

TRADITIONS FOR TOMORROW



Newsletter 2006 - No. 1

An international network of non-profit organizations, with no religious nor partisan affiliation, created in 1986 to accompany the efforts of indigenous peoples anxious to protect their cultural identity. **Traditions for Tomorrow** is active in different countries of Latin America and acts as a partner of Amerindian communities. In the field, it receives cultural or educational projects chosen and entirely implemented by the beneficiaries. To fund them, the organisation presents these projects to donors: its members, public and private funding agencies. **Traditions for Tomorrow**, by helping toward revitalising confidence, self-esteem, dignity and life in harmony with its environment, contributes to the restructuring of communities that will thus better assume the responsibility for their development. It has a consultative status with UNESCO, with the United Nations ECOSOC (Economic and Social Committee) and with WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization).

A second UN Decade for Indigenous People

The first International Decade for Indigenous People (1995-2004), proclaimed by the United Nations in the stride of the International Year that was dedicated to them in 1993, went unnoticed to a majority. Understandable will most people say; "another Decade, what for?"

The most unusual fact that this Decade was extended for a further 10 years in December 2004 demonstrates that its objective to "strengthen international cooperation in order to resolve indigenous problems in fields such as human rights, environment, health, culture and education" had not been achieved.

There is no time for regrets but rather for an evaluation in a constructive manner, in order to sweep the first Decade's disappointments with the results of the second one. On October 12th 2004, the main Amerindian leaders gathered on the sacred site of Tepoztlán in Mexico together with Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchu, recognized that the Decade had been "a significant step toward establishing a new type of relationship between indigenous peoples, States and national societies". The Decade was most

of all worthy for highlighting the situation of discrimination and marginalization endured by some 350 million indigenous peoples scattered amid some 5'000 nations in over 70 countries, and for causing a sudden awareness among them which had never occurred before.

Among the main achievements to be noted are the creation in 2002 of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York sealing the indigenous presence in the UN world, the appointment of a special Rapporteur on the situation of indigenous people's human rights and fundamental freedoms, the elaboration of a number of rules in the international and

national spheres, and the development of jurisprudences related to indigenous people.

Concretely, many training programmes were organized, indigenous universities were opened, special funds for financing projects were constituted, joint structures were established at the international and regional level in order to tackle matters related to social development, biodiversity, preservation of knowledge, gender, habitat, culture, etc.

But let's not dream on! Traditions for Tomorrow's daily contacts

with the field for almost 20 years, our regular visits in the villages, rapidly bring us down to a sad reality. These rules and these policies have in very few cases favoured the Amerindian farmer who continues to live in misery and insecurity. A positive point however: this new outburst strengthened his conviction that his way out also lies in his own efforts to consolidate his cultural identity, without which whatever future is unlikely. It is at this level that Traditions for Tomorrow's work priority has always laid and will



continue to lie.

Locally as well as globally, there is yet a way to go. Disappointed for not seeing the UN draft Declaration on Indigenous People's Rights materialize, in construction for 22 years, the indigenous people ironically claim: "Before we had no voice. Today, now that we have one, no one listens to it". Let's pursue our action so that at the end of the second Decade, we not only listen to them with attention, but also give them the means to live according to their rights and their legitimate aspirations.

Diego and Christiane Gradis
Founders of Traditions for Tomorrow

Nicaragua

Chorotegas from Cusmapa conquering their indigenosity

Right up north of Nicaragua on the border with Honduras, set on the top of peaceful hills, Cusmapa dominates the region. When we arrived there at the end of 2004, it was the eve of a key date for the small village of Cusmapa. Indeed, the following day, voters from this town with 10'000 inhabitants, most of them living in the surrounding countryside, were about to elect the first indigenous woman in charge of a township.

Not just the first indigenous woman mayor in Cusmapa, but the first indigenous woman mayor of the whole Pacific Coast of this country which had decreed since long ago that indigenous people in Nicaragua were only found on the Atlantic Coast in the East and not in the West.

But for several years the different indigenous groups willing to revive their past, living in the West of Nicaragua, entrenched in a mixed-blood majority, today are engaged in a slow process toward the affirmation of their identity.

We then understand what the election of Doña Maria Elena to the position of mayor represents; this Chorotega woman, mother of a very large family who raised her children on her own, in a particularly modest house.

During our visit, we were also questioning the fact that despite the importance of the next day's event, so many members of the indigenous community of Cusmapa – over 95% of its inhabitants – got together with us for hours on end to explain to us how much the cultural restoration activity they were asking Traditions for Tomorrow support for, actually counted for them.

