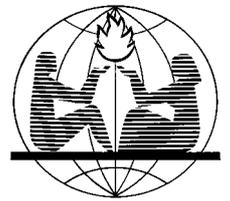


# TRADITIONS FOR TOMORROW



Newsletter 2001 – No. 1

The organization **Traditions for Tomorrow** was created in 1986. Its purpose is to support indigenous communities in the South anxious to preserve and strengthen their cultural identity. Based in France, in Switzerland and in the United States, **Traditions for Tomorrow** is active in a number of Latin American countries. It acts as a partner to those Indian communities which have proposed cultural or educational projects to the organization during one of its visits to the field. **Traditions for Tomorrow** then submits those projects to potential donors – its own members, governmental and non-governmental institutions, businesses and foundations - willing to finance initiatives chosen and undertaken entirely by the beneficiaries themselves. **Traditions for Tomorrow** will thus encourage these communities to strengthen their social organization, thereby enabling them to take responsibility for their own development. **Traditions for Tomorrow** is officially affiliated to **UNESCO**.

1986-2001

## 15 YEARS LATER

What happened with the indigenous peoples since the mid-80s? They were ignored, denigrated, unloved - including by themselves victims of so many abuses and violations. Here they are now in a different frame. Admittedly, amongst the indigenous peoples, the American Indians enjoy a privileged situation.

At the turn of the century, they have taken hold of local powers in a number of areas where they are a majority. Indians sit at parliaments. Ministers are appointed, like the Maya Minister of culture in Guatemala in January 2000, and not only as the head of indigenous affairs. They earned their Nobel Prize and have had, in Bolivia, a Vice-President.

It is of course not the panacea yet, but indigenous peoples occupy today a real and irreversible space in their country and on the international scene. They are no longer, as it was the case, pretexts for an indigenist policy that subtly led to ethnocide.

In universities, they are granted chairs. Indigenous students' associations are increasing in number. In order to call for professionals, lawyer, doctor, engineer, etc., it is not anymore necessary to always go and get the "white man". In Nicaragua, in 1994, for the first time Indians created a university, today active at an international level and totally integrated in its own country.

International legal instruments grant them rights and give them a place to take part in debates and in the definition of policies, by self-representing themselves as indigenous. The 1989 International Labour Organization Convention 169 on indi -

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*The founders' corner*

## PLEA ON THE INDIANS' PATH

*What a strange destiny! It appears that those who were sought to be eliminated by the Western civilization for centuries, or in the best of situations were ignored by it, are now found propelled to the forefront of our references for the future. Their beliefs, their values, their remedies, even their garments or their food hygiene are praised in our temples of Knowledge. Advertising itself does not hesitate in making use of feathers.*

*Indeed the collapse of last century's ideologies, the extinction of its great debates have left an empty space behind. Through lack of having someone else to watch, someone with or against whom to debate, it is thus a case of turning round towards one's own mirror. "Meet yourself" type magazines, seminars, websites are doing well. As for ourselves, not that much better !*

*Stepping onto the Indians' path is a suitable way to go and seek this "personal development" so expected. Well, why should this be wrong? Far from a westernisation where control of the values' spiral has been lost, the power of fire and the sound of drums inspire us.*



*Happiness does not necessarily result from the accumulation of material satisfaction. Nothing new! But few are the human groups that, just like most indigenous peoples, still live this logic. A logic so trivial that we could end up forgetting it. With no artifice, indigenous people try to resist globalized influences.*

*It is unavoidable that amongst them, after centuries of latinization and christianization, the Amerindians, especially those of Latin America, send us back more resonance than the others. Therefore: this passion expressed towards their values and the messages they pass on to us.*

*Let's however avoid the trap of idealization or of western selfishness that sometimes, even in compassion, forgets there is more to give or share than to take. American Indians live, in their huge diversity, contradictions and conflicts. To prove solidarity in their favour is not to consider them as superior beings, untouchable. This is not their claim either.*

*It is true; they have lots to bring us. And at the same time, they expect so much from us. Our dominating position is to go on taking the best out of them, and in return to only offer them the worst of what we have. An extra challenge for them to overcome, at least as risky as those they have had to face until now. Let's keep that in mind.*

Diego and Christiane Gradis

## ....15 YEARS

genous peoples was a decisive step for millions of them.

