Huicholes inhabit the mountains of the Sierra Madre Occidental within a territory that comprises parts of the Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Durango, and Zacatecas.

Year after year, approximately 40% of all Huichole families leave their communities in the dry season to find employment, poorly paid and dangerous, in the tobacco fields of the Nayarit coast. The causes of this temporary migration stem from the socioeconomic situation of the Indigenous people and from their ritual calendar.

In the rainy season, the Huicholes traditionally cultivated a combination of corn, chile, beans, squash, and amaranth. Unfortunately, the Mexican government promotes exactly the opposite: monocultural planting-by distributing hybrid seeds of corn that require the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers, replacing the mixed seeds that were traditionally used by Huicholes and other Indigenous agricultural peoples. Monoculture agriculture and other modern developments break down

**THE "VALUABLE AND APPRECIATED" HUMAN MERCHANDISE INCLUDES PREGNANT WOMEN AND BABIES INCAPABLE OF CRYING, MUTE FROM PAIN, WHO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN BORN TO MALNOURISHED MOTHERS**

the Indigenous traditions of cooperation in the communal agricultural work and increase, at an alarming rate, the incidence of malnutrition and alcoholism. The introduction of herbicides like Paraquat and 2,4-D gradually destroys communal farm practices, puts the health of cultivators and their families in danger,

and deteriorates farming that typically occurs on hillsides.

With increasingly fewer opportunities to survive in the mountains, the Huicholes feel forced to migrate in search of work in the tobacco fields in the coastal plantations of Nayarit. The Huicholes also migrate for cultural reasons. Negrin claims that "they have the religious necessity to visit the ocean, an ancestral female figure associated with fertility and the earth. Once they reach the coast however, they find that if they don't work in the tobacco plantations, they cannot return home to the mountains."

Tabacco has been grown in Nayarit since long before the arrival of the Spanish, but it was in the 1940's when the tobacco market took off as a result of the Second World War. The municipality of Santiago Ixcuintla in Nayarit is the Mexican capital of tobacco production. Every year, local landowners meet in their town plazas to hire the Huichole workers and subcontract them as a cheap labor force. Huichole workers are appreciated because their work with the tobacco leaves (hanging and bundling) is practically an art.

The Huicholes make the journey from the sierras under subhuman conditions, arriving at the tobacco fields hungry, thirsty and exhausted. The "valuable and appreciated" human merchandise includes pregnant women and babies incapable of crying, mute from pain, who have recently been born to malnourished mothers or mothers with tuberculosis. Vulnerable elders and even the "strong" men arrive at these centers in weak condition.

The negotiations between the

Huicholes and the local landowners — the latter acting as intermediaries between the labor force and the big tobacco capital — usually takes place in the plazas of the communities, on the main highways, or in the houses of the employers. Sometimes the Huicholes ask, hesitantly, for some "extras": a certain quantity of tortillas a day per family or

some ration of purified water. Few workers are granted these "extras". For those who succeed, it is a great accomplishment. The rest will have to drink water from the irrigation channels deriving from the Santiago River, one of the most contaminated in Mexico, or from the wells of the region, which are also contaminated in that, owing to the intensive use of pesticides in the zone, the dangerous agrochemicals have leached into the aquifer.



*Huichol migrant workers make their temporary homes under the pesticide laden tobacco leaves.*

One of the reasons that the Huicholes contract to work in the cutting and stringing of tobacco, and not in other agricultural work, is because these operations are done in the late afternoon or morning, when the temperature is more agreeable compared with the heat of the middle of the day. During the hanging and bundling of the leaves one stays under the shade of the "branches." The apparent advantage of working in the shade becomes a health threat when the Huicholes are cutting the moist leaves and they become wet from head to toe. Moist skin absorbs pesticides more easily. The very nicotine in tobacco causes skin irritations and hives, symptoms which, in the United States, have been identified as Green Tobacco Sickness.

The children, who actively participate in the cutting of the leaves, are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of the



pesticides and the nicotine. It is considered "easy" for them to work in the first phase of the cutting because they can gather the leaves at the base of the plants. As they work along the furrows, cutting the leaves, their bodies are smeared with the sticky gum and resin that covers the tobacco. At the same time, they inhale and absorb the residues of the toxic pesticides that have been applied to the plants.

The families live and sleep in boxes, or under blankets or plastic, beneath the strings of tobacco leaves that are drying. In their makeshift shelters, they try to protect themselves from the inclement sun during the day and from the wet cold at night, exposing themselves in the process to the toxic substances that cover the leaves. There is no potable water, drainage, nor any latrines. Even the food is cooked beneath the hanging strings of tobacco. Occasionally the Huicholes use the empty pesticide containers to carry their drinking water, without paying notice to the grave dangers that this represents, since the majority cannot read the instructions on the labels which may be written in English. Other times they bring these containers back home to the mountains as "practical souvenirs".

Pesticides are poisons specifically designed to kill. They are toxins that contaminate and degrade everything with which they come into contact; there are no remedies or cures against them and, contrary to their manufacturers' claims, they are destroying the cycles of life and the ecosystem of the planet and its inhabitants.

### Urgent need for an investigation

Neither the national and transnational companies that manufacture pesticides, nor the tobacco producers, nor the

Mexican government's health and environmental institutions have taken the necessary measures to protect the health of the workers that handle these toxic substances. The endemic malnutrition that the Huichole population suffers becomes more acute with the rise in alcoholism, which increases during the working season on the coast. This in turn aggravates the toxicological problem.

The Huicholes and Pesticides Project is undertaking a health study between



Children under the age of 12 constitute 32% of the Indigenous labor force in the agricultural regions of Northern Mexico.

Indigenous and mestizo workers designed in coordination with the Pesticide Education Center of San Francisco, California and includes collaboration from the University of Guadalajara and the Autonomous University of Nayarit. The study began in 1995 and includes performing two blood analyses to determine the levels of erythrocyte cholinesterase. The pesticides inhibit the activity of this neurotransmitter, producing various effects on one's health, including death. As of this writing the study is at the stage of data analysis in collaboration with important Mexican non-governmental organizations dedicated to the epidemiological investigation.

Between 1996 and 1997, the team working on the Huicholes and Pesticides project produced various informational workshops on the human rights of

migrant workers, in the Indigenous communities of the Huichole sierra, as well as in the principle municipalities of the tobacco zone in the coast of Nayarit. In these workshops they showed, in both Huichola and Spanish, the video Huicholes and Pesticides, which includes the testimonies of Indigenous and mestizo farm workers who have suffered from problems of pesticide poisoning.

There is no doubt that, with the massive use of pesticides in the agroindustrial fields, the large pharmaceutical companies and tobacco growers are violating rights to information and health and, in the process, are polluting land, rivers, aquifers, and finally the ocean, whom the Huicholes call "Our Mother of the Sea" Haramara.

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**"DURING THE LAST 500 YEARS, MINING HAS BEEN, MORE THAN ANY OTHER HUMAN ACTIVITY, THAT WHICH HAS TRANSFORMED THE ECOSYSTEM OF LATIN AMERICA"**

**-ELIZABETH DORE (MEXICAN RESEARCHER)**



**M**ore than twenty five years after the Ngöbe-Buglé (Guaymí) people first raised their voices in protest over the imminent danger that the Cerro Colorado mining project presented to the region's social, cultural and environmental life, the same ghost of gold and copper fever has returned to haunt the region.

# Ghosts of Cerro Colorado Mining Project continue to haunt the Ngöbe-Buglé

◆ by *Anelio Merry López*

Without taking into account the Ngöbe-Buglé's historic rights as original inhabitants of the region's mountains, rivers and streams, the Panamanian government signed a new contract in 1996 with the mining company Panacobre S.A. for the exploration of Cerro Colorado, known to the Ngöbes as 'Ngüduo Tain'. This mountain is considered by geologists to be one of the

12 largest copper deposits in the world.

The various Indigenous communities surrounding the 75,000 hectares granted to Panacobre would be directly affected if the mining exploitation were to begin. During mining operations in the 1970s, communities were alarmed when the San Felix River, which originates at the base of the Cerro Colorado, brought thick mud down from the mountain contaminating other rivers and streams.

It is very probable that these waterways will be used to transport waste and toxic substances from mining sites which will undoubtedly affect the health of the Indigenous communities as well as the great diversity of animals that use the river daily.

The concerns of the Ngöbe-Buglé, of the peasant and social organizations, the church, human rights organizations and of the community in general, stem not only from previous experiences with mining at Cerro Colorado (which caused enormous environmental damage to the region) but also from experiences with other similar projects.

During the time when the San Felix River experienced contamination, negative environmental impacts were registered, including the appearance of dead fish, shrimp and other species along the river's shores. The river became so polluted that people were forced to stop bathing in its waters. The transnational corporations together with the national government worked to promote the mining project under the guise of development and progress and to generate an air of confusion among the Ngöbe-Buglé population.



After the San Felix River disaster an evaluation was conducted to assess the project's impact on the Ngöbe-Buglé. The tests were only carried out for two months, an insufficient period of time to draw any meaningful conclusions. The mining project itself, however will take anywhere from 25 to 50 years.

One of the largest impacts that renewed mining at Cerro Colorado will have on the local Indigenous people is loss of vast tracts of land which would further strain land rights issue in the region. With increased mining exploitation in the area, some Indigenous communities will undoubtedly be forced to relocate. According to Panacobre S.A., those affected by relocation will receive "just" reimbursements and will be allowed to return to their lands once the operation is finished.

It is estimated that in the Cerro Colorado area there are 1,380 million metric tons of copper mixed with traces of molybdenum, gold, silver, as well great quantities of sulfur found in pyrite. Annually, the mining project would extract 113 million metric tons of rock from Cerro Colorado out of an open air mine pit. The 26 million metric tons of waste produced by this extraction and transported in pipes toward the coast, does not include the waste produced during the processing of the minerals.

Rivers near the mine, like the Cuibora and the Tabasará will most likely provide the great quantity of water required for the large-scale mining exploitation. These rivers may also be used to construct a dam, as has been previously planned.

The Ngöbe-Buglé pointed out in testimony that "the construction of highways has created dangerous consequences, for example, the earth removed during the dry season due to the construction of the highway from Hato Chami to Nancito was washed into the rivers and streams by the rains which prevented the local communities from crossing. Landslides caused by the mining exploitation are also a threat.

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The Panacobre mining corporation has announced that after completing its pre-feasibility studies it has begun its feasibility studies in order to determine the construction costs of mining installations and later operations. These studies include a social and environmental impact report undertaken by two consultancy firms. The first being a Canadian firm, Hallam Knight Piesold and the other a Panamanian company, Panamanian Ecological Consultants

(Consultores Panamenos Ecologicos, S.A). The report, now in its second phase, includes the study of riverflows, the quality of water, the flora, vegetation, cultural characteristics of the areas' inhabitants and the fertility of the land.

Panacobre will employ mining technologies known as "lixiviacion en pilas", "solvent extraction" and "electro-deposition" which according to them are safe and environmentally sound

processes. During this new mining procedure, the rock fragments will be sprayed with a water and sulfuric acid solution which will travel in a closed maze of tanks and tubes, then the mixture will be passed on to a second tank where an organic solution will be added which separates copper. Finally, the mixture will be sent to a fourth tank where it will receive electrical charges to dislodge the copper onto a metal slab.

According to a communiqué from the Commission of Indigenous Affairs of the Legislative Assembly of Panama, as well as many other communiqués demanding the suspension of the project, mining at Cerro Colorado "represents a serious threat to the Ngöbe-Buglé people from the physical, social, cultural and environmental standpoint."

In the past year, various sectors have organized to battle against mining projects which threaten human and environmental survival, particularly the health of Indigenous people. Some examples of local organizing include: the Santeno Front Against Mining (Frente Santeno Contra la Minería) which was created in the Province of Los Santos last May; the National Front Against Mining (Frente Nacional de Lucha Contra la Minería) was founded in June in the Province of Panama; the Indigenous and Peasant Front Against Mining of Alto Bayano (the Frente Indígena y Campesino de Alto Bayano Contra la Minería) was formed last August in the Kuna community of Ibedi in Alto Bayano and the Province of Veraguas Front Against Mining (Provincia de Veraguas Frente Veraguense Contra la Minería) was also founded last August.

Mining activity has always been and continues to be a serious threat to the survival of Indigenous peoples. Mineral exploitation inevitably disrupts the unique symbiotic relationship which Indigenous people have with the land. Despite advanced technologies and impact assessment evaluations, there is no guarantee that these projects will not affect the ecosystem, the environment or its people. Mining is continually promoted as an alternative development that will benefit the Indigenous people in the area, when in reality the communities face relocation and displacement from their native land, and a host of illness which are an inevitable consequence of polluting mining activities.

*The author is a Kuna journalist who has contributed to numerous periodicals and publications and has co-produced various radio programs about Kuna issues. He also works with the Movimiento de la Juventud Kuna (Kuna Youth Movement).*

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be affected by the Carajas Project. The pressures to "develop" resources could herald major consequences for these communities as well as the biodiversity of the region.

