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*Cover: Embera youth from the Pacific region of Columbia. Photo: Jenzerá Working Group*
THE INDIGENOUS WORLD 2005

This Yearbook covers the period January-December 2004. Thanks to the contributions from indigenous and non-indigenous scholars and activists, The Indigenous World 2005 gives an overview of crucial developments in 2004 that have impacted on the indigenous peoples of the world.

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Kathrin Wessendorf and Alejandro Parellada

Indigenous children and youth are the most vulnerable groups within indigenous societies. Suffering from the discrimination, poverty and marginalisation that affect indigenous peoples, the youth is particularly impacted by inadequate education systems, high unemployment and social problems in the communities. They are also victims of violence in conflict situations, as well as of institutional violence based on racism and discrimination. The problems facing indigenous children in terms of health, the juvenile justice system, education and employment are all directly related to problems of discrimination. At the same time it is often difficult for indigenous youth to find a place and obtain respect in their own society while having to adjust to the demands and institutions designed and controlled by the dominant society.

The rights of children and young people are enshrined in various international instruments, one such being the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This has enabled the drafting of legislation and production of public policies aimed at guaranteeing the protection and defence of the rights of indigenous children and youth. In spite of this progress, the discrimination, exclusion and racism young indigenous people suffer from is becoming increasingly alarming.

Indigenous populations are particularly concerned about the distancing of indigenous children and youth from their own culture. Indigenous youth are frequently forced to abandon their communities and move to the cities if they are to benefit from employment and education opportunities. In the new urban environment, young indigenous people are often subjected to discrimination and deprived of equal opportunities in employment and education. Domestic work is the primary option for many young indigenous women living in urban centres. This kind of work is scantily regulated and they frequently receive only board and lodging in exchange for their labour. The lack of protection of young people also makes them extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexually transmitted infections. In Thailand, as the article by Kwanchewan Buadaeng shows, a migratory process has been taking place from the mountainous indigenous communities to the town of Chiang Mai since the 1990s, due to the rise in the tourist industry and the possibilities for study offered by the town. But most of the indigenous people currently living in Chiang Mai work in badly paid jobs with no medical insurance. A large number of indigenous children can also be seen abandoned on the streets of Chiang Mai, many of whom as adults end up in the sex industry, with many cases of HIV/AIDS being recorded amongst them.

Whereas there are job opportunities and education in the towns, the lack of bilingual study programmes culturally adapted to indigenous youth, along with the discrimination to which these latter are subjected, has created a strong psychosocial vacuum amongst many indigenous children and youth. This situation has, in turn, resulted in the alienation of indigenous children from their own culture and often from their families and communities. Moving away from home can lead to loss of language skills and in some cases to problems of recognition by their own indigenous society. One serious challenge for indigenous communities is how to preserve their cultural identity without exposing the indigenous children and youth to an ever more vulnerable situation in relation to national society. Many young indigenous people feel that they fall between two chairs: the world of their indigenous families and communities, and that represented by education and the urban environment. A strong feeling of a lack of belonging can have serious consequences for the mental and physical health of these young people. In Greenland the issue of language and identity is crucial for young people educated in Denmark. As the article in this issue states, it is important for the Greenlandic society to accept youth that does not speak fluently Greenlandic in order to secure well-educated youth a home and a job in their country and to make use of their skills. “Language is an important part of ethnic identity. But one must not fossilize Greenlandic identity in outdated conceptions of what makes a real Greenlander”.

A crucial problem for indigenous youth in the Arctic is the high rate of suicide. While in Greenland 100 in every 100,000 take their own lives, this increases to 180 in Nunavik (north of Quebec) and 240 on the Canadian Labrador coast. Suicide rates amongst the Inuit are between 10 to 20 times higher than those in the southern regions of Canada. Throughout the Arctic, suicides occur primarily amongst young men. The Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council understands that these suicides must be seen in relation to the rapid changes within the communities. The Council has asked the United Nations to support the development of suicide prevention strategies.

The vulnerability of indigenous children and youth is exacerbated during situations of armed conflict. Many young people and children are forcibly recruited into armed groups and the war not only endangers
their personal safety but also threatens the integrity of their community. In Colombia, for example, most of the indigenous peoples have been affected by the war and many communities have had to flee their traditional territories. Displacement often leads to a loss of traditional social patterns and the collapse of their political structures. Meanwhile, the armed conflict in Colombia continues to seriously affect the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. This article focuses on a recent meeting in the Pacific region at which the origins of the violence and the opportunities for young people to achieve their life projects were analysed. At this meeting, the young people stated that it was amongst them that, “the highest proportion of people are recruited into the indiscriminate felling of forests, into the cultivation of illegal crops and even recruited as cannon fodder for the armed groups that are now bleeding the country dry. This occurs because of a lack of social and economic opportunities that would enable us to lead a dignified life”.

In Nepal, the armed conflict between the Maoist guerrillas and the government continues to cause a large number of deaths and displacements, along with an economic crisis. The article by Luisang Waiba Tamang calls for reflection among the indigenous youth enlisted in the armed groups and calls for a peaceful solution to the country’s crisis.

Indigenous organisations have repeatedly denounced the discrimination from the police, particularly against indigenous youth. They have also expressed concern at their high rates of imprisonment and the ill treatment suffered during their detention.

Alongside these problems, we can see that in many countries there are movements of organised indigenous youth who are re-creating the indigenous movement, sometimes from a more urban perspective. This is very often in ways and with slogans that are not always shared by the traditional indigenous organisations. The young urban Mapuche in Argentina find new ways of expressing their identity that are specific to their marginalized neighbourhoods, thereby widening the concept of Mapuche identity, as is described in the article on Argentina.

In the Arctic, important initiatives are taking place to tackle social problems. In Canada, the Saputitit Youth Association of Nunavik and the Embrace Life Committee of Arviat, Nunavut are important points of reference in the defence of Inuit youth, as these organisations are setting up suicide prevention programmes. Nunavut Youth Consulting supports young people in relation to education and health issues. The National Inuit Youth Council runs a website where these organisations and young Inuit from the different regions can exchange their experiences and support each other in their efforts towards more healthy communities.

In the Cordillera region of the Philippines, young indigenous people seem to have been less influenced by Western habits. Their cultural strength has led them to resist discrimination and projects that threaten their resources. Indigenous youth organisations are supporting the struggle for recognition of their ancestral lands and the right to education.

The article on Chad describes the many burdens of a young indigenous woman; of not only being discriminated against by the dominant society, but at the same time suffering from the many restrictions posed on them by their traditional system. But also in Chad, women are organising themselves in a movement which addresses their concerns and demands.

An International Indigenous Youth Conference in Canada in August 2005, united close to 500 indigenous youth from five continents to strengthen youth networks and to share stories and experiences. The conference particularly focused on globalisation issues. The participants to the conference stress in their declaration that they want to “join our voices with all Indigenous youth in movements to ensure that we are heard in all struggles to stop the destructive impacts of globalization on our lands, cultures and peoples”. Furthermore, the indigenous youth “call upon Indigenous organizations and leaders to support meaningful youth activities and participation in all decision-making processes affecting our Indigenous ways of life”.

The ratification of international conventions and national legislation governing children does not in itself guarantee respect for, or the achievement of, the rights of indigenous children and youth, unless these are also transformed into policies and programmes for their integral protection and development, respecting and strengthening the cultural characteristics and diversity of the peoples in each country.

With this first IWGIA publication on youth, our aim is to contribute to raising awareness about the situation and the thoughts of indigenous youth.

Notes


2 Panama, for example, has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS cases in Central America and, within the country, the Kuna people’s territory has the third highest level, after Panama City and Colón “Situción de la Juventud Indígena de Panamá”. Jorge Stanley Icaza. www.ica.org.uy/redlat/publi005.doc

Resistance in the barrios

The Argentinian town of Bariloche, situated in north-eastern Patagonia, is well-known both at home and abroad as a pleasant tourist resort set in the mountains. People working in the tourist industry are eager to promote the idea of harmony: the town as a place of relaxation, its image commercially moulded to ensure a foothold in the international market. In fact the region is even known by some as the “Swiss Argentine”. However, the day-to-day reality of those living in the town’s urban slums does not fit this picture at all. Most of these people came to the town in search of work and better living conditions, and they tend to form the hidden workforce of the tourist industry. Among them can be found a large number of Mapuche who have emigrated from the region’s rural areas or from various towns in present-day Chile.
These people have given rise to what are known as the *barrios altos*, poor districts thus known to differentiate them from the *barrio commercial* or commercial/tourist centre of the town and the *barrios residenciales* or middle and upper class residential districts.

The rising unemployment that began to occur in Argentina in the 1990s, the collapse of the public health and education services and the growing marginalisation experienced by many in the peripheral urban districts gave rise to a series of protests in towns around the country. In Bariloche, this situation of conflict was heightened by the contradiction between the public face of successful summer tourist seasons and the hidden reality of the long winters many families had to face, under extremely poor living conditions.

It was out of this context that there grew a need to create alternative spaces, spaces that included the young people of the *barrios*, their voices and the realities they were facing. One such space called itself “heavy metal/punk resistance”. And, from within these spaces, the young people began to challenge the rhetoric that identified the town as the “Swiss Argentine”. They began to expose the other side of this picture postcard, a side that had long been denied in official parlance and which was related to rural and Chilean migration towards the peripheral areas of the town along with the economic, political and social subordination of these people, something that had been overlooked in this perception of Bariloche identity.

Among other things, this movement organised performances – generally in community spaces within the neighbourhoods – of punk and heavy metal bands plus local traditional music. These performances also began to include “fanzine fairs” and to create codes and specific “productions” and, gradually, this was how these spaces came to be characterised. The performances were generally organised around some kind of campaign (such as defending the local school) or organised for the benefit of community canteens or health centres. It was these spaces that began to give some of the town’s young people a chance to meet, to join together and challenge the local and national rhetoric that excluded them. Now they could discuss their common problems, such as unemployment or the difficulties they had in moving freely around the town for risk of police arrest. And so the young people, mostly Mapuche, came together and formed a common space, created out of shared musical tastes, their common exclusion in the marginalised *barrios* and their joint day-to-day reality. In this context, one issue they began to question was that of...
identity. They began initially to identify themselves in terms of the barrio or district to which they belonged or in terms of their musical taste, but also in terms of the history that brought the families there. This last aspect began to be appreciated from a different perspective and it slowly began to be recounted from the history of one people in particular: the history of the Mapuche.

These spaces enabled the young people to realise that the heavy rockers and the punks could not be separated from the Mapuche. And the idea began to form that their life on the margins could not be dissociated from the fact that they were Mapuche. Quite the contrary: being Mapuche and living a marginal life were historically related conditions that required one to have an attitude of rebellion and resistance towards a society that was, in many aspects, a racist and denying one. This idea was diametrically opposed to the image of the Mapuche that was spread by local traders and official rhetoric. That image related them to a remote past or identified them in terms of forming one of the folkloric attributes of the region, obscuring current conflicts and practices.

**Studs and xarilongko**: from the margins to centre stage

The public arena began to be used by young Mapuche to discuss and question their prevailing image in Bariloche and to highlight the reality of the marginalised urban Mapuche. In this way they were also attempting to encourage the involvement of other young people who rejected - or were unaware of - their identity as a result of the Argentinian policy of denying an indigenous presence in the country.

Through press releases, demonstrations and their own radio programmes, the young people began to make the urban Mapuche presence more visible in a discursive form that was diametrically opposed to the dominant “picture postcard”. Marching on the town centre with Mapuche slogans, with “studs” and xarilongko, mixing the image of the “underclass” with that of the Mapuche meant questioning the concept of the Mapuche as part of the folkloric landscape of the region. At the same time, these activities highlighted a series of issues such as the territorial claims of the Mapuche people and denounced the many injustices that were taking place. Some of the main complaints related to the eviction of Mapuche communities, the imprisonment of political leaders accused of terrorism in Chile, the indiscriminate sale of natural resources to multinational companies, the situation of poverty and marginalisation in which the Mapuche of the barrios found themselves, mining operations and so on. This breadth of public demands and complaints had its origins in the fact that most of the young people involved in these protests also had links with Mapuche organisations, with communities and families that were faced with such problems. The young people were operating in conjunction with these sectors, highlighting their different issues and also their daily reality.

With renewed voice, the young people are thus creatively using discursive codes that are specific to
But it is with this voice and from this space, creating discussions and causing issues to be rethought with different levels of acceptance, that the young people can now discuss their complex reality, raising some of the different problems facing the Mapuche today. It is a voice that is striving to become established as one of the many collective voices of the Mapuche people.

**Note**

1 Xarilongko is a piece of fabric the men tie around to their heads to symbolize strength of thought.
COLOMBIA

TERROR IN THE PACIFIC

Jenzerá Work Group

Embera Youth. Photo: Jenzerá Working Group

Path to a solidarity meeting with the Naya. Photo: Jenzerá Working Group
Guerrillas and paramilitaries currently form a significant part of Colombia’s political power structure. This is due not only to the fact that they have armies through which to obtain income, profit from the extraction of natural resources and appropriate the production surpluses of local communities. It is also because they impose an authoritarian social and political order that encourages the emergence and prosperity of high-income illegal economies.

But this imposed order is mediated by terror, as can be seen in the massacres, selective murders, kidnappings and disappearances of leaders of grassroots organisations over the last 10 years. According to the World Health Organisation’s 2003 report, Colombia has the highest rate of intentional murder in the Americas. Between 1991 and 2002, there were 326,000 murders in the country.1

Although almost half of all murders (44%) take place in the most populated central region of Colombia, it is noteworthy that almost one fifth of all murders (17%) take place in the Pacific Coast, a region in which around 4% of the population lives. In this region, which is primarily inhabited by Afro-Colombians, the most outstanding feature of this violence is the disproportionate number of young people among its victims.

It was out of a concern for this situation that the Jenzerá Work Group, in association with IWGIA, organised a meeting of young people from different regions of the Pacific at the end of August 2005 to reflect on the situation they are suffering in their settlements and river basins. This meeting was held in Buenaventura, Colombia’s principle maritime port and the most important town in the Pacific, home to around half the region’s population.

This article presents the results of this meeting, the aim of which was to analyse the historic origins of this violence and to look at the economic, political and social context in which it is taking place in order to gain a better understanding of the precarious living conditions and narrow margins of opportunity young people have to achieve their life projects.

This article comprises two parts. The first more formally depicts the difficult situation in the Pacific, a product of the violence unleashed by the armed groups in order to impose their economic projects, but also a product of the devastating arrogance that has characterized capitalism in the face of human groups and communities who, as a result of their age-old interaction with their environment, have developed other logics and rationales that are not necessarily governed by financial gain. The Pacific cannot withstand the impact of agro-industrial and infrastructural megaprojects, the design and implementation of which constitute incarnations of this devastating arrogance.

In the second part, we depict the situation the young people are suffering as a result of this, their uprooting, their sorrows, their pain, but also their hopes and dreams.