Together with other means, it gives the opportunity for regular meetings between the actors of such process. Biodiversity, racism, spirituality, medicine and many other themes lead them to get together and define their position, also with the other society that has become less of an opponent, and rather more of a partner.

The indigenous foot has been put through the UN system's door. It seems that to half-open this door has been easier than to now open it wide. It is to hope nevertheless that at the end of the International Decade on Indigenous People in 2004, these will have obtained the space they are expecting at the nations' rank.

The end of internal conflicts in Latin America, except for Columbia, has allowed for the release of resources, the opening of space for dialogue that has contributed to this development in social, economic and political fields. The improvement of communication and telecommunication is a key element to facilitate everyday life.

Of course, the rising awareness that took place at the time of the 500th commemoration of Europe's arrival onto the American Indian soil in 1992 triggered a series of processes that also favoured what some have called "the awakening".

Yet awakening it is not, as the people have never been asleep. But their activism was obviously slowed down by threats, repression and various dangers. The numerous obstacles they continue to encounter should not be ignored nor underestimated either. The main thing is perhaps their lack of experience in using the instruments of power. This is what has left them aside, and what they need today in order to draw a line on the past.

Even though the panorama may globally appear to be promising, it must be recognized that the champions of poverty, deficient hygiene, inefficient education, labour exploitation, are still the indigenous peoples. Therefore the efforts displayed to grant them this power to take hold of their own destiny - empowerment - must not weaken.

The road to cultural recognition and assertion is one of the main axes of this process. For the past 15 years, cultural identity under its multiple forms has become the focal point of the fight led by the indigenous peoples. Among their great diversity, the common values to all of them are the cohesion factors that will allow them to complete with care what has been undertaken. However, this reality is unfortunately still rather distant.



## A few recent projects

### MEXICO

#### A conservatory for the children of Amoltepec

Under a burning sun one Sunday afternoon, we finally manage to find beneath the arcades of a small neighbouring town, the young members of the San Cristobal Amoltepec brass band. Under dynamic Gildardo's direction, they got a contract on that day to liven up the fair.

It is no more than about 10 times a year that they manage to make a somewhat of pocket money this way to pay for their school supplies and save up for an extra trumpet or trombone. Until 1995 and for over 40 years, there were no more brass bands in this village of the



Oaxaca mixtec region, in southern Mexico. No more brass band means slow suffocation of the village: no more fairs, no more exchange with the neighbouring villages mean the community's erosion, an essential piece of the tradition disappearing.

Today there are 16 musician children: soon there will be 35. In most cases, their families live in distant hamlets. In order to be able to go to school during the week, they are lodged in some of the village's premises. In the evening they get together to rehearse and get ready for their next "contract". But where can they meet? The village does not have a place where they can gather. And a brass band in the middle of the village makes a lot of noise. So it is often outside, in the cold and wind. The precious instruments do not have a secure and dust free shelter either.

The action taken towards the local political authorities in favour of this support has remained vain, unless they undertake to play at every appearance of such candidate or of such politician.

Traditions for Tomorrow is thus bringing its support to Amoltepec in order to acquire the construction materials that will allow them to build the premises they are dreaming of. Nothing too fancy, but a little something that will make the Amoltepec people give even more value to their young brass band, by having a well-established situation. And whenever it will be possible, they will bring it their support.

Support: Traditions for Tomorrow

## ECUADOR

### Maps for the schools of Otavalo

We find them everywhere, their long hair tightened in a ribbon, strange-looking sandals on their feet, the blue poncho thrown over the white shirt and a long black skirt for the women and white lightweight pants for the men. Otavaleños travel the world to sell their handicrafts, just as they used to sell their medical remedies throughout South America in the old times.

Ask them about San Francisco or Amsterdam. They will often be able to tell you about these places with more details than for their own region, so beautiful at the foot of the volcanoes. This is what led the persons in charge of the villages and schools to decide that for Quechua children the knowledge of their immediate environment was essential to the maintenance of their identity. Indigenous peoples in Ecuador are engaged in a terrible confrontation with the different sectors of society. The path is full of pitfalls and it is often a case of "one step forward and two back".