**Chile:** Urbano Alfaro, a diver from a small fishing village in the region of Antofagasta, discussed the impact of the Minería Escondida Ltd, whose activities have led to contamination of the fish and shellfish they depend on for their living. The company boasts that it produces 80 thousand tons of copper per year, using the most advanced technology in the world. In his exposition, he added that the company fails to explain that no other country was willing to accept the plant due to the enormous environmental consequences. The treatment of the ore involves discharging into the sea highly toxic chemicals, which among other problems have raised the temperature of the waters and produced deformities, especially in prawns. The problems do not circumscribe themselves to the sea. The company transports these toxins right through the town in ordinary trucks which have had no modification. The villagers greatest fear is that in the event of a brake failure or crash, these chemicals will escape, contaminating the air, soil and even causing an explosion.

Again, at the World Bank Conference the company's representative concentrated on the economic benefits, highlighting that the production of "La Escondida" represents 6% of the total exported by the country. Furthermore, as there are plans for increasing production, Chile will become a world leader in the production of copper.

**Resolution:** Towards the end of the conference the delegates prepared a statement which was read out to the press during a speech in the Congress Press Office. The document, known as the "Declaración de Quito", rejects "mining activity in Latin America and the pernicious role of the World Bank in promoting and financing mining in the region". Delegates asserted "the right of Indigenous people and communities to continue their harmonious ways of life and decide their own destiny".

Nor were delegates in agreement with the Bank's macro-economic policy. "We

reject the neo-liberal model of the 'free market', which serves the interests of a global minority whose objective is the indiscriminate consumption of resources and which is bringing the millions of people surplus to the system to the edge of extinction", states the declaration.

The delegates also promised to carry out wide-ranging educational campaigns on individual and collective rights, and to strengthen the coordination of the struggle against mining at the local, national and regional level.



Their demands can be summarized as urging national governments to prioritize quality of life, food, security and environmental preservation above anything else., they requested that alternatives to mining should be sought and that all mining development money be channeled to other sectors of the economy managed by communities.

#### **World Bank Conference:**

Delegates from Latin American NGOs attending the World Bank Conference expressed their reservations about the event in a letter addressed to the President of the Bank, which was read out during their speeches in the final panel.

A strongly-worded letter was used by the delegates to express their disagreement with the organization of the event and the conclusions reached during discussions. Reading from a letter prepared by the group, Hector Huertas Gonzalez ( a Kuna from Panama) communicated the group's disappointment at the absence of a significant number of NGOs and community delegates. They felt the conference had not been able to reach an

understanding of the impact of mining at the local level.

To be more precise, they stated in the letter that out of the 40 delegates to the World Bank Conference there was just one Indigenous person, and he was from Canada and reflected in his speech experiences far removed from those of Latin Americans. In addition, representatives from Latin America had been unable to attend the workshop "Processes used during consultation" on the 7th of May due to the absence of a Spanish-English translator. This unfortunate example of how little the organizers had thought about the needs of delegates from the region happened not just once. On two more occasions and due to the same problem, Spanish-speaking delegates were left without any option but to abandon the discussions. As a result, they expressed doubts about the value of the consultation process instigated by the Bank, concluding that their participation was merely token. This is in marked contrast to a promise of "meaningful" participation made by the Bank in a letter addressed to the Latin America Project, dated April 18th. 🐦

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#### **UPDATE:**

*During the debate many farmers and Indigenous people spoke about their wishes to "see" the real extent of environmental deterioration that open-pit mining has produced in Peru, by far one of the worst case presented during the conference.*

*As a follow up to this request The Latin America Mining Monitoring Program (LAMMP) and Accion Ecologica are presently organizing an international exchange trip between farmers and Indigenous people from Ecuador and Peru. It is the intention of the group to visit in Peru the communities of Cerro de Pasco, Oroya and the city of Ilo and to offer international support to these communities.*



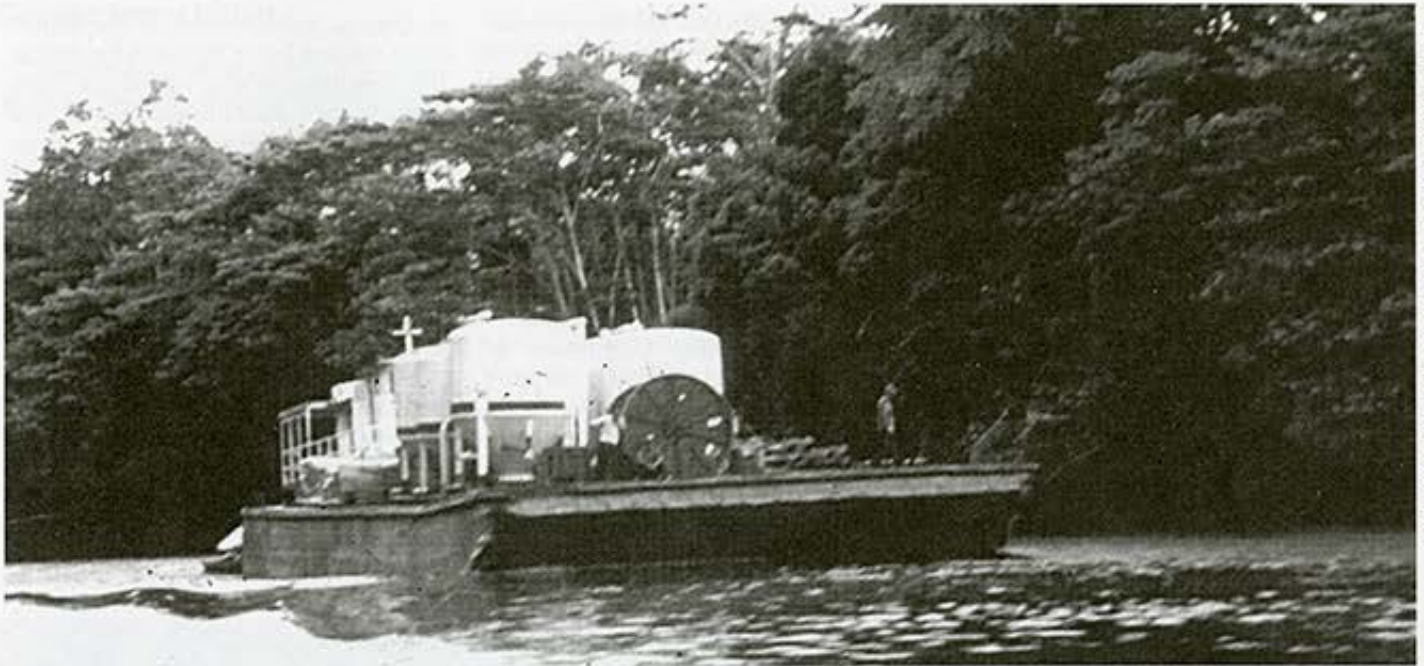


Photo: Enterprise/Perker/Som Fe pecking machinery up the Chambira river by Ritchie Witzig

**T**he Urarina, who call themselves "Kachá", meaning "the people," are a semi-nomadic Amazonian people who have inhabited the Chambira and Urituyacu river basins north of the Marañon river in Peru for at least 500 years. The Urarina and the Mayorunas (Matses) remain the largest untitled Amazonian Indigenous groups in Peru. However, the relative isolation of the Urarina has been interrupted as their traditional territory has been invaded by colonists, loggers, river traders, and drug-voyeur tourists. All of these groups have brought significant disease pressure on the Urarina that threatens their way of life and survival as documented in the article published in *Abya Yala News* Vol. 10, Number 2 (Summer 1996).

## **Urarina Survival Update: Continued Resource Exportation and Disease Importation by Foreigners and Newly Initiated by Multinational Oil Companies**

◆ by *Ritchie Witzig and Massiel Ascencios*

### **Resource Exploitation Update**

The most recent and grave threat to Urarina survival is disease importation caused by the three multinational oil companies who entered their territory in late January 1997 to build an oil drilling site for petroleum extraction.

The Urarina people live in a flood zone that is projected to have significant oil reserves. Three multinational oil companies began drilling from the Chambira oil field located at Santa Martha on the Chambira river. Santa Martha is an old Urarina community located in the heart



of Urarina land that was temporarily vacated due to the semi-nomadic nature of Urarina culture. The Chambira oil fields are part of Block 3 owned by Petroperu, the Peruvian national oil company, but the rights to drill directly on the Chambira river were transferred to Enterprise Oil Co., of Great Britain in 1996. The rights were sold because Petroperu did not have the capital to initiate drilling. Against the wishes of the public, the Peruvian government now wants to privatize Petroperu. The sale of the oil rights to Enterprise had the effect of privatizing the entire Chambira oil field without privatizing Petroperu.

Enterprise subcontracted Parker Oil Drilling Co. of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the Santa Fe Petroleum Co. of Lima, to drill the Santa Martha well. Construction of the oil field started in January, 1997 and by May 1, Enterprise/Parker/Santa Fe had drilled a complete well but fortunately did not encounter enough oil to warrant further exploration. The latest news is that the company has moved to lot 32, which is just northwest of their original site and is still deep in Urarina territory, to pursue further exploration in the next two years with a government contract.

**Spills Before Drills**

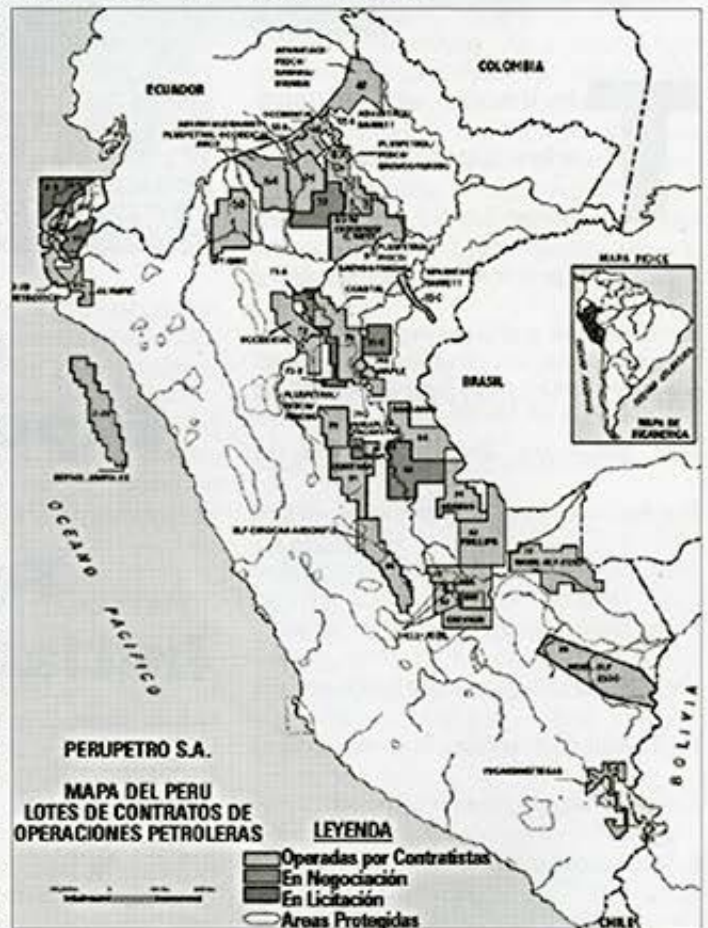
Even before they struck oil, there were ecological disasters. On April 30, 1997, the steel bottom of a barge bringing up supply oil was punctured by a huge capirona (*Calycophyllum* sp.) tree 10 kilometers from the oil well, causing oil contamination of the entire Chambira river downstream. The barge was then towed upstream, moored at Santa Martha, and surrounded by pylons attempting to control the oil leak (see Figure 1). One Urarina cacique (leader) in the Hormiga river off the Chambira complained that the fish entering his grounds had been contaminated from the oil, and were swimming into the Hormiga looking for fresh water. Amazonian river dolphins (*Inia geoffrensis*) which were numerous in the Chambira river basin have since noticed to be scarce from the main Chambira. This is certainly only the first of many barge leaks as this accident occurred when the river level was at flood stage in the rainy season. The Chambira is a nar-

row river, at times only 30 meters wide. In the dry season when the river is 10 meters lower there are certain to be more accidents of this type. There are no studies ongoing by the government, any NGO, or the oil companies of this impending ecological destruction.

**SIL and Missionary Control**

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL or ILV- Instituto Linguistico de Verano) used an impostor Urarina "leader" to help the oil companies create an appearance of legitimacy in their invasion of Urarina land. The SIL is an evangelical organization of amateur and professional linguists who attempt to influence the societies in which they work by translating the Bible into native languages. SIL has had a representative (Ronald Manus) living intermittently in the Urarina community of Nueva Esperanza for the past 30 years. The Urarina have retained their culture and spirituality despite SIL's attempt to influence them. As the outside agency with the longest domicilial experience in Urarina territory, the SIL has never tried to empower the Urarina in any way to protect their lands. Colby and Dennett's recent book about oil exploitation in the Amazon, "Thy Will be Done" has documented that the history of the SIL has been to help divide Indigenous peoples and even help oil companies enter Indigenous areas. When the oil companies needed to gain entrance into Urarina land, they received the necessary help from the SIL. SIL helped arrange a paper deal that "allowed" the oil companies access to Santa Martha that was signed by

an Urarina individual under the control of the SIL and living in Nueva Esperanza. This Urarina man who signed the documents is not a leader of the Urarina, and only represents himself. The total "compensation" to the Urarina nation from this "agreement" was a speedboat and monthly promises of gasoline given to the impostor "leader". The total effect was to give an extra speedboat to SIL. Unfortunately, it is difficult to undo a fraudulent "contract" as described above quickly, and it enables the oil companies to establish themselves while the legal defense of the Urarina is being organized. As they have done elsewhere in the Western Amazon, the SIL have again proven with the Urarina that Indigenous self-determination is exactly the opposite of their mission.