### Current political, economic and social features of the Pacific region

1. Lack of physical presence on the part of the Colombian state. In the middle of the last century, a
flood of settlers left the country’s central region in
the direction of the forested and semi-forested ar-
eas. Forced to abandon their lands because of the
violence, or disillusioned at the slowness and/or
failure of agrarian reform policies, thousands of
peasant families settled in the Pacific and other re-
gions. The Pacific was being joined to the country
with neither the control nor presence of the state.
Now, guerrilla and paramilitary groups are the
ones who exert territorial control over vast areas of
the region, supplanting the state in these areas and
contributing to the region’s deinstitutionalisation.
The state is neither capable nor willing to exert
sovereignty over the Pacific. Its incapacity and
lack of interest in implementing the rights of the
ethno-territorial groups is also clear.

2. **Enclave economies and natural resource extrac-
tion.** Following an intense plundering of its forests
and mineral wealth resulting in a high level of en-
vironmental destruction, extensive livestock rear-
ing began to become established in the Pacific,
along with the current banana and African palm
plantations. The most worrying thing is that an
economy based on coca leaf cultivation has also
been taking shape. This coca economy has been
one of the most “impoverishing and destructive”
businesses in the region, as can be clearly seen
from the research conducted by the Jenzerá Work
Group in Naya region. The gains for the produc-
ing region are negligible in comparison to the final
stages of drugs trafficking, where the largest part
of the booty is monopolised (made) in the coun-
tries of consumption by means of “retail distribu-
tion, money laundering and financial speculation”.
But the costs for the producing region are very
high: expansion of the agricultural frontier (for
crops) at the cost of the natural forest, the destruc-
tion of flora and fauna, contamination of the rivers
with chemical residues and fumigations, social
disintegration (along with processes of cultural al-
ienation and loss of identity), breakdown of Afro-
Colombian and indigenous economies, territorial
uprooting, violence caused by the control over
these areas and a high cost to life.

3. **Migration and territorial uprooting in contrast
with an almost complete lack of social mobility.**
Many people come and go in the Pacific or move
from one place to another. But there is no progress
here, people scarcely survive. There is a low surplus retention capacity in the region. The income produced does not contribute to the social and economic development of the region and its inhabitants. This is why it is considered to be the Colombian region with the highest level of unsatisfied basic needs⁴, as can be seen in the high morbidity rates amongst the population, particularly the young people.

4. Violent dispute over economic, political and territorial control of the region. Many areas of the Pacific are the object of dispute between armed groups because control of these spaces and their legal and illegal economy is vital to maintaining the war effort. In just a few years, the Pacific has become one of the most violent regions in the country. A violent struggle is above all taking place for control of the income associated with illegal crops or natural resource exploitation, for the possession of fertile lands or control of geopolitically strategic territories. It is through these regions that illegal exports and smuggling, including of arms, take place. This struggle has cost the lives of hundreds of young people working as “raspachines” (coca leaf gatherers), sawyers or miners in the employ of one or other of the armed groups.

5. Fragmentation and deterritorialization of indigenous and black communities. As illegal crops have increased, and the large plantations and extraction activities expanded, the economic and social life of the communities has become conditional upon the flow of resources created by these economic activities. In virtually all the communities affected by this kind of economy, subsistence crops have declined dramatically and dependence on imported food has increased. The abandonment of subsistence farming practices is a first step towards the economic breakdown of the communities. And the use of the land and resources of the territory in order to respond to the demands of markets that are external to the region is the first step along the path towards loss of territory. There are many examples of this in the Pacific.

6. New black diaspora. As the resources of the forest, rivers and mangroves have become exhausted through overexploitation, and the gold reserves have run out, a migration has begun towards the...
cities. This diaspora is selective: the first to go are the young people. In a booming economy, with dynamic and growing companies, this new labour force arriving in the towns of the Pacific would have been productively absorbed. But with rentier economies only seeking short-term profits with no strategic economic vision, no local or regional economy is developing that could overcome the conditions of marginalisation and exclusion of the rural population that is abandoning its river basins.

7. **Breakdown in municipal government.** Tax evasion, smuggling, illegal land possessions, the theft and private appropriation of public goods and resources, caciquismo (local patronage systems), fraudulent elections, vote buying, kidnapping and lastly drugs trafficking, with all their inherent consequences of corruption and violence, have ended up destabilising local government and deinstitutionalising the region.

8. **Social issues addressed in terms of the war.** The Plan Colombia emerged in the context of the US administration’s anti-drugs policy. By turning the drugs business into the main source of economic and military empowerment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), and by these organisations being put (since 11 September) on the US Defence Department’s list of terrorist groups, the anti-drugs war has now come to be defined as an anti-terrorist war.

   It is for this reason that, in the context of the government’s current security strategy, the Amazon (strategic hinterland of the FARC) has now become the main backstop for the military offensive (Plan Patriota) against this guerrilla organisation. By establishing this causal relationship between terrorism and drugs, the social problems of the region’s cocoa growers become a phenomenon that must be dealt with in military terms. The economic development proposals designed for these areas can only take place after the “military solution”.

   With the expansion of illegal crop cultivation, the Pacific has become part of what is known as the *Gray Zone*, classified as being of easy access to the armed players. The inhabitants of these gray zones have thus come to be considered a part of the financing strategy, when they are not seen as potential collaborators in terrorist actions. In one fell swoop the proposal to “*think peacefully in the Pacific*” (Biopacific Project slogan) has been wiped out. This had been reasserting the co-existence and survival strategies of black and indigenous groups living in the neotropical forests of the Pacific as the key to supporting their remarkable biological and cultural diversity.

   As the sociologist Ricardo Vargas says, the war makes “a terrible advisor” in terms of directing regional development. It is distorts supportive production methods that have preserved the Pacific’s forests for centuries and violates constitutional and regulatory rights relating to the protection of collective territories. The end result is that any further action aimed at empowering communities to exercise their functions and generate processes of autonomous and self-sustainable development becomes impossible.

   The greatest problem is that the armed forces find it difficult to have any impact on the illegal structures that have become ensconced in these areas. Their method of intervention and the abuses, the violations they regularly commit, along with the strong impact of the control measures they use – withholding of fuel, foodstuffs, medicines, restrictions on free circulation via roads and highways, obstacles in going to their fields and subsistence crops or to gather fruit and access fishing and hunting sites, difficulties in buying and selling products, end up creating local economic crises: an escalation in prices of essential articles from outside the region and a fall in prices for goods produced in the region. The region’s economy collapses. And faced with the incapacity of local governments to handle these problems, this leads to an exodus from the region. As the popular saying goes, the remedy ends up being more costly than the illness.

   This model of intervention and its consequences, as described above, has been repeated many times in different regions, not only the Pacific but throughout the country – and not only by legal armed players but by paramilitaries and insurgent groups – that it has led a number of analysts to conclude that behind these actions lies a deliberate policy of evicting the population in order to “clean up” certain areas coveted by economic interests linked to large agroindustrial projects. In Bajo Atrato (Chocó department) large-scale cultivation of palm oil began following the violent evictions of communities from the area. In other zones, such as in Alto Río San Jorge, the displacement of the Embera Katio population from their reserve took place in order to sow illegal crops. In other areas, the purpose of the evictions is to exploit the environmental resources on a large
scale, particularly timber and minerals, or to expand the large cattle ranches.

9. Economic inequalities and cultural differences. Although multiculturality was enshrined in the new Colombian Political Constitution of 1991, the state has not identified with it. Statistics and actions show that despite the fact that the National Constituent Assembly was organised to resolve the Colombians’ conflicts, it was from this point on that socio-cultural conflict actually worsened. The reason is that the Colombian state never thought to create spaces for interculturality, thus seeking to close the gulf separating the different cultures. The blacks continue to be the most excluded sector of the Colombian nation. Nor do there exist economic policies aimed at closing the gap between the different regions, and the Pacific - the ancestral territory of the blacks - continues to be the poorest, most exploited and isolated region of the country.

From out of economic inequality grow cultural differences, and they will continue to increase. Inequality and difference will only be exacerbated as an economy based on illegal crops expands throughout the region. Slavery may have been abolished 150 years ago but, with this drugs trafficking economy, similar rules of exploitation of labour and violations of human rights are being revived.

In the Pacific, what the sociologist Daniel Pécaut considers as symbolising the violence in Colombia is becoming increasingly clear: a generalised and hazy situation in which different phenomena and forms of expression are present (political violence, armed conflict, murders, displacements, extortion, disappearances, kidnappings, common violence, racist violence). They interact and feed on each other, creating a spiralling and increasing vicious circle.

And this is precisely what is happening in the Pacific. A situation of generalised violence is appearing, but where the drugs traffickers and criminal gangs subordinate to them exert intimidatory power by means of force of arms. These armed groups are becoming the regulatory bodies guaranteeing public order and compliance with the rules that they themselves establish. They exercise their own justice system and decide on the lives of people. Lately, they have opted for the method of savagely murdering many unemployed youths from poor neighbourhoods or carrying out “the chore of social cleansing of rejects” – to use the fascist language of the paramilitary groups of the ultra-right. As a product of this violence, over the course of this year almost 50 young people have been murdered. Most of the victims presented signs of torture, which leads one to think that there must be a significant component of racism or social intolerance in these criminal acts.
II

So that being young in the Pacific can be a source of happiness and pride, and not one of risk

The young people of the Pacific have many different hopes and dreams. Those that do not form part of social organisations and have not yet been attracted by organisational or social processes have dreams built in line with the models provided by the prevailing context and the media: easy money that revolves around the coca industry. In other words, they aspire to be and copy this stereotype of success. This vision of success is associated with the prevailing economic model that links happiness and well-being with ownership of material goods. Consumption, the habits and customs of these young people, revolve around money insofar as it makes the purchase of imported goods, weapons and motorbikes possible. The wearing of imported designer clothes has become one of the reasons behind these young people deciding to join the ranks of the armed groups.

In their reasons for taking up arms, there is no desire to improve the quality of their life from a cultural perspective or to assert their rights, or to access resources to sustain and help their families. In their analysis, these young people state “that they do not join armed groups in search of money to relieve hunger but because it raises their status and because people respect them.”

The recruitment of young people by the armed players is carried out precisely by offering the illusion of obtaining $400,000 a month to buy happiness. Women, for their part, go after what they have called the seduction of arms and power.

Another group of young people, few in number it is true, leave to pursue their dreams in the region’s universities and colleges, out of a desire to flee their homes, their poverty, or the memory of some friend who lost his or her life in a venture suggested by a well-known comandante, or perhaps as a go-between in the drugs trade.

And others, the smallest group, are those who have had an opportunity to reflect on their situation and have realised what is going on around them. Armed with courage and with the strength of their love for their river basin and their people, they have launched themselves into a struggle to change the terrible situation that has befallen them. They follow only the call of
their liberating voices, which indicates to them that to overcome the epidemic of forced acculturation that is threatening them with obscurity and cultural extinction they need to strengthen their identities and join forces to create or consolidate their organisations.

Most young people complain of the politicking that brings to power a series of leaders with no experience, in posts of great social responsibility but who, once there, renege on their origins or embark upon a draining of the region’s resources. Nonetheless, they want to be a part of municipal or regional government, in order to be able to serve their communities. Many believe that their communities’ leaders do not have the experience to govern wisely. And they believe that they could play a role in their communities, if their own authorities were to call on them to participate. But they complain that the leaders make no such offers to them, and that they have no place on the agendas of their organisations. Although they need spaces to consider issues specific to their own group, they want to be involved in broader issues such as territory and the defence of their natural resources, for they believe they have much to contribute in this regard and, above all, much to do because life
itself is at stake and the future of their communities depends upon their actions now.

They dream of being part of the planning process within education centres and to participate in education plans as they do not want the children who are growing up today to be tomorrow’s victims of education policies that take no account of the needs of their communities and their territories.

They hope that the next national census will tell Colombians and the world the truth with regard to the real weight of the black population in the country. They do not want the country to continue to conceal the fact that black people are an essential symbol of Colombian nationality.

They want support and backing for their artistic and cultural initiatives. They want support and backing for productive undertakings. They want to live in peace on their land. To have a normal youthhood and enjoy it, without the pressure of having to fight tooth and nail for an opportunity to survive or to have to compete with and beat their brothers in a disloyal struggle for work or a job. But above all they do not want to be forced to hand over their youthhood to economic or political projects that subordinate their peoples. Their main concern is that they may be persecuted by opposing the designs of the armed players who, like a controlling army, restrict and check the individual freedom of young people.

The young men feel that they are at risk when their girlfriend arouses the passion of a drugs trafficker, a paramilitary chief or even someone who is supposed to be reintegrated into civilian life but who believes that the whole of society should fall at his feet because he was deceived by his bosses and by the state, which has not followed through on its promises.

For their part, the urban youth yearn for the street corner, which until not so long ago was a place where they could hang out, the symbol of youth, a place they could find love, friendship and solidarity. They dream of being able to enjoy their city, and of having no restrictions on movement imposed by the paramilitaries controlling them because “they say it is their responsibility to clean up the district and not let anyone not living there in”.

Finally, acknowledging that they form part of a social state based on the rule of law, the young people who joined forces to deliver the essence of this article from their hearts said that, in any case, they believe their rights are in the hands of the state, and so it is from the state that they request their fulfilment and guarantee. They are not asking the state to give them happiness, for this they will build themselves, if they have the conditions to do so. They will express this happiness in their songs, their dances and in the joy of living that characterizes them, in spite of everything.

Notes

1. Intentional murder is the main cause of death among male youths and adults in Colombia. This “...means that our country is, whilst being a paradise for the world’s biodiversity, also one of the planet’s most tragic empires of necrodiversity: on Colombian territory, which covers scarcely 0.8% of the land area of the planet, can be found 10% of all the world’s living species, and it is in this same country that 10% of all the world’s murders committed outside of combat take place”. Gustavo Wilches-Chaux: “Nuestro compromiso político con el cosmos”. Working document, August 21, 1998

2. Coca growing descended on the Pacific region three years ago, as a result of the fumigations and violence unleashed by the Plan Colombia in Caquetá and Putumayo.

3. Data from the Ombudsman states that 98% of the Pacific’s Afro-Colombian population are without basic public services.

4. There are fewer and fewer young people prepared to stay in the region once their income falls considerably.

5. This problem of “economic refugees”, that is people or families who abandon their homes in the face of environmental degradation or economic activities contrary to the needs of the population, is increasing. As a general rule, the players who profit from these economic activities are seeking to empower themselves through political control of local government structures, thus preventing the economic conditions from changing or making the organisation of the economy along local interests possible. The state provides resources and supports economic development projects in no more than a marginal way. Some NGOs are also implementing projects funded by international cooperation. These projects achieve little coverage, however, in relation to the extent of the social problems of the Pacific.

6. This deinstitutionalisation stems from the fact that the state, its institutions and resources, have acquired the status of ‘war booty’ for the armed groups and their associated political caciques (bosses).

7. As at the time of the Conquest, when it was stated that, for the Indians to hear the doctrine of faith they would first have to hear the sound of weapons.

