

PRESS RELEASE

For release:
December 6, 2005

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National Funders Conference Focus On Indigenous Issues

During the past several months International Funders for Indigenous Peoples' (IFIP) worked in collaboration with the National Network of Grantmakers (NNG) as a planning committee member for their annual conference at the Semiahmoo Resort and Conference Center, in Blaine, Washington on October 8-11 2005. IFIP was instrumental in coordinating a reception and several conference sessions.

The *Indigenous Peoples and Funders Working Group Reception* opened with a traditional welcome song performed by Potlatch Executive Director Andrea Alexander and Makah tribal member Nytom Goodwin. The reception was attended by more than 50 NNG participants and brought recognition to the Indigenous Peoples and Funders Working Group (IPFWG), a working group of NNG that started over a decade ago.

Evelyn Arce-White, Executive Director for IFIP facilitated the event by introducing Ron McKinley, Executive Director of NNG, all of the reception co-sponsors and four artists from distinct regions locally, nationally and internationally. The artists traveled from Bolivia, New York State, South Dakota, as well as Sequim, Washington. Each of them was given an opportunity to sell their traditional artwork and to showcase their work. They also spoke at the reception about the symbolism of their art.

The reception was made possible with financial support from The Solidago Foundation, Ford Foundation, ArtCorps a Program of New England Biolabs, Potlatch Fund, Tierra Madre Fund, Native Americans in Philanthropy and IFIP.

Roger Falcón, Program Director of ArtCorps at New England Biolabs Foundation, assisted in developing the session, *Creating Indigenous Art Workshop*. The session brought former ArtCorps artist Sandra De Berduccy, part Aymaran Indigenous descent from Bolivia. Ms. De Berduccy is both a painter and weaver and had participants engaged in a hands-on workshop creating a Native American dreamcatcher.

The workshop gave nearly 30 participants a rare opportunity to learn about symbolism through an Indigenous perspective. De Berduccy spoke about how in Guatemala she initiated a community natural dye workshop that brought back lost communal knowledge

of using plant materials to make dyes. Participants learned how art and the environment were wed in a project that is bringing greater economic resources into the community.

De Berduccy also shared her experience of carrying out a mural campaign to raise awareness of forest fires. The campaign is intended for children and has proven to be successful by combining art as a powerful communication tool with environmental concerns. As a result, for the first time in years there were no forest fires near the village.

The second session titled, *Indigenous Peoples Confront Globalization: Building Strength through International Relationships*, gave funders a perspective on social justice issues in an age of economic globalization through a north-south Indigenous lens. The Solidago Foundation contributed financial support and Magda Lanuza, of the South American Coordinator for Center for Economic Justice (CEJ) facilitated discussions. The session covered the growing and successful strategy of building relationships across borders, whether in indigenous-exclusive or mixed-sector networks. It discussed the power of combining networks to gain global strength and the impressive victories that have been won over the world.

Tom Goldtooth (Dine'/Dakota), of Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), participated in the session and spoke about how there has been more international forums devoted to Indigenous issues, but how there is still a lack of Indigenous involvement. He noted that Indigenous representatives need to be included in the planning process to create better policies that will directly impact Indigenous communities.

Dr. Luis Macas (Quichua), senior administrator for the Knowledge of Indigenous Culture, former president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), and board member of Seventh Generation Fund also participated in the conference session. Macas spoke about the work of several organizations that have made residents of Ecuador increasingly aware of the need to protect the environment and Indigenous communities. He noted that an international network with ecological and human rights groups has been created to promote the human rights of Indigenous people, which have brought fruitful solidarity relations.

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