*Due to the recent widespread privatization of oil rights in Peru, the lot numbers have recently been changed. Oil exploration is currently taking place on lot 32 (formerly lot 8) in Urarina territory.*

Photo: www.ecojusticia.com.pe/PERUPETRO/IMAGES/AMPS



## Disease Importation

*Multinational oil exploration = Malaria, pertussis, and environmental contamination*

Oil drilling teams are renowned for transporting new strains of disease into territories they exploit. The oil exploration and drilling teams are based in the field with support offices in Iquitos and Lima, but their personnel are imported from various areas in Peru, the United States, and Europe. The Santa Fe Iquitos office use the small Nanay river port community of Santa Clara to load all their equipment onto barges for transport to the Chambira. Santa Clara is currently suffering the most intense and drug resistant *P. falciparum* epidemic of any area in Peru, as well as an outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough).

very real danger that resistant *P. falciparum* strains are being transported to the Chambira by the oil workers loading the supply barges in Santa Clara.

The Peruvian government has no health post in the entire Chambira river basin. The nearest health post is in Maypuco, more than 1 week by canoe from Urarina territory. Colonists on the lower Chambira have access to boats and motors which can shuttle sick persons to Maypuco and on to Iquitos. The Urarina have no transportation except canoes.

As of May 1997, the Peruvian non-governmental organization CEDIA (Centro Para el Desarrollo del Indígena Amazónico) had counted over 3,200 Urarina in the Chambira basin alone

oil workers will take away any hope of controlling the *P. falciparum* epidemic that is currently decimating the Urarina people. Implementation of Convention 169, of which Peru is a signatory nation (1994) would help to protect the cultural rights of the Urarina as well as legally title their land. Legal recognition of their territorial boundaries would lead to self determination for the Urarina giving them some recourse to protect their way of life. 🗳

*R. Witzig has performed medical surveys, disease treatment, supplied medicines, and trained Urarina village health workers (VHW) in basic medical and public health on seven separate trips to the Chambira basin since 1992, with a total of 13 months in the field. This continuing project which the author founded is the Amazonian Indigenous People's Health Project (AIPHP).*



Photo: Kichie Witzig

Pertussis appeared last February in the Chambira, after drilling had started- it was almost certainly brought by the oil teams. At least seven persons died from the two villages around Santa Martha. The Urarina have not received the DTP vaccine which protects from pertussis, and pertussis can be among the most lethal diseases in children with multiple infections.

Over sixty percent of the *P. falciparum* strains in Santa Clara near to Iquitos are resistant to chloroquine and pyrimethamine/sulfadoxine, the two cheapest and most used drugs against *P. falciparum* in Peru. The *P. falciparum* strains in the Chambira river still respond to pyrimethamine /sulfadoxine, but supplies are small and infrequent. There is a

(there are also Urarina in the Uritiyacu river and in affluents of the Corrientes river). The final number will likely include over 4,000 individuals, a large number for a remote Amazonian people.

Even though it has only just begun, the oil exploitation in Urarina territory has resulted in both serious health impacts and environmental degradation. If it continues at this pace, the cultural, biological, and ecological effects of oil exploration on the Urarina will likely be irreversible. The Urarina do not marry outside their group and sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS are not yet a problem in the communities. Cultural breakdown from exposure to oil workers may alter this trend. New drug resistant strains of malaria brought in by

*The author has documented the epidemics of measles, acute respiratory illnesses, cholera, and malaria affecting the Urarina. His previous trip in May, 1997, found one of the three VHW's dead from malaria, and widespread malaria in the entire Chambira basin. This was the first trip after the oil drilling started, and all of the Urarina communities were traumatized by the incursion of heavy equipment into their river. The pertussis epidemic in the communities around the oil drilling site was documented, which the oil workers likely introduced. Seven Urarina had died of pertussis in those villages alone since February 1997. The author is the only person (domestic or foreign) to work with the Urarina to document and treat their medical problems. The authors are currently working on malaria projects in Iquitos, Peru.*



Photo: Edgar R. Ayala

# Environmental Racism: The US Nuclear Industry And Native Americans

◆ by *Ulla Lehtinen*

THIS ARTICLE ALSO APPEARED IN THE INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK NEWS, VOL. 3, ISSUE 3

**F**or decades, the United States has mined Native American lands for uranium and has tested nuclear weapons on them. Some 75 percent of the country's uranium reserves lie under native lands — lands once considered so worthless that the authorities did not mind designating them as reservations — while all nuclear testing within the United States has been carried out on native lands.

Children now play on radioactive waste from the mines simply left where it was piled up. Some of the waste has been used to build houses or schools. In many areas, the death rate among children is higher than among the miners. In New Mexico, Arizona and South Dakota, radiation from uranium mining tailings has contaminated water resources. The Shoshone have fought for decades to end nuclear testing on their land in the Nevada desert which has exposed them to levels of radiation many times higher than that generated by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War.

Now the authorities want to dump nuclear waste on native lands as well. Two proposals are currently being mooted: a high-level radioactive dump on Yucca Mountain in the lands of the Shoshone in Nevada; and a low level

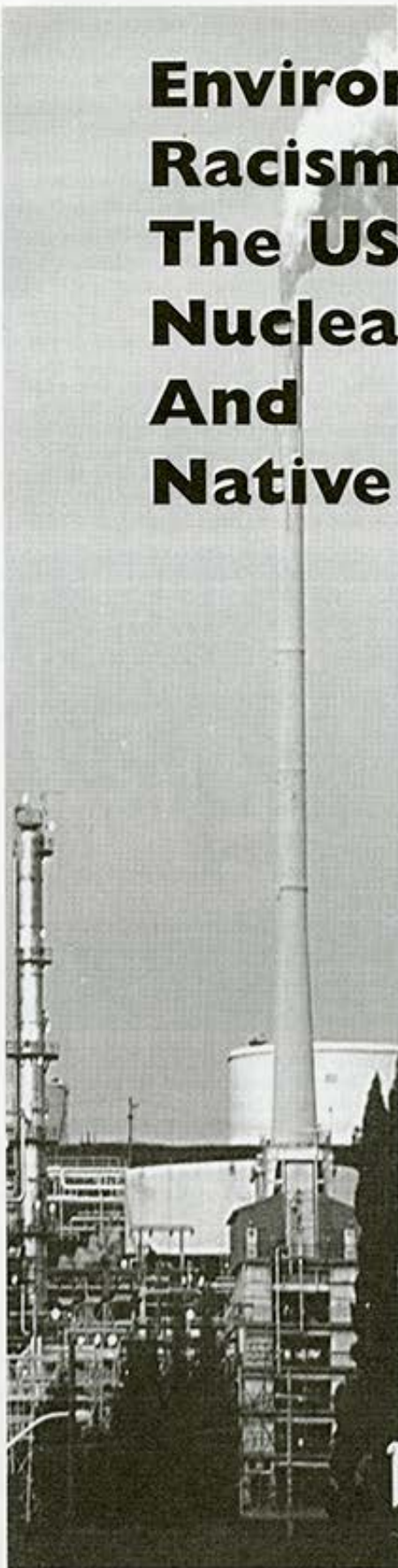
radioactive waste dump in Ward Valley in the California Mojave desert, an area which is sacred for five native peoples, the Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Quechan, Cocopah and Colorado River Indians.

An estimated 30,000 tons of nuclear waste are in temporary storage in the US., either in underwater pools or in steel and concrete casks, at 109 nuclear reactors across the country. But these stores are almost full. Some plants may have to shut down within the next few years unless more storage space is found. There is no central facility in the US for handling, processing, storing or disposing of nuclear waste.

The nuclear industry is attempting to force the national government — specifically the Department of Energy — to take responsibility for nuclear waste, but the department maintains it does not have the capacity to do so. It is however, mandated to "provide" a central underground storage site for the country's entire stock of high-level nuclear waste. The only candidate it has come up with is Yucca Mountain.

Millions of dollars have been spent studying the safety of burying nuclear waste at Yucca, the results of which are anything but promising. Located in a volcanic area and potential earthquake zone, the proposed site is also near ground water. Even though the site has not been approved as an underground nuclear waste dump, further studies have been commissioned and its opening has been postponed until 2010 at the earliest, several proposals currently going through the US Senate and Congress aim to send radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain from 1998 onwards. If approved, this waste would simply sit in the nuclear equivalent of a parking lot without adequate controls or equipment.

Beside the permanent site of Yucca Mountain, the Department of Energy has also suggested 21 temporary dump sites in the US for high-level waste, 18 of which are on native lands. Large sums of money have been offered to "persuade" the various tribes to accept these proposals; so far all but two nations, the Goshute and the Paiute-Shoshone, have refused. In neither of these two cases did the Tribal Council put the decision to the





tribe as a whole. Probably for good reason: previously the Goshute rejected a proposed toxic waste incinerator on their lands and decided to start a recycling business instead, while, in a survey of the Paiute-Shoshone, tribal members opposed the nuclear dump by 4 to 1.

The government and nuclear industry are also forging ahead with plans for the low-level radioactive waste dump in Ward Valley in the California Mojave desert. Despite misleading terminology, low-level radioactive waste contains the same ingredients as high-level waste; the half-life of some low level waste is tens of thousands of years. The waste would be placed in steel drums inside sealed plastic or steel containers and then buried in shallow, unlined trenches.

The proposed dump is right above a major aquifer and about 30 Kilometers from the Colorado River which flows through the valley on its way to Mexico. Scientists of the US Geological Survey warn that leaking radioactivity may end up in the river. Even the National Academy of Science's Board on Radioactive Management has recommended further safety studies. The river and its canals bring drinking water to over 20 million people in Los Angeles to

the west and Phoenix and Tucson to the south, as well as providing water for agriculture and cattle.

In Beatty, Nevada, an existing dump, similar in design to the proposed Ward Valley site and also in a desert, has started to leak and contaminate ground water, even though it is only 20 years old.

Ward Valley is in the midst of eight designated wilderness areas and is a protected area because it encompasses the few remaining habitats for the endangered desert tortoise. The valley is also sacred to five native peoples of the area. Their ancestors have walked there, their ancestors are buried there and their spirits still roam there. It is their church and graveyard. The Mojave believe they are guardians of the land, caretakers of the water and neighbors of the desert animals. If the Colorado River dies, the Mojave believe they will disappear as well. Together with the other native peoples of the area, the Mojave have organized protests and ceremonies in the area. They have set up a permanent camp on the proposed dump site where some of the elders stay. Corbin Harney, a Shoshone Elder and healer, said:

"This nuclear power is always taken to native Lands. First it's mined

from there and now the native lands are turned into dump sites. They take our water, then the poison is hurting all living things there. I don't really appreciate what the government is doing. They know it is dangerous but still they move nuclear waste through roads to seas. We the people should be out there at the front. That's why we have asked the non-Indian people to stop the government. Not only here but everywhere: in England, Puerto Rico, Russia—we should really unite! We in Nevada have too much mining and chemicals that go to the water table...In my part of the country, we saw that nuclear radiation was making our lives shorter. I've seen children born without legs: I've seen cats born with just two legs. I've seen a lot of humans die of diseases caused by radiation... Everybody has been polluting [this land] and everybody has to pitch in and make things better. If we continue to destroy things, than nobody will be able to survive at all. If we don't start working together to clean up the planet soon, there won't be anyone left to clean up our messes tomorrow. We have to unite to understand what nuclear energy does." 🐦





DAUGHTERS OF ABYA YALA

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## Bolivia, a mining country, hosting Women and Mining Conference in 2000

In January 1997, women from all over the world involved in mining met in Baguio City, Philippines for the First International Women and Mining Conference. Women, particularly Indigenous women, have long been uniquely affected by and involved in the mining that goes on in their countries. With the expansion of large scale mining and its inevitable dependence on the global market, women have been faced with changes to the organization of their societies, their economic systems, their interpersonal relationships, their natural environments as well as the health of themselves and their children. Despite their hardships and sacrifices, Indigenous women have often been invisible in the mining world.

In many countries local women's groups and community organizations formed to confront the reality of the effects of mining on their cultures and the environment and to come up with ways to reverse the negative effect that mining had on their lives at the individual, familial and community level. These organizations began to see more and more the need to interact with other like-minded organizations at a regional and international level. The NGO, Minewatch (England) was instrumental in forming an international network of women mine workers to coordinate with one another and share information.

Minewatch, together with the Women Workers Program, organized and hosted the First International Women and Mining Conference in the Philippines, the first of its kind. Representing their organizations, unions and Indigenous communities, women from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Pacific and North America shared their experiences of multinational mining and discussed ways to resist its threats to their lives and communities. The delegates developed strategies for collaborating and supporting each other. Responding to the urgency of their needs, the delegates decided to organize regional events after the Conference and to strengthen their existing networks.

Plans are now under way for the Second International Women and Mining Conference to be hosted by CEPROMIN (Centro de Promocion Minera) in Bolivia in 2000. The organization hopes to bring 50 delegates representing all of the continents. The objectives of the Second International Conference are: to discover the shared and the particular situation and specific problems of the women in mining zones around the world, to facilitate the exchange of information concerning the impact of mining, and to denounce human rights violations, both territorial and culture, as well as the ecological disasters and health ramifications of mining activities. Other goals are to utilize the shared creativity of all those present to come up with tactics to improve the conditions of life in mining zones, and to establish links between organizations and between the countries to work on common issues and to negotiate before the pertinent organizations at the governmental and international levels.