8. This experience of interdisciplinary and pluralist work was supported by the Global Environment Facility and the Swiss government, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry for the Environment. Biopacific concentrated its efforts on more than 400 people, black and indigenous organisations, foundations, universities, NGOs and territorial organisations.

9. According to the estimates of the anti-drugs squad, around 10 shipments of drugs leave the Colombian Pacific every day via Panama, the entry door into the Central American corridor.

10. We say “drugs trafficker” without referring to any armed group in particular, given that the most significant fact is that, in the midst of this internal war that is being fought in the country, there is a kind of “gentlemen’s agreement” around drugs trafficking between opposing armed sectors. For instance, in May 2005, 15 tonnes of cocaine were seized in the port of Tumaco in the Pacific. The drugs belonged to the FARC and the Norte del Valle cartel. This shipment was found in a zone controlled entirely by paramilitaries.
On 16, 17 and 18 August 2005, 67 young people from various regions of the Colombian Pacific met in Buenaventura. We were supported in this by local black organisations, various Community Councils of the Pacific, the Process of Black Communities (PCN), representatives from the country’s indigenous organisations and the Interethnic Territorial Union of Naya (UTINAYA). After considering our problems and discussing our work for the future, we decided to issue this Declaration to the Colombian people. In writing this, we are referring not only to our black communities but also to the indigenous and peasant communities, and all the other poor inhabitants of the Pacific region who share our situation of marginalisation, exclusion and misery, a product of the neglect of the Colombian state and the voracity of economic interests, for whom our cultures and territories are a hindrance.

We are young black people from different areas of the Colombian Pacific, the ancestral homeland of thousands of black families. In this great region, we live in harmony with the Embera, the Wounaan and the Tule people. Until a few years ago, we lived in relative calm, despite our marginalisation, the violations perpetrated against this region and the discrimination our peoples have suffered for centuries.

Despite its great cultural wealth, its astounding biological diversity and its enormous natural resources, all the evils from which Colombia suffers are now
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Seizure of coca leaves by the Colombian police. Photo: Mauricio Moreno / El Tiempo

concentrated in the Pacific region: irrational exploitation of natural resources, poverty, exclusion and violence. The whole world knows that, in this region, the State stands for lethargy, discrimination, incompetence and corruption.

More recently, we have become concerned at the violence being perpetrated against our brothers, the youngest members of our communities, for it is amongst us that most loss of life of a violent nature is taking place, and amongst us that attempts to subordinate our community economies to the designs of neoliberalism, an exclusive and selfish economic system, are being fuelled.

More than 60% of the population of the Pacific region is young. Paradoxically, given that we form the largest social component, we are not involved in tasks of government within our communities of origin and we are gradually losing our links with the land and with a culture that generates well-being and resources.

It is amongst the young that the highest proportion of people are recruited into the indiscriminate felling of forests, into the cultivation of illegal crops and even recruited as canon fodder for the armed groups that are now bleeding the country dry. This occurs because of a lack of social and economic opportunities that would enable us to lead a dignified life.

But now we are organising in an attempt to change this situation, based around principles of respect and appreciation of plurality and the diversity of life in all its expressions and in defence of our ancestral territories, as spaces that create life and freedom.

We are organising to put an end to the exodus to the towns, a real threat to the future territorial and demographic stability of the communities and peoples of the Colombian Pacific, who are now fighting to gain a firm foothold in their territories as the only possible means of resisting the pressures of violence.

We are organising so that we can have a greater presence in organisational activities and in initiatives that are in line with our aspirations for the future. And this is necessary because we want to be useful to our peoples, working to ensure the territorial security and physical safety of our communities.
With this Declaration, we want to share the most serious concerns of the Pacific’s youth with the Colombian and Pacific people.

1. We believe that our territory/region in the Pacific has not remained immune to the exacerbation in Colombia’s armed conflict. Quite the contrary, it has become one of the worst and most cruel scenes of dispossession and deterritorialization of the black communities in the last 10 years, and this has led to a severe transformation in our political, social and economic processes. Despite their value, local dynamics remain subject to decisions that are being taken ever further from the region.

2. Paradoxically, in a region so well-endowed with natural resources, or perhaps precisely because of this, the most conflictive and violent focal points in the country can now be found, with the highest figures for displacements, murders and kidnappings. A relatively young region is suffering the symptoms of decrepitude, by becoming involved in mechanisms of extraction activities, illegal crops, oil palm monocropping and all kinds of irrational resource exploitation.

3. Exploitation and exclusion, with their ensuing consequences of misery and violence, are here in the Pacific to stay. The eyes of many greedy “businessmen” and their “dirty” money are turned on this region, disputing control of the land and resources.

4. It is to a large extent in these imposed economic systems that the origin of the backwardness, dependency and social and economic marginalisation of our territory/region lies.

5. The Political Constitution of Colombia and subsequent legislation establish collective property rights to territory for ethno-territorial populations (indigenous and Afro-Colombian). ILO Convention 169, now law in the Republic, also emphasises the need for Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples to have appropriate mechanisms for consultation, participation and prior and informed consent over actions and measures that may have an impact on our peoples. But the Colombian State has not
identified with our objectives, it has systematically refused to revise its project for an exclusive Nation in which we blacks will continue to be third-class citizens and which will change the rules of play, privileging economic interests that will pillage the land and resources so fundamental to our continuity on our territories and our survival as peoples.

There is a continuing inability, but also a lack of will, on the part of some social sectors to come to terms with cultural and political differences and respect them. Divergence is seen as an obstacle and to think or feel different is considered a hindrance.

6. The government and those who hold economic power in the Pacific are turning their backs whilst our communities are being bled dry. This is terrible not only for us but also for Colombia. Nor is it right that the economic powers now trying to take over the Pacific should attempt to destroy the political space that was opened up for our peoples by the 1991 Political Constitution.

7. To the exclusion and segregation present in State policies and in the socio-cultural practices of white and mixed peoples must now be added the massacres of young people from different regions of the Pacific. The most well-known are the killings in Buenaventura where, in less than three months, more than 30 young people have been brutally murdered. The State has shown no political will to intervene with regard to these crimes against humanity, which are being committed by powerful racist sectors who want to maintain and perpetuate, in whatever way possible, economic and government systems that exclude blacks and Indians economically, politically and socially, and to rob us of the territorial conquests gained via the new Political Constitution.

8. The violence we are suffering from in the Pacific is somewhat nebulous. Its victims have names and surnames: unemployed youth, offended and excluded. Activists who reject the impositions and call for their communities’ demands to be met. This violence is nebulous because of the different forms it takes: political violence, armed conflict, murders, displacements, extortion, disappearances, kidnappings and common violence, all of which interact and feed back into each other, creating a vicious and upward spiralling circle. The killers also have names and surnames: they are the ones who are trying to maintain and consolidate their wealth and power, gained through the exercise of violence.

9. The tragedy of the Pacific is that it has entered the 21st century without having found a solution to problems that have been around since the 19th. The difference lies in quantitative terms. The natural resources in demand on the world market (including cocaine), and thus coveted as sources of income, are now more numerous. The weapons with which to appropriate them are more sophisticated, the methods more cruel and the number of deaths and displacements more numerous.

It is for all these reasons that we young people have decided

1. To reject the violent means being employed to evict our communities from, and rob them of, their lands and resources. Our greatest desire, and one we will fight for, is that our territory should no longer form a scene of armed conflict governed by injustice and cruelty.

2. To demand full protection of our territories from the State, for they are the foundation of all life and well-being. For this reason, we do not share the policies that are threatening our territory and sources of life that are our forests and rivers.

3. We undertake to build a system of coexistence with our neighbours, for we want to contribute our grain of sand to building a multiethnic society in which men and women of different colours and cultures can live in peace. We will seek this co-existence despite the sceptical voices that persist in their intolerance, intolerance that has caused so many wrongs in this country.

4. To defend the spaces for peace, coexistence and freedom that we have paid so dearly to build.

These are undoubtedly very hard tasks for young people who have scarcely started to organise. This is why we are asking for your support, for the support of all of Colombia’s youth, all the Indians and black people in the country, all those who have been insulted and offended, and all those Colombians who believe that the Pacific and Colombia deserve a better future.

What Colombians can be sure of is the fact that our cultures will survive the authoritarian regimes and barbarism that the armed players (both legal and illegal) want to impose on the Pacific. Once this dark night is over, we will remember with pride and gratitude those young people who, for thinking differently, for refusing to be subjugated, for defending the validity of our life projects in harmony with nature, have been denied their lives.
I am a young person from the Aymara people. In actual fact, all my family are Aymara: my father is from the Yariba Ayllu and my mother from Omasuyus Province. I went to school in the town of El Alto and went on to study sociology at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz.

I consider myself a free person because I had a very broad education from my family in terms of how to live and think and because they passed on to me the way of life and thinking of the Aymara. As a young indigenous woman, living within the environs of the city and having studied at university, I find many challenges facing me, as do many other young people. Young indigenous women are greatly discriminated against and particularly in the city because we challenge the ideals imposed by global fashion. But who are the people who discriminate against us? The same young city dwellers who uphold the aesthetic rules of fashion. Indigenous women are different not only in their physical features but also in the clothes or pollera skirt they wear. When I started school I stopped wearing the pollera, as did a number of other young people, who stopped wearing it to school or work. But now I have more choice, more freedom, so now I sometimes wear my pollera, and we are popularly known as “transformers” because we switch easily between one form of clothing and another.

For me, being indigenous comes from a process of self-recognition. At school and university, we can see that many young people who continue their studies no longer feel indigenous. Only the people living in the countryside are considered indigenous but, in my case, I consider myself indigenous because of my roots, my way of thinking and my way of life, in line with the rules and customs of my Ayllu and my Aymara family. For me, being indigenous does not only mean being “different” but being recognised amongst the Aymara people, with their ideals and way of life and particularly amongst the youth who find themselves in a daily process of alignment.

During my studies in La Paz, I knew of no organisation of indigenous youth although there were peasant students who were involved in the Peasant Confederation (Confederación de Campeños). Young indigenous people are in contact with each other but not grouped into an organisation because everyone is involved in their own provincial or other organisation. As part of the work I do with my fellow team members in the community of Achocalla (around one hour from La Paz), we have a Youth Centre called “Wiñay Qhantati”. Our role is to provide support to the young people of Acholla, helping them to help themselves. To start with, we were considered no more than minors in the community’s political decision-making but now the organization takes us into account. We have relations with the People’s organisations, that is, the Agrarian Sub-offices, the neighbourhood committees, school councils and sports teams, and also cultural centres.

The elders understand that many young people dress in line with fashion and also follow the music of the day. The cumbia chicha is currently the dance of the moment but this does not mean that we do not like the traditional music of the khantus, tarqueadas that are generally danced at village fiestas and which we young people always join in with. Now it is normal for indigenous youth to have different colour hair or like rock music but there are also young people who really like wearing traditional Aymara clothes or listening to traditional music. So the adults have now got used to these sudden changes in taste, like I mentioned in the case of the “transformers” who wear the pollera but may at the same time have green or light blue eyes, use perfume, dye their hair, wear fashionable colours and a lot of jewellery. This is really normal in our environment and the adults generally see the youth as people who are setting a new fashion in our village or community without forgetting our traditions.

In terms of our future, I believe that we are now facing a different situation because, through daily life in the city, we have achieved a space for ourselves in the schools and in the university. But we are still seriously discriminated against, and our struggle is one of supporting our provincial, departmental and national organisations’ struggle for indigenous recognition throughout society.
From June 17-21, 2005 close to 200 young indigenous people from five continents gathered at the Second International Indigenous Youth Conference (IIYC 2005) held in Vancouver, Canada.

The main aim of the IIYC is to gather indigenous youth representatives from all over the world in order to help define the role and tasks of the world indigenous youth movement and network. Among indigenous youth there is a strong notion that it is time for them to come together and set priorities for their futures and indigenous peoples’ rights, so that the young people can continue the work of their ancestors and prepare for the future generations. The IIYC therefore marks the new beginning of a global alliance of indigenous peoples spearheaded by young indigenous people with a firmer hold on their lives and situations in spite of the continuous denial of their rights by Nation States.

The theme of the conference was “Strengthening Solidarity among Indigenous Youth in Asserting Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Amidst Globalization” and the objectives were:

- To reaffirm and build upon the Declaration and Resolutions of the First IIYC 2002 held in Baguio City, Philippines.
- To build and strengthen regional and international indigenous youth networks.
- To bring indigenous youth together to strategize around issues of globalization that affect us.
- To bring indigenous youth together to share culture, stories and experiences.

The conference consisted of workshops on focus themes and panel discussions, and included cultural elements representing individual participants and their distinct areas. There was also a focus on skills sharing and sharing of experiences of a wide range of struggles in different political and socio-economic settings. A number of thematic issues were discussed in relation to indigenous youth and globalization: land, resources and territories; governance; culture, traditional systems and spirituality; and indigenous rights.

Preamble:

We, the 181 young Indigenous People present at the 2nd International Indigenous Youth Conference (IIYC) located on unceded Coast Salish territory, 17-21 June 2005, from Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Turtle Island, Samiland, Africa, Philippines, Japan, Nagaland, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Manipur, Australia, and New Zealand acknowledge with thanks the Coast Salish Peoples on whose land we have honorably gathered.

We affirm the declaration and resolutions of the first IIYC held in 2002 in Cordillera, Philippines, and join our voices with all Indigenous youth in movements to ensure that we are heard in all struggles to stop the destructive impacts of globalization on our lands, cultures and peoples.

We consider Globalization as reinforcing colonization, the commodification of our ways of life and Mother Earth (natural resources). This has led to the weakening of our societies, loss of cultural identity and autonomy. It is this ideology of finding places to accommodate and feed the needs of capital that we refer to as “Imperialist Globalization”.

We call this imperialist globalization because this process is controlled by a few powerful nation-states with colonial-imposed laws and military might consolidating imperialist agendas. Globalization aggravates state-instigated wars and violence against Indigenous peoples.

We assert that the transformation of conflicts experienced by Indigenous Peoples within the existing nation states lies beyond the systems that have been imposed upon them.

Neo-liberal Capitalism has failed to contribute solutions to the above issues of Indigenous Peoples worldwide and has rather intensified the exploitation of natural resources through large-scale mining, deforestation, fish farms, dams, oil drilling etc.

We affirm the inherent right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and embrace our responsibility as caretakers of Mother Earth. It is with these rights and responsibilities guiding us that we commit to work in solidarity for the betterment of our peoples and the protection of our land and cultures.
We reaffirm our intrinsic responsibilities to future generations in consolidating and sustaining the continuity of our collective and unique values, spirituality and principles that spring from the interrelationship with Mother Earth in safeguarding our pride and dignity as Indigenous Peoples.

Our Indigenous culture springs from our defense and nurture of our lands and territories and our culture is essential to our well-being and socio-economic development as Indigenous Peoples.

We affirm that both local and international action is necessary for the continued success of the Human Rights movement of Indigenous Peoples; that effectiveness in each strengthens the other and that we must be strategic in coordinating our efforts at all levels of struggle.

