

The Sharing Circle

"Caring for Country" Maintaining Cultural and Biological Diversity

The Christensen Fund is a private grant making foundation located in the San Francisco Bay area with a long involvement internationally in the arts and conservation, currently providing about \$5m in grants per annum and set to grow considerably in size. In late 2002 TCF decided to shift its attention to the neglected interface between natural environments and human cultures, and to work in an integrated fashion towards maintaining the rich diversity of the world – biological and cultural (and especially "bio-cultural"). An integrated approach to diversity is necessary because these two diversities depend on each other (and correlate closely worldwide), are being eroded by broadly the same forces, are crucial resources for re-inventing human society

and the planet, and because the very diversity and aesthetics of culture-nature-landscape connections are beautiful and valuable in and of themselves.

Bio-cultural diversity is that component of diversity which contains both cultural and biological content. It is what is present in the shrines at springs and woodland groves across Central Asia. It is the specialness of the hundreds of native corns of the US southwest. It is the system by which herders carefully regulate the timing and intensity of grazing in Ethiopia's alpine meadows and semi-desert lowlands. It is how a mosaic of seasonal fire is used to maintain the diversity of the savannahs of Northern Australia. If conservation groups have relatively neglected bio-cultural diversity, then bio-

cultural knowledge and values are even more under-appreciated, these surely being key to enabling human beings to handle the spiraling footprint we are imposing on the planet. This is because such knowledge has evolved to adapt the long-term presence of human beings in landscapes over spatial areas and timescales that western technocratic systems have had difficulty with. Moreover breaking the cultural connection to traditional lands often precipitates ecological decline; and then, furthermore, when lands and resources are

degraded and homogenized by the development machine, a cultural erosion typically follows. Stewardship – or what Australian Aboriginal people so aptly call "caring for country" – is crucial, where "care" necessarily combines technical, cultural, spiritual, scientific and institutional land-based knowledge. It also has to be about adaptively learning through culture and values, about singing to the turtle not just tagging it, acknowledging a relationship, humbling ourselves to listen deeply to rhythms analytic analysis is chal-

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The traditional Kyrgyz Golden Eagle keepers in the Tien Shan Mountains of Central Asia are invited to share their deep knowledge.

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The Sharing Circle is a newsletter for members of International Funders for Indigenous Peoples. IFIP is an association of grantmakers who support, or are interested in supporting projects involving Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

We strive to:

Increase knowledge and understanding of the unique issues related to funding projects that involve Indigenous Peoples by providing a baseline of information on issues relevant to the Indigenous context.

Encourage innovation and increase effectiveness within the grantmaking community by facilitating networking opportunities.

Foster a cross-disciplinary understanding of Indigenous Peoples and the holistic contexts in which they live and work.

Advisors and Contributors:

Rebecca L. Adamson
(Cherokee) Founder

Jose Barreiro (Taino)

Evelyn White (Chibcha)
IFIP Coordinator

Tel: (540)371-5615 ext.14

Fax: (540) 371-3505

E-m: ifip@firstnations.org

Internet: www.firstpeoples.org/ifip.html

www.firstpeoples.org/ifip.html



Americas Social Forum

Crossroads of the Hemisphere

by Philip McManus, *Appleton Foundation and Forging Alliances South and North*

The first Americas Social Forum (ASF), held this past July in Quito, Ecuador, drew 10,000 people from 44 countries and brought together a broad spectrum of social change movements. The ASF is the regional expression of the World Social Forum, currently one of the largest civil society gathering spaces in the world. Over 900 organizations were officially registered for the Quito conference. The approximately 500 organized activities included workshops, seminars, panels, testimonies, a huge public march, and a wide array of cultural activities celebrating the rich diversity of our peoples. Issues that stood out include opposition to the current free trade proposals (FTAA, CAFTA, Plan Puebla-Panama), repudiation of the unjust and unbearable

cost of the foreign debt, and concern about increasing militarization in the region, particularly the expanding US military presence.

The strong presence of indigenous groups reflected the Andean location. A large Bolivian delegation from the CLOC (Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations) was especially prominent. Their spirited presence illustrated the capacity for mobilization, the strength, and the resilience that have made Bolivian social movements such a major force in national politics there.

One of the CLOC's organized activities was an open-air fair on food sovereignty and native seeds. The display of seeds and the foods produced from them was both an impressive demonstration of the riches of

indigenous culture and a powerful argument for defending indigenous rights.