The themes of the Second International Conference On Women and Mining will be those issues of central concern to the women and their organizations. These concerns relate to the changes at the global level in regard to mining exploitation, the informal and invisible work of women mineworkers (related to the global tendency to informalize and undervalue the contributions of women's work, following the model of domestic labor), the conditions of life, health and education, and the effects of the expansion of mining into new areas and its real impact on the ecosystem and the culture).

Bolivia, the site of the upcoming conference, is a country with a long history of mining. Its inhabitants have seen first hand the extraordinary impact of mining on the politics, environment and socio-economic dynamic of this country. The organizations in Bolivia have fought for decades for their survival, their rights and their dignity despite the massacres and militarization of their communities. CEPROMIN has extensive documentation of the severe health effects of mining on Indigenous women in Bolivia. Native women miners suffer respiratory illnesses, skin diseases, muscular afflictions and die young from the compounded polluting effects of life in the mines.

*Information from CEPROMIN, Mujeres y Minería Hacia la Segunda Conferencia Internacional. For more information: contact CEPROMIN (tel) 00591-2 35 94 02 (fax) 00591-2 37 39 83 (e-mail) cepromin@caoba.entelnet.bo*





Photo: SAIC archives

# **BOLIVIA: Indigenous people fight for forest**

**An alliance among local communities, Indigenous groups and non-governmental organizations faces off against a major logging company.**

◆ —by *Jaime Grant* | REPRINTED FROM NOTICIAS ALIADAS, VOL. 35, NO. 5, FEB. 12, 1998

In a bid to protect their livelihoods, the Indigenous communities of the Pilon Lajas Indigenous Territory and Biosphere Reserve in Bolivia's northern Beni department have united against one of the area's biggest logging companies. The Chimane, Mosekene and Tacana peoples have joined forces with the Rurrenabaque municipal government and Veterinarians Without Borders (VSF), a French NGO which oversees administration of Pilon Lajas, to ban the Berna logging company from the reserve.



"We want the authorities to throw out the logging companies, so they leave the territory for good,"

**"THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE PILÓN LAJAS AREA, DESIGNATED AS AN INDIGENOUS TERRITORY AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE IN 1991, DEPENDS ON WHETHER OR NOT THE LOGGING INDUSTRY IS CONTROLLED"**

or not the logging industry is controlled," said Daniel Robinson, national coordinator of VSF. Bolivia's forest reserves are considered among the world's richest, with more than 2,500 species of trees.

The coalition against Berna say that the company, along with hoards of independent loggers, is steadily deforesting the supposedly protected area. "They are tearing out various timber species, mainly mahogany, and selling them for excellent prices," Soto said. In addition, Mosetene representative Macario Canare said, "For every mahogany trunk they take out, they cut down 70 more trees getting to it."

Logging also threatens traditional hunting grounds on which Indigenous communities depend for their livelihood. "The loggers hunt animals in the jungle for food, and the sound of their machines scares many more away," Canare said.

Bolivia's forestry law, passed in 1996, allows the government to lease forests to private companies in 40-year concessions, providing regulations governing sustainable forest management are fol-

lowed. The law gives Indigenous people the exclusive right to use forest resources on communal land in territory reserved for Indigenous groups. Protected areas include more than 9.5 million hectares, while Indigenous areas amount to about 1 million hectares. In contrast, more than 21 million hectares have been granted in forestry concessions (NA July 18, 1996).

"The success or failure of the Pilon Lajas area, designated as an Indigenous territory and biosphere reserve in 1991, depends on whether

lowed. The law gives Indigenous people the exclusive right to use forest resources on communal land in territory reserved for Indigenous groups. Protected areas include more than 9.5 million hectares, while Indigenous areas amount to about 1 million hectares. In contrast, more than 21 million hectares have been granted in forestry concessions (NA July 18, 1996).

"The lumber companies and independent loggers are taking away trees that we have title to, without giving anything in return to the communities," Soto said. Robinson and the Indigenous peoples of Pilon Lajas argue that local communities should at least get a percentage of loggers' profits. The Indigenous communities have created a precedent of resistance and some headway has been made in defending Pilon Lajas. In 1996, VSF sued the Bella Vista and El Pino logging companies for working without contracts, and they were forced to suspend operations, the first time such action had ever been taken. A third company, Selva Negra, left the area voluntarily.

Berna, the largest company remaining in Pilon Lajas, is proving hard to dislodge. Robinson said VSF lawyers have "extensive evidence that the company's logging practices do not comply with the forestry law." For example, Berna has not begun the reforestation program detailed in its original contract, and its employees continue to hunt for food, although hunting is prohibited.

"It is everyone's fervent hope that Berna will be thrown out, but they are very powerful here," Robinson said. The logging industry is important to the local economy, and

many people want Berna to stay.

Rurrenabaque, a frontier settlement on the Beni River, thrives on the extraction of mahogany from Pilon Lajas. Most of the town is built from second-rate mahogany, and it is an open secret that the local sawmill cuts illegally harvested wood into commercial planks.

Despite its shortcomings, the new forestry law has started to control the flow of wood from the area. By allowing people to make a living from logging, but regulating the industry through forest inventories and extraction plans, the area could have a more sustainable future. "People have realized that by limiting their output they can still make good money. Since the volume has dropped in Rurrenabaque, the price of lumber has almost doubled," Robinson said. But these small advances are threatened by large-scale, unsustainable operations like Berna's in Pilon Lajas.

"If [Berna] isn't thrown out, then the whole thing will fall through. Independent loggers will say, 'If they're not going to make the big guys leave the protected areas, then why should we [leave]?' Robinson said.

Despite the obstacles, the Indigenous communities in Pilon Laja are determined to protect the reserve. "It's our right to protect our territory," Canare said. "If we can't control it, and if this logging doesn't stop, we lose the future we are fighting for."



**"FOR EVERY MAHOGANY TRUNK THEY TAKE OUT, THEY CUT DOWN 70 MORE TREES GETTING TO IT."**



## Second International Indigenous Forum On Biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity Workshop

THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IS THE FIRST INTERNATIONALLY BINDING AGREEMENT LOOSELY REQUIRING ITS 165 MEMBER NATIONS TO SUSTAINABLY USE THE WORLD'S BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. THE AGREEMENT WAS OPENED FOR SIGNATURE IN JUNE 1992 AT THE EARTH SUMMIT IN RIO DE JANEIRO, AND HAD RECEIVED 168 SIGNATURES BY JUNE 4 OF 1993.

**F**rom November 20-23, Indigenous people from around the world met at the Second International Forum on Biodiversity in Madrid, Spain to prepare a proposal for the Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Workshop, which was held from Nov. 24th to the 28th. The Workshop focused on the implementation of Article 8j, as planned at the third Conference of Parties (COP) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the previous year in November 1996.

What follows is the proposal drafted by the Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and submitted to the Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity. The results from the International Indigenous forum will be presented to the Fourth Conference of Parties in Bratislava, Slovakia, in May of 1998.

### Working document on the implementation of article 8j. and related articles

#### PREAMBLE

*Indigenous Peoples come from the land and have been given our life through the land. We do not relate to the land that we came from as property, we relate to the land as our Mother. That the land is our Mother cannot be denied, just as it cannot be denied that our human mother is our mother. In this respect we as Indigenous Peoples have responsibilities to honor and nurture our Earth to ensure that she can continue to give us life. Our role and responsibility is to protect our Mother Earth from destruction and abusive treatment, just as we would defend our human mother. In carrying out this responsibility over a period of thousands of years, we have become a central component of the biodiversity of the Earth.*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELEMENTS FOR THE FORMULATION OF A WORK PROGRAM

1. Ensure that the implementation of article 8j, and related articles, take into consideration the existing Indigenous declarations and proposals, including the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Kari Oca Declaration, the Mataatua Declaration, the Santa Cruz Declaration, the Leticia Declaration and Plan of Action, the Treaty for a Life Forms Patent Free Pacific, the Ukupeni Kuna Yala Declaration, and previous statements of Indigenous Forums convened at previous CBD/COP and intersessional meetings.

2. Ensure Indigenous Peoples' full and meaningful participation in the implementation of article 8j. and related articles: a) recognize Indigenous Peoples as Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity b) adopt the recommendation of the Second International Indigenous Forum to establish an Indigenous Peoples' Working Group c) involve the Indigenous Peoples' Working Group in the interpretation and implementation of article 8j. and related articles, including the monitoring of the compliance of the Parties to the Convention to their obligations under the Convention d) develop mechanisms to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation in decision making processes at the international level (UN, COP, IFF, etc.) e) develop mechanisms to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation in decision making processes at the national level, including the development and implementation of legislation, environmental action plans and impact studies f) develop mechanisms to ensure the full participation of Indigenous Peoples in State Parties' strategies to designate and manage protected areas g) incorporate the right to objection in all mechanisms

to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation h) incorporate the right to free and prior informed consent in all mechanisms to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation.

3. Develop mechanisms to ensure the full and equal participation of Indigenous women in all processes related to the implementation of the Convention, and support the unique responsibilities of Indigenous women in the caring of their traditional lands and territories and the protection of biodiversity.

4. Develop mechanisms and processes to ensure Indigenous Peoples' control over lands and territories to affect the protection and enhancement of biodiversity: a) recognize the inalienable a priori rights of Indigenous Peoples b) recognize the relationship that exists between the lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge, innovations and practices relating to biodiversity c) develop processes to repatriate the lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples.

5. Incorporate indigenous customary resource uses, management and practices into sustainable development plans, policies and processes at international and national levels, recognizing transboundary issues important to Indigenous Peoples: a) encourage multilateral institutions, international agencies, research institutions and non-government organizations to involve indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices related to the use and management of resources in their plans and programs b) establish an indigenous global biodiversity monitoring system based on early warning systems using indigenous knowledge with the backing of satellite technology and geographic information systems c) require the incorporation of indigenous perspectives and social and cultural

*Continued on page 35*



# Chiapas: Massacre in Acteal

by Crystal Echolhawk

## The Nightmare and Hope for Tomorrow

*"Acteal is the symbol of a war of extermination, the true government response to the just demands of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico. But Acteal is also the symbol of the struggle of two efforts: that of the government which seeks to make impunity and forgetfulness triumph; and that of civil society, which demands true justice and refuses to forget the worst crime of the last 30 years. And the struggle for memory and justice is the struggle for a just peace."*

*-Communique from the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, January 12, 1998*

These words from a recent Zapatista communiqué succinctly sum up the situation in Chiapas since the December 22, 1997 massacre of 45 Tzotzil Indians in the village of Acteal. What is clear from these few lines, and recent evidence, is that the massacre at Acteal was not an isolated incident, nor was it the product of inter-community conflict as the Mexican government would like us to believe. It was a carefully planned act executed by the hired gunmen of local PRI bosses, and in complicity with state and even federal authorities. Despite all their rhetoric, the Mexican government cannot hide the truth that Acteal was the outgrowth of a larger framework of violence and terror created by the more than 60,000 Mexican troops in Chiapas, and by government sponsored paramilitary groups who have acted with impunity for more than 3 years. The sole intention of the Mexican government's campaign since 1994 has been to repress Indigenous peoples and their rights and hopes for a new Mexico.

Despite the silence of mainstream media outside of Mexico, the blood of the Indigenous has not stopped flowing, nor

has the terror and military stranglehold on the communities in Chiapas ceased. The Mexican government's low-intensity war that has already claimed the lives of more than 1500 people since 1994, continues. Thirty-three Zapatista communities have born the brunt of at least 44 armed and illegal incursions by federal troops since December 22nd. In all of these cases, soldiers ransacked homes looking for weapons, interrogated and even tortured some residents in their search for the Zapatista leadership and insurgents. On January 12th, State Security police opened fire on protesters in Ocosingo, killing a 25 year old Indigenous woman and wounding her baby. In addition three Zapatista sympathizers were found hung weeks later. For all the government rhetoric regarding the efforts to bring the guilty of Acteal to justice, one must ask why the federal army insists upon terrorizing Indigenous communities under the pretext of looking for weapons, when the pro-government paramilitary groups and the Mexican military remain free and are allowed to conduct the business of dirty low-intensity war as usual.

The answer is clear-while the Mexican government talks peace it makes war. It makes war because it can not and will not implement the San Andres Agreements on Indigenous Rights and Culture. These unfulfilled peace accords, signed by both the Zapatistas and the Federal government in 1996, pose a tremendous threat and contradiction to the current reality of power and economic globalization in Mexico under the PRI. The implementation of the San Andres Agreements, the product of the dialogue and consensus of representatives of the fifty-six different Indigenous nations in Mexico and the Zapatistas, would give the more than 12 million Indigenas in México the right to self-determination and autonomy. It would represent a historic and unprece-

dent step towards redefining the relationship of the Mexican state to Indian peoples, and would give Indian peoples the right to implement their own forms of self-governance. Such rights would inevitably lead to broader participation of Indians peoples in the policies that affect their communities. The agreements would also give Indian peoples the right to control their lands and the resources within them, as well as the right to retain and nurture their diverse cultures, histories and languages. Finally it would open the door to broader and more profound changes within the nation as a whole and allow for the possibility of a new Mexico, in partnership with the Indigenous and all Mexican peoples.