In the Otavalo area, the matter was to get hold of the instruments that would be put to good use by the schools in order to develop pride of their origins among the children. There is no intention to ostracize them with regard to the national society, but rather to see to it that they know their fauna, their ancestors' sacred places, the sense of these celebrations that are being lost, the rhythms of nature that surrounds them, a lot better.

The project which involves about a hundred villages will result, with the help of a scanty computer system, in the realization of five thematic maps. These maps will then be distributed in each school. Pupils and their families will be requested for surveys that will result in the publication of a series of booklets in Quechua and Spanish, thereby contributing to the implementation of intercultural bilingual education.

The villages' authorities in consultation with the Ministry of Education's directly lead this project supported by Traditions for Tomorrow.

Support: Swiss Solidarity Foundation and Maagdenhuis Foundation

## HONDURAS

### Whether you want it or not, we exist!

They are called the "Guatemalans". They are however full-fledged Honduras citizens, these 5.000 to 8.000 Maya Chortis that live next to the ruins of their Maya ancestors in Copán. Indeed the border is not far, but until not so long ago these indigenous people did not exist for the rest of the country.

When Traditions for Tomorrow meets them in 1998, their organization as it were does not exist. It must be said that the Chortis hardly have the right to build their hovel on a piece of land lent by the owner in exchange for their work. Bit by bit, relying on the international laws, their determination will allow them to obtain for the first time pieces of land on which to build their first communities.

In order to exist as a group of people and to validate their self-identification process, the recovery of their main forms of cultural expression was essential. Under the porch roof where we meet, they are proud to explain to

us the little they have been able to do in order to recover bits of their Maya language. The Chortis of Guatemala send them a teacher.

They even do not have their marimba music anymore. But this powerful instrument is a key for these people to meet during fairs, celebrations.



Since 1998 the Chortis have demonstrated to others and to themselves that they do exist. The language courses have intensified with the assistance of Traditions for Tomorrow. A team of promoters is being constituted and goes in the villages to teach the language in the evening by the light of an oil lamp to those who have a passion to learn. Now, during the meetings in the centre they have since been able to acquire in Copán, people start to speak Chorti again.

The children are the ones who got to play marimba the quickest. Traditions for Tomorrow facilitated the purchase of the instrument in Guatemala, and the organization found the teacher.

In the streets of Copán on Sundays, market day, Chortis men and women who come down from the faraway villages for sure cannot be ignored by the small town people any longer, as they used to be in the past.

Support : Horizon Foundation

## PERU

### The Quispillacta waves run through the Andes

The small village of Quispillacta is lodged in one of these high Andean valleys blown by the winds, roasted by the frost and sun. Only a few sparse eucalyptuses break the hardness of a landscape bare from an already long past deforestation.

For 10 years, the area has been reduced to silence through the presence of the armed conflict that made the entire country shiver and aroused a repression often blind. With the return of peace in the department of Ayacucho, voices were meant to awaken.

The Quispillacta *campesinos* proved to be adventurous when they decided to set up the apparently crazy project of establishing their own radio station in the town of Ayacucho. Logic wanted until then that the rural zones received the media package from the urban people, mainly by radio, and increasingly by television.

During the conflict, the village had demonstrated that through its unity and its traditional mean of organization

method it would manage, somehow, to maintain relative neutrality. This remarkable demonstration was meant to carry on during the project implementation; to transmit from the urban area to the countryside the knowledge and tradition of the villages in Quechua language - that inherited from their Inca ancestors.

Today, within a radius of over 100km, from 5 to 10am and from 6 to 10pm on AM frequency band, Radio Quispillacta broadcasts news which are essential to the villages, tales and stories from the past, and Andean music. Personal messages ensure its self-funding to cover modest expenses. Except for the technician who watches over the equipment, the radio station is run by volunteers that come for that purpose to the town. Traditions for Tomorrow, by financing the purchase of equipment and its installation, has allowed for this project rather contrary to the "logic" of our time, to take place.