Latin American social movements generally expect the state to guarantee that the needs of its citizens are met. Among indigenous groups there is a noteworthy current, evident at the Americas Social Forum, of deep skepticism about what they see as corrupt governments and a corresponding assertion of autonomy projects, free of state funding or control, as the necessary building blocks of a new order. A final document from the panel discussion synthesizing the many sessions on indigenous and Afro-American issues is boldly assertive in this regard:

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Bolivian Indigenous Delegations were a strong presence at the Americas Social Forum held from July 25-30, 2004 in Quito, Ecuador.

Special Event

In the Heart of the Earth

II Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples

by Beverly Bell, Executive Director of Center for Economic Justice

*"In the heart of the Earth,
in the place where the
sun shines directly..."*

So began the final declaration of the II Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala, held in Quito, Ecuador on July 21 to 25, 2004.

There ended any allusion to a tranquil or whole world. The five days of discussion and ceremony of 800 people from 64 indigenous nations and 25 countries, from Canada to Chile, demonstrated that a fierce and violent second conquest is occurring in that place. The summit also birthed new spaces and strategies for indigenous peoples to reclaim what is theirs and to live with peace and autonomy.

The gathering was organized by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); the Organization of Quichua Nationalities of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazonian Basin (COICA). Its location was significant, as the efforts of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement to gain a plurinational state, with equal weight by an indigenous government, have been powerful reference points for indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. And the

suppression of the human and political rights of the Ecuadorian indigenous under an indigenous president, Lucio Gutierrez, is archetypal of relationships between state governments and their indigenous citizenries.

The workshops and plenaries exposed the enormity of assaults and violations facing indigenous communities today. Subversion of sovereignty; theft of land; expulsion from indigenous territories; extraction and privatization of natural resources; expropriation of indigenous knowledge and genetic material; environmental degradation; biotechnology; loss of control of food sources and agriculture; militarization; fumigation; ecotourism; violation of human and political rights; criminalization of social protest; undermining of national and international treaties and laws; free trade pacts; foreign debt; attempts at cooptation of indigenous organizations; and destruction by corporations and international financial institutions are only a partial list of the aggressions cataloged in discussion.

The analysis emerging from the group showed that, no matter how vast the dangers to indigenous peoples and their autonomy, it was no larger than their commitment to sustain social, economic,

political, cultural, and spiritual integrity. This was evidenced in the plethora of proposals and commitments, and in the prayer, ceremony, and cultural celebrations that bracketed the discussions.

One of the issues under attention was indigenous alliances with other social movements. The participants forcefully asserted that strategic partnerships with other movements are essential to defend indigenous rights and interests against neoliberal globalization and militarization. As Benjamin Inuca of the Federation of Kichua Peoples of the Northern Sierra of Ecuador said, "If we are not together, we are no more than a big meal."

The timing of the summit, back-to-back with the First Social Forum of the Americas, created an important avenue for indigenous peoples to more extensively and effectively insert themselves into international spaces. After the closing ceremony, the crowd marched across town to join the inauguration of the Social Forum. Distinguished by dozens of different traditional outfits and plentiful rainbow indigenous flags, and speaking on many different panels on a broad range of topics, indigenous people were a strong and visible presence at the event. This departure from many Latin

American social movement spaces, and from previous Social Forums, was a clear indication of bridges that indigenous peoples are crossing.

A dominant focus of discussion at the Summit was territoriality, land, and resources. Many adversaries to their retention and protection were cited throughout the sessions, among them the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, the InterAmerican Development Bank, national government, the Global Environment Fund, NGOs like the Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund, multinational corporations, and trade pacts such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Demands included: indemnity for environmental destruction, return of genetic materials and collective patrimony; control of food sources and agriculture; full knowledge of and participation by communities in all economic and development decisions and initiatives; and action to reclaim indigenous lands. The participants adopted a boycott of all multinational corporations as well as the World Bank,

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lenged by, remembering that nearly all the knowledge of past human experience about how to exist with the world gleaned over tens of thousands of years is currently being casually thrown away. And this is happening just at the time that we need all the knowledge we can get in the face of a bankrupting global life-support system, with hardly any resilience, that has surely to transform or collapse over the next century.

To do this work TCF has identified four regions for grantmaking (the Ethiopian Rift Valley; Northern Australia and Melanesia; The American Southwest; and Central Asia, Turkey and Iran) each marked by exceptional cultural and biological diversity within dramatic physical landscapes. As relatively intact areas in socio-biological terms and possessing kinds of heterogeneity that may better enable resilience in the face of the vicissitudes of global climatic change and other disturbances, TCF is betting on these places playing a major role in shaping the long term future of diversity on the planet. Though typically seen as obscure and isolated today, each has served over millennia as a major historical and evolutionary powerhouse and crossroads for the world's cultural and biological diversity and heritage. It was in regions like these that all the

plants we now rely on for food were domesticated; it is mountainous regions like these that have served as the refugia for surviving past eras of climate change.