The San Andres Agreements were designed to end the continued oppression, marginalization and exploitation of Indigenous peoples that colonization brought to the Americas. Yet it is clear that the Mexican government has too much to lose by acknowledging the legitimacy of the Zapatistas demands for a life of dignity in Mexico-land, housing, work, food, education, health care, autonomy, democracy, liberty, justice and peace.

First it would be an admission that neoliberal economic policies, codified in NAFTA, have not helped the extreme levels of poverty and misery suffered by the majority in Mexico. Secondly, the Mexican government would jeopardize its ability and access to strategic natural resources within rich Indigenous lands, such as those in Chiapas. For example, Chiapan oil accounts for 81.2% of Mexico's crude exports, 68.6% of its petroleum derivatives and 90.6% of its petrochemicals. Chiapas also produces 55% of Mexico's hydroelectricity and contains 20% of its bio-diversity in the Lacandon jungle. Finally, to justly meet the demands of the Indigenous peoples would not mean making minor adjust-

*Continue on page 35*



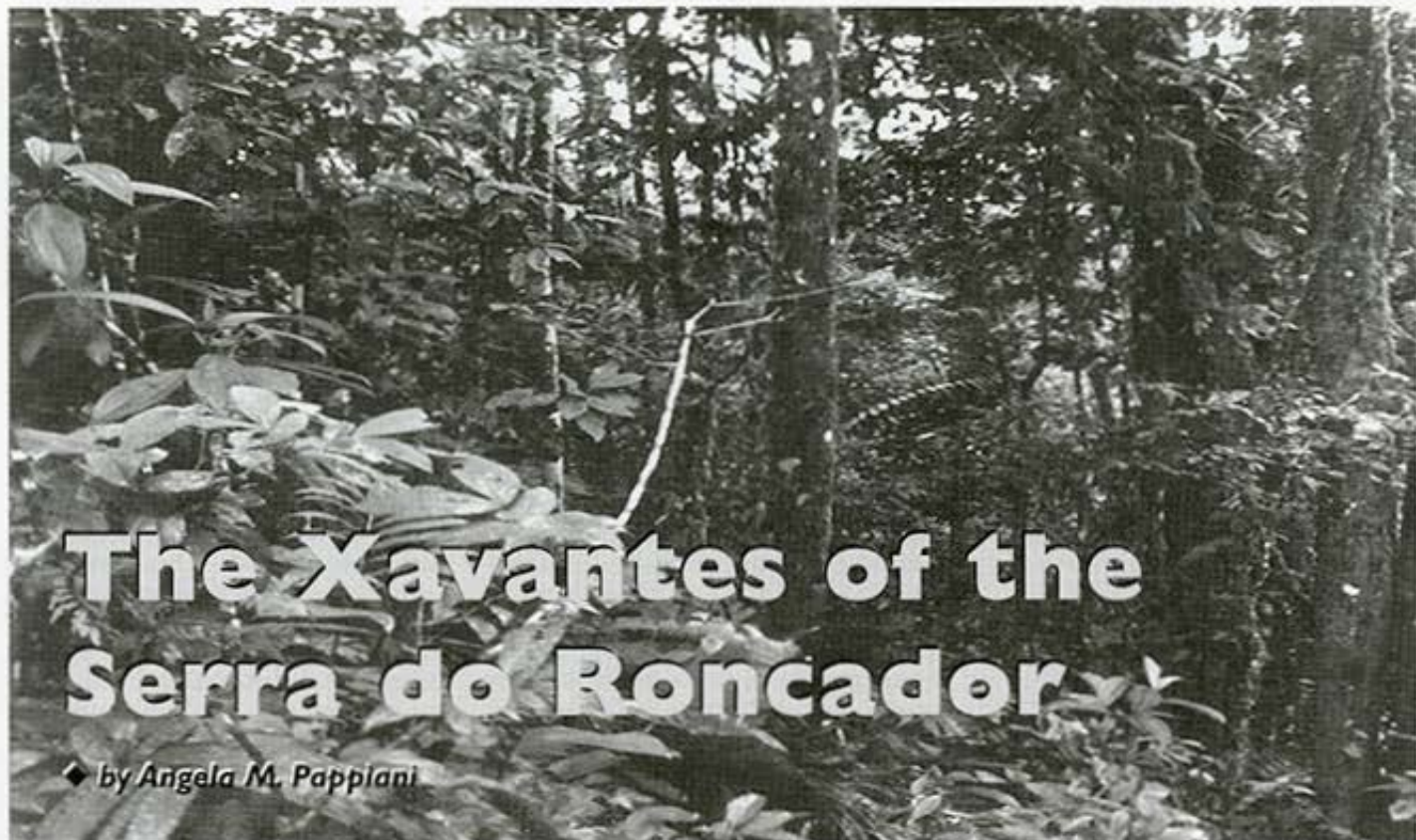


Photo: SMIL archive

# The Xavantes of the Serra do Roncador

◆ by Angela M. Pappiani

For centuries, perhaps even millions of years, the Xavante people, like other Indigenous people around the world, have been developing a different way of being in the world, building their own unique identity, their own unique culture.

They have learned from the stories, passed down by their ancestor from a time immemorial, how to think about the world and how to relate to everything that exists around them, alive and mysterious. They have learned to move between the vast countryside and the dense forests, learning about each animal, each plant, each star and constellation, each movement of the sky, and the river, in complete harmony and connection with everything around them. Taking from nature - and returning - everything that they need for survival: food, shelter, color and beauty, medicine

for the body and spirit.

The unique Xavante identity is marked by the haircuts that distinguish them from any other nation in the world, by their rich and sophisticated language, by the custom of removing eyelashes and eyebrows, by the richly elaborate body paintings done for each ceremony, by the songs that emerges from dreams, by the unique dances and games that unites the people in strong, unified movements, capable of shaking the ground of the forest. This is the people of Auwe Uptabi, true people, Xavante people of the Serra do Roncador.

The first encounter with the "warazu" - whites - occurred 2 centuries ago, when they entered the central-eastern part of Brazil in search of gold and precious stones. After a tentative coexistence with the whites, that ended in ambush and massacre of hundreds of Xavantes, the Auwe people decided to avoid contact with the "warazu". They retreated deep into the forests, seeking out in their traditional territories places that had not yet been invaded.

For close to two hundred years, they had lived in relative peace, with a few confrontations, but still maintaining their autonomy. By the beginning of the 1940's, new attacks from the invaders, now much more aggressive and well organized, brought warfare, death and suffering to the Auwe Uptabi.

The past 50 years have been a period of danger, threats and fear. But this hunting people have learned how to cope with the predators that have continued to invade their territories again and again. In looking for ways to maintain peace, to pacify the "warazu", they learned how to create new forms of coexistence and survival.

The great chief Ahopoen, leader of this Xavante community, guided his people through contact, believing that peace with the whites would be the only way to ensure the survival of the Auwe people. These warriors decided to control their territories with complete autonomy, decided to present themselves to the "warazu" through their own culture.



Cars, with their strange and continuous tracks on the ground, are no longer a mystery to the Xavante people. The youth of the village learn to drive Toyotas, trucks and tractors with ease. Technology such as video cameras, recorders, solar panels, radio transmitters does not frighten them. They are confident in their capabilities, ancestral memory and sophisticated analytical reasoning.

The village of Pimentel Barbosa, which was first contacted over 50 years ago, has been able to successfully maintained its traditions by resisting the entrance of missionaries, government agencies and interference from the outside world. With the strong leadership of the great chief Ahopoe, this village has created strategies to maintain a peaceful coexistence with the "warazu." They decided to choose a group of youth to leave the village to study and live with the whites, to learn the language and customs, returning later, possessing this knowledge, to work inside the community and strengthen the traditions of the culture.

In the 1980's, with the continuing disappearance of animals for hunting, the elders voiced their concerns about the future of the people and the traditions. With the help of the knowledge gained by the youth, who had been prepared in the "world of the warazu," the Xavantes created the Jaburu Project, a research and management project set up to guarantee the continuance of hunting in the territory now enclosed by ranches.

In the last 4 years, The Xavantes, in partnership with the "Núcleo de Cultura Indígena" (an Indigenous NGO), launched the first Indigenous music CD in Brazil - "Etenhiritipá - Traditional Songs of the Xavante." The record was recorded in the village, with professional equipment, and the songs were registered in the name of the village, guaranteeing the payment directly to the authors. Several additional projects came out of the Xavante's first CD. One was a collaboration with the rock band Sepultura on their latest record "Roots." A successful music video was also created to publicize the Etenhiritipá record, and was exhibited at Indigenous film festivals in the United States, Mexico and Europe.

Even with all these contacts from the exterior world, the young men continue to be traditionally prepared in HO (the singles house) for years. They maintain close contact with their godfathers and continue to learn the ancestral traditions. They are taught in this way until the time when their ears are pierced, marking the transition from a child to an adult, and their entrance into the life of a warrior.

During their apprenticeship, the young men follow the animal tracks in their hunting games. They participate in the solidarity game which requires running with large palm tree logs, and also in the secret initiation ceremonies where the real world ceases to exist.

Maybe it is difficult for outsiders to understand the complexities of the contemporary Xavante culture. The clothes, the t-shirts and caps with English inscriptions that no one reads or understands, the machines that FUNAI (the Brazilian government agency for Indigenous people) left when they tried to create an Indigenous development project there... These things mean nothing when the elders join together everyday, to greet the arrival and the departure of the sun, to exchange their impressions of the world on a daily basis, to discuss the path to the future. The "wará", the advice from the adult males, is the strongest institution in the village and is responsible for giving direction and continuing the daily traditions.

It is here that the elders discuss the confrontation between the Xavante community and the culture of "progress." This conflict can be seen at the "Rio das Mortes" (River of Death), a drainage channel from the neighboring ranches and a exportation corridor for Mercosul. For the Xavante people, the river is the fountain of life, of stories and histories, and must remain full of fish, sheltering and feeding many animals, people,

plants, memories. A human being alive, with a past and a future, this is the way of Auwe Uptabi.

In partnership with the Núcleo de Cultural Indígena, the Xavante people are organizing a big event for the middle of 1998, called "Xavante - 50 Years of Contact." This work has reunited various generations from the villages, the elders who participated in the contact with the "warazu" in 1946 and the youth and children that have already mastered [western] writing and drawing skills. Everyone has been working together with the recorders and video cameras and participating in the effort to register the history of this period for the present and for the future.

This event will bring together photographs of the initial contact between the Xavantes and the "warazu," along with original drawings, texts, and objects. A group of 25 warriors will give

singing and dancing performances and traditional rituals and ceremonies will be presented as well. Also on the agenda are plans to make a documentary, a bilingual book in Xavante/Portuguese and a CD ROM.

The Xavante people of Pimentel Barbosa live in an Indigenous reserve called "Rio das Mortes," that shelters 3 other villages in the state of Mato Grosso, in central-eastern Brazil. Six more reserves of the Xavante people still exists, approximately totaling 60 villages and a population of more than 4 thousands Indians.

*The author works with Núcleo de Cultural Indígena in Sao Paulo, Brasil.*

*For more information and the purchase of postcards and CD's, please contact: Núcleo de Cultural Indígena, Rua Roquete Pinto 381, Previdência - S. Paulo, Brasil, Phone/Fax: 5511-8131754, E-mail: nci@ax.apc.org*



Traditional style dwellings in a Xavante village.

Photo: Belo Borges



*An Interview with*  
**Alberto Andrango**  
**BILINGUAL INTERCULTURAL  
 EDUCATION IN ECUADOR**



Photo: Courtesy of DINEIB

**A** long-standing objective of Indigenous organizations is to rejuvenate and preserve local culture. Fortunately, there is an increasing movement towards bilingual intercultural education which aims to promote and develop Indigenous languages and cultures and make them part of the national culture in their respective countries.

Born of this movement are a number of efforts in Ecuador attempting to develop the country's Indigenous education through new pedagogical techniques suitable to the 13 Indigenous peoples. This project has a considerable history developing outside of any official protocol, but it has recently gained official status as the Intercultural Bilingual Education Initiative, el Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (EIB).

In the fifties, the SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) and the Andean Mission developed projects involving Indigenous education. However, the

principal objective of these projects was to proselytize the Indians. By the 1960's, under the direction of Mr. Leonidas Proano, bilingual education was addressed by Ecuador's Public Educational Radio Program which had audiences into the Sierra. In the seventies the Shuar System of Radio Education (SERBISH) was implemented in other Indigenous schools in the Bolivar, Cotopaxi and Napo provinces.

The experiences gleaned from these predecessors made way for the creation of a formal Indigenous educational program. The Intercultural Bilingual Education Initiative, was established in 1986 with the signing of a contract between GTZ of Germany and the Ecuadorian Government. They elaborated a tentative curriculum, didactic materials in Quichua for primary schools, and designed programs providing training and support to rural organizations for the purpose of educational and cultural promotion.

The following is an interview we conducted with the director of the National office of Bilingual Intercultural Education, (Direccion Nacional de educación Intercultural Bilingüe-DINEIB), Alberto Andrango. Mr. Andrango is a Quichua and has had considerable experience working in the field of education. He also was the vice-president of what is now the National Federation of

Indigenous and Black Workers of Ecuador (FENOCIN).

