

AUTUMN 2009

BUILDING

# Bridges

## Everything comes from the earth

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**Generations of Indigenous Knowledge**

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**Growing Food or Growing Fuel?**

**Your Gifts have the power to Change the World**



A CHANGE FOR CHILDREN PUBLICATION

December 2009 is a critical time as world leaders gather from the 7-18th for the UN Climate Change Conference - touted as the most important international meeting in history. The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012, and many scientists, world leaders and citizens groups call this a time of "climate emergency". In December, we will also see many gatherings of citizens around the world urging their governments to take serious actions to address our collective "climate emergency".

The theme of this edition of Building Bridges is **Everything Comes from the Earth**, inspired by the questions and debate that abound in communities across all continents who are working for change. This issue gives examples of the work of Change for Children to link poverty alleviation, health, education and social justice to the environment.

The concept of environmental justice is one that recognizes that environmental struggles and social justice struggles are not separate. Environmental justice recognizes the social, economic and political dimensions of environmental issues and challenges social inequities and systems of power to create a new agenda for environmental and social change.

These past months have brought incredible environmental imbalance once again to the forefront with numerous disasters that are permanently destroying and dramatically changing peoples and places. Change for Children is working together with communities who have experienced this great environmental imbalance, whose lives have been so immediately altered by it. We are also working to bring about greater awareness and plan to implement dialogues in Alberta communities about environmental justice and leadership in the new year. Our priority at the moment is to work to restore balance, and to promote and preserve the knowledge and ideas that make this balance possible.

– FIONA CAVANAGH  
PROGRAM MANAGER – EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



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Design & layout: Chris Peters  
Cover photo: Caitlin Jackson



## Consider Giving a Gift of Preservation

– one that provides an environmental alternative, that preserves our environment and most importantly that allows for future generations to survive and thrive.

**CHANGE FOR CHILDREN ASSOCIATION (CFCA)** is an Edmonton based non-governmental organization with a thirty-three year history of working for sustainable grassroots community development in Latin America and Africa and a vibrant Global Education Program in Canada.

## Healthy Communities, Human Dignity, Global Justice

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## Thank you

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### e-Newsletter

To subscribe to Change for Children's monthly electronic newsletter email us at [cfca@changeforchildren.org](mailto:cfca@changeforchildren.org)

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CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

# “Tasba penkira”

## Generations of indigenous knowledge



*Primitivo Centeno, Miskito indigenous leader on the Rio Coco heading to Pamkawas*

It has been a long endured struggle by the Miskito to protect the delicate balance of their ecosystem and the cultural ways of living off the land

“That boy you see over there - ” Primitivo says to me, raising his voice over the whine of the engine and pointing towards shore where a young boy navigates his cedar longboat along the river's edge, “ - he is a Miskito boy.” Primitivo waves as our longboat, crammed with cargo and passengers, groans steadily through the brown waters of the Rio Coco. The boy smiles and wildly waves his hand in return.

We are now crossing into indigenous territory of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve, the largest tract of tropical rainforest north of the Amazon basin, located in Northern Nicaragua. It has been a 2-day journey on the Rio Coco, a river that flows 750 km and forms the Honduras-Nicaragua border, passing dense green jungle and small villages of wooden houses built on stilts. On the riverbanks, groups of women glance up as they wash clothes on the rocks, and the children splash and play in the shallow waters.

The Rio Coco is the central vein of transportation in and out of the region, penetrating the isolated depths of BOSAWAS territory, a land that spans 22,000 square kilometres, and is home to hundreds of species of birds, plants, mammals, and insects. The Miskito indigenous peoples who have lived along the river for over four centuries - subsistence farming, fishing, and hunting - know the river as *wanki*.

Primitivo, who was born and raised in Pamkawas, one of the 27 Miskito villages in the region, knows every landmark that the *wanki* holds. He points to the mountain that rises up like a green thumb, thin red streams that feed into the river, and small black birds that zip by us in bursts of sudden speed, translating to me their Miskito meanings.