This initiative composed of different aspects (publications, installation of a room on their history – a museum -, Chorotega dance and music activities, organization of festivals and contests) is the outcome of collective consideration which will make complete sense when, in hold of the local political power for the first time, the inhabitants of Cusmapa will demonstrate how much as indigenous peoples of Nicaragua's Pacific Coast they also count on their identity to build their future.

Swiss music instruments find a new fate in Mexico

With support from the Swiss Embassy in Mexico, some hundred instruments donated by Swiss village brass bands sailed to the port of Vera Cruz early 2005. They were then sent on to Mexico City by truck, where our representative Marie-Claude Brunel shared them among different brass bands from indigenous villages of Huasteca and Oaxaca.

Each of them received a subsidy from the organization to cover their travel expenses and transportation of instruments to the village.

We thank the Swiss village-bands and the media that took part in this action, especially the French-Swiss Radio, the carriers that granted us special conditions, and also the volunteers who packed up this treasure gone overseas for a second life.

Bolivia

The cocaleros Afro of Dorado Chico

Attached to the abrupt slopes of a very hot region in the Andes, the small houses are scattered between the well looked after terraces of coca bushes. Dorado Chico is located in the traditional coca production area, therefore totally authorized. The plant's excellent quality allows a good price for the sale of a product used in traditional consumption by masticating the dried leaf, and also in manufacturing pharmaceutical and food products.

This village's other particularity is that, out of the 35 families, 31 are descendants of African slaves, and the rest are indigenous Aymaras. Each group maintained its cultural characteristics (language, music, beliefs and social relationships), even though black women adopted, and with much grace, the little bowler-hat, the braids and the outfit of Andean indigenous women. The harmony between both groups is an example of interculturality.

Nonetheless Afro-Bolivians, who do not outnumber 7'000 in the entire country, terribly suffer from racial discrimination. The



cocaleros of Dorado Chico are affected every time they go into town to sell their production, and, worse yet, when from time to time they need to reach La Paz.

This is what led them in this village to contact Traditions for Tomorrow in order to ask for support in publishing a book about their history, their identity, their culture and one of its most advanced expressions: the *Saya* dance coming straight from Africa.

Research was carried out with the elders who confided in the youth under the direction of one of the village's young members, who today has become the Afro-Bolivian peoples' cultural leader.

The 1000 copies will be integrated into the school curriculum in the area, as part of the public education reform taking place, and will also be available to the diffusion circles of Afro-Bolivian culture so strongly ignored or despised.

Peru

Andean cultural assertion blazing

The first phase of the project Traditions for Tomorrow is accompanying since 2002 in a large part of Peru's Andean area with its partner PRATEC (Andean Project of Peasant Technology) ended in 2005. With regard to the excellent results obtained through the hundreds of cultural initiatives of communities that were supported by the fund we set available to the PRATEC (www.pratec.org.pe), the funding for the period 2005-2007 with the Geneva Federation for Cooperation was renewed.

This approach to support material and spiritual development in rural areas on the basis of Andean societies' knowledge and functioning methods has demonstrated its efficiency; restoration of traditional landscape management, revalorisation of the customary system of governance and of conflict resolution at community level, rehabilitation of techniques for agricultural production, handicraft, livestock breeding, consolidation of links between groups of farmers engaged in this approach, etc.

Early 2006, a book ("*Valver al Respetto*" - Back to respect) was published by PRATEC about this experience that probably does not have any equivalence elsewhere. Beyond the support contributed, Traditions for Tomorrow wishes to disseminate this experience widely, given its originality and the convincing results it obtained in such little time.

Traditions for Tomorrow receives a prize from the Fondation de France



The 2004 Denis Guichard Prize of the "Fondation de France" was awarded to Traditions for Tomorrow for its contribution to the protection by Amerindian people of their traditional knowledge. The Prize was shared with Chol-Indian friends from Mexico

The Denis Guichard Foundation promotes meetings on the environment and life. The jury was presided by the European Institute of Ecology's Chairman, Professor Jean-Marie Pelt, renowned author and one of the first ecologist researchers.



Another six years to go with UNESCO

At the beginning of 2005, UNESCO and Traditions for Tomorrow renewed for six years their formal consultative relationship.

Our objective during that period will mainly be to pursue that the indigenous course and the cultural approach to development in the various forums we take part in shall be heard. We also wish to make UNESCO better known to indigenous organizations so that they get closer to it.

- In 2004, we led a consultation of NGOs working with UNESCO, about their contributions to indigenous education. The widely disseminated results of this survey were presented during a seminar that gathered indigenous delegates around Professor Rodolfo Stavenhagen, UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Issues.