**In what year was the DINEIB created? Why was it necessary to create the DINEIB? What are some other confederations and organizations that participate in and contribute to the political activities and administration of the DINEIB? How is the DINEIB structured?**

The DINEIB was created in November of 1988, but local, regional, provincial and national Indigenous organizations had been demanding its formation for years. In 1988, CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) played a very important role by launching a proposal for the education of Indigenous peoples. It was a proposal generated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous professors and educational specialists but was strictly tied to plans made for the enhancement of the Indigenous nations in Ecuador. An agreement was made between the Minister of Culture and Education and CONAIE to implement the DINEIB according to local directives concerning bilingual intercultural education.

Long before DINEIB, organizations, principally the FENOCIN and also the ECUARUNARI (affiliated with the CONAIE), had continuously struggled to



make the government recognize the Bilingual Intercultural Education movement (EIB). For example, I remember between 1981 and 1982, prior to the existence of the CONAIE and the DINEIB, there was an massive national march calling for the recognition of the EIB by the government of Jaime Roldos Aguilera. At this time, there was a constant demand for recognition from every organization. This also helped to precipitate the creation of the national office. Local and regional experiences were compiled and used to create an all-encompassing proposal presented to and recognized by the government. By the time Rodrigo Borja took office the national Bilingual Intercultural Education program was institutionalized in Ecuador.

**"... WE HAVE TO DEVELOP OUR IDENTITY, PRESERVE OUR LANGUAGE IN ORDER TO BETTER CONFRONT OTHER CULTURES"**

Two of the most significant goals of the Indigenous movement have been to encourage multiculturalism and participatory democracy. In what sense is the DINEIB a realization of these goals?

The DINEIB is a state institution, but we are also an institution of the Indigenous communities of Ecuador. For this reason, the DINEIB is subject to the control, support and the direction given by the Indigenous nations. As a formal state institution we are administratively, financially and technically decentralized. Therefore, we are dependent on the directives generated by all of the individuals working within the DINEIB. The DINEIB is a conglomerate of individuals, Indigenous for the most part but also non-Indigenous, that participate on behalf of all the national organi-

contribute to the operations of their bilingual education program, by organizing a budget, infrastructure, teaching materials and any other form of support necessary to the realization of the EIB.

**What would you say are some of the successes of the DINEIB and some of its failures or shortcomings?**

One success of the program is that we have managed to bring together six major organizations in a conversation concerning bilingual and intercultural education and have also generated a dialogue dealing with other important issues of the Indigenous-campesino movement in Ecuador. Previously, although these groups were ideologically on the same path, they sparred often in the political arena. With the EIB as a foundation, these groups are united...while, of course, they continue to respect one another's diverse experiences and objectives.



Once the DINEIB was formed, the rest of the Indigenous and Campesino organizations, like the FEINE (Federation of Evangelical Indians), FENOC (Federation of Campesinos), FENACLE (Federation of Free Campesinos) and FEI (Federation of Ecuadorian Indians), came to participate; at first they were suspicious but eventually they evolved sufficient trust to participate within all levels of the EIB. I believe the EIB has actually facilitated a dialogue among our national organizations; a dialogue that concerns not only crucial issues put forth by the EIB, but also other issues concerning these organizations. The organizations I mentioned have supported this process, some with considerable fortitude and dedication and others with somewhat less. But by all means these six major participants have significantly contributed to the development of the EIB.

zations previously mentioned. In this way DINEIB recognizes the objectives of each of these diverse organizations.

**As for the communities, is there a way in which families or local groups are able to participate in the Bilingual Intercultural Education system?**

There are local Educational Advisory Councils (CEC) that have been established in some provinces and some communities. Through these community councils, local peoples are able to participate directly in the bilingual intercultural education efforts. The local Educational Advisory Councils are comprised of delegates from parent's committees and community organizations, student and teacher representatives, and delegates from other local institutions.

So, these boards are local and participatory by nature. They are obliged to

I believe another accomplishment of the DINEIB is institutional decentralization. We have attained a degree of autonomy that enables us to advance objectives of the EIB. This decentralization also allows us to select our own candidates for administrative positions. The only remaining power of the central government is to give legitimate title to the candidate elected by Indigenous organizations. Otherwise, the electoral process occurs in the selection of provincial directors. They are elected by local organizations following a public debate. This election system is unique, distinct from the tradition of appointments dictated by the ministry and government which are commonplace in other state institutions.

As to our educational model, we have been able to develop our own prototype without the intervention of the central government dictating this or that model. We are creating materials for each of the



Indigenous nations, and are able to elaborate our own budget for the items that we require.

**What has been the attitude toward the DINEIB of different administrations over the years? Have they voluntarily supported the DINEIB or have they tried to undermine the initiatives of Bilingual Intercultural Education?**

We have chiefly had financial problems. The government does not allocate sufficient funds to sustain Bilingual education. In the last year the government did not give us a single cent to invest in

tion—the lack of a willingness to support Indigenous education on the part of the government. Of course Ecuador doesn't have an enormous budget, but nevertheless, there ought to be enough funds available so that we might work somewhat normally developing the EIB.

**What types of projects are proposed for the schools?**

With the EIB we do not want to work solely with children and young people. We also want to establish development projects... considering the poverty of our Indigenous people, we need to fight against this extreme poverty... to prepare individuals for work, arming them with the tools necessary to be productive, so they may benefit their families, their communities and the entire society.

We would like to strengthen our development projects for agriculture, animal husbandry, mechanics, carpentry and craft production. Some groups have begun to work on realizing these projects but they are limited by a shortage of financial support. We need funds for basic materials, tools, etc.

**Have you proposed that non-Indigenous people learn an Indigenous language?**

Indeed, in our institutes of bilingual education there are non-Indigenous children, students, professionals who would like to learn an Indigenous language. In Quito we are setting up a language training program for the children of DINEIB employees, the children of directors of national organizations and anyone else who would like to learn. We will begin the program with Quichua, then Spanish, and then English.

**Last year I had the opportunity to visit a bilingual school in the province of Imbabura. We spoke with a teacher, who told us she was worried that some parents did not want their children to learn Quichua in school. What is being done to deal with this problem?**

Some parents are opposed to having

their children learn Quichua. We continue to think that the white/mestizo, Western world is better and that our own Indigenous society is worthless. We have been inculcated with this attitude prohibiting the use of the Indigenous languages by Hispanic professors. Our own youth have faced this when they have attended college and have been prohibited from speaking their native tongue. We have experienced and endured the Spanish invasion that tried to crush our cultures.

We have suffered through colonialism that has tried to make us feel ashamed of ourselves. Some families continue to believe that our culture and traditions are without value. Local and regional organizations need to raise people's consciences, convince them otherwise, that our culture is eminently worthy and... we have to develop our identity, preserve our language in order to better confront other cultures. This way we will be well prepared for any situation.

**Then, it is still necessary to combat colonialism?**

Certainly, it is crucial that we erase this mentality. We have to confront the lack of self-esteem. We must foster self-worth and counter the low self-esteem which still persists in some of our communities.

Introduction to this interview was taken from a paper written by Sami Pilco (Quichua) of the DINEIB

*Alberto Andrango, the director of the National office of Multicultural Bilingual Education (DINEIB) is a Quichua from Ecuador. SAIIC friend, Robert Andolina who has lived and worked in Ecuador interviewed Alberto Andrango in Quito for Abya Yala News. He is currently working on his dissertation on the politics of the Indigenous movement in Ecuador.*



our projects, or to train our professors and administrators... nor did we receive a single cent for teaching materials for our various Indigenous communities. Nor have they supplied us with the necessary tools or technology.

This is a considerably serious problem for us. We have been able to make a little progress with the financial support of the GTZ of Germany, but by no means does this suffice.

**Is this lack of support a result of a shortage of resources within the government or their unwillingness to help?**

I believe it is more the absence of voli-



Interview with SAIIC:

## Margarita Marta Calfio Montalva



Photo: Laura Soriano

**M**argarita works with the LIWEN Center for Mapuche Studies and Documentation and is a member of the Mapuche Institutions and Organizations of the IX Region Organizing Committee. She was also president of the Urban Mapuche Indigenous Youth and Student Union, and founder and board member of the urban Mapuche association, "Kinen Mapu."

Margarita came to visit SAIIC in mid-March to participate in a number of local events. She gave a presentation at SAIIC's "Recognizing and Honoring Contributions and Perspectives of Indigenous Women" event on March 13th. While visiting our office, Margarita spoke with SAIIC about her work with urban Mapuche youth in Chile.

We know that you work with the Mapuche youth in Temuco, Chile. How are urban Mapuche youth keeping their identity?

Actually, I was working with youths when I resided in Santiago, between '92 and '95. I worked with a youth organization called the Urban Mapuche Indigenous Youth and Student Union. One of my wishes now is to start a project with urban Mapuche youths in the city of Temuco, because revitalizing identity in these spaces is urgent.

We know very well that cities are not the appropriate environment for the reproduction and socialization of the cultural elements of an Indigenous People. These places, rather than facilitating the formation of a unique identity and positive self-image for the younger Indigenous generation, tend to degrade you as a human being and encourage negative and alienating values.

According to the 1992 population census, there are one million two hundred Mapuche people. Of this, over than four hundred thousand Mapuches live in Metropolitan regions, and only about 15% live in rural zones.

The urban Mapuche population is made up of migrants from the rural communities and their children born and raised in the cities. They are youths with Mapuche last names, but they are usually lacking cultural references that would enable them to connect with their Indigenous identity in a positive way.

I personally lived this reality and it was a slow, complex process, because when I began to reconnect with my Mapuche heritage, my parents were unhappy. They didn't understand or didn't want to comprehend my need to reconnect with my roots...It was a difficult battle against the social currents, and against your own fears...

How much influence has urban culture had on Indigenous youths?

The city influences you with values that alienate you from your identity as a Mapuche, but when you resolve your own identity issues and begin to accept yourself and feel proud of your origins, it gets easier. There are always people that will help you, especially the grandmothers and grandfathers, who will hand you all their knowledge without questioning.

A very relative point is that when you assume your identity, being urban, you have mastered the elements of the other world, of the dominant society. This is really an advantage, because you possess the tools that you can utilize to benefit your people. This is what we are trying to do with many Mapuche young people, make them conscious of our heritage, conscious of our need to become professionals.

What is "Kinen Mapu", the Urban Mapuche Association doing to support the Mapuche youth and to strengthen their culture?



This organization is new and has not yet completely defined its course of action, which is something that we have to do soon.

I've been working for some time with the LIWEN Center for Mapuche Studies and Documentation. The objective of this institution is to generate knowledge from our own perspective and to disseminate it to all sectors, especially the Mapuche. For example, we work on topics relating to the Mapuche people, to the situation of other Indigenous nations' in their own countries, and on the issue of Bilingual Intercultural Education.

**What is the difference between the programs for Mapuche children and those for the youths?**

With the children you have to work in a playful context, where you keep the youngster entertained while they're learning, and of course you must involve the family in some way. This is difficult, because many times the parents don't agree that their child should learn about Mapuche culture because they view this as negative but this is not their fault. We don't know what negative experiences they have had that have made them opposed to it.

Working with young people or adolescents is a little more complex. They are going through a difficult stage, building their identity. They have many fears, and to come to terms with being an Indigenous person in a racist country is not an easy thing. You have to gain their confidence slowly. They must see that you as a woman can be a role model, that being Mapuche is not bad or ugly, not at all.

**We know that you did some research on the oral history of the families of urban Mapuche youths. What were the most important points that came out of this research?**

This study came about due to the interest that a group of us young Mapuche students had in retrieving our history, that history which was denied us for our having been born in a different context than our parents and grandparents. It was an arduous task, because from the beginning our families didn't

understand our interest in understanding things of such little relevance to them. The people in the countryside usually don't value their legends, their family histories. They don't comprehend the richness of their own knowledge. We got them to change their attitude: they started to talk, to spill out a whole marvelous, unknown world for us. We really learned an enormous amount. It was magical to listen to it all, and the most important thing is that we were able to get our relatives, our aunts and uncles, cousins, etc., involved.

**We'd like to ask why you, as a young Mapuche woman, are involved in this type of work?**

I work with conviction, because I really feel that it's necessary to struggle for our rights as Mapuche people. The conditions of poverty and oppression in which we live today must change. Mapuche children should grow up in a healthy atmosphere, in peace and harmony with the environment.

When I took consciousness of my identity, of my history, of my culture, it was really like a liberation. I strongly feel the need to support my people in every way that I can. It's a life choice.

**What would you like to see in the future for Mapuche youth? And what would you like to do to make it happen?**

The future of the youth and children is a worry that we have as a people. In many communities, the young people must migrate to the urban centers to find any work they can. Their dreams of studying are dashed at a very young age and that's not fair.

I'd like to do many things, but we need to design strategies at the community level. Individual initiatives should be within a larger context to make the desired impacts and changes. We're working for this.

**We know that you've been working on a project on Indigenous Women and Gender in Washington, DC. Could you tell us what the focus of your research has been?**

In September, 1997, I was selected by the Development Fund for Indigenous Peoples to develop a work apprenticeship in the Indigenous Peoples' Union of the Interamerican Development Bank, located in Washington, DC. I'm specifically working on editing a report about the topic of gender relations in Indigenous communities and development. It is a reflective work, whose main objective is to understand Indigenous women's thoughts and perceptions about development. Essentially, the idea is to propose certain strategies that can be incorporated into the Bank's policies in relation to Indigenous women. ✎

*Continued from page 22*

contribution to society, not only the Indigenous one of Ecuador, but in whichever place throughout the world.