For the past 12 years he has been journeying in and out of the BOSAWAS to the capital, Managua to represent his people and lobby the Nicaraguan government for recognition of their traditional rights to the land. Over the years, traditional Miskito subsistence practices and ecological balance have been severely threatened by the farming and commercial logging activities of non-indigenous people. It has been a long endured struggle by the Miskito to protect the delicate balance of their ecosystem and the cultural ways of living off the land that have sustained existence for over 300 years. In 2005, after years of experiencing the pressures from imperial forces - suffering land loss, growing rates of poverty and malnutrition, and the degradation of indigenous knowledge - the Nicaraguan government finally recognized the sovereign territory rightfully belonging to indigenous peoples in the BOSAWAS biosphere.

*...continued on page 8*

# Green Technologies

## Projects for a brighter future



Early in 2008, forty wind turbines were installed on the isthmus between Nicaragua's most popular tourist destination - San Juan del Sur - and Lake Nicaragua. Once fully operational in 2010, these turbines will provide 10% of Nicaragua's energy needs. The national government hopes to expand these types of projects and reduce its dependence on oil for energy to just three percent by the year 2013. Nicaragua is already using geothermal energy provided from its many volcanoes, ethanol from sugar cane fields, and has tapped many of its rivers for hydroelectric power. This combination of renewable energy alternatives provides Nicaragua with 34 percent of its energy needs in 2009.

In terms of green energy, Nicaragua is a "green gold mine" and every year there are more examples of inspiring projects that eliminate the need for fossil fuels and electricity and put the environment first.

Change for Children's water well drilling project in northern

Nicaragua is one such example. Recently, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) approved the third phase of this project with support in the amount of \$500,000. Partnered with another \$100,000 contributed by the Frank Flaman Foundation, and an additional \$75,000 expected from generous donors like you, this project will reach 35 more drought stricken communities, provide water to an additional 12,000 people and train 200 municipal officials and employees in water management in Nicaragua's driest department.



But that is not all. This project, the first of its kind in the region, employs only green technologies in its operations. It is "the green flagship of sustainability for us" says Pedro Lopez, water projects coordinator at our partner organization Centro Humboldt, Nicaragua's leading environmental organization. "This project allows us to demonstrate at a grassroots community level that green technologies really work, are completely sustainable and, especially with the rising prices of electricity and diesel, are now affordable for us".

### **Reforestation and Deforestation Reduction:**

Ensuring that our water wells continue to yield water far into the future means doing all that we can to preserve the watershed. Deforestation, droughts caused by climate change, and the over-consumption of water by agricultural initiatives have made watersheds in this region incredibly fragile. In recent decades, areas like Chinandega in northern Nicaragua have been stricken by drought on an annual basis, and during the rainy season, hurricanes (Joan, Mitch and Felix) have devastated the area three times in the past 20 years. Both hurricanes and droughts have contributed in a natural way to deforestation in the area, but the human inhabitants have done the most damage in

their search of firewood for fuel. The more trees we lose from the area, the faster the watershed dries up and the scarcer water becomes. With the loss of trees also comes the loss of education for girls, because now girls and young women spend their days walking farther and farther to find firewood, instead of attending school. As a solution to slow deforestation, this project is distributing eco-stoves to 500 families in the region. These stoves (pictured left) consume 1/4 the amount of wood that a traditional adobe stove consumes.

### **Solar Power:**

Nicaragua has an abundance of sun, so this project prioritizes solar power as the only source of energy. Rising electricity and diesel prices have made solar energy a smart and sustainable choice for pumping water. While most of the wells in the project will be equipped with a hand-crank pump, at many of the well sites solar powered water pumps will work to fill water towers that serve multiple communities through gravity fed distribution systems. As part of the solar education campaign, solar stoves will be demonstrated in every community and beneficiaries will be taught how to build their own solar stove and harness the sun's rays to cook their food.