- Traditions for Tomorrow was very active in the multilateral negotiations which led to the adoption in October 2005 of the UNESCO Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. This Convention must at full-term guarantee to the States the possibility to choose their cultural policy to fight against the market's infliction of a globalised monoculture.

Traditions for Tomorrow has also coordinated the participation of NGOs affiliated to UNESCO in Paris' intergovernmental conferences in order to negotiate this convention, and also co-organized hearings on this text with the civil society in Switzerland.

One of the extensions was the creation of a Swiss Coalition for Cultural Diversity uniting the main organizations in the field of culture, media and development cooperation.

- In that respect a close collaboration was also developed on indigenous issues with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Traditions for Tomorrow was able to get UNESCO to invite the Forum to take part in the negotiations.
- Several actions were carried out in close association with the Swiss Commission for UNESCO, of which Traditions for Tomorrow's President, Diego Gradis, is also Vice-President for Culture; for instance the organization of a forum in Geneva on the links between culture and development, in collaboration with the Geneva Federation for Cooperation and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (DDC).

Close to the field for Traditions for Tomorrow

Without their volunteer contribution, we would not be able to fully undertake our mission. Our local representatives, active in most Latin American countries where we accompany communities' initiatives, are like "workers in the dark".

They assume multiple tasks: field visits on request of the organization's project managers, representation, contacts with the media and institutions, network development, mission preparation and follow-up for head office members, information search, and many other favours. We are extremely grateful; they constitute our permanent staff in these countries.

CARLOS Borge is a distinguished anthropologist from Costa Rica. With Sandra, his wife, they set up SEDER, a consulting firm. In fact they dedicate a good amount of their time lavishing advice to Talamanca and Puntarenas Bribri. Carlos' knowledge of indigenous reality in Costa Rica is particularly precious to us.

CHRISTIANE Saborio, who came from Lorraine (France) to Managua almost 50 years ago, has more or less come across everything in this country: earthquakes, hurricanes and political upheavals. Translator and also writer in her own time, sharply knowledgeable about the Nicaraguan society and its customs, she has pulled us out of uneasy situations several times.

CRISTINA Bubba; all of her advice and initiatives are essential to our work in Bolivia. Activist anthropologist, she received the prestigious Rolex Prize for successfully managing the return of Andean communities' ancient sacred textiles from North America, stolen by unscrupulous art dealers.



ELISA Julia, "la profesora" French-Panamanian, teaching French at the University of Panama. She has a long experience of fieldwork with indigenous people, particularly the Kunas. Their trust in her is an important element of our good relationship with the different groups in this country.

MARIE-CLAUDE Brunel, Claudia has an accent from the South of France. Ecology engineer, she has been living for many years in Mexico and has studied for a long time whales from Baja California. She often visits our projects

and has coordinated the Mexican edition of the book "¡Madre Tierra!".

NATHALIE Weemaels left Belgium a long time ago to serve indigenous communities with her qualification as an engineer in agronomics. She ensures an active presence of Traditions for Tomorrow in Ecuador. She is very much engaged in denouncing the damages caused by oil companies on indigenous territories in the Amazon.

Amerindian people, partners of Traditions for Tomorrow since 1986

GUATEMALA	MEXICO	ECUADOR	PANAMA
Aguacateco	Akateco	Afro-ecuatorian	Kuna
Axi	Chamula	Cañari	Ngobe-Bügle
Chalchilteco	Chinanteco	Quichua	PERU
Itz'at	Chol	Saraguro	Andean
Jacalteco	Choloteco	Shuar	Aymara
Kaqchiquel	Chontal	EL SALVADOR	Quechua
K'anjobal	Huichol	Kakawira	COLOMBIA
Mam	Mam	Lenca	Afro-colombian
Q'eqchi	Mazahua	Nahuat	Embera-Chami
Quiché	Mixe	COSTA RICA	Wayuu
NICARAGUA	Mixteco	Borruca	BOLIVIA
Creole	Nahñu	Bribri	Afro-bolivian
Chorotega	Nahuatl	Cabecar	Aymara
Garifuna	Nahuatl	Ngobe-Bügle	Guarani
Miskito	Tojolabal	CHILE	Quechua
Mayangna	Triqui	Aymara	HONDURAS
Rama	Tzotzil	Huilliche	Chorti
Nahuatl	Zapoteco	Mapuche	Garifuna

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 Alamos, Casa 1, San Bartolo Milpa Altas
Zona 3, Sacatpequez, Guatemala
Tel. + 502 78 31 23 03, Fax + 502 78 31 23 09,
tradguate@intelnatt.com