**Resolutions:**

- We call for the respect of Indigenous Peoples’ inherent right to self-determination and in this regard we call for an end to the militarization and occupation of our lands.

  - We call for an end to all developmental aggression such as dams, logging and mining, including the extraction of oil, natural gas, uranium, gold and coal within or near Indigenous lands and territories; and demand that the governments and corporations recognize and respect our fundamental right to self-determination and to a free, prior and informed consent on all these activities.

  - We support the adoption of a legally binding Convention on Corporate Accountability which upholds Indigenous Peoples’ rights, including our free, prior and informed consent to any activity of states or transnational corporations which affects our lands, territories and communities.

- We call for global action to release Indigenous and other political prisoners.

- We call for the end of the development, cultivation and use of genetically-modified seeds, plants, fish and other organisms in order to protect human
health, native seeds and other food-related genetic resources.

- We oppose and denounce the privatization of water as well as the diversion that affects the water resources of our territories. We call for the creation of an international regulatory body to track the trade in water.

- We demand an end to the victimization of Indigenous women, sex-trafficking, abuses and racism experienced by migrant workers, and the misogyny collectively experienced by Indigenous women.

- We call upon our traditional leaders and government administration to be accountable and responsible in committing to fortify the solidarity of Indigenous Peoples in the eyes of the international community as our work and progress depends on it; We call upon Indigenous organizations and leaders to support meaningful youth activities and participation in all decision-making processes affecting our Indigenous ways of life.

- We reaffirm the call for the continuation of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and for the adoption of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the UN Sub Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

- We call upon the nation-states to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol in combating climate change and to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples in all climate change negotiations.

- We assert our rights for the reclamation and protection of Indigenous knowledge and for the promotion of cultural diversity, integrity and its dynamic development according to our aspirations as Indigenous Peoples.

- We demand the establishment of an International Code of Ethics on bio-prospecting to stop bio-piracy and to ensure the respect of our cultural and intellectual heritage.

- We adhere to the international declarations and statements adopted by consensus and in solidarity by Indigenous Peoples on human rights, environment and sustainable development, including Kari Oca and the Indigenous Peoples’ Plan of Implementation from the WSSD.
The indigenous Peul population (Foulbé, Bororo) of Chad is estimated at around two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) people living from subsistence agriculture and transhumant livestock.

Peul livestock breeders practice an exclusively nomadic existence with no pre-determined route, and they are extremely attached to their animals. To obtain supplies, the women and girls go into the nearby towns or villages each week. Indigenous Peul form the most marginalised group and they suffer the most discrimination. This minority benefits from no special facilities in terms of access to health care, education etc. The limited strategies conceived and formulated by the Department of Education have produced no satisfactory results because of their mobility. The rate of school attendance is very low amongst this sector (less than 1% for boys and virtually nil for girls).

According to the habits and customs of this indigenous people, girls – from a very young age - get up early, before the other members of their family, to share the household tasks with their mother. They have to milk the animals, then take them to their grazing and watering areas. This they must do every day until the head of the family decides it is time for them to marry. It forms part of a woman’s education. Her mother provides her education by teaching her PULAAKU. Pulaaku is the code of moral conduct that all Peul must follow. It is Pulaaku that makes a Peul a Peul: birth gives one no more than a predisposition to this. Pulaaku consists of five obligations that must be learned and respected by every Peul, and therefore also by young Peul women. The highest compliment one could pay a Peul is to tell him or her that s/he possesses Pulaaku. The basic principles of Pulaaku are:

Semteende, which means “reserve”. The word is also bound up with elements of “embarrassment”. For a young Peul girl, Semteende requires, for example, embarrassment at being presented to men: she must cover her body and head. The worst insult you could pay a Peul, particularly a Peul girl, is to tell her she does not have Semteende.

Nedhingo, which means “respect”. She must respect everyone, especially her elders.

Dhowtago, which means “submission”. She must submit to people such as her husband, father, in-laws, older brothers and sisters and anyone older than herself.

Dëitaare, which means “tranquillity”. She must be calm at home, around the house, in her vocal expression, her bodily expression (approach) and any other act; she must demonstrate calm and dignity.

Hakkiilo, which means “intelligence”. Hakkiilo involves not only judgement but also cunning (Yoiire). A true Peul who is cheated in a transaction, for example, will never admit it, as this would demonstrate a lack of cunning. She must be intelligent in order to get along well with others and avoid any trap.

Some girls whose parents now live a sedentary life in the city do have the opportunity to go to school, at
least for a few years. But they have to endure harsh discrimination from the other pupils, who do not want to sit next to them. They have to put up with taunts, such as the claim that they stink of cow’s milk and butter because they are Peul. And yet Peul girls are generally very intelligent, probably because of the challenges they have had to face. In school or in the street, if a Peul walks by, she is treated like a different being; children shout and sing as she goes by. In Chad particularly, the offensive term of wara dubbaan is used to denote indigenous Peul. The expression literally means “after the flies”. The assumption is that God created all the animals on earth, right down to the flies (flies, like dogs in the Arab world, are the most despised of creatures) and then, much later on, when He was bored, He created the Peul, just to keep Himself amused. In other words, it means that the Peul are lower even than flies. Faced with all this discrimination, few Peul girls persevere with their studies. Old habits die hard and the government’s call for efforts on the part of all Chadians to integrate the Peul on an equal footing has done nothing to put a stop to this discrimination. In the end, the father decides to take his daughter out of school and marry her off rather than keep her at home “for no reason”.

Peul girls marry at the age of twelve or thirteen. They do not choose their husbands. They marry the first suitor chosen by their father. Neither the girl nor her mother are consulted. Marriages often take place between cousins, hence the high proportion of genetic degeneracy. Worse still, given that the marriage is within the family circle, all the problems are hushed up and, in the name of Semteende, the young Peul woman must stay quiet and put up with it rather than bring dishonour on her family. Polygamy is not forbidden within this people, and this means that it is common to see a young Peul girl of twelve given in marriage to a sixty-year-old and thus becoming the co-wife of women the age of her mother, or even her grandmother. One can easily imagine the troubles she suffers from these other wives, more accustomed to plotting than her, and not necessarily happy at the disproportionate interest their husband is showing in the fresh young flower.

Within the Peul family, women scarcely participate in decision-making. This role falls primarily to the head of the household and his brothers (the girl’s uncles). The resources obtained through a girl’s activities (sale of milk and butter) are controlled by the head of the household. Apart from kitchen chores, the girl and her mother have to go every day to collect firewood and draw water, some kilometres from the family home. The women have almost no time to look after themselves and are forced into an accelerated cycle of repro-
duction and production: reproduction in the sense that it is they who have the heavy responsibility of providing their husbands with descendants, given that fertility is a matter for the woman and not the man. They play a role in production insofar as the division of labour allocates little more than the task of grazing the livestock to the men; everything else falls to the women and girls. Even the children’s education is the woman’s responsibility.

Under these conditions, the Peul woman is a prisoner of habits and customs and is discriminated against not only in her own environment but also in relation to other groups in society. Given her nomadic way of life, the Peul woman misses out on population censuses and government programmes therefore rarely take her into account.

The Peul woman thus does not benefit from the most basic rights as a full citizen. Like any indigenous African girl, the situation of Peul girls is determined at national level. And yet they have virtually no presence at that level, except during rare festivities when they are called on to dance their traditional dances. In Chad, for example, Peul girls were only known via an association that has now disappeared, the Peul Folkloric Youth (Jeunesse Folklorique Peule), the role of which consisted merely of presenting Peul dances during official events. This isolation has put a considerable brake on the blossoming and development of Peul girls in Chad. To date they have thus suffered from:

- a lack of schooling;
- early marriages;
- a lack of family planning with regard to spacing their children;
- a lack of knowledge with regard to their rights; etc.

This is largely due to the habits and customs of this ethnic group, reinforced by the Muslim religion and the almost virtual absence of the state in terms of adequate structures within indigenous environments that could improve their living conditions.

Given the reality of this situation, the only place solutions can come from is private initiative, that is, associations, NGOs and other organisations working to improve the conditions of indigenous life. It was from this perspective, and out of a concern for the future of indigenous women and girls, that AFPAT (the Association of Indigenous Peul Women of Chad) was born. The primary aim of this association is to improve all facets of the standard of living of indigenous Peul women. The actions of the associations will be to no avail, however, if official education is not provided to indigenous girls. In fact, experience has shown that whenever women are provided with an education, they will subsequently show greater concern for the education of their children. It is impossible to integrate into a society as multicultural as Chad without having been taught in the common mould of the official education system. The Peuls’ nomadic way of life means that the system has to change by providing this group with mobile schools. Some groups have benefited from this in the past but not the Peul. Through the contacts it makes at seminars and conferences, AFPAT endeavours to raise awareness among both governmental and non-governmental structures in order to gain support for the education of Peul girls in Chad, either through assistance in building classrooms or through pressure on the appropriate government structures, and even on the UN programmes in Chad, to place special focus on this group, particularly on the education of women and girls. AFPAT also conducts awareness raising campaigns amongst women and parents in order to prevent early marriage. Unfortunately, a lack of adequate resources, a certain hostility from husbands and fathers and a lack of interest on the part of the decision-makers are all hindering the impact of our actions.

And yet there is no question of giving up, for there is always hope. Awareness is gradually increasing. We have made a very encouraging start in terms of getting some of the more conservative families to permit their female members to attend awareness raising meetings, and even - on two or three occasions - allowing them to travel unaccompanied to participate in women’s meetings abroad. For urban dwellers, things are beginning to change, in terms of sending girls to school at least. Unfortunately, although they now often stay on beyond 4th year primary, their studies tend to end completely at the end of primary education. In the whole of Chad, there are currently less than a dozen Peul girls who have completed their secondary education.

**Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim**, the daughter of Oumarou Ibrahim, was born in 1983 in N’djamena, the capital of Chad. Her organisation joined the African Indigenous Women’s Organisation (AIWO) in 1999. She is now AIWO’s General Secretary for Central Africa and Coordinator for Chad. She has been regularly attending meetings of indigenous women’s organisations around the world since 2001, ensuring that the voices of indigenous Peul women from Chad are heard, particularly at the Beijing+10 women’s conference and the meetings of indigenous women on the Convention on Biodiversity.
PHILIPPINES
CORDILLERA YOUTH: CONTINUING THE LEGACY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ANCESTRAL LAND AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Kalinga girl. Photo: Christian Erni
2005 marks a renewed focus on the situation and directions of youth all over the world in terms of policy-making and development thrusts. Essential to any development efforts is the recognition and promotion of the valuable contributions of the youth.

The youth are the heirs and carriers of people’s cultural legacy to the next generation. Often regarded as idealistic, adventurous, energetic and open-minded – the youth are integral to the survival of any society. When the positive and collective potential of the youth is enhanced, they become effective catalysts for change.

On the other hand, they are also vulnerable to the negative effects of crass commercialism, individualism, a commodity-oriented and decadent culture, all of which are inconsistent with the indigenous people’s vision of society.

The Cordillera indigenous youth play a significant role in the Cordillera peoples’ movement for self-determination and defense of ancestral domain. This role is demonstrated by the way in which we are developing the positive qualities of our culture, protecting our cultural identity and integrity from all kinds of threat, and defending our ancestral land and resources. Only through these efforts can we ensure the survival of the next generations.

In their desire to safeguard the Cordillera heritage, indigenous youth and students in the Cordillera have historically played a key role in arousing the people’s collective will to struggle for land, life and resources.
Background

Activism is a necessity in the Cordillera because of the oppressive political and economic set-up and the institutionalized discrimination caused by the national government’s historical neglect and the exploitation of its natural resources. These different problems of national oppression can be seen in the way the Cordillera peoples are treated as second-class citizens.

In the sixties, more than 5,000 Igorot youths went out onto the streets to protest at the discriminatory statement “The Igorots are not Filipinos”, made by former Foreign Minister Carlos P. Romulo.

In the social ferment of the seventies, Cordillera sons and daughters actively participated in the First Quarter Storm to protest at widespread poverty, growing fascism, incessant oil price hikes, cronyism and corruption in the government and the continued subservience of former President Ferdinand Marcos to US interests. The Declaration of Martial Law on September 21, 1972 paved the way for the birth of modern youth activism in the Philippines. Cordillera youth, particularly the students who were studying in Manila, organized the Kilusang Kabataan ng Kabundukan (KKK) or Youth Movement in the Mountains, while those who were studying in Baguio City established the Highland Activists (HI-ACT). The two organizations merged to form the Kilusang Kabataan ng Kordilyera (KKK) or Cordillera Youth Movement at the First Youth Congress in December 1971 in Bontoc, Mountain Province. During that time, the Cordillera youth movement became instrumental in the indigenous peoples’ national democratic movement for the defense of ancestral domain and for self-determination.

Suppression of basic human rights and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus forced many activists to go underground. However, these harsh conditions did not completely wipe out the open national democratic mass movement. The Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth), then a legal national youth organization that was instrumental in the series of massive rallies in the 60s, continued to uphold the struggle for national liberation and democracy, even whilst underground. Many of its members joined the armed revolution in the countryside. It had a Chapter in the Cordillera and its membership comprised youths.
and students coming from an indigenous and non-indigenous background who are actively organizing work in the region. Since 1972, KM has remained underground and is now branded an enemy of the state by the Arroyo administration.

The emergence of youth militancy inspired the Cordillera people as a whole to carry forward the struggle for the defense of ancestral land domain and for self-determination. This helped the growth of Cordilleran consciousness among diverse tribes, as manifested in the anti-Chico dam, anti-Cellophil Resources Corporation (anti-logging) and other movements against destructive projects funded by the World Bank, trans-national companies and their local partners in the late 70s and early 80s.

In Baguio City, many Igorot youths were actively involved in the anti-Chico Dam and anti-Cellophil (anti-logging) struggles. Police and military harassment and brutality did not prevent them from going out onto the streets to protest. In August 1981, the Progressive Igorots for Social Action (PIGSA), a national democratic organization of Igorot youth and students, was formed on the basis of safeguarding the rights, integrity and aspirations of the Cordillera peoples. PIGSA spearheaded the campaign against the infamous Grand Cañao – a local government project for tourism that commercialized the culture of the Cordillera peoples. The campaign also led to the formation of a tactical alliance called “Agkaykaysa a Rebbeken ti Mananggundaway a Grand Canao” (AGRI-ING KA), which means “Unite in Exposing the Oppressive Grand Cañao”. The alliance launched systematic campaign activities to safeguard the Cordilleran culture.

On the morning of March 5, 1983, a peaceful march and rally of some 200 youth and students led by PIGSA was brutally dispersed by the Baguio City Police. The incident left scores of Igorot students injured while student leaders were arrested. In spite of this strong repression, the Cordillera youth movement continued to grow stronger.

Since then, the Cordillera youth have been celebrating March 1-5 as Kaigorotan Youth Week or Cordillera Youth Week to mark the heroism of the indigenous youth in responding to social problems amidst the reign of fascism. This has also ignited the re-emerg-
gence of a Cordillera youth movement for self-determination and genuine national democracy. In January 1993, the city council of Baguio approved a resolution (lobbied for by Igorot youth and student leaders) declaring March 1-5 as “Indigenous Youth Week”, to be commemorated every year.