### **Green Educational Campaigns:**

In an effort to change the world - one citizen at a time - this project prioritizes community based education campaigns on sustainable technologies, solar power and reforestation. It also encourages Nicaraguans to become citizen-advocates to their municipal, departmental and national governments and encourage the establishment and expansion of more green energy projects locally, nationally and regionally in Central America.

*Lorraine Swift is Change for Children's Program Manager for International Projects*



## **Change the World this holiday season**

Drill a water well and provide training for community members in Sierra Leone or Nicaragua: approximate cost \$10,000

Match CIDA on water well drilling and training in Nicaragua: \$2,500

Provide training and curriculum materials for teachers in Guatemala or Nicaragua: \$250

Buy desks for primary schools in Guatemala: \$35 each (sets of 10 for \$350)

Provide one year of Vocational Training for an orphan in Tanzania: \$550

Provide micro-credit and agricultural support for families of AIDS orphans in Uganda: \$325

### **Donation dollars grow**

With every dollar you donate to a CFCA project in cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 3 dollars is provided by the Canadian Government as matching funds.

With every dollar you donate to a CFCA project in cooperation with the Alberta Community Initiatives Fund, one dollar is provided by the Alberta government as matching funds.

# Just Teach 2009

## Connecting Classrooms and Communities



In July 2009, 10 educators from Western Canada embarked on a two week journey of learning and adventure, visiting CFCA partners in Nicaragua.

### Just Tour 2009

Participants: Back row (from left to right) Daniel Reilly, Angel Martinez, Jessica Neufeld, Anna Timm, Carlos Acevedo, Fiona Cavanagh (CFCA Program Manager), Kathryn McKenzie. Front row (left to right) Diana Coumantarakis, Adwoa Savage, Lucie Wong, and Michelle Fidyk.

*“Develop understanding, appreciation, values and skills required for engaged, active, informed and responsible citizenship”*

(Social Studies 20- 30)

Visiting the 18th of May school in Estelí. Parents of the school talked about the great impact having a primary school has on their children.

*“Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights”* (Grade 9 Social Studies)



Inspired by the visit to the 18th of May school, teachers hit the streets of Estelí in search of more supplies to support education in very poor community.

*“Citizens participating in decision making”* (Grade 6 Social Studies)



There were many opportunities to practice Spanish and share about education in Canada

*“Spanish Language learning”* (Optional course)



### \*Curriculum Connections:

The curriculum highlights in the photo essay are from Alberta Education (general), curriculum summaries Grade 1-12 (<http://education.alberta.ca/parents/resources/summaries.aspx>)



Learning to make eco-stoves at the factory in Leon was a highlight of the trip.

*“Building things”* (Grade 1 Science)

*“Recognize the role of science in problem solving and decision making”*  
(Science 14-24)



Many challenges and solutions, from communities, were heard throughout the trip.

*“Exploration of multiple perspectives on the origins, impacts and possible responses to globalization”* (Social Studies 10)



In Santa Teresa, Candida Lopez, chair of her potable water committee, shared about the impact of clean water on her community and its future.

*Learning about, “Communities in the World and global citizenship”* (Grade 3 Social Studies)

*“Recognize the role of science in societal decision making and maintaining a sustainable environment.”* (Biology 20 and 30)



The last stop on the tour was to the Montenegro market in Managua. Participants were led on a tour of the market by children who are beneficiaries of cultural programming and education initiatives



## Change the World Give the Gift of Education

Your gift will help us continue to build schools for children in communities where education is not available or accessible, to develop programming, to facilitate dialogue about global solutions, and to support youth leadership initiatives in the Global south and here in Alberta.