**What have been the challenges that you have had to face as an Indigenous woman doctor?**

I don't like being labeled as an Indigenous woman doctor; well, I feel like any other woman of any other culture and nation. But in fact I've had to face certain challenges, like knowing that the people of my community viewed me as the savior from the health problems affecting the community. The leaders of my provincial community trusted so in my abilities. One demonstration of this was their inviting me to work in the SAMAY Project, financed by the European Union. I'm talking about a pro-life project that would permit us, in a significant manner, to build our society, that would allow us to control our own destiny. Being a representative of the Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE, is another challenge.

To respond positively to all these challenges, I always try to learn more to better understand the culture of Globalization, to learn how to maneuver myself within the dynamics of the modern age, in distinct levels and spheres of human actions. For me, it is important to take into account the advice and the points of view of the great Indigenous leaders, and of the great ideologies, both old and new. ✎



Continued from page 26

dimensions into environmental impact assessment processes of research institutes, multilateral institutions, governments, etc.

6. Develop standards and guidelines for the protection, maintenance and development of indigenous knowledge, which: a) facilitate the development of sui generis systems of protection for Indigenous knowledge according to indigenous customary laws, values and world view b) recognize the concept of the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and incorporate this in all national and international legislation c) take into account and incorporate existing Indigenous Peoples' political and legal systems and Indigenous Peoples' customary use of resources d) recognize traditional agricultural systems of Indigenous Peoples e) involve Indigenous Peoples in the development of research guidelines and standards

7. Develop standards and guidelines for the prevention of biopiracy, the monitoring of bioprospecting and access to genetic resources: a) affect a moratorium on all bioprospecting and/or collection of biological materials in the territories of Indigenous Peoples and protected areas and patenting based on these collections until acceptable sui generis systems are established b) affect a moratorium on the registering of knowledge c) recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples' to access and repatriate genetic materials held in all ex-situ collections, such as gene banks, herbariums and botanical gardens.

8. Ensure the sharing of the benefits derived from the use of indigenous knowledge includes other rights, obligations and responsibilities such as land rights and the maintenance of Indigenous cultures to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, innovations, practices and values to future generations.

9. Ensure that relevant provisions of international mechanisms and agreements of direct relevance to the implementation of article 8j. and related articles, such as the Trade Related Intellectual Property agreement of the World Trade Organization, the European Union directive on the patenting of life forms, the Human Genome Diversity

Project, the Human Genome Declaration of the UNESCO, the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and national and regional intellectual property rights legislation under development, incorporate the rights and concerns of Indigenous Peoples as expressed in the ILO Convention 169, the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Kari Oca Declaration, the Mataatua Declaration, the Santa Cruz Declaration, the Leticia Declaration and Plan of Action, the Treaty for a Life Forms Patent Free Pacific and previous statements of Indigenous Forums convened at previous CBD/COP and intersessional meetings.

10. Provide material and non-material support mechanisms and incentives to Indigenous Peoples for capacity building initiatives towards: a) the development of sui generis systems based on indigenous customary laws for the protection and promotion of Indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices b) institutional strengthening and negotiating capacity c) locally controlled policy, research and development strategies and activities for the maintenance and development of Indigenous knowledge

11. Require the revitalization and maintenance of Indigenous languages as part of the implementation of article 8j. and related articles and support the development of educational systems based on indigenous values and world view, including the establishment of an Indigenous university.

12. Require that research and development activities in the realm of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, practices and innovation systems are given the same financial and policy support as "formal scientific" research and development activities.

13. Provide material and non-material incentives for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, including land rights and the recognition of achievements by Indigenous Peoples in protecting biodiversity. ♣

Continued from page 27

ments and reforms to the Mexican state, rather it would be admitting that what is needed is a radical transformation to the corrupt structures of power in Mexico that have been dominated by the more than 70 year old PRI dictatorship. It would mean allowing for not only the Zapatistas, but all of Mexican civil society to have the right to transform the government into something that would govern by obeying the needs and consensus of the Mexican people, rather than continue to be mediator of elite global business interests and an instrument of repression.

Unfortunately Mexico acts with the reassurances of its trade partners, the United States and Canada. The only thing standing in the way of Mexico's unacceptable policy towards Indigenous peoples is civil society both in Mexico and globally. Civil society through both its political will and actions can put an end to this genocidal war. The Indigenous people are clear that the solution will come from nowhere else, nor can they do it alone. "Neither peace nor justice will come from the government. They will come from civil society, from its initiatives, from its mobilizations. To her, to you, we speak today." ♣

*Crystal Echobawk is a member of the Pawnee Nation, who works for the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico. She attended the University of Sussex in Brighton, England where she completed both a Bachelors in History and a Masters in Social and Political Thought, and wrote her thesis on the Zapatistas. In September 1996, she was asked to join the North American Indian Delegation to the United Nation's Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva. In December of that year, she traveled to La Realidad, Chiapas, Mexico and produced a comprehensive briefing report regarding the situation in Chiapas. Since she has been working with NCDM, Crystal has traveled nationwide to raise consciousness and mobilize people around the Zapatista struggle, especially focusing on organizing North American Indian communities to support the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Mexico.*



## Urgent Action:

**Indigenous communities in Amazon resisting pressure to allow the patenting of their sacred plant Ayahuasca.**

### Background:

In a recent letter addressed to the Inter-American Foundation, Antonio Jacanamijoy, the General Coordinator of the Coordinating Body for Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) refused to back down from a resolution proclaimed by COICA at their congress in Georgetown, Guiana in May of 1996. The resolution which was adopted through sovereign means by more than 80 delegates representing 400 groups of indigenous people from nine Amazonian countries effectively banned the entrance and safe passage of the American researcher, Loren Miller.

Loren Miller committed a large offense against Indigenous people in the patenting of a variety of the sacred Ayahuasca plant that he claims to have "discovered." His work with the International Plant Medicines Corporation in the United States and their attempts to gain a monopoly over the plant is a serious violation of many Indigenous communities sacred beliefs.

As a result of COICA's decision to ban Loren Miller from entering these communities again in a disrespectful manner, the Inter-American Foundation has put pressure on COICA and also on the Indigenous federation of Amazonian peoples of Ecuador (CONFENIAE). They have been ordered to return funds for an education project supported by IAF if they do not retract their support of COICA's decision to ban the entrance of Loren Miller.

### Recommended Action:

Please send letters, faxes and email to the President of the Inter-American Foundation in support of COICA's decision not to allow further violations of their sacred traditions by outsiders.

For more information please contact The Coordinating Body for the Indigenous People's Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA at [coica@uio.satnet.net](mailto:coica@uio.satnet.net))

### SAMPLE LETTER:

Mr. George Evans  
President of the Inter-American Foundation  
Arlington, Virginia USA  
Fax: 703-841-0973  
e-mail: [correo@iaf.gov](mailto:correo@iaf.gov)

Dear Mr. Evans,

I am writing to you to express my concern about the violation of the religious traditions of the Amazonian people. I do not support the efforts of Loren Miller in his pursuit to patent and effectively give himself and the International Plant Medicine Corporation control of the sacred Ayahuasca plant. I understand that this plant is a very sacred object of the Indigenous people in the Amazon and I believe that they have suffered a grave offense to their religious beliefs and traditions.

As a concerned individual in solidarity with the Indigenous people of the Amazon, I do not support the pressure that the Inter-American Foundation has placed upon COICA to retract their resolution concerning their future relationship with Loren Miller. Outside visitors cannot be disrespectful to the traditions of the Indigenous communities and expect hospitality and cooperation in return. Like any culture or religious tradition, a violation of that which is sacred is not a matter to be taken lightly, especially when someone attempts to gain control and notoriety from it. I hope that you will consider the offense taken by these communities and reconsider your desire for them to back down from their resolution. It is their right to demand respect for their religious traditions.

Sincerely,



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# Upcoming Events

## April 14-16

AMERINDIAN PEOPLES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONGRESS. Guyana. Contact Amerindian Peoples Association at 592-2-70275

## April 22 - 23

WORKSHOP ON BIODIVERSITY AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT. Christchurch, New Zealand. Coordinated by IUCN, to be held at the 18th annual IAIA meeting. (Contact: Andrea Bagri, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Economic Services Unit, Rue Mauverney 28, Gland 1196 Switzerland; e-mail: [esu@indaba.iucn.org](mailto:esu@indaba.iucn.org); <http://iucn.org/themes/economics>\*)

## May 1 - 3

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM. Bratislava, Slovakia. (Contact: Caroline Martinet, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, 28 Rue Mauverney, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland; tel: +41.22.999.0001; fax: +41.22.999.0025; e-mail: [ccm@hq.iucn.org](mailto:ccm@hq.iucn.org))

## May 1-4

DIVERSE WOMEN FOR BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE. Bratislava, Slovakia. This pre-conference is being organized by Vandana Shiva, and other women active on the biological diversity/biopiracy issues, and they will cover travel expenses for an Indigenous woman from North America. If you are interested in attending, please contact Deborah Harry asap at Tel: (702) 574-0248, Fax: (702) 574-0259, E-mail: [dharry@niec.net](mailto:dharry@niec.net)

## May 4 - 5

WORLD MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. This interactive event will also be held in conjunction with COP-4 to the CBD in Bratislava, Slovakia. (Contact: H.E. Mr. Jozef Zlocha, Minister of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Namestie L. Stura 1, Bratislava, 812 35, Slovakia; Tel: +421-7-516-2455/2460; Fax: +421-7-516-2557 OR Zuzana Guziova, National Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ministry of Environment, Hanulova 5/d, 841 01 Bratislava, Slovakia; Tel: +421-7-786-581/568; E-mail: [zuzana\\_g@ba.gef.sanec.sk](mailto:zuzana_g@ba.gef.sanec.sk))

## May 4 - 15

FOURTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CBD: COP-4. Bratislava, Slovakia. (Contact: CBD Secretariat, World Trade Center, 393 St. Jacques Street, Suite 300, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2Y 1N9; Tel: +1-514-288-2220; Fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: [chm@biodiv.org](mailto:chm@biodiv.org))

## May 4 - 15

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. To be held in conjunction with COP-4 to the CBD in Bratislava, Slovakia. (Contact: Ing. Stefan Petkovic, INCHEBA, Viedenska cesta 7, 852 51 Bratislava, Slovakia; Tel: +4217-802-210/051; Fax: +4217-847-982/581-165; Telex: 092-255)

## June 17-20

AMAZON COALITION ANNUAL MEETING. Caracas, Venezuela. Please notify Amazon Coalition if you plan to attend at 1511 K St. Suite 627, Washington, DC 20005. Tel: 202-637-9718, E-mail: [amazoncoal@igc.apc.org](mailto:amazoncoal@igc.apc.org)

## July 28-31

FIRST CONGRESS OF INDIGENOUS LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS—CALL FOR PAPERS—

The B'ÁDEYB'ÁDAL Cultural Association cordially invites all interested persons to participate in the FIRST CONGRESS OF INDIGENOUS LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS, which will be held July 28-31, 1998 in Guatemala city.

Indigenous writers who have published works in their own languages (preferably) or other languages, and also non-Indigenous persons who have written on Indigenous literature of the Americas are invited to submit an abstract of their paper no longer than 3 pages, by April 30, 1998 to give the Organizing Committee enough time to assure their participation. Please include name, address, e-mail address, fax, telephone and title of the paper. Before the event, the paper should be sent on diskette, or printed on letter-size paper, and should take no longer than 30 minutes to read. The papers will be published at a later date.

## Principal topics include:

Indigenous literatures of the Americas; Poetry and lyric song; Prose, narrative, short stories and fiction; Theatre and drama; Oral tradition, myth, legend, history, fable, comedy, counsel; Worldview and Indigenous cultures in literature; Methodologies and techniques of writing Indigenous literature; Anthropological and sociological aspects of Indigenous literature; Editors, publishers, and publishing; Libraries, archives and writers; Mass media and Indigenous literature; Official languages and literatures in Indigenous languages; Indigenous literary currents and trends

Once your participation has been approved, we will send you a conference Program. Schedule: July 27, arrival of participants; July 28-30, the Congress itself; July 31, excursion to picturesque places in Guatemala. In the evening there will be an opportunity to present literary, theatrical, dance, music or other performances from Guatemala and the countries of origin of the participants. Guatemala, has 23 different ethnic groups, each with different clothing, language and life style. International participants may wish to bring their regional costumes, published works, and samples of their art to represent the cultural richness of the Americas. There is a nominal fee of Q50.00 for Guatemala participants and US \$20.00 for those from other countries. Participants will have to seek financial support for their attendance in their countries of origin.

For further information, contact: Gaspar Pedro González, (General Coordinator), Fax: 232-2723, Guatemala, e-mail: [lacide@guate.net](mailto:lacide@guate.net)

## August 2-3

9TH ANNUAL PROTECTING MOTHER EARTH CONFERENCE. Theme: Sacred Sites. Sponsored by Indigenous Environmental Network, hosted by Seventh Generation Fund, Modoc National Forest, near Alturas, California, USA. For more information contact: IEN at PO Box 485, Bemidji, Minnesota 56619. Tel: 218-751-4967, Fax: 218-751-0561, E-mail: [ien@igc.apc.org](mailto:ien@igc.apc.org) or Seventh Generation Fund at (707) 825-7640.