The youth sector supported the formation of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) in 1984. CPA is the federation of indigenous peoples’ organizations in the central mountain region of Northern Luzon, Philippines. It is committed to advancing the collective interests and welfare of the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera.

The CPA Youth Commission was established in 1991 to provide services to youth and student organizations by training youth leaders, publishing educational materials and coordinating various activities. In response to the growing needs of organizing youth, the Youth Commission evolved into a Youth Center in 1994. The Youth Center provided a wider range of services and had an emphasis on strengthening indigenous youth and student organizations. It has also sustained and developed its international solidarity work with other youth organizations abroad.

From 1960 to the present, indigenous youth and students launched a series of activities in schools and communities such as fora, symposia, discussions, information drives, cultural performances and march-rallies, among other things, to project the issues and problems confronting the Cordillera peoples.

**Cordillera Youth**

The Cordillera youth are distinguished from their lowland brothers and sisters by their distinct culture, which is not totally influenced by Western ways. This culture also serves as a potent force that drives various sectors of the Cordillera community to resist discrimination, destructive projects and state manipulation of resources.

Urban areas like Baguio City, where a majority of higher educational institutions are located, are con-
considered the melting pots of different cultures, tending to disorient indigenous youth from the provinces. Indigenous youth who temporarily or permanently migrate to the city cope with adjustment problems by keeping in touch with their fellow youth from their communities or through the help of youth organizations like Benguet-Ifugao-Bontoc-Apayao-Kalinga (BIBAK), Kalinga-Apayao Students Association (KASA) and Progressive Igorots for Social Action (PIGSA). BIBAK is an organization of youths from all five provinces in the Cordillera while KASA members are specifically Kalinga students.

Indigenous youths sometimes tend to choose extreme possibilities for their identification. They can sometimes fall into the trap of indigenism, which one-sidedly glorifies indigenous customs and traditions or, on the other hand, become acculturated to the point of denying their identity due to discrimination by their non-indigenous peers. These tendencies can be avoided by studying an historical and dialectical view of society, recognizing their vital role in remolding a progressive social consciousness.

**Education in the Cordilleras - a tool for assimilation and subjugation**

When the American colonizers established the public school system in the Cordillera, their main objective could be seen in the words of William F. Pack, the American governor of Benguet in 1904.

> *What is needed here, as in many places where progress is to be made, is, first of all, to create new wants; secondly, to give the education – industrial and otherwise – which will fit the people to satisfy their greater range of wants."

Apparently, only those who had the resources were able to send their children to school up to tertiary level. Sons were prioritized for formal education.

The deregulation of the education system in 1982 has made it more inaccessible to the majority of the population. In the far-flung areas of the Cordillera, students have to walk one to three hours across mountainous terrain to reach the schools. Some schools do not offer complete elementary or high school levels,
such that they have to walk hours to reach the nearby barrio or municipality.

The multi-grade system, where students of different year levels share the same room and the same teacher, is implemented in remote areas of the region. The insufficient budget for hiring of teachers or establishing school infrastructure has resulted in an increasing number of volunteer teachers who move from one community to another but receive minimal salaries, often delayed and insufficient to their needs.

Aside from deregulating the education system, the government is now venturing into privatization. This means gradual yet continued reductions in state subsidies to education, resulting in higher costs. This has driven most of the indigenous youth and students to drop out of school. This adds to the already large number of out-of-school-youths engaged in odd jobs and antisocial activities such as gambling, pick-pocketing, drug dependency, prostitution and premarital sex (leading to teenage pregnancy), as well as other crimes and vices that are sometimes the cause of tribal conflicts.

In a region where there is a high rate of poverty covering 43.7 percent of the 1,365,220 population, more and more youth prefer to work in the fields or look for other sources of employment rather than go to school.

Aside from being inaccessible, the education curriculum contributes to the further marginalization and discrimination of indigenous peoples. The curriculum does not provide space for the integration and development of indigenous knowledge systems.
Dwindling employment opportunities are now driving the best college graduates who are proficient in English and willing to work night shifts to work as call center agents. This new trend is now slowly breeding a new kind of lifestyle and acculturation totally different from the indigenous culture. Because they have the money to spend and are easily susceptible to the glitter of a bourgeois lifestyle, they are now the main targets of consumerism. They receive around $240 a month, which is high compared to other jobs but only a quarter of what their American counterparts earn. They are only hired to work for 6 months or less because of the contractualization law endorsed and implemented by the Philippine government.

Philippine laws guarantee workers’ rights but these are often violated in practice. Company managements resort to union-busting in order to weaken the worker’s collective unity, while some economic zones have a “no union, no strike policy”. There are also cases of retrenchment or lay-offs without due process. The youth have difficulties in accessing the services of lawyers because of the high cost of legal fees and sometimes due to a lack of information on legal procedures. Worst is the slow and corrupt justice system in the Philippines. This is a vicious cycle that has affected the workers since contractualization of labor in the country was legitimized.

Those who cannot get competitive salaries and benefits are forced to migrate to other countries to

There is still much work to be done in terms of developing an indigenous education that is relevant to the concrete situation of the community.

In some schools, cultural practices such as traditional dances form part of physical education but there is no separate and comprehensive learning system of indigenous culture. The local governments highlight cultural traditions and customs as a major tourism vehicle to draw more international and local tourists to the area. The sacredness of the culture and traditions of the indigenous peoples is totally disregarded.

**Youth Employment**

Young workers are found in the mining sites, in small-scale agricultural production areas, city industrial zones and the service sector, for example hotels, restaurants and call centers.

Workers in industrial areas receive around P250-P350 or roughly $4.6-$6.5 per day. Agricultural workers receive P150-P190 or $2.7-$3.5 per day. According to the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment, young workers may receive below minimum wages because they are not yet considered skilled laborers. There are also cases of child labor, particularly in agricultural communities in Benguet. Instead of attending school, children are forced to work in vegetable gardens due to their families’ poverty. They earn around P50-60.00 or $0.92-$1.1 daily.
work as domestic helpers, factory workers, teachers, nurses and the like.

Because of poverty, indigenous youths become vulnerable to military and para-military recruitment, thereby creating conflicts between indigenous peoples as well as with other peoples. Tribal members who are recruited to the government’s military tend to discontinue their loyalty to their tribal communities and become instruments of the state in its attempt to implement anti-people projects and programs and they are paid to force tribal communities to accept capitalist projects such as dams and mines.

**Defense of Land and Resources**

As sons and daughters of indigenous peoples, we must play our role in combating the ever-worsening exploitation, oppression, repression, discrimination and inequality brought about by the globalization of our lands.

Today, the region is facing serious threats against indigenous lands and life as destructive and large-scale mining operations, logging, energy projects and tourism are encouraged by the state.

Drawing strength from the rich history of the peoples’ struggle, the Cordillera youth are now actively campaigning against mining TNCs and an expansion of existing mining operations.

**Taking up the Challenge**

Indigenous youth are continuing to take up the challenge and the responsibility to further the fight for the recognition of ancestral land and ancestral domain.

The workshop on “Challenge to the Youth in Continuing the Struggle”, held during Cordillera Day 2004 in Mt. Province provided a crucial venue for interaction between the elders and the youth. It provided an opportunity for the elders to pass on accounts of the peoples’ struggles and for the Cordillera youth to agree to continue protecting the Cordillera peoples’ legacy.

A wider unity among the youth and students has been reached since the establishment of Anakbayan-Cordillera in 1999. Anakbayan-Cordillera is currently the widest and most comprehensive organization of youth in the country. It is a national organization of Filipino youth, so indigenous peoples’ issues and concerns are articulated at a wider level. Together with the CPA Youth Center and Progressive Igorots for Social Action, Anakbayan has launched a series of activities and campaigns by which to achieve the young people’s aspirations for jobs, land, education, human rights and social services.

The Cordillera youth have also linked up with other indigenous youth movements abroad as part of their contribution to the world indigenous youth movement. In 2002, the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance Youth Center sponsored the International Indigenous Youth Conference (IIYC), which brought together 83 delegates from different countries. The second IIYC, held in June 17-21, 2005, brought together young indigenous organizers and activists from around the world in Vancouver, British Columbia, in the territory of the Coast Salish people, to share their common indigenous struggles against globalization and the imperialist expansion of neo-colonialism.

In the tradition of the valiant deeds of the young Igorots before us, we shall continue the struggle - to
protect our ancestral lands, to fight the destructive and deceptive programs and projects through collective and painstaking organizing, education and mobilization of the wider indigenous youth and students.

As we face the threat of marginalization, discrimination and national oppression, the words of the brave Kalinga martyr of the Chico dam struggle continue to reverberate in our hearts and minds.

What is the most precious thing to man? Life. If life is threatened, what ought a man do? Resist! If he does not resist, he loses his honor, and that is worse than death. If we do not fight, and the dams push through, we die anyway. If we fight, we die honorably. We oppose! To clarify the meaning of our opposition, we will wage war! We would die, but our death will be honorable. Because we are willing to fight now, our children may live and keep this land; and the land shall become even more precious when nourished by our sweat and blood.

Macliing Dulag

Notes

1. Collective term for the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera, which means “people from the mountains”.
2. First Quarter Storm refers to the series of massive militant protest actions, rallies, demonstrations and strikes that took place between January and March 1970 in key urban centers around the country.
3. Privatization is the abandonment or passing over of government obligations to private entities and corporations such that government-owned and controlled corporations, including state colleges and universities, are converted into profit-oriented entities. This is done through the reduction of budget allocation, integration or merging of state colleges and universities existing in one province, commercialization of facilities and partnerships with multinational corporations, resulting in an increase in fees. Privatization is one of the main components of globalization, which includes liberalization and deregulation.
4. From phone center in the early 1980s, it was changed to call center where phone calls are either answered by agents or an interactive voice response (IVR) system. Call centers and business process outsourcing handles customer service inquiries, technical support, telemarketing, reservations, taking purchase orders and other services for US-based companies involved in computers, utilities and telecommunications. The Philippines now has a call center academy that focuses on teaching English proficiency, American culture, call center technology and sales, telemarketing and customer service skills.

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Lilette Fatima R. Raquel is campaigns and advocacy officer for the Cordillera Youth Center. She has been with the youth center since 1999. Although she is not an indigenous person, she is deeply involved with the struggle of the indigenous peoples for self-determination and national democracy, especially in terms of the issues and concerns of the youth. Her involvement with the Cordillera peoples’ struggle started while she was still studying and further developed when she started doing voluntary work for the youth center. She completed a BA in Mass Communication - Journalism at the University of the Philippines Baguio in 1999.
THAILAND

URBAN MIGRATION AND HILL TRIBE YOUTH IN CHIANG MAI

Kwanchewan Buadaeng

Lahu girl in a Chiang Mai slum
Photo: Panadda Boorgassaranai
In the hills and mountains of Northern and Western Thailand live people whose cultures and social organizations are different from those of the majority lowland Thais. Nine of these peoples are officially recognized as “hill tribes”: the Hmong, Karen, Lisu, Mien, Akha, Lahu, Lua, Thin and Khamu. An official survey in 2002 found 923,257 hill tribe people living in 20 provinces. Chiang Mai had the highest hill tribe population. These people traditionally live as swidden farmers in small villages whose members are kin related. Since the 1980s, an increasing number have been migrating to urban centres such as Chiang Mai. A high percentage of these are young people.

In this article, I shall begin with the history of urban migration and then discuss the livelihoods of the urban migrants, the situation of the hill tribe youth who have migrated to Chiang Mai to work and study, and the way in which tribal peoples organize themselves to solve the problems they encounter in an urban environment.¹

¹ Chiang Mai city. Photo: Panadda Boonyasaranai
Handicraft making in Chiang Mai. Photo: Panadda Boonyasaranai
The history of urban migration

Up until the 1980s, few people migrated from the hill villages to work and live in Chiang Mai. The first generation of hill peoples came to work at three main places: at the Chiang Mai Radio Station, which had been broadcasting a hill tribe radio program since 1964, at the Chiang Mai Cultural Center (CCC), which was set up in 1970, and at the Night Bazaar, which started operating on a small scale in the early 1970s. These first migrants were sought by the Border Patrol Police (BPP) and by business people to stage cultural shows for tourists and to work as radio announcers. Family members and relatives later joined them in Chiang Mai and started hill tribe handicraft production and trade initiatives in the Night Bazaar and other tribal product shops in Chiang Mai.

The story of Phi Somsri, who was among the first Akha to work and settle in Chiang Mai after 1969, illustrates this process of migration. Her original village was in the mountains of Chiang Rai province. In 1965, at the age of 13, along with the village leaders and people from other tribes, she was taken by the BPP to Bangkok to stage tribal shows. One venue was a big annual festival in Bangkok where people bought tickets to see strange things; the “hill tribe show” was one of many popular shows. At that time, the term “hill tribe” was new and few people knew its meaning. Phi Somsri remembered just sitting or standing all day for a whole month in an enclosed place while onlookers came to stare, take photos and listen to the official explanation. The most memorable time during that trip was performing in front of the King and members of the royal family on the occasion of the prince’s 12th birthday.

After she returned to the village, Phi Somsri was employed as a maid, first at the Hill Tribe Development Centre and later at the home of one of the centre’s officials, close to her village. In 1969, at the age of seventeen, this official asked her to work as a helper at a restaurant in the town of Chiang Mai. She remembered meeting young girls from other hill tribes working at the same restaurant. They had to wear their tribal costumes while serving food. When the restaurant closed, she worked as a baby-sitter or house-maid in a number of places. In 1971, the Chiang Mai Cultural Center (CCC) opened and Phi Somsri was contacted to run the Akha show. She brought more Akha from her village to stay at the CCC, as well as people from other tribes. She performed and later supervised the tribal people who worked there. During the day, they would make handicrafts to sell to tourists who came for the evening show and dinner. In 1973 she was contacted to work at the Chiang Mai Radio Station, where she is still working full-time to this day.

Most tribal migrants to Chiang Mai, however, came after the 1990s. The survey by Songsak (1999) of tribal peoples in eight slum areas in Chiang Mai found that, of 100 households surveyed, only 12 had moved to Chiang Mai before 1987, 58 had come during 1987-1992 and the rest migrated later. According to a survey conducted by the author and her colleagues, about 14 percent migrated to Chiang Mai prior to 1988 and the remaining 86 percent gradually migrated into Chiang Mai later. This increase in numbers was a result of a combination of push and pull factors, and of a change in the values of tribal youth. Firstly, the growth of tourism in Chiang Mai, affecting other related businesses such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, market places, gas stations and tour companies, increased the need for labour. Chiang Mai town, surrounded as it is by mountains, has long had the image of a beautiful town with cool weather. As infrastructure improved, and Chiang Mai became a hub for public transport, both land and air, domestic and international tourists began to visit, and tourist-related businesses began to grow. There were 584,087 tourists in 1990, and by 1996 this number had increased to 944,729. Hill tribe peoples migrated to work on construction sites and in hotels, restaurants and shops. Some came only in the dry season but many others came for the whole year. Many worked as manual labourers, some worked in the entertainment sector as sex workers and dancers, others became beggars, while yet others became producers for and traders in hill tribe handicraft markets such as the Night Bazaar.