## Participate in Just Teach 2010

Contact:  
[fiona@changeforchildren.org](mailto:fiona@changeforchildren.org)



*Julio Centeno, son of Primitivo Centeno*

## Give the Gift of Food Security

Change for Children is currently implementing a project focused on improving food security, stimulating economic development through agriculture and providing leadership training for the Miskito indigenous peoples who inhabit the rainforest on both sides of the Nicaragua-Honduras border. To support this important project please contact us or donate online to the **Food Security Project in Nicaragua and Honduras.**

But the weight of the struggle is not with Primitivo today, as our longboat surges against the current, cutting towards the shoreline of Pamkawas. He smiles at a world he knows so well, glad to be home after time spent in meetings in Managua. A short, stocky boy, about 12 years old, stands waiting on the rocky bank. He is waiting for his father who has come home. “Julito” - Primitivo gestures proudly to his son.

Over the next two weeks, I listen to the stories of men, women, and children living in Miskito and Mayangna villages of the BOSAWAS reserve. I learn from farmers about the traditional techniques of land clearing and planting of rice, beans, and corn, practices that conserve the fertility of the nutrient-rich rainforest soils. I learn how they have integrated aspects of scientific knowledge and technology into their practices, but maintain the belief that their traditional method of planting (using a long bamboo stick) is more ecologically sustainable. I learn from midwives and healers in the communities who rely on the abundance of medicinal plants, trees, and roots to treat wounds and illnesses, and catch babies. A preschool teacher tells me how she involves natural objects - like leaves, seeds, flowers, and bark - in her arts and crafts classes with the children. And the children run and play in the natural world around them - swimming, climbing trees, and learning from their older siblings how to pick fruit, haul water, and help with chores.

The land is central in shaping the worldviews of the Miskito indigenous peoples, and despite the many challenges communities have faced - war, relocation, land degradation, natural disasters, and the effects of climate change - they have adapted, survived, and maintained their traditional knowledge of how to live off the land. And this knowledge of land use and preservation has been and continues to be central to the people who, according to Primitivo, are used to “living away from the rest of the world.”

For Primitivo, as he later confided in me, he hopes for a future where his children and his grandchildren will always know the story and struggle of the Miskito people. “I will die a happy man knowing that my son's children will be born on indigenous territory.”

On my last day in Pamkawas, I trek up a steep clay path that leads to the highest vantage in the village. Primitivo's son, Julito, shows me the way. At the top of the hill we stop to gaze at the world below us - the tiny houses, women carrying buckets full of water on their heads, the bright orange school built by Change for Children in 2005, the small stream snaking through the village and emptying into the Rio Coco. And then he begins to point to the different parts of his community, saying the Miskito word aloud for me to repeat. *Dus* - tree. *Lapta* - sun. *Wanki* - river. *Kul* - school. *Uvla* - home. *Tasba penkira* - beautiful land.

I thank Julito - my *maestro*, my teacher. He smiles proudly, and I can see something in his expression that is not unlike the way of his own father.

*Trina Moyles traveled to the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve to spend two weeks interviewing the community about their history, culture, and socioeconomic realities. She is a student at Grant MacEwan University and project coordinator of the Rural Rights: Youth Action & Media Project with CFCA*

# Your gifts have the power to Change the World

Over the past year, Change for Children has built very special relationships between Canadians who want to personally do something to address global poverty, and communities who are most impacted by that poverty.

