

TRADITIONS FOR TOMORROW



Newsletter 2002 No. 2

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 Switzerland, in France 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.

A Lesson of the indigenous peoples

Time is running out. On December 3, 2004, the International Decade for Indigenous Peoples will end. Will we manage before then to have the UN General Assembly adopt the draft Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples worked upon since the beginning of the eighties - a project some States are busy undoing? It doesn't seem likely.

Meanwhile, the indigenous peoples' slow walk to take their place on the international scene is in progress. 2002 will represent an essential step with the official establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, in the spring. To the 300 million indigenous peoples, some 500 groups covering over 70 countries, this represents the irreversible recognition of their existence along with the States.

The principle of consulting indigenous peoples before any UN decision is made - that directly or indirectly involves them - has finally become a reality in Vienna in 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights. Questions of land rights, education, health, culture, intellectual property, and labour rights, amongst others, are matters of concern.

and thus allows these peoples to consider certain claims in that respect. (see box "Indigenous peoples staring at UNESCO in 2001").

In the field, and particularly in Latin America, indigenous peoples are intensifying their assertion process both cultural and political,

sometimes in an orderly way, sometimes in regrettable but often unavoidable confusion. All the same, in a world context shaken by creeping traumas revealed through the events of 2001, such assertions do not go unnoticed.

Facing the temptations of either community extremism or ethnic fanaticism as an answer to marginalization, indigenous peoples show that other paths exist which take into account certain human groups' own specificities; such as those of coexistence and dialogue. It is one of Daniel Wermus' main conclusions in his book *Madre Tierra!* a reportage around Traditions for Tomorrow. (See page 4)



The lesson, the message that the indigenous peoples are sending us, is to conciliate the traditions and the future's challenges in order to recover those

and labour rights, amongst others, are matters of concern.

In a parallel way, UNESCO validates the existence of indigenous peoples and recognizes their essential contribution to diversity's richness in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity solemnly adopted in November 2001. Moreover, the Declaration namely refers to "peoples" and no longer to "people"; a significant distinction that emphasizes the indigenous environment's collective dimension

that the indigenous peoples are sending us, is to conciliate the traditions and the future's challenges in order to recover those values we would so easily tend to forget.

Diego and Christiane Gradis
Founders of Traditions for Tomorrow

A FEW RECENT PROJECTS

GUATEMALA

Every three years, the hummingbird dances in Chalchitan

There are about twenty of them between 50 and 75 years old. According to historians, from father to son - and fathers and sons together - the Tz'unum dance (hummingbird) brings Chalchitan families together every three years, since the beginning of the 16th century. It is not easy to be Maya-Chalchiteco in this hot and humid area of the Cuchumatanes' Piedmont in North Eastern Guatemala. Barely recovering from the dramatic times of cruel violence that broke through the country for 35 years, the Chalchitecos find themselves facing increasing hegemony from their Maya-Aguacatecos neighbours in the small Aguacatan township.

Besides the language, the Tz'unum dance that accompanies ancestral ritual observances is one of the most outstanding demonstrations of this minority group of 18,500 inhabitants. But then, since tradition says that it should only be presented every three years and nowhere else in the country - unlike many other dances that are presented in different Mayan groups annually - costumes and masks' rental for the Tz'unum dance is extremely costly. Moreover, this expense is added to the already high costs for the weeks long celebrations, which cannot be faced due to increasing poverty.

Sitting around the old blue wooden drum, the «tun», that gives the dances its rhythm, those at the head of the brotherhood opened themselves to Traditions for Tomorrow. It clearly appeared that, without support for making the Tz'unum outfits, it was not only the dance, but also the community's meetings and the intercommunity synergies that were threatened. Thus the Chalchiteca identity itself could be endangered, with the risks for peace in the area this would imply.

The support needed would allow the brotherhood to acquire 20 costumes and 19 masks, with the people themselves covering the expenses of each celebration.

NICARAGUA

The Indians' university carries out its research

There is no example to this day in Latin America comparable to that of Nicaragua, of an autonomous region, which has set the training of its future leadership as first priority. The Atlantic region's

Whilst the University benefits from government subsidies, it must call upon international aid for special projects. The ties of friendship that were woven between Traditions for Tomorrow and URACCAN during our 10 year presence in the region, allowed the implementation of an ambitious theme-based research project. Its purpose is to strengthen the regional autonomy process by relying on cultural identity, values and means of organization of the region's different groups. Specifically, the project has four areas:

- Ancestral methods of sustainably managed natural resources,
- Traditional rules for conflicts' management and resolution,
- Body and spirit care system,
- Social customs in community life.

This ambitious project was designed on a participatory basis between the University and the students who actually are its actors. Results of the research will be integrated into the programs and will also constitute grounds for discussion between regional authorities and central administration in Managua.

Although somewhat distant from the type of support usually provided by Traditions for Tomorrow, this avant-garde project will eventually enrich and consolidate knowledge of customs as much on the University benches as in the region's villages. It will consequently contribute to strengthen the regionalization process.