Secondly, young tribal people also came to Chiang Mai to continue their studies in secondary schools, colleges and universities. The number of tribal youth who finish primary school in the mountains and then continue their secondary education elsewhere is increasing as their parents and they themselves see that there is no future in highland farming. Formal education is seen as a means of entering careers other than farming. So some were ordained as novices and monks under the Dhammacharik Buddhist missionary program, which sponsored them to study from primary school level up to undergraduate level. Others were sponsored by different Christian denominations, which provided dormitories so they could stay cheaply in Chiang Mai. Many would work and study at the same time. Upon finishing, many continued to work in Chiang Mai while others moved elsewhere to work. It is true that studying in schools outside the
village for many years changes the attitude of young tribal people towards farm work. They also lose touch with the practical knowledge of farming. Highland farming is increasingly difficult and risky, and does not generate the cash needed for modern life. A Karen girl who had completed her bachelor’s degree explained to me why she had to work in the city. She said that if she had wanted to do farming, it would not have been necessary to study in higher education. So, for her, after investing time and money in her education, a job other than farming was justified.

Thirdly, a highland livelihood is becoming increasingly difficult. There is pressure from the Forestry Department to limit the use of forest areas for swidden agriculture, which has traditionally relied upon the natural regeneration of soil fertility and upon local input. Highland farmers have had to change from subsistence farming to cash cropping. They have had to spend money on external inputs, such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides. The market for their produce is also unreliable, with price fluctuations leading to losses and debt. The use of forest products is also limited by law, especially for those living in the recently proclaimed protected forest areas. With these limitations on their use of forest and other natural resources, hill tribe families cannot sustain their livelihood. Some, if not all, of their family members have to work in town so that more cash can be generated for the survival of every family member.

Lastly, the town can also become a refuge for people who want to flee from the social and religious control of highland communities. With pressure from the authorities to have “drug-free” villages, some drug addicts choose to leave their highland villages instead of being punished by community leaders according to the new regulations. Akha parents of twins might choose to move to town with their twins instead of killing their babies as is required by Akha law. After the death of their husbands, women of some tribes traditionally live in very depressing circumstances because they cannot return to their original family and are also cut off from their husband’s family. Now they can choose to move to town with their children and to find other jobs. It was noted that when the government’s “War on drugs”
started in February 2003, many tribal people, mostly men, were murdered or arrested, leaving behind widows and orphans.

**Characteristics and livelihoods of urban migrants**

It was interesting to see the different patterns of occupation found among the different tribes. Akha people were found to be producing handicrafts and selling them in the Night Bazaar. Mien people were found to be making and selling soybean milk in almost every corner of Chiang Mai town. Hmong people had set up small factories for producing souvenirs. They were also found to be selling their souvenirs and agricultural produce - fruit, vegetables and flowers - in various markets in Chiang Mai. The Lisu were also producing handicrafts and selling them in Chiang Mai and other big cities’ markets. But many of the young people were also working in the entertainment sector. Karen youth were involved less in trading but were more visible as workers in gas stations, restaurants, supermarkets, as security guards and as tourist guides. Lahu youth were more involved in laboring work as well. But while these were the obvious trends found for the different tribes, there was also great variety. For instance a number of different jobs could be found in one family: the mother made handicrafts during the day and sold them at night while the father worked as a construction worker and the children sold flowers after school. Furthermore, in each tribe there would be some who would be quite well off, perhaps with their own factories producing handicrafts and souvenirs, while there would be others who only lived from hand to mouth. At present, there are an increasing number of tribal girls and boys, some as young as 4-5 years old, to be found selling flowers at almost every big intersection and in many open air restaurants. Tribal adults carrying ba-
The situation of hill tribe youth in an urban environment

Hill tribe youth have increasingly come to Chiang Mai city to study because many schools do not charge a tuition fee and offer free boarding. Many of them came, when they were very young, to attend kindergarten and primary school as the boarding schools, such as the Chiang Mai Education Welfare School or Srisoda Temple, are offered mainly to tribal children and youth. Because the hill tribes are viewed as distinctive, non-Thai people, the schools are set up to inculcate a “Thai nation” ideology and to discipline tribal youth in the “Thai national” culture, in order to trans-
form them into “qualified Thai citizens”. They live with many students from other tribes and are usually looked after by senior students and a few teachers who ensure that, unless rules are followed, they will be punished. They can go home only during the vacation, which is usually when there is no farming activity. These young people therefore increasingly lose touch with highland farming and cultural practices. The good thing is that they develop a tribal network with friends at school from the same tribe and other tribes, and this is larger than any they might have formed living in only one village. As a result of mixing with many other tribes in schools and work places, the tendency is that marriage is increasingly between men and women from different tribes. Tension always exists between the parents and elders who live in the village and their children who come to study and work in town, because the former cannot ensure that their children behave according to tradition, especially regarding sexual relations.

The tribal youth who attain higher education obtain permanent and salaried positions with Christian organizations, non-government development organizations, educational institutions and companies. Those whose parents have their own businesses work for their parents and usually have higher economic status. However, the number of such youth is still small compared with the total tribal population in Chiang Mai, the majority of whom are working on a daily wage basis with long working hours, little pay, no holiday pay and no health insurance. Working in some places, such as gas stations or food processing and handicraft factories, exposes them to toxic chemicals, leading to frequent illness. And the cost of living in the city is also high, such that the young people do not often have money to send home to support their parents.

The worst problem I see is that many of the youths from the tribes, both male and female, are now working as sex workers in the numerous massage parlors and entertainment venues in Chiang Mai. We found there were many ways in which tribal youth got into sex service work. Some young girls, even before beginning menstruation, were sold into brothels by their parents or relatives. They have no choice but to work there until the money obtained by their parents in the beginning is all paid back. Some may at first just work as waitresses or kitchen assistants at sex service venues but are later motivated to become sex workers. Many become sex workers of their own choice. Many also end up infected with HIV and return to their hilly villages, sometimes with babies, to care for themselves alone. This problem is also related to the problem of street children. In 1994, a survey counted 223 street children in Chiang Mai, about half of whom came from a hill tribe background. They were aged between 4-14 years old. In some cases, their parents had either died of AIDS or had been jailed for drug abuse. They live by selling flowers along the street and begging from tourists. They may live in slum areas with their parents or relatives but also in abandoned buildings or public places. When they grow up, many street boys and girls become sex workers.

There is an attempt by tribal peoples in urban communities to stick together in order to maintain their social relationships and their culture and to help each other to face the new problems. It is also an attempt to create the social and political space necessary to gain recognition from other urban residents, and to manoeuvre for their rights. For example, those who have been settled in Chiang Mai longer and have permanent jobs try to build their houses in the same location, in a “traditional” style, with a “traditional” village structure. One outstanding Akha leader has become a representative of a slum community in which members are from many tribes. He actively organizes activities for the Akha community in Chiang Mai through which to solve some of the problems of living in slum areas, such as issues of land-use rights and water pollution. He also leads the Akha community’s participation in public events, including various types of festivals in Chiang Mai, in order to assert their membership of the urban community. Christian tribal peoples regularly go to church on Sundays in their colourful traditional costumes. Many Christian churches of different denominations in Chiang Mai provide services along tribal lines. These are thus places where tribal peoples can meet, expand their networks and exchange their problems and ideas. Tribal students at undergraduate level in various institutions recently set up a tribal association to organize activities which would educate them in their own culture, and find a way to better develop the people of their own tribes. Besides these developments, there are many informal networks along tribal, village or occupational lines. For example, people usually know where others from the same village work and live. They contact each other by phone; they meet each other in smaller or bigger groups on many occasions. But meetings of male youths from the same tribe might also lead to conflicts and brawls with the youth of other groups. Or they might engage in illegal activities, such as the drugs trade and drug consumption. Some youth networks, however, are good as they meet to play sport together or to do other creative things.
The tribal peoples and youth are facing new socio-economic challenges in the new urban environment. They are, however, learning and creating new livelihood options and developing their own organizations and networks to solve the problems they face. This creates a social and political space for better living in the city.

Notes

1  The stories and data cited in this article are based on research reports written in Thai by my colleagues and myself (Prasit Leepreecha, Kwanchewan Buadaeng and Panadda Boonyasaranai. 2003.) withi chewit chatiphan nai muang (Livelihood of ethnic groups in the city). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University. As we witnessed the increasing number of hill peoples migrating to Chiang Mai, the second biggest city of Thailand, we were interested to establish who the migrants were, the type of work they were doing, where they stayed, the problems they faced and how they solved these problems. To find answers to these questions we conducted a research project, “Social Capital: Case Studies of Organizations and Networks of Ethnic Groups in a Changing Socio-Economic and Cultural Context”, during 2003-2005. The reports mentioned above are the results of the first year of study, concerning the socio-economic circumstances and livelihoods of the urban migrants. The synthesis report, focusing on the issue of social capital, or how tribal migrants organize to cope with new problems, should be complete by the end of 2005.


3 Khong kan suksa phue thop thuan phaen phattana kan thong thiw phak raa ton bon (Research project to review the development plan for tourism in upper Northern Thailand), a paper distributed at the meeting for public consideration organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Chiang Mai University, 13 May 1998.

4 Our research project surveyed 5,220 tribal people in Chiang Mai, using the method of accidental sampling. About half the samples proved to be male and about half female. The sample was estimated to represent about 30 percent of the total urban tribal population of the six main tribes: Hmong, Karen, Lisa, Mien, Lahu and Akha. It found that around 47 percent of those surveyed were young people between the ages of 11 and 20 years; 72 percent were unmarried; around 52 percent of the surveyed population were studying - from kindergarten to university level. About 35 percent were in kindergarten and primary school, 46 percent were studying at secondary level, and 19 percent went to college or university. About 63 percent were employed by the private sector, 35 percent had their own business, and the rest - 2 percent – were employed by the government.

5 In 1998 there were 38 slum areas, called in Thai cham chon ae ud, literally “crowded community”, in the town of Chiang Mai. These areas housed 1,890 households and 6,346 people. (The community architect group for settlement and environment. 1998. rai ngan phon kan sam ruai chamchon slum nai muang chiang mai (Report on the survey of slum communities in Chiang Mai).

6 Phu chat kan (The manager) 5-6 November 1994.


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Background

Nepal is a small landlocked country in South Asia that lies between the People’s Republic of China to the north and the Republic of India to the south. It is well known as the Himalayan Kingdom, situated along the southern slopes of the Himalayas and extending from 26°22' to 30°27'N and 80°40' to 88°12'E. According to the recent UN Human Development Report, the per capita income of the Nepali people is US$ 230 per annum. Nepal has been categorized as one of the poorest countries in the world but is rich in socio-cultural diversity. Nepal is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country.

In 1951, the People’s Movement overthrew the autocratic Rana regime and established a multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy. But only nine years later, in 1960, then King Mahendra threw out multiparty democracy and established an autocratic no-party Panchayat System under an absolute monarchy. After 30 years of the King’s autocratic rule, in 1990 the popular people’s movement was able to restore multiparty democracy and a parliamentary form of government, with a new constitution framed by an agreement between the King, the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front (a temporary forum of a group of communist parties fighting for democracy). Restoration of the Westminster model of democracy failed to meet the aspirations of the multicultural people, however, and so a rebel group, commonly known as the CPN-Maoist, planted the seeds of armed conflict in 1996 with the sole aim of uprooting the whole system. The armed conflict between the government and the rebel CPN-Maoist has now lasted for nine years. Conflicts are mostly concentrated on the lands of the indigenous peoples, having a great impact on their day-to-day lives. Arrests, killings, arbitrary detentions, rapes and disappearances have become routine. According to the human rights group, Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a total of 11,358 people lost their lives between 13 February 1996 and 1 March 2005. Of these, 7,415 were killed by the state and the remaining 3,943 by the Maoists. The rate of killings is recorded as 17 per day. It is estimated that 300 children have been killed to date. Thousands of people have been detained or have disappeared.

The indigenous peoples are victimized both by the government and the CPN Maoist and the armed conflict seriously affects the human rights situation.
and economic condition of the indigenous peoples, particularly the indigenous youth. These latter, mainly the men, are forced to leave their native lands and migrate to the District Headquarters where security is comparatively better, or to the capital city, or even to foreign countries to save their lives and support their families. The border is open between Nepal and India and it is estimated that more than 500 youths are migrating to India every day. In addition, around 180-220 youths emigrate daily to the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Afghanistan, Iraq, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macao, Malaysia etc. The root cause of the migration is to escape the conflict. The Maoists force the local people to support their activities whilst the government victimizes those who are found to support the Maoists in any way. Here we must be clear that the government does not stop to consider whether the people are willingly supporting the rebels or being forced to. This is why many young people leave their native lands, to obtain safety from both the Maoists and the military. Because of this migration of youths to foreign lands, the elderly, women and children are highly affected.

Recently, on 1 February 2005, the present King of Nepal dismissed the coalition government of the four political parties and declared himself Head of the Cabinet. With the declaration of an indefinite state of emergency, the king has suspended the basic fundamental rights of the people. For instance, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, press and publication rights, the right to information, the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest etc. In this emerging scenario, the people were deprived of telecommunication services for more than 100 hours. Cell phones have since been shut down indefinitely. Private broadcasting companies are under strict censorship. Lack of information has meant that people have no idea what is going on. The circumstances have become increasingly worrying. The leaders and cadres of the political parties are under military arrest. It is obvious that this act on the part of the king has further fueled the armed conflict.

Indigenous Youth in the Indigenous Movement of Nepal

It is well-known that young people are the backbone of any sort of movement. The role of youths in strengthening the movement cannot be ignored. Obviously, this is no different for the indigenous youth involved in the indigenous movement of Nepal. Indigenous youth organisations are the partner organization of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), an umbrella organization of 48 indigenous peoples’ organizations. Each and every indigenous issue has the strong and participatory support of the indigenous youth, through advocacy, lobby, awareness raising, demonstrations and protests against governmental and non-governmental policies that have adverse effects on indigenous peoples. For instance, the Local Self-Government Act 1998 stipulates that the local government bodies shall have the right to preserve their local languages (mother tongue). Accordingly, some of these bodies decided to use local languages in their local official affairs. But, on 1 June 1999, the Supreme Court issued a Certiorari to the local government bodies stipulating that their decision was illegal. The indigenous peoples and var-
ious language groups called the “Kathmandu valley strike” as a symbolic protest against the Supreme Court’s verdict and Kathmandu City was closed down for a day.

Similarly, in 2004, on the recommendation of the Positive Discrimination Task Force, the Cabinet of Ministers declared that there would be positive discrimination for indigenous peoples, women and Dalit in the field of education and employment opportunities. But the Supreme Court interfered in this act of the government and ruled it illegal on 29 October 2004. Indigenous youth have strongly protested against the Supreme Court’s verdict throughout the country by organizing mass demonstrations and campaigns.