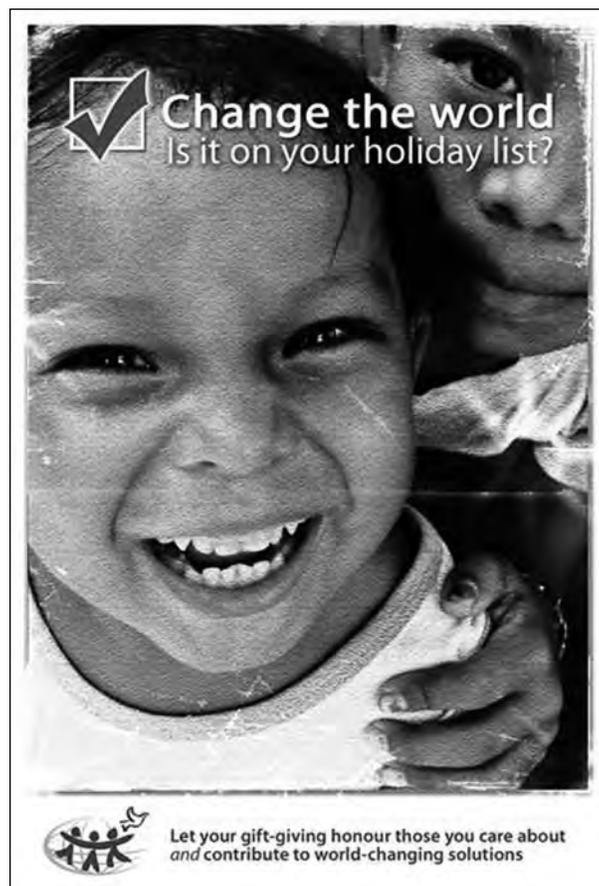
Whether building a school, drilling wells, supporting health centres, promoting environmental preservation, providing opportunities for skill and capacity building for communities and leadership opportunities for youth here and around the world, our work would not be possible without your generous gifts.

*“My eco-fogon stove is wonderful. It can cook tortillas and beans at the same time! Before I had this stove I walked for hours every morning to collect enough firewood for the day's fuel. Now I use 1/4 the amount of wood and...our house is no longer filled with smoke when I cook, because the smoke goes out the chimney.”*

– Candida Lopez, Santa Teresa, Nicaragua

*“A water well in my community means that now I attend school. Before I would have to walk for hours...to bring water back to the house from the river for drinking, cooking and washing. I was always late for school... and the teacher said I should stop coming.”*

– Maria Lopez, 12 years old



**Thank you for giving:**  
**The Gift of Health**  
**The Gift of Food Security**  
**The Gift of Preservation**  
**The Gift of Water**  
**The Gift of Education**

# Growing Food or Growing Fuel?



The headline read: *Number of starving people hits one billion, UN says*, the UN's mandated statement for World Food Day, October 16. All day I pondered the many reasons for hunger:

**Poverty:** The economic downturn impacts the Global South who depends on remittances from family members who work in other countries.

**Climate Change:** Farmers in the South have to deal with drought, floods, storms, and weather anomalies, creating havoc with traditional planting and harvesting times.

**Soil Degradation:** The Green Revolution of the 70s yielded higher crops but dependence on chemical fertilizers, abandonment of crop diversity and rotation and improper use of irrigation led to extreme soil degradation. Added to this is the failure of almost every country to assure equitable land distribution for small farmers.

**Wars:** There are about 30 wars being fought around the world and 12 million refugees in the African continent alone.

**Free Trade:** The liberalization of trade between Central American countries and between Latin America and North America in the 90s had immediate and drastic effects on food security and sovereignty.

Growing corn was essentially a labour of love – a vocation.

The farmer could usually feed his family...

That changed...

The price of corn had doubled almost overnight.

I lived in Nicaragua at the time these changes occurred. Growing corn was essentially a labour of love - a vocation. The farmer could usually feed his family as well as recuperate the cost of his inputs from the small excess he sold but the cost of his labour was not factored in the sale price. In the city of Matagalpa, Doña Eugenia made and sold tortillas with no return other than the tortillas her family consumed. That changed when the borders opened. Traders from relatively rich El Salvador bought cheap Nicaraguan corn and beans at harvest time and returned in the lean months before the next harvest to sell the corn and beans back to Nicaraguans at inflated prices. At the grain store, I watched Doña Eugenia empty the pockets of her apron and stack coins and creased bills in front of the scale. The price of corn had doubled almost overnight. Her previous day's sales were enough to buy 10 kilos of corn instead of the usual 20. I added a crisp bill to the pile. As we walked back, I commented: "You almost lost your capital." She nodded, well aware that today's solution was temporary. "What are other tortilla sellers doing? Can't you increase the price?" Increasing the price or making the tortillas smaller was not an option for Doña Eugenia. "People have to eat," she said.