Given these concerns with keeping bio-cultural diversity and knowledge adapting and alive (not preserved or pickled) in landscapes it should be clear why TCF is primarily working with peoples and

“Though typically seen as obscure and isolated today, each has served over millennia as a major historical and evolutionary powerhouse and crossroads for the world’s cultural and biological diversity and heritage.”

communities variously known as “indigenous”, “tribal” and “minority”, in their passionate struggles to give a future to the expression of biological and cultural creation in their territories. As we frame this work we often engage with the individuals and traditional institutions that serve as “guardians of the landscape”, people respon-

sible for knowing, adapting and applying cultural and scientific knowledge to sustain landscape level processes, people like the “Golden Eagle Man” in the accompanying picture. To partner in this fashion means changing HOW we are as a foundation as we embark on this work, which is challenging but - mind you - much fun. It means hiring program staff with unusual cultural and linguistic competencies, and with lifetimes of experiencing how local tradition, innovation, passion and vision can be made meaningful. (And we are exceptionally fortunate with the individuals from different Indigenous cultures we have been able to recruit.) It means building a wider institutional culture and administrative system that might move nimbly between an indigenous way and the requirements of a being multi-million dollar bureaucracy and the US government’s IRS. But then that very process that has to happen within us as an institution neatly parallels what has to happen out there in the world, where the shaman, the scientist and the grandmother sit together between despair and illumination to wonder how creativity and adaptive learning can breed resilience, deep caring, and quietly keep enough alive for recovery to come after the fall. ■

Ken Wilson Ph.D. is the Executive Director for The Christensen Fund. For more information, please visit the TCF website at: www.christensenfund.org.

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"In spite of the fact that we have been obliged to live in resistance for more than 500 years, today we do not need the development options offered by governments and multi-lateral institutions. Their options are no more than smoke and mirrors that will not fool us. We join in the broad rejection of their plans, mega-projects, and trade agreements..."

Both the indigenous peoples and nationalities, as well as the Afro-Americans, will design and establish our own freely determined models, based on an affirmation of what is our own, in the context of respect for the sovereignty of our countries, but without awaiting their legal recognition, in order to build democratic, inclusive, participatory states that recognize distinct nationalities within them and that offer a dignified life for all their inhabitants."

A small, but highly engaged, group of funders traveled in a delegation to the Americas Social Forum and found it to be an extraordinary opportunity to learn about and even to experience from the inside of regional social movements. The funders delegation witnessed firsthand the mounting resistance to an economic model that fails to meet human needs and one that threatens the very survival of indigenous communities and cultures. One participant described it as a privileged experience, like being "embedded" in Latin American social movements.



Indigenous activists welcomed news of IFIP's Spanish language publication, "Indigenous Peoples Funding and Resource Guide", and IFIP Executive Director Evelyn Arce White received numerous requests from organizations for copies.

Funders delegation participants from the Fund for Nonviolence (FNV) took advantage of the presence of so many veteran Latin American activists to undertake a round of international grantmaking that incorporated several Latin Americans in the decision-making. The experiment proved to be very fruitful, and FNV intends to build on it in the future.

Delegation members also participated in a dialogue with social movement leaders on funder/social movement relations, one of a series of such events organized by Forging Alliances South and North (ForAL). One issue that was touched on repeatedly was the need

to construct a common political agenda. This consistent concern reflected the importance of ensuring that both parties in the funding relationship are consciously collaborating in a joint project in pursuit of shared goals. The power imbalance inherent in funding relationships thus becomes less significant. As one participant put it: "It is not about benefactors and beneficiaries but rather an alliance among brothers and sisters to realize the vision: 'Another World Is Possible!'"*

The ASF had a lot of the trappings of the World Social Forum, but at what some found to be a more engaging scale. (The annual World Social Forum regularly draws on the order of 100,000 people.) Like all the social forum gatherings, it is subject to the criticism of too much talk and not enough action. However, it was impressive to see how the trade/debt networks in particular took advantage of the opportunity for outreach, education,

campaign building, and internal organization matters. For their part, indigenous groups held the II Continental Summit of the Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala immediately prior to the ASF, thus facilitating broader participation in both events. It is evident that these social forums continue to fulfill a vital role for international civil society, and their importance is likely to grow with the increasing profile of the social movements that they bring together. ■

** "Another world is possible" is the slogan of the World Social Forum process.*

Philip McManus is a board member of Appleton Foundation and chair of Forging Alliances South and North (ForAL). He coordinated the funders delegation to the ASF on behalf of ForAL. For more on the ForAL-sponsored funder-social movement dialogue process, see www.for-al.org.