Due to the indigenous peoples’ struggle for national identity, Nepal has recognized 61 ethnic communities as indigenous peoples of Nepal by enacting laws in Parliament. The government has set up the Nepal Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities. This foundation is the only governmental organization that works for the socio-economic development of the indigenous peoples of Nepal.

At organizational level, indigenous youth have organized according to their ethnic tribes through student wings. For example, the Nepal Tamang Student Ghedung, Nepal Magar Students’ Association, Thakali Student Society, Sherpa Students’ Association etc. Additionally, there are more than 20 indigenous students’ organizations that have organized under an umbrella organization popularly known as the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities’ Students (NEFINS). The Indigenous Peoples’ Youth Forum (IPYF) has been organized by recognizing the essentially common platform of indigenous youths from different ethnic communities, the need to re-organize the indigenous movement of Nepal from a new dimension and introduce the indigenous youth movement of Nepal to the global indigenous youth movement. The IPYF is in the process of linking up with the Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network and other international youth caucuses.

### Indigenous Youth in the Maoist People’s War

The rebel CPN-Maoist started the insurgency, the Maoist People’s War, on 13 February 1996, in five very remote districts (Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot of the Mid-Western Region, Gorkha of the Western region and Sindhuli of the Central Region) that are predominantly inhabited by indigenous peoples. Now the insurgency is strong in each and every district of the country. According to a statement from a battalion commander of the Maoist military force, Mr. Jay Bahadur Gharti (who surrendered in February 2004), the Maoists have around 15,000 military troops including a large indigenous youth presence, whereas the state has a total of 75,000 soldiers. The presence of the indigenous youth, in large numbers, in the Maoist People’s War is due to the historical exploitation, discrimination and exclusion of the indigenous peoples by the state. The indigenous peoples have been exploited and neglected for 235 years, ever since the so-called military unification of Nepal by then King Prithvi Narayan Shah. The unified territories used to be autonomous states of the indigenous peoples. The political, economic, religious and social policies adopted by the state have generally always done more harm than good and hardly ever favor indigenous peoples.

Nepali Khas is the only official language, and yet it is not understood by more than 50% of the total population of the country. The mainstream Hindu population is in the minority. It constitutes 30% of the total population but holds 85%-90% of state bureaucratic, judicial, legislative and military positions. In the hope of liberating themselves from this historical exploitation and discrimination, large numbers of indigenous youth have therefore joined the insurgency. Moreover, the major issues raised by the Indigenous Peoples’ Movement of Nepal have been supported and endorsed by the rebel CPN-Maoist. These issues can be highlighted as:

- A secular state, equal rights to language, education, culture, information and development.
- Restructuring of the political power, i.e. in the Parliament: changing the Upper House into a House of Nationalities and reserving seats for indigenous peoples in the Lower House.
- Right to self-determination and national autonomy.
- Affirmative action in education, bureaucracy and health.
- Active participation in the decision-making process, from planning to implementation.

The rebel CPN-Maoist have endorsed indigenous issues as one of their main political issues. They have begun to create “Autonomous People’s Governments” corresponding to the ethnic or regional homelands. They have declared six autonomous regions, formed on the basis of ethnicity, for Magar, Tamang, Tharu, Limbu, Gurung and Newar. Autonomous people’s governments have been formed in all the above-mentioned regions except for Newar, as the Newar homeland is the current
capital city of the country. Similarly, three autonomous regional people’s governments have been formed in Bheri-Karnali Autonomous Region, Seti-Mahakali Autonomous Region and Madhesi Autonomous Region. The message from the rebel CPN-Maoist is clear: they are in favor of federalism with a right to self-determination in order to meet the needs of a multicultural society.

Conclusion

Clearly, the involvement of indigenous youth in the insurgency is due to historical causes and the failure of mainstream political parties to address indigenous peoples’ issues, even following the restoration of democracy in 1990. Historical exploitation and discrimination is bound to polarize a large section of the indigenous youth towards armed conflict. The exploitative state mechanism has driven the youths to take up arms. So the state has a clear responsibility for encouraging these youths to abandon their arms. For this, the state should be proactive in providing equal opportunities within various state mechanisms; ensuring social and economic development; guaranteeing democratic rights and respecting the norms of multicultural society. Unless the state ensures the present and future of the deprived and backward communities and respects indigenous and minority rights, the current conflict is bound to escalate.

The armed conflict has done more harm than good to the nation. Socio-economic development is at a standstill, social insecurity is rising and the energetic spirit of the young people, which should have been invested in the development of the nation, has been drawn into bloodshed. Both warring parties (government and Maoists) must understand that a military strategy is not the answer to the present crisis in Nepal. They must learn lessons from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, where decades of armed conflict have led to no gain. In armed conflict, the only loser is the Nation and its people. The state must therefore take more responsibility for conflict resolution and learn from the Swiss example, where they have managed social diversity since 1848.

Emigration of the indigenous youth will ultimately weaken the indigenous peoples’ movement in Nepal. On the other hand, the involvement of indigenous youth in the current armed conflict provides ample opportunity for the racist government to undertake activities of ethnic cleansing in the name of anti-terrorism. The government of Nepal has labeled the armed conflict as “terrorism” in order to gain international support with which to suppress the movement. As a result, the governments of India, the UK and USA have been providing military aid to Nepal. Indigenous organizations such as NEFIN therefore need to play a significant role in persuading the mainstream political parties to adopt indigenous peoples’ issues and mainstream them in order to reduce the conflict. NEFIN must persuade the political parties that indigenous issues are an essential part of democracy without which it cannot be expected to flourish. NEFIN must lobby civil society and human rights organizations at national and international level to focus on indigenous issues in relation to conflict resolution so that the government is forced to develop a peaceful strategy by which to resolve the country’s crisis. If the present conflict is not properly addressed, or the military strategy of the government is not replaced, then this politically motivated armed conflict may be transformed into violent ethnic conflicts that will be more fatal than the former and could threaten the Nepali state’s unity.

Note

1 The Positive Discrimination Task Force is a commission formed by the government to formulate policies on Affirmative Action for women, Dalit and indigenous peoples in different sectors of the state. This was the result of the activities and lobbying of the indigenous movement.

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DANISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS IN DENMARK LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY CONFLICTS

Laila Chemnitz
This article is based on my thesis, submitted to the Institute for Eskimology in 2001. The thesis was on Greenlandic students in Danish higher education. For this article, I have focused on the Danish-speaking group among these.

In 2001, there were about 500 young Greenlanders studying in Denmark, most of them in higher education. Around 50% of them completed their degrees. Those students who graduated seemed to do as well as their Danish co-students, and adapted well to Danish society. Indeed, perhaps too well, as 41% of them decided to stay in Denmark after finishing their degrees.

One of the first goals of the Greenlandic Home Rule (the Greenlandic government, which has had autonomous status within the Danish realm since 1979) was to become self-sufficient in terms of its workforce. Clearly, many more educated Greenlanders are required. The government has accepted that a radical change in the level of education in Greenland is necessary if the country is ever to function without outside workers. A change must be effected in the common perception of what it is to pursue an education. There is talk of creating a shared sense of responsibility in families, whereby each individual member can see the advantages and appreciate the importance of pursuing an education. People have spoken of “raising the level of education to Nordic standards”. This will require a restructuring of the entire education system. The politicians have acknowledged the importance of families supporting young people’s choice of education.

Traditional Greenlandic upbringing

The traditional Greenlandic upbringing has been described many times. I believe the following three terms, described by Ing-Britt Christiansen and Per Langgaard, may well describe how Greenlandic students manage their education. The anthropologist Ing-Britt Christiansen has described Qujagisaq and Isumaminik, and Per Langgaard has described Naalattoq.
**Qujagisaq**, the favorite. Someone who is pampered, favored above others, and admired.

**Isumaminik.** The traditional ideology of non-interference. People are solely responsible for their actions, no one else can be made accountable, and no one therefore has the right to interfere in other people’s affairs. Traditionally, it was the practice that people would not speak of personal problems.

**Naalattoq** is the most positive thing one can say of a child. It means that the child is reserved and does not ask any unnecessary questions. These are not traits that are appreciated in the Danish education system. On the contrary, students are encouraged to be sharp, critical, and question the material presented to them.

A boy raised as **Qujagisaq** may well have a difficult time tackling the problems faced as a student. These may include language problems, if he does not understand the Danish-speaking or thinking teacher. Such a **Qujagisaq** may find his first instinct is to drop out of his studies, because he cannot handle adversity. Children raised as **Naalattoq** will be reserved and risk being perceived as unable to follow the teaching. Parents influenced by **Isumaminik** will not encourage their children to persevere, which will surely prove a hindrance to their studies. In one’s time as a student, crises will always occur. In order to overcome these, it is important to have a support network. If others easily and uncritically accept that one drops out of one’s course, it becomes all the easier to do so. There is a difficult balance for families to strike here, as they risk the shame of dropping out becoming so great that the family member does not want to return to Greenland.

**Educational background**

In addition to the hindrances caused by their upbringing, there are a number of other reasons why Greenlandic students drop out of their studies. A number of the students I spoke to felt that they had not been sufficiently prepared (in educational terms) to study at the institute of higher learning to which they had been admitted. As one of the students pointed out, one does not have the same general knowledge, coming from Greenland, as Danish students do. There are skills, taken for granted in Denmark, of which Greenlanders may have no knowledge. This may result in a feeling of lagging behind in the course and requires extra effort to be made, particularly in the early stages. The student may experience defeat, having come as a “winner” from the gymnasium (Greenlandic High School), with high grades, and feeling like a “loser” in Denmark, failing exams. This influences whether students feel comfortable on their course and are likely to complete it or not.

Greenland’s Home Rule has a special agreement with the Danish Ministry of Education whereby Greenlandic students may be admitted to, for example law, medicine or psychology with lower grades than required by other students. This agreement may mean that some Greenlandic students are not sufficiently prepared to manage on a course with more scholastically able co-students. In Greenland’s particular situation, with very few educated Greenlanders, I believe it is key to get as many people admitted to higher education as possible. It is very important too that people have exceptionally good information available regarding the courses to which they are interested in applying. This is an area in which the Home Rule should invest heavily in order to minimize the number of students who pick courses that turn out to be wrong for them.

As to the question of whether Greenlandic students feel comfortable in Danish society, my conclusion is that all of those I met did. In spite of the recurring gripe that Danes are not easy to get to know, they all felt a great degree of freedom in Denmark. Indeed, some felt it was easier being a Greenlander in Denmark than in Greenland, as one had greater space to be different. This is a central dilemma, and one tightly connected to language, or rather lack of it. Students pointed out that they did not have to justify feeling Greenlandic in Denmark, despite not being fully fluent in the Greenlandic language. All the students felt that their Greenlandic language skills deteriorated while in Denmark.

**Identity and language issues**

Issues of identity and language have made their mark to various extents on societal debates in Greenland over the years. The students I spoke with felt that the debate had shifted over the last few years, such that it was now understood that language was the key component of Greenlandic identity. This was troublesome for the students, who were largely Danish-speaking. Language plays an important role in ethnic identities. In Greenland, in particular, language has often been used when classifying people as Greenlandic or not. It
used to be easier to divide Greenlandic society into these two groups, as mixed marriages were less prevalent. Today, however, the situation has changed, as many children from the 1960s onwards have grown up in mixed families. Many children from such families have felt that the Danish language has been favored at the expense of Greenlandic. Thus many people today feel that they cannot claim to be Greenlandic-speaking at a native level, yet still consider themselves Greenlanders.

In addition to these children from mixed marriages, children of Greenlandic parents have also learned Danish. It is paradoxical that there are families in Greenland – granted not many – where both parents are Greenlanders with Greenlandic as their mother tongue, but whose children speak Danish almost exclusively. I believe there may be a number of reasons for this, including:

- the parents wanted to improve their children’s educational opportunities
- the children have attended Danish classes and have thus had Danish playmates
- many teachers and kindergarten teachers are Danish-speaking Danes.

There is also the possibility that some parents devalue aspects of Greenlandic culture and traditional values, perhaps because they feel inferior to Danes.

It is difficult to say whether the debate on language is a general problem for Danish-speaking Greenlanders, living in Greenland. I have spoken to many of them, who do not feel that the debate - as played out in the media - is a general trend within society. Things are different for Danes living in Greenland, who do not speak Greenlandic. They will feel more sensitive to a questioning of their presence in Greenland. A Greenlander born and raised in Greenland will not feel the same need to justify her presence in the country, and thus will take these sorts of questions less personally.
But what about the Greenlandic students in Denmark, who feel harassed because they do not speak sufficient Greenlandic, and who feel their Greenlandic identities questioned for that reason? They should be in no doubt as to their Greenlandic identity, and yet they are. They are insecure because they are away from Greenland and feel hurt when they are criticized for being “half-Danes”. I suspect this vulnerability will disappear when they return to Greenland and realize that there are many other opinions beyond those expressed in the media.

Possible solutions

One should not exclude people who do not speak Greenlandic natively from participating in society. This of course does not mean that one should forget the Greenlandic language. It is after all an important part of Greenlandic ethnic identity. However, it should not be the only way for people to feel Greenlandic. The Greenlandic ethnic identity needs to be less linguistically dependent. There is no reason why a Greenlandic identity cannot build on other values, just as people in other Arctic areas do, where they have built a strong sense of Inuit culture and identity, despite the original languages being spoken much less widely than in Greenland.

My contention is that people are too complacent in Greenland. It is the same people who speak out and let their opinions be known on just about any subject in Greenland. They are the well educated, the bilinguals with good and prestigious jobs. The only way to change this is for as many Greenlanders as possible to gain an education. This need not be an academic education, but one that suits the needs of Greenland and the abilities and interests of the students, so they have the greatest possible chance of completing it. Hopefully, this will then broaden debates within society to include more people, and not just a small elite of well-educated people.

It is crucial that Greenlandic politicians recognize the importance of the Danish language. One hears mainly from those who are against the Danish language, and who incessantly criticize Danish speakers, albeit - tellingly - without proposing alternatives. Perhaps none of those responsible wish to risk their political positions by showing support to the Danish language. In order to achieve a more open and equal society in Greenland, it is important that as many people as possible participate in public debates. Problems are apparent that cannot simply be ignored, and one needs to move beyond Greenlandic traditions of not criticizing others or taking controversial stands.

Danish speakers, however, should also make an effort to learn Greenlandic, just as one would naturally learn the language of any country one was staying in. But that requires proper training. Given the lack of qualified teachers, this is perhaps not the first area to develop. It is more important that Greenlandic speaking teachers teach Greenlandic children. But if people are to learn the language, they need to be given a chance to practice speaking it. One must acknowledge the impossibility of basing Greenlandic society on the notion that it ought only to be composed of pure, ethnic Greenlanders. Many young Greenlanders today come from mixed homes, but they are a part of Greenlandic society and cannot be excluded or brushed off as “non-Greenlanders”. Greenlandic politicians need to acknowledge this publicly. They must see beyond their personal predispositions and think of the Greenlandic youth, who will carry the country forward. For these young people it is necessary to be as well equipped, not least educationally, as possible.