# Recommended Publications & Events

## Indigenous Agriculture In The Mountains of Guerrero

By: Marcos Matias Alonso, *Indigenous Anthropologist from Guerrero State, Mexico*, published by: Plaza y Valdes, SA de C.V., Manuel Maria Contreras No. 73, Colonia San Rafael, Mexico D.F. cp. 06470. 1997. (249 pages + Appendices)

The author invites us to analyze the complex process of appropriation and integration in an Indigenous region: How and why are systems of agricultural production modified? What consequences result from the transition from an isolated and traditional agricultural society toward a modernized rural society? Is the decline of traditional agricultural systems irreversible?

In this book, Indigenous anthropologist Marcos Matias Alonso, provides an analysis of how the process of modernization of Indigenous agriculture is based on the incorporation and application of multiple technological innovations (mechanization, use of improved seed varieties, application of agrochemicals, etc.) He also discusses how traditional styles of agriculture are fundamentally based on the use of the people's own resources (labor provided by the family, production for self-subsistence, use of local fertilizers, no investment of money, etc.) As his investigation deepens, he comes to realize that Indigenous agriculture integrates traditional and modern techniques in its own unique way. The results of his research data show the existence and complimentary nature of traditional techniques coupled with modern ones in Indigenous agriculture.

According to Matias Alonso, campesino subsistence and survival relies precisely on the selective and compli-

mentary use of local and foreign resources. This adaptation does not imply loss of cultural identity for the Indigenous communities of the mountains who employ this survival strategy. He stresses the importance of having an understanding of Indigenous languages in order to study and analyze agricultural systems. Every concept has social significance and carries with it implicit meanings that describe a process or an agriculture phase. Indigenous languages constitute a key to understanding and describing Indigenous agriculture. Language makes us aware of the cosmology of a community, "it is like the entrance to comprehension of local culture." This book is available in Spanish only.

## Indigenous Communities and Education

Journal No.39-40, January-June 1997, 215 pages, Published by Ediciones Abya Yala, Av. 12 de Octubre 1430 y Wilson, Casilla 17-12-719, Quito, Ecuador.

Indigenous Communities and Education, is thematic journal published by Ediciones Abya Yala which comes out three to four times a year. The journal contains nine investigative articles pertaining to education and Indigenous people in Latin America. This is an informative collection of analytical essays for anyone interested in the complex issues of Indigenous education in Mexico, Central and South America. Some of the varied themes featured in the 1997 issue number 39-40 include development strategies for multi-lingual educational programs in Mexico, Bolivia and Chile, an analysis of various ways to create reading material in Indigenous languages, and discussions about the merits of teaching in an Indigenous language.

In their article on Indigenous

Education in Mesoamerica, authors Roberto Vasquez and Vilma Duque emphasize the need to modify traditional education programs. The Rigoberto Menchu Tum Foundation initiated a process to identify the needs and interests of Indigenous communities in the Mesoamerican region. The principal problem is the lack of focus on a cultural and linguistic curriculum pertaining to Indigenous people.

Xavier Albo presents a summary of his important work, "Multi-lingual Bolivia" published by UNICEF in 1994, which includes a description and analysis of a series of respectful policies for the successful development of Indigenous education.

In their article on bilingual intercultural education in Chile, Elisa Loncón and Christian Martinez present their proposal for educational reform in the Mapuche region. This includes the implementation of an autonomous bilingual-intercultural education program suitable to the Indigenous people. Moreover they stress the need for an adequate linguistic policy to accompany this project. Available in Spanish only.

For more information contact: Ediciones Abya Yala, tel: 593 (2) 562-633 or 506-247, fax: 593 (2) 506-255, e-mail: [abyayala@upsq.edu.ec](mailto:abyayala@upsq.edu.ec)

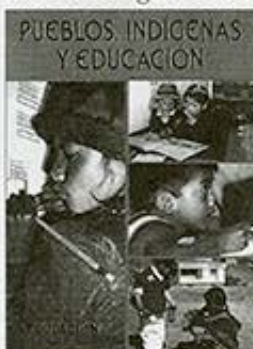
## The Indigenous and Popular Struggle in Mexico

Carmen Valadéz, representative from the FZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Front) and Melquiádes Rosas Blanco, delegate from the Mazateco Nation and representative from the CHI (National Indigenous Congress) will be speaking about the current situation of the Indigenous communities attacked by the Mexican government's policies.

The event will also feature speakers, music, poetry and visual arts from leaders from California-based Native and Human Rights organizations.

April 19th at Horace Mann School Auditorium  
Valencia @ 23rd St., San Francisco

Carmen and Melquiádes will be visiting the SAIC office on their upcoming trip to the Bay Area.





# News from SAIIC

**1998 HAS ALREADY BEEN** very productive and eventful for SAIIC. We have co-sponsored numerous local events and rallies and just recently coordinated the visit of Margarita Calfio to the Bay Area.

**MARGARITA CALFIO (MAPUCHE)** worked as part of the Professional Team at LIWEN, the Center for Mapuche Study and Documentation, which gathers and disseminates information on the Mapuche community, ethnic and national issues, and multi-cultural and bilingual education. While she was here, she was interviewed by several radio programs including Terra Verde at KPFA, Pacifica Radio, and Making Contact, and spoke at U.C Berkeley and before the Chilean embassy as part of the "International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water, and Life."

Margarita also spoke at a recent event sponsored by SAIIC honoring Indigenous women. This event also featured **MARIA ELENA CURRUCHICHE AND ADELINA NICHÓ CÚMEZ**, two Mayan women painters who discussed their work, Gina Pacaldo, a cultural artist who performed dance and theater, and Beatriz Restrepo with Grupo Étnico de Colombia, who performed traditional and impressionist Colombian dance. This event was very successful in reaching out to the Bay Area community about Indigenous women, their contributions and perspectives.

In addition, we recently finished **OUR LATEST ISSUE OF NOTICIAS DE ABYA YALA**, the Spanish edition of our journal. This issue covered Convention 169 in Latin America, as well as current news from Columbia, Chile, Venezuela and Chiapas, Mexico. This Spanish issue was distributed to 625 Indigenous organizations and communities throughout Mexico, Central, and South America, as well as others in Europe and North America. It has also been hand-delivered to some communities, including the U'Wa community in Colombia.

We have gotten a lot of positive feedback from **OUR LAST RADIO PROGRAM** that was sent out in December. Excerpts

from a letter from Alexis Alvarado, Legal Program Coordinator at The Dobbo Yala Foundation in Panamá follow:

*"Dear Compañeros, Thank you for sending us the "Indigenous Voices" Radio Program. Everyone in our organization has already listened to it and it seems to us this was a lot of work for your organization to put together. We are organizing various workshops and training sessions on Indigenous Law and will be using your tape in these programs, even though our country (Panamá) has not ratified the ILO Convention 169. We would also like to know if you could send us your book 'Protecting what's ours, Indigenous People and Biodiversidad,' it would be very helpful in our work."*

Also, Laura Soriano, our Executive Director, and Marcos Yoc, Board Member, recently returned from **A TRIP TO NEW YORK AND DC** where they met with representatives from the Ford Foundation, Fund of the Four Directions, the Gaea Foundation, the Rainforest Foundation, and Share Our Strength. In addition, they met with various Indigenous rights and solidarity organizations and donors in both New York and DC. It was a very busy week for them and the trip renewed SAIIC's partnership with various organizations and individuals. Laura and Marcos came back with exciting ideas that will help strengthen our organization.

**OUR JOURNAL COORDINATOR, Jess Falkenhagen** will be leaving SAIIC in early April to travel to Kuna Yala, Panamá. Jess will miss her work on Abya Yala News and being part of the 'SAIIC family'. She is looking forward to this opportunity to travel in Central and South America and visit some of the communities that she has been working with during her time at SAIIC. SAIIC will miss her dedication and enthusiasm and appreciates the hard work and deep love she has contributed to Abya Yala News/Noticias de Abya Yala and to the work of SAIIC.

**Steve Rudnick** will be taking over the Journal Coordinator position after Jess' departure. Steve has worked with NEST

Foundation (New El Salvador Today), Global Exchange, and other Bay Area non-profits. After teaching in San Francisco schools for the past few years, he is excited to be returning to international solidarity work and supporting the struggles of Indigenous peoples for self-determination.

**SAIIC WISHES TO THANK** all of our members, donors, sponsors and volunteers. We could not continue with our important programs without this financial support and the dedication and commitment of the people who give their time to SAIIC. For those of you who have helped out in our office or at our events or translated articles, we want to thank you!

**SAIIC CONGRATULATES** the Abya Yala Fund on their new office, and looks forward to continuing our sister organization relationship in the future. While SAIIC and the Abya Yala Fund both work on issues concerning the Indigenous peoples of Meso and South America - and while we both use the Kuna phrase "Abya Yala," or "Continent of Life" - we are separate organizations with different missions and areas of expertise:

\* **SAIIC IS AN INFORMATION CENTER** promoting the rights of Indigenous peoples of Latin America through our journal Abya Yala News/ Noticias de Abya Yala, our radio program "Voces Indigenas," and our Visitors Program. SAIIC is located at 1714 Franklin St., 3rd Floor, Oakland, CA 94604. To contact SAIIC, please call (510)834-4263

\* **THE ABYA YALA FUND** is a project of the Tides Foundation, and promotes Indigenous self-reliance and community development through grants, loans and training. The Abya Yala Fund is located at Higgins House-678 13th St., Suite 100, Oakland, CA 94612 and may be contacted at (510)763-6553.

SAIIC welcomes the **STAFF OF THE NATIONAL RADIO PROJECT**, who now share office space with us. We look forward to working with them on media-related issues. 📻

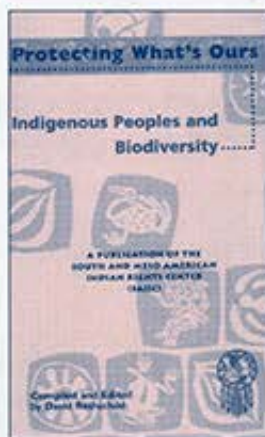




## Daughters of Abya Yala

Testimonies of Indian women organizing throughout the Continent. Statements from grassroots Indigenous women leaders from South and Meso America. Includes resolutions from Indigenous women's meeting, a directory of Indigenous women's organizations and key contacts, information on Indian women's projects, and

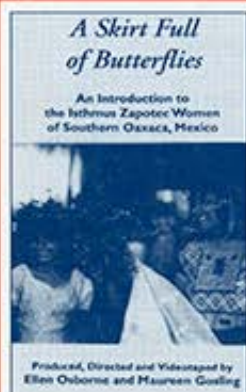
poems by Indian women. Printed on recycled paper. Available from SAIC for \$7.58 + \$3 shipping.



## Protecting What's Ours

**Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity** Draws a clear picture for Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike of issues surrounding biodiversity and possible strategies for conserving natural resources. It is an invaluable resource in the Indigenous struggle for control and conservation of bio-

resources. Available in English and Spanish, 132 pp. \$10.83 and shipping.



## A Skirt Full of Butterflies

15-minute Video. Five Zapotec women from Southern Oaxaca, Mexico tell what it is like to live in a community where women manage the economy; where women's work is just as valued as men's; where women and men work side by side in political resistance. A valuable tool for discus-

sions of Indigenous women's issues. For every purchase, a second copy will be sent to an Indigenous organization. \$19.95 + \$3.00 shipping. Available from SAIC.

**W**e, Indigenous people from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico often exclusively speak our own languages and have a significant language barrier with Spanish let alone English. The Binational Oaxacan Indigenous Alliance (FIOB- Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional), a not-for-profit organization, recognized the need for interpreters for Indigenous Oaxacan speakers of Mixteco or Zapoteco. To address this need, FIOB created the Mexican Indigenous Interpreter Project to train and coordinate fifteen Mixteco and Zapoteco interpreters for state-wide service. The prestigious Monterey Institute of Language Studies provided a week-long training to our interpreters.

FIOB is now contacting every relevant institution and organization to inform them of our interpreter services in the event that they come into contact with Oaxacan Indigenous people in need of an interpreter. We Indigenous people have a right to an interpreter in our own languages. While FIOB has made the first step, the task is yours to identify Oaxacan Indigenous people monolingual in our languages or insufficiently bilingual in Spanish who would benefit from our interpreter services. We also work with Guatemalan Indigenous interpreters.

Please feel free to contact Gaspar Rivera at 209 394 4287 for further information about our program or our assistance in furnishing Indigenous interpreters.

## Call for Papers

Announcing a special issue of American Indian Culture and Research Journal: Environmental Caketaking on Indian Lands in the United States. We are soliciting contributions to a special issue that is dedicated to discovering the range of environmental and ecosystem management initiatives occurring on Indian Reservations in the US under Tribal or joint Tribal-other government action. The emphasis will be on efforts to reverse environmental degradation and protect or restore environmental quality or ecosystem integrity. The scope of activities covered will include: solid wastes management, air pollution control, water pollution control, water management and water rights, cultural resource protection, and wildlife and fisheries management.

-Call for Abstracts-

Authors are invited to submit abstracts for consideration by the guest editors. Authors whose abstracts are accepted will be asked to prepare full papers for publication. Abstracts should be on one page and may be up to 200 words in length and are due by Sept. 1, 1998.

Questions regarding the special issue and requirements for contributing, please contact the guest editors: Richard Harris, Dept. of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, 164 Mulford Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-3114, tel: (510) 642-2360, e-mail: rharris@nature.berkeley.edu

**South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIC)  
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