Support : Horizon Foundation

### Amerindian peoples, partners of Traditions for Tomorrow since 1986

GUATEMALA	MEXICO	COLOMBIA	CHILE
Aguacateco	Chinanteco	Chami-Catio	Huilliche
Axi	Mam	Afro-colombiano	Aymara
Kaqchiquel	Mazahua	Wayuu	Mapuche
Ixil	Mixteco		
Jacalteco	Mixe	ECUADOR	PANAMA
K'anjobal	Nahuatl	Cañari	Ngobe-Bügle
Quiché	Tojolabal	Quichua	Kuna
Mam	Choloteco	Saraguro	
	Tzotzil	Afro-ecuatoriano	PERU
NICARAGUA	Triqui	Shuar	Aymara
Miskito	Zapoteco		Andino
Mayangna	Chol	EL SALVADOR	Quechua
Rama	Chontal	Lenca	
Garifuna	Nahñu	Nahuatl	BOLIVIA
Criollos	Chamula	Kakawira	Guarani
			Quechua
HONDURAS		COSTA RICA	Aymara
Garifuna		Ngobe-Bügle	
Chorti		Cabecar	

## Madre Tierra!

*A book for Traditions for Tomorrow's 15th anniversary*

Madre Tierra! is a surprising trip on the trail of the American Indian revival, full of life and humour sometimes. At Traditions for Tomorrow's side, the author comes across the actions, dreams and confidences of Central America's peoples and their key figures or colourful individuals: musician, minister, shaman, reporter, lawyer, bio farmer, school director, etc.

This book is also a plea to a clever development. To recover one's culture is to become oneself again ; to get up again and converse with the other. It is a call and a cry for hope that the Indians are letting out towards the Westerners. Where we are, too, values and cultural diversity are swept by globalisation!

The book, prefaced by Professor Yves Coppens of the Collège de France, is illustrated with coloured pictures. Its author, D. Wermus, journalist, founded the press agency InfoSud in Lausanne in 1988, which brings the voice from the South to the Northern media.

### Madre Tierra!

by Daniel Wermus

Albin Michel (Publisher), Guides Clés (collection)  
(French and Spanish versions available)

## 2000 FINANCIALS

(Total consolidated income and expenses in Swiss francs, Euros, French francs and US dollars of the different national chapters of Traditions for Tomorrow. Separate audited accounts available upon request).

Income	in SFR	in €	in FFR	in US\$
Memberships	6.798	4.199	27.544	3.999
Member's donations	34.053	21.033	137.967	20.031
Special project grants	175.945	108.672	712.842	103.497
Projects handling fees	9.290	5.738	37.639	5.465
Financial income	11.461	7.079	46.435	6.742
	<b>237.547</b>	<b>146.721</b>	<b>962.427</b>	<b>139.734</b>
Expenses				
Funding of projects	163.093	100.734	660.772	95.937
Mission expenses	5.967	3.685	24.172	3.510
Publications	3.145	1.943	12.745	1.850
Mail/telecom.	9.460	5.843	38.328	5.565
Equipment	1.221	754	4.946	718
Fundraising	2.655	1.640	10.758	1.562
Office supplies	597	369	2.420	351
Fees, taxes, charges	1.828	1.129	7.406	1.075
Secretary	44.622	27.560	180.782	26.248
	<b>232.588</b>	<b>143.657</b>	<b>942.329</b>	<b>136.816</b>

## 15 years of trust and help

After fifteen years of work, we should recall those who brought and still bring us their trust and collaboration. At the top of the list: the volunteers, without whom nothing would have been done. Indeed Traditions for Tomorrow is another demonstration that volunteerism and professionalism can rhyme harmoniously. This is what our members, donors and sponsors have recognized and we would like to express our very warm gratitude towards them.

Amongst the major and most faithful ones we shall name:

Air France Group Found.	Apple computer
AVINA Found.	La Bouquinière
Canon SA	Swiss Solidarity Found.
Emmaus Found.(Wageningen)	Geneva Cooperation Fed.
Vaud Cooperation Fed.	Fondation de France
Haella Foundation	Horizon Found.
Hewlett Packard	Migros
PricewaterhouseCoopers	Nestlé
Rémy-Cointreau	Charles L. Mayer Found.
Schenk SA, Rolle	Le Rosey Institute
UBS	Swissair
Int. Museum of the Red-Cross and Red-Crescent	Yves Saint-Laurent

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