Support from the Geneva Federation for Development Cooperation (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and State of Geneva)

EL SALVADOR

Kakawira children also have the right to attend school

The slopes of the Morazan mountains, Northeast of this small country, close to Honduras, are well known to Traditions for Tomorrow. Since after the war in 1994, the organization has accompanied the reconstruction process of its Lenca and Kakawira peoples, who were muffled and almost wiped out through recent and more distant history.



that of Nicaragua, of an autonomous region, which has set the training of its future leadership as first priority. The Atlantic region's autonomy process confirmed by the 1987 law would not exist if its implementation was to rely on Managua, the capital city in the West of the country. Therefore the creation of the Regional Autonomous University of Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast (URACCAN; "hurricane" in Spanish) had become an absolute necessity.

Of course, over half the 4,000 URACCAN students distributed in the different centres of the university in the region have not finished primary school. However, more important surely, they draw their knowledge from their parents' teachings, from their village customs, from the authorities' wisdom. Miskitos, Mayangnas, Creoles, Ramas, Garifunas (afro-caribbeans) and mestizos - the most numerous - all benefit from URACCAN teachings, without discrimination.



Miguel Amaya getting prepared for a Mayan ceremony, El Salvador

Instigator of this movement is a young Kakawira, Miguel Amaya. His personal journey started with being responsible for the cultural centre in the small village of Cacaopéra, then continued with the teachings of his master in Guatemala, to finally becoming a celebrant of Mayan spirituality. All this was bringing him to become leader of his people.

He is active in many fields: shamanism, ecotourism, community museum, organizing villages. His current request to Traditions for Tomorrow is at least as important. The aim is to allow, every year,

some twenty children aged 6 to 12 who live with their families in remote villages, to have access to school and prepare to become leaders in their community. But to Miguel, to go to school does not mean merely following the lessons of a deficient public education system. It also means making possible for these children a global self-development, i.e. intellectual, physical and spiritual, all within an environment as close as possible to that of their families.

For that purpose, a plot of land away from the village on the river side, was bought: *El Maizal*. Animals are bred and land is cultivated to ensure life autonomy. Handicraft helps in contributing to material needs. All that is missing is a shelter to welcome the children. Nothing luxurious is needed; just a place where they can live, do their homework when they return from school and also learn from Miguel and his team, all volunteers, the knowledge of their language, of the ancestors' dances, and of the traditional community's rules of administration. The building we are helping construct will thus be used in the training of the future village leaders who will, little by little, recover the sense and interest in their identity and their traditional knowledge.

Support from the Horizon Foundation

2001: a year for recentering geographically

A stronger concentration of Traditions for Tomorrow's work in Mexico and Central America led the organization to transfer its regional office for projects' monitoring from Peru to Guatemala. This structure receives support from the AVINA Foundation. Since March 2001, the regional coordinator is Pedro Camajá, Maya-Quiché Indian, head of the Guatemala City based NGO «Fundación para el desarrollo y fortalecimiento de las organizaciones de base» (FUNDEBASE). He collaborates with our local representatives in the different countries of the isthmus.

Recentering in South America was done in Ecuador, certain areas of Peru and Bolivia. A strong reduction of our involvement in Colombia was necessary due to the severe situation this country is undergoing which is stopping us from having access to the communities. In these countries, volunteers represent the organization and ensure the follow-up in the field.

PERU

Giving life back to the Land of the Andes



Lamas and alpacas of the Puno area, Peru

Eager to become associated to this movement known to us for many years, we answered positively to a project over several years, which consists principally in an annual fund to some fifteen local groups, in close collaboration with PRATEC. This fund will finance micro-projects for cultural revitalization in several regions of the Peruvian Andes.

Support from the Geneva Federation for Development Cooperation (City of Carouge) and from the Horizon Foundation

Amerindian peoples, partners of Traditions for Tomorrow since 1986

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

Giving life back to the Land of the Andes

Development set according to Western standards with mainly quantitative objectives and production techniques far from the Andean world's reality is largely responsible for the impoverishment of the Andes and of its inhabitants. In reaction to this, an initiative began and developed at the people's pace: the Andean Project of Farmers' Technology (PRATEC). This small NGO spreads its influence to several Andean regions in the country. A series of multiple «interactions» produces everytime new centres of initiatives. What is it all about? Locating groups of people barely constituted and structured, always from rural villages, and suggesting some lines of action that will permit alternative means of cooperation in their regions, with their village and those surrounding.

Whilst not aiming at completely discarding prior teachings that proved inefficient, we are, however, not so far from it. As Traditions for Tomorrow has always done, we will contribute to the rebuilding in each person, in each group, of a trust in their identity refocused on local knowledge. The village is set to partake in agricultural, animal breeding, healthcare, weaving, clothes, etc. All of this is related to the restoration of values that various external influences had swept away without providing, in most cases, satisfying alternatives.