Networks and Collaborations

**Americas Social Forum
in Quito, Ecuador
July 24-30**

IFIP participated in the funders' delegation to the Americas Social Forum in Quito, Ecuador that was coordinated by Forging Alliances South and North (ForAL). During the ASF, delegation members participated in a dialogue on "Challenges for Progressive Philanthropy in the Americas".



**GWOB Conference,
Oct 15, Miami FL**

IFIP had a session at Grantmakers Without Borders (GWOB) annual conference titled "Indigenous Peoples of Nicaragua and a Strategy for Autonomous Development."

Speakers included Armstrong Wiggins, Director for Latin American Program for the Indian Law Resource Institute and Nicky McIntyre, Vice President of Development and Communications for Global Fund for Women.

Discussions included how Indigenous communities in Nicaragua are promoting alternative development strategies based on their own knowledge, traditions, visions and potentials.



**NNG Conference
Oct 18, Miami, FL**

On October 18, IFIP had a session at National Network of Grantmakers (NNG), along with an informal reception in collaboration with Native Americans in Philanthropy, Seventh Generation Fund and Potlatch Fund.

Speakers for IFIP session included: Beverly Bell, Executive Director of Center of Economic Justice, Ana Maria Murillo, Executive Director of Uwa Defense Fund and Teresa Juarez Schreck from Peave Development Fund.

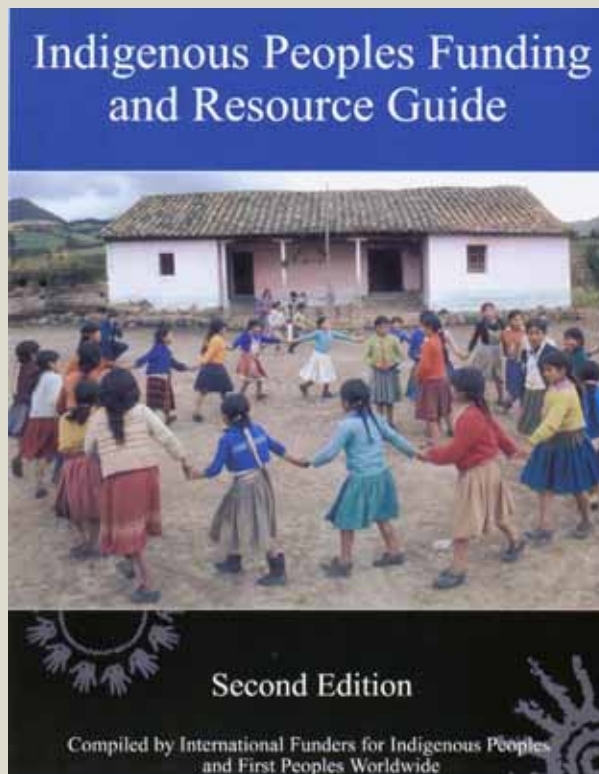
Discussions included how funders can best support efforts to serve Indigenous communities on their own turf and terms.



The New Indigenous Peoples Funding and Resource Guide

Ken Wilson, Executive Director of Christensen Fund quotes:

"By enabling indigenous organizations worldwide to identify potential sources of grant funds this Guide beautifully addresses an important reason why foundations and indigenous people have so rarely been able to partner directly, despite the needs and opportunities. The



Christensen Fund is distributing the Guide among its grantees around the world to help them identify foundation's with common interests and to begin to diversify their funding. We would encourage other foundations to do likewise."

The *Indigenous Peoples Funding and Resource Guide*, which was developed in collaboration with First Peoples Worldwide, has been distributed to hundreds of Native communities and nonprofit organizations in English and Spanish languages. The *Funding and Resource Guide* helps build the capacity for Indigenous

communities to increase their participation as successful grant-seekers. It contains practical information that includes the elements of a proposal; how to conduct foundation research; useful research websites; glossary of fundraising terms; and information on more than 250 foundations, corporations, and government agencies who provide funding for Indigenous and grassroots projects.

To purchase copies, download form from IFIP's website at www.firstpeoples.org/ifip.html.

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Inter-American Development Bank, and IMF in their communities and their countries, and urged all indigenous organizations to refuse grants from these institutions. It called for food sovereignty and a fight against biotechnology. The participants resolved that indigenous lands be left out of all negotiations for market-driven development. They called for peoples to organize against the FTAA and other trade pacts, and to block all borders on October 12, Indigenous Peoples Day, in opposition to free trade. And they called for a permanent space for exchange and communication to challenge neoliberal globalization.