A solid primary school

It is common for a formerly colonized people to be very ethnically conscious, and critical of the former colonial power. This is a part of the liberation process. It was important for Greenland to break away from Denmark and assert the importance of the Greenlandic language at the beginning of the Home Rule period. However, it has now been 25 years since Home Rule was implemented, and it is time to move on and publicly acknowledge that both languages are needed, and that both languages will be prioritized equally, since both languages are part of Greenlandic society.

There is a drop-out rate of around 50% for all courses, at technical schools, the gymnasium, business schools, Ilinniarfissuaq (the teacher training college in Greenland), the institutes of higher learning in Denmark and Ilisimatusarfik (the University of Greenland). This rate must be brought down to a more reasonable level if one is serious about doing something about the level of education in Greenland. The Home Rule should start an extensive and qualitative study of dropping out, in order to map which courses give problems and why.

One of the key areas in which to invest in order to heighten the level of education in Greenland are pri-
mary schools. If they are made to function at an acceptable level, the graduating students will be more motivated and scholastically equipped to start further education, be it vocational training or the gymnasium. For this to work, teaching needs to take place in both Greenlandic and Danish. In the current situation, with Greenland’s relationship with Denmark, the two languages must be set on an equal footing. The population must become bilingual. This means many more teachers must be educated at the teacher training college, Ilinniarfissuaq. The Home Rule must make it more attractive to take a teaching degree. Once the foundation, learned in primary school, is in place, we will see many more Greenlanders choosing to take and complete their education.

Returning with an education

Discussion on how to tighten requirements for Greenlandic students, to ensure they return to Greenland upon finishing their degrees, is fraught. It is difficult to find a solution that everyone will be happy with but it is something the Home Rule ought to be considering. An effort must be made to bring graduates back to Greenland, so the country can profit from their education. The students I spoke with mentioned the language barrier as a key reason for not returning immediately. They felt that there were simply too many problems involved with not speaking Greenlandic natively in Greenland.

It is striking that all the people I spoke to who had Danish high school diplomas were doubtful as to whether they would return to Greenland. None of the people I spoke to from this group said they would definitely return. This may also be because these people have been away from Greenland for too long. They have developed a social network in Denmark that cannot easily be replaced should they choose to return.

Mutual acceptance

Having worked on this area in my thesis, it is clear to me that if one wants to make use of the many Danish-speaking Greenlanders and ethnic Danes who have higher degrees, one must respect them for who they are, and not persecute them for not speaking fluent Greenlandic. They ought to be accepted in the same way that Greenlandic athletes, establishing themselves abroad, are. No fingers are pointed at them, despite many of them not having Greenlandic as their mother tongue. Some may say that the Danish-speaking Greenlanders ought to be less sensitive to the jibes of other Greenlanders about their language skills. I find this unacceptable. When people discriminate or insult a person because they do not speak Greenlandic, one should react against it. One cannot throw Danish speakers or ethnic Danes out of Greenlandic society, just as one cannot throw second generation immigrants out of Denmark, simply because they have a non-Danish background.

Language is an important part of ethnic identity. But one must not fossilize Greenlandic identity in outdated conceptions of what makes a real Greenlander. In many places in Canada and Alaska, Inuit have shifted the boundaries of their ethnic identities. They speak English and wear Western clothes, but this does not change their self-conception as Inuit. The young Greenlanders pursuing an education in Denmark have developed a more international mindset. This should also widen the sense of what constitutes a Greenlander in Greenland beyond its traditional boundaries.

Notes

2 The article was first published in Danish in Tidsskriftet Grønland, Nr. 2-3, March 2005

Laila Chemnitz. Danish-speaking Greenlander. Born 1966. Raised in Angmagssalik and Nuuk. Danish high school diploma. 2001 master’s degree in Eskimology, University of Copenhagen. E-mail: Lch@ghsdk.dk
INUIT YOUTH IN CANADA

Franco Buscemi
The Saputiit Youth Association in Nunavik was created in March 1995. In its infancy, Saputiit predominantly played a role in representing and advocating for Inuit youth in Nunavik until it had built sufficient capacity to initiate projects such as the kayaking trip to raise awareness on suicide prevention. Saputiit wants to put the focus on LIFE and has named the project accordingly, the Living Life Journey.

The kayakers, aged between 18-32 are: Yusi York, Kuujjuaq; Simon Aliqu, Akulivik; Luck Papialuk, Kuujjuaapik; Tommy Kumaluk, Inukjuak; Ainalik Qavavauk, Ivujivik; and Gilbert Innukpuk, Umiujaq, and they are kayaking up the Hudson Bay coast from the community of Kuujjuaapik to Akulivik making stops in Umiujaq, Inukjuak and Puvirnituq. In the communities, the kayakers will make presentations of their own life experiences, encouraging people to break the silence, demonstrating the importance of self respect, encouraging Inuit youth to choose to Live Life.

Related Links www.saputiit.ca

Embrace Life Committee of Arviat

The Embrace Life Committee is a group of people, young and old, all with the same goal, “To Bring Back HOPE to Our Community”.

Arctic Bay. Photo: Autumn Watson
The group rallied support from the Elders, local businesses and community members for a camp that brought 17 youth out onto the land. The camp was called “Rekindling Hope”. A number of sessions were provided, including how to cope with losing someone to suicide, suicide prevention - how to talk to someone who may be feeling suicidal –, healthy living, coping with depression and continuing education.

While on the camp, a bonfire was made. This was symbolic of the purpose of the camp to “rekindle hope.” The council has also planned FAMILY NITES, teen dances for the community, and they are working on a website, www.embracelifearviat.i8.com.

**Nunavut Youth Consulting**

Nunavut Youth Consulting (NYC) is a not-for-profit youth group that started as the High School Café in Inuujqaj School in Arctic Bay, Nunavut. In 2000, the café became Nunavut Youth Consulting. NYC’s main goal is to help the youth of Arctic Bay in any way it can. Members of NYC implement projects that they know the youth in Arctic Bay want or need. Currently they focus mainly on education and health issues. Members of NYC are also involved in other groups at a local, regional and national level.

The NYC program includes:

**Community access program (CAP)**

This program, from Industry Canada, offers free Internet facilities to community members. It also provides jobs and learning experiences for the youth that get those jobs and supervises the CAP site.

**HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C prevention and awareness**

Neil Kigutaq is a member of the Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network and is NYC’s representative on the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Through the program, they run an annual AIDS walk and HIV/AIDS/HEP C fairs. For the past four years, Arctic Bay has had one of the most popular AIDS Awareness Walks in Canada.

**Education, exchanges, experience**

Members volunteer their time to help fundraise for other organizations and to help fund young people to go on exchanges. In the past, NYC has participated in three exchanges (2 with Ottawa and 1 with Kingston, Ontario) funded by Exchanges Canada. It has helped fundraise for the Nunavut Youth Abroad Program and the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Walk.

NYC has sent a number of young people on various educational trips such as Encounters with Canada, Forum for Young Canadians, Katimavik, Canada World Youth and Students on Ice Antarctica Expedition. It has even helped recreational teams such as the Arctic Bay Senior Hockey Team.

**Literacy and Culture**

Its literacy program has an extensive library of resources including posters, puzzles, calendars and...
have been writing poems. In February, we have big plans to take a group down to Nicaragua.

**Related Links**

www.nunavutyouth.com

**Kitikmeot Regional Youth Council**

“Young, fun and let’s get it done” is the motto of the Kitikmeot Regional Youth Council (KRYC).

This past March, the Kitikmeot Inuit regional youth symposium took place in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Three young people from each of the communities in the Kitikmeot region attended the two-day symposium.

At the symposium, the Kitikmeot Regional Youth Council was born. The creation of a regional youth council has provided the youth of Kitikmeot with an organized body whose leadership can advocate on their behalf and give the youth greater control of youth programming in the region.

The KRYC’s founding President is Megan Pizzo-Lyall. One of her duties as president of the KRYC is to serve as a regional board member on the National Inuit Youth Council. She has recently been appointed as Vice-President of the National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) by her fellow NIYC board members. The elected council has representation from each of the communities.

**2005 Northern Games**

The 2005 games mark the 35th anniversary of the Northern Games. Like the 24-hour summer sunlight, between July 28 and August 1 visitors, residents, spec-

**In the Pipeline**

NYC plans to offer an Anger Management Workshop with the help of other organizations in Arctic Bay. This would be open to people in the High Arctic. Irene Swoboda from Mental Health and the nursing station are assisting with this. We also want to finish a Poetry Book for which the youth
Able Tingmiak, master of the blanket toss, in the air at the Northern Games 2005. Photo: Daisy Saunders

Skinning competition at the Northern Games 2005. Photo: Northern Games Society

"Two foot high kick" competition at the Northern Games 2005. Photo: Northern Games Society
tators and competitors in Inuvik were shining with joy all day and all night.

There are 3 different categories in which the players are placed, Juniors 12 & under, Juniors 15 & under and Seniors 17 & over. The games feature familiar traditional games such as the Arm Pull, Kneel Jump, Two-foot High Kick, “Knuckle hop” and “Airplane”. The games also include competitions and demonstrations of traditional skills and activities such as the “Blanket Toss”, goose plucking, fish gutting and seal skinning. Through out the games, old-time dances, drum dancing and other fun activities such as a Jigging contest are held, with a final huge celebratory feast at the end of the games.

The Northern games are organized by a committee that was formed in the summer of 1970. The games were launched as a NWT Centennial Project in Inuvik. A dozen communities participated in the first year of the games and they now have participants from all over the circumpolar region. Traditionally, the games were played in the Western Arctic but, with growing interest, the whole circumpolar north has now taken them as their own. The Northern Games Society (formerly Committee) helps preserve the valued customs of the past by joining together for a fun time competing in games.

“The Northern Games wants to see young people take increasing pride in their own cultural heritage and discover the rich history which have been inherited from their ancestors.”

**Nunatsiavut Drum Dancers**

The Nunatsiavut Drum Dancers is a young group in Nain, Nunatsiavut who have helped revive traditional drum dancing in the community. The Nunatsiavut Drummers have studied various regional drumming styles and have developed a style of their own that is influenced by the various styles. They have innovatively developed a choreographed style that sends a powerful beat through the air. The Nunatsiavut Drum Dancers have also successfully incorporated rock music, traditional throat singing and flamenco music into their performances.

The Nunatsiavut Drum Dancers have had their potent beats heard at a number of venues, including the First Night festival in Toronto, a festival celebrating youth, family and diversity. They have performed in Cultural Day festivals in Labrador and at the Labrador Inuit Land Claim signing agreement.
The National Inuit Youth Council

The National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) is made up of Youth Coordinators and Youth Representatives from six (6) Inuit regions across Canada; Nunatsiavut; Nunavik; Qikiqtani; Kivalliq; Kitikmeot and Inuvialuit. The NIYC was formed at the first National Inuit Youth Summit, held in Kuujjuaq, Nunavik in 1994.

In partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, they work to open communications cross-regionally and improve the lives of Inuit youth in Canada.

The mission of the National Inuit Youth Council is to benefit all Inuit youth through the strength of our voice and action. Furthermore, we commit to work with our elders and other partners in the preservation and strengthening of the Inuit language(s) and culture and to provide opportunities for young Inuit to attain their dreams and visions.

Currently, the three main priorities of the NIYC are: the preservation and promotion of culture and Inuktut; education and training; and suicide prevention. In the past two years, the NIYC has published the National Inuit Youth Suicide Prevention Framework, four public service announcements on suicide prevention and the "Life Book,” an agenda-like book that includes a compilation of stories, pictures and artwork from Inuit youth across Canada.

Last October the NIYC set up a website for Inuit youth, www.niyc.ca where stories, pictures, education, employment opportunities and other resources for Inuit youth are available.

Franco Buscemi was born in Iqaluit, Nunavut. He currently works at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in Ottawa. “The part of my role that I enjoy most is sharing the good news of all the different things young Inuit are doing across Canada. Inuujunga! ‘I am Inuk’ ‘I am human’ ‘I am ALIVE’
IWGIA’s aims and activities

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - IWGIA - is a non-profit making, politically independent, international membership organization.

IWGIA co-operates with indigenous peoples all over the world and supports their struggle for human rights and self-determination, their right to control land and resources, their cultural integrity, and their right to development.

The aim of IWGIA is to defend and endorse the rights of indigenous peoples in concurrence with their own efforts and desires. An important goal is to give indigenous peoples the possibility of organising themselves and to open up channels for indigenous peoples’ own organizations to claim their rights.

IWGIA works at local, regional and international levels to further the understanding and knowledge of, and the involvement in, the cause of indigenous peoples.

The activities of IWGIA include: publications, international human rights work, networking, conferences, campaigns and projects.

For more information about IWGIA’s activities, please check our website at: www.iwgia.org

Publications

IWGIA publishes a yearbook, The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena, and a quarterly journal Indigenous Affairs/Asuntos Indígenas. Furthermore, a number of books thematically focussing on indigenous issues are published each year.

IWGIA’s publications can be ordered through our website: www.iwgia.org
by e-mail: iwgia@iwgia.org
or by fax: +45 35 27 05 07
**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Engagement in mainstream political processes and local government is an option increasingly taken up by indigenous peoples in order to regain more control over their lives and their destiny.

This book compiles concrete experiences with indigenous peoples’ participation in local government in two Southeast Asian countries: the Philippines and Malaysia. It identifies the problems and constraints for indigenous participation and also looks into the legal framework as well as indigenous women’s present and potential role in local government institutions.

**AN INDIGENOUS PARLIAMENT?**

**REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES IN RUSSIA AND THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH**

This collection of articles is based on discussions among indigenous peoples in Russia and other parts of the Circumpolar North on their participation in political institutions and processes. It includes a number of articles on the legal situation of indigenous peoples in Russia on a federal level and different structures and solutions in the Russian provinces, as well as case studies from Alaska, northern Canada, Greenland and Sápmi. Furthermore, the recommendations from a roundtable meeting in Moscow in 2003 on this topic are enclosed. The first version of this book was co-published by RAIPON and IWGIA in Russian in 2003.

**EYES THAT TELL**

**MYTHS AND CUSTOMS FROM INDIGENOUS AMAZONIA ILLUSTRATED BY ITS PEOPLE**

_Eyes that Tell_ is an anthology of myth and traditions narrated and superbly illustrated by members of eight indigenous peoples of Peruvian Amazonia: the Ashaninka, Shawi, Uitoto, Shipibo, Awajun, Wampis, Tikuna and Matsés. The narrators illustrate the extraordinary events that took place in ancient time (and that still take place today) in an equally extraordinary manner. In their illustrations we find the fantastic forms of mythical beings, the vivid colours of their clothes and adornments, the mysterious landscapes of their worlds, the vibrant energy that links humans, animals, gods, plants and all that exists in a single universal essence.

Fernando Santos-Granero
_Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute_