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*SAIIC interviewed the three Amazon Indian leaders who visited Washington, D.C., in December to lobby the World Bank and other institutions regarding projects they fund in the Amazon basin which have serious negative consequences for Indian people in the area. Following are some of their comments.*

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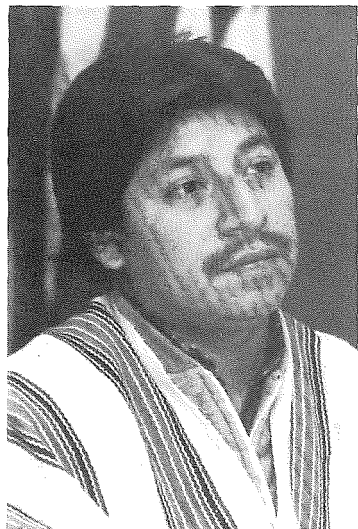


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## National Indian Organization of Colombia (ONIC) José Narciso Jamijoy

*SAIIC: How was ONIC created and what are some of its objectives?*

José: ONIC was created four years ago at a national Indian assembly in Bogotá. Two thousand five hundred Indians participated. In Colombia there are approximately 500,000 Indian people distributed in 150 communities all around the country and there are 70 ethnic groups which still survive. We had a second congress where 1,800 Indian people participated. The transportation to these congresses is very expensive, especially for those who live in distant and inaccessible communities. At the congresses we elected a governing committee which is composed of 14 members from different regions and different ethnic groups.

The basic objectives of ONIC are to develop unity, to maintain and regain our land, to maintain our culture, and to secure self-determination. When we say to maintain our culture, we don't mean we want to go back to the past, but rather that as the new generations develop to sustain our customs, our language, our territories, and a government that gives us our identification as Indians.

*What are the differences between resguardos and reservas?*

*Resguardos* is not an Indian concept. The Spanish used it during colonization to demarcate certain territories for Indians, restricting them so that they would not have large extensions of land. The Indians were guaranteed that they could live on that land and work that land. Based on that concept, in 1889 Indian legislation was created which provided that the land pass from generation to generation. It is collectively held. The community has the land title. It cannot be sold.

This is different from *reservas*, which are lands owned by the state. The government identifies them as *reservas*, but they are not owned by the Indian community.

*What are the differences between the last government of Belisario Betancur and the new government of Virgilio Barco in relation to Indian matters?*

For us they are both demagogues. The last government talked about Indians a lot but in general terms it did not deliver on its promises. The new president hasn't even mentioned us in his speeches and no one knows what his plans are. We have invited him twice to dialogue, but he hasn't answered us. So we think that they are different kinds of demagogues. Every government wants to be innovative, but each one only lasts four years. When the community is getting to know a program designed by the government, the government is already changing into a new one.