Discussions of indigenous knowledge—the term adopted over “intellectual property”—also led to strong resolutions. The Summit rejected: patenting of indigenous knowledge and life forms, intellectual property pacts proposed by the U.S., and biogenetic prospectors. The Summit demanded that national and international government recognize and indemnify that knowledge already taken. It demanded full and direct participation by indigenous peoples in the international fora where decisions regarding indigenous knowledge are made, such as the World Trade Organization and the UN Conference on Trade and Development. The group called, moreover, for adopting internal strategies to transmit and valorize indigenous knowledge within families and communities.

Regarding other cultural and social rights, the Summit affirmed the need for indigenous schools, transmission of indigenous languages, reclamation of historic and organic foods and medicines, re-adoption

The Summit also birthed new spaces and strategies for indigenous peoples to reclaim what is theirs and to live with peace and autonomy.

of ancestral economic customs based on reciprocity, reappropriation of stolen sacred sites and cultural resources, reclaiming and teaching of native history, research and protection of ancient cultures and traditions, and maintenance and dissemination of indigenous cosmovision within the community.

Autonomy, diversity, and plurinationality were cross-cutting themes. Among other calls, the group demanded the ratification and application of Convention 169 of the International Labor Confederation and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (which recognizes indigenous peoples, government, territories, and legal systems). It called for the InterAmerican Commission

on Human Rights and the International Court of Justice to uphold conventions and treaties. However, the participants affirmed that legal recognition and treaties are not needed to create and sustain nationality or autonomous territory. “While there exist 3,000 indigenous languages and cultures,” commented one panelist, “only 200 nations are recognized.” The gathering urged respect for lands and rights particularly for non-contacted peoples, and for political and judicial autonomy.

The eleven declarations, with their binding resolutions, contained dozens more commitments. A few included: economic sovereignty; rejection of invasions, wars, and all forms of militarization; the release of dozens of indigenous peoples imprisoned throughout the hemisphere for defending their lands and rights; free transit of peoples; an

indigenous international court; a network of communication and action of indigenous peoples; and support for the peoples of Venezuela and Cuba.

The final declaration concluded, “We possess our own models that guarantee the continuation of our peoples and nationalities in harmony with nature and based in our ancestral cultural heritage.”

The Indigenous Summit marked a new moment in uniting indigenous peoples and equipping themselves with new strategies to defend and protect those models. ■

Beverly Bell is the Executive Director of Center of Economic Justice and a member of IFIP's Advisory Board. For more info about CEJ, check out www.cej.org

Upcoming IFIP Sessions

April 10, 2005, Council on Foundations San Diego, CA

IFIP is organizing a session titled, “A look at the Challenges and Opportunities to Funding Indigenous Peoples.” For more information visit the Council on Foundation's website at www.cof.org.

May 2005, Annual IFIP Conference New York City, NY

IFIP will be supporting the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples by having it's annual conference during the same period. IFIP is currently accepting session proposals. Please submit to ifip@firstnations.org For more information visit www.firstpeoples.org/ifip.html.

IFIP Membership

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples is a recognized philanthropic affinity group whose members are dedicated to enriching their grantmaking programs for international Indigenous development.

Membership is currently free, though members are encouraged to contribute and become a Sustaining or Esteemed Member for added benefits such as receiving a complimentary copy of *Native Americas: Hemispheric Journal of Indigenous issues* and being listed as one of our supporters. The benefits of membership include: being part of an unparalleled vehicle that exchanges ideas and guidance with funders and experts, receiving *The Sharing Circle*, our bi-annual newsletter that offers insight into the international arena, reading current research topics, invitation to our annual conference, being added to our new listserve, *The Sharing Network*.

If you are interested in becoming a member, send your contact information to Evelyn Arce-White, at ifip@firstnations.org, or call 540-371-5615 ext. 14.

Levels of Support

Sustain Members:

(Contributed \$10,000 or more)

Levi Strauss Foundation, The Christensen Fund
New York Community Trust

Esteem Members:

(Paid Members from \$300 to \$5,000)

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Otto Bremer Foundation, Global Greengrants Fund, Tides Canada Foundation, Garfield Foundation, Mary's Pence, Jewish Funders Network, National Network of Grantmakers, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development at WB, Native Americans in Philanthropy, Center for Economic Justice

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Combining the global links of international grantmaking with the professional development of affinity groups



IFIP Coordinator
c/o First Nations Development Institute
2300 Fall Hill Avenue, Suite 412
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Phone: 540-371-5615 ext.14
Fax: 540-371-3505
ifip@firstnations.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FIRSTPEOPLES.ORG/IFIP.HTML