The UN statement in the newspaper article noted that the number of hungry people across the world had reached one billion for the first time in 40 years, that the total had risen by at least 100 million in the past year alone, and that the number of hungry peo-

ple was rising both in relative and absolute terms. Five years ago, about 15 per cent of people in the developing world were undernourished. Today, the figure approaches 20 per cent!

The reasons I gave for hunger could not explain such a rapid rise in the number of hungry people. Global food prices rose in 2007, but while retail food prices fell in rich countries over the past year, they stayed about 20% higher than in 2007 in poor nations. Why have prices stayed high? Could it be because of rich countries' sudden interest in climate change? More food per capita is produced today than at another time in history but instead of appearing on the dinner plate, it is now found in the gas tanks of vehicles. The new colonial era of agrofuels is much more devastating to the environment and to the people than anything we can imagine.

Supported by subsidies from the developed world, massive areas of land in the Global South are being converted into plantations for agrofuel monocultures. Small landholders and rural communities are being displaced, harassed and evicted due to the spread of plantations for agrofuel crops.

*To put it simply, our country is in peril... Huge plantations and monoculture agriculture have pitted humans against nature. There are short-term profits for the few and even substantial harvests, but the fertility of the land has suffered and the diversity of the natural world has been depleted.* – Pastoral letter, Bishops of the Philippines

Those who argue that agrofuels will reduce our global carbon footprint haven't calculated the greenhouse gas emissions created by deforestation and soil erosion when plantations expand (some are as large as 100,000 hectares). Eighty percent of Brazil's greenhouse gases come from such deforestation. Indonesia is now the third largest producer of greenhouse gases. Rainforests in Ketapang district in Indonesian Borneo are cleared, often without Environmental Impact Assessments, often encroaching in protected forest, to plant oil palm as far as the eye can see.

Agrofuel crops are heavy consumers of water. While one-third of the world's population is dealing with serious water scarcity, the rush to agrofuels could worsen the water crisis.

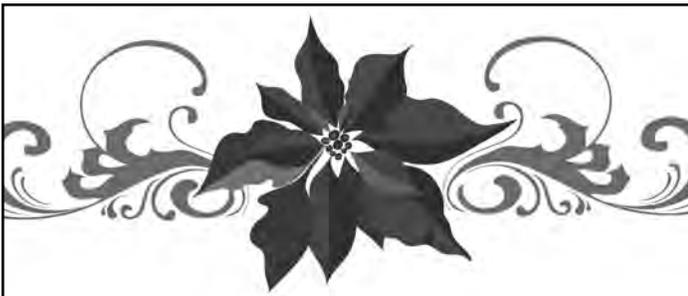
*232 kg of corn is needed to make 50 litres of bioethanol. A child could live on that amount of corn for a year,* said Jean Ziegler, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, who also called agrofuels a crime against humanity. It is a crime against humanity that one billion people do not have enough food to lead healthy and productive lives in a world that produces enough food for every man, woman and child to eat a daily balanced diet.

Food sovereignty, a vision developed by small-scale farmers of the Global South is a solution. It includes providing for local needs in an ecologically sound way that respects local biodiversity, national differences in food production, and support for small-scale farmers.

In June 2010, the meetings of the G8 and G20 are in Canada. Canada can be a leader to ensure that there is support for small-scale, sustainable agriculture in the Global South.



It is a crime against humanity that one billion people do not have enough food to lead healthy and productive lives



## Change for Children's Annual Open House

December 11, 2009

5:00–11:00 pm

at the Change for Children office

Refreshments provided.

Celebrate with us!



The CFCA 2008 Annual Report is available for download at [www.changeforchildren.org](http://www.changeforchildren.org), or pick up a print version at the Change for Children office.

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