Country	Language	Language	Language
	Zapoteco	Nahuat	Rama
HONDURAS	PANAMA	COSTA RICA	
Chorti	Kuna	Cabecar	
Garifuna	Ngobe-Bügle	Ngobe-Bügle	

Traditions for Tomorrow

Traditions pour Demain - Tradiciones para el Mañana

Central office in Switzerland

12, promenade John Berner, 1180 Rolle, Switzerland
Tel. + 41 21 825 23 31, Fax + 41 21 825 23 62
trad@fgc.ch Postal bank account CCP 10-17148-0

Local office in France

B.P. 477-07, 75327 Paris cedex 07, France
Tel. + 33 1 47 05 16 24, Fax + 33 1 45 56 05 51
trad@fgc.ch

Local office in the USA

4400 Greenwich Parkway NW, Washington DC 20007, USA
Tel. + 1 202 625 15 14, Fax + 1 202 625 12 11
trad@fgc.ch (IRS 501C3 tax-exempt status)

Regional office for Central America and Mexico

Residenciales Roosevelt, 21 calle 8-40, Zona 7 de Mixco, Guatemala
Tel. + 502 435 38 59, Fax + 502 433 80 85,
tradguat@concyt.gob.gt



Madre Tierra!

Daniel Wermus, Albin Michel, publisher

Foreword by Yves Coppens, Professor at the *Collège de France*

From Mexico down to Panama travelling through seven countries, the author, a Swiss journalist from the InfoSud agency, followed the trails of Traditions for Tomorrow and of its founders, Diego and Christiane Gradis. He met about a hundred actors of the Amerindian revival. For both neophytes and connoisseurs, *Madre Tierra!* is an essential key to understand the undergoing processes in the area.

This travel narrative, an attractive book illustrated with colour pictures and maps, swarms as an initiation to the trip with practical, historical, political, technical... and also shamanic information. Soon published also in Spanish and in English, the French edition is available in bookshops and can also be ordered from Traditions for Tomorrow.

(US\$ 20, € 20 or CHF 36, not including postage)

Some reactions:

"A hymn to humanity, to the immense Amerindian cultures and to their land."

Yves Coppens

"A 'total' book to see Indian America differently."

Echo Magazine, Geneva

"The strength, the wisdom and the poetry of forgotten values."

Psychologies Magazine, Paris

"The feeling of something experienced related so much to the ardour of Wermus' pen as to his love to people. This testimony accounts a seal of truth."

La Tribune de Genève

"Extremely lively and interesting, both a journalistic report in the field and a practical guide essential to knowing indigenous communities,"

24 heures, Lausanne

"A poetic entry into the Indians' universe, to little by little become convinced by their cause."

L'autre Afrique, Paris

"A guide to understanding Latin America."

Le Matin, Lausanne

"From their patient dive into the origins of their culture, they chose to only keep what would allow them to grow in humanity."

Le Vie Nouvelle, Paris

to people. This testimony accounts a seal of truth.

La Tribune de Genève

"A beautiful journalistic report meeting with the Amerindians, to whom the author - finally - broadly offers a voice."

Nouvelles Clés, Gordes (France)

they chose to only keep what would allow them to grow in humanity."

La Vie Naturelle, Paris

"Giving voice to tens of Amerindian representatives bonded by one same respect for *Madre Tierra*."

Le Courrier, Geneva



Indigenous peoples in the limelight of UNESCO in 2001

As an NGO specialized in indigenous issues with a consultative status with UNESCO, Traditions for Tomorrow follows and supports, sometimes in a decisive way, the taking into consideration by UNESCO of indigenous peoples' specificity within its program implementation:

- UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication was awarded to Radio-Quispillaccta (Ayacucho, Peru). Nomination was presented in 2001 by Traditions for Tomorrow, which had supported the creation of this AM radio station of the Quispillaccta quechuan community. Radio Quispillaccta covers an Andean population of about ½ million people.

- In May 2001 an international conference was held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, on the theme: "Indigenous identities: sayings, writings and new technologies" in which we actively took part, as well as Aymara (Bolivia) and Kuna (Panama) partners of Traditions for Tomorrow.

- Article 4 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity specifies that: "Defence of cultural diversity... implies the engagement to respect human

rights and fundamental liberties, in particular rights of people belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples." Point 14 of the Action Plan for the Declaration's implementation demands "respect and protection of traditional knowledge, especially that of indigenous peoples."

- Were officially proclaimed as elements of the World heritage for the first time in 2001, masterpieces of oral and immaterial heritage, of which several belong to indigenous peoples, for example, the Oruro Andean carnival (Bolivia).

- The General Director presented a very encouraging report in October to UNESCO's Executive Council on the Organization's effective contribution to the International Decade for Indigenous Peoples.

- Work towards the preparation of the draft International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was launched. Eventually, this text will of course constitute an essential instrument for the protection of indigenous peoples' heritage (oral tradition, knowledge, rituals, customs, etc.).

[Word Document](#)