



A CHANGE FOR CHILDREN PUBLICATION

BUILDING BRIDGES

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

VOICES OF REASON, RESISTANCE
AND RESILIENCE

THIS ISSUE:

- Opening doors to indigenous bilingual secondary education
- Indigenous Resistance and Resilience in Latin America
- How to be an Ally to Indigenous Peoples

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OUR ROLE: AN ALLY TO INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

Across the globe, there are many challenges facing indigenous peoples today: Economic insecurity, environmental destruction of traditional lands, marginalization from health services and education, exclusion from political processes, poverty, racism and discrimination – to name but a handful. **Indigenous peoples make up the poorest demographic in every single country in Latin America.** Change for Children works in partnership with several indigenous organizations in Latin America, acting in solidarity and supporting them in their own processes of development. In Guatemala, we work with the Mayan Mam peoples; In Nicaragua, we collaborate with the Miskito and Mayagna peoples; In Bolivia, we work with the Mosen; In Ecuador we work with the Siona peoples and in Chile we collaborate with the Mapuche. **In every Change for Children alliance with indigenous peoples, we see resilience. We see peoples rooted in cultures of strength and resistance – connected to thousands of years of traditional practises; adaptable, powerful, and dedicated to preserving the earth for future generations.** In this context, we see our role as an ally to indigenous movements as increasingly important for our work promoting peace and sustainable development - **essential to our participation in this global movement for human rights.**

Change for Children is also committed to raising awareness about indigenous issues here in Canada. Through our participation in the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation and our commitment to the #DoBetter2015 Campaign, we work in partnership with other civil society organizations across the country to raise awareness on important issues. Issues such as the fact that



Rigoberta Menchú – indigenous rights activist and 1992 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Peace is not only the absence of war; as long as there is poverty, racism, segregation and exclusion we could hardly reach a world of peace."

Rigoberta Menchú

Canada has still not implemented the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the fact that water on many of Canada's first nation reserves is still not potable, the fact that Canada fails to adhere to its promises under the treaties it signed with sovereign indigenous nations more than 140 years ago. Here, we urge Canadians to hold our governments to account on these issues because here and everywhere - **we can do better.**

And in our quest for better, we see change on the horizon. Change brought about by alliances between peoples and groups working for justice across the Americas and the world. As the ancient indigenous prophecy of the 'Eagle and the Condor' predicts, we see a new movement taking shape - a new spiritual movement led by indigenous peoples – one that works towards a new era of compassion, peace, justice and prosperity that will unite all members of the Human Family and will heal and protect Mother Earth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lorraine Swift".

Lorraine Swift
Executive Director, Change for Children.



Change for Children has championed human dignity, healthy communities, and global justice with the passionate support of Canadians for over 39 years.

Change for Children's Mission is to build civil society capacity in the global south and in Canada to promote health, human rights and create solutions to poverty through sustainable development.

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Since 2000, Change for Children has supported projects directed by Miskito and Mayagna indigenous peoples in the remote BOSAWAS rainforest region of Nicaragua to elevate quality of life; to strive for the respect of traditions, languages and cultural identity; to strengthen the practice of individual and collective rights; and to provide material, economic and technical assistance. **Ongoing projects in the BOSAWAS include secondary school construction and promoting girls' education.**

OPENING DOORS TO BILINGUAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Two hours into the nine-hour dugout canoe journey into the BOSAWAS, grazing pastures on the banks of the Rio Coco give way to lush tropical rainforests marking the border of the biological reserve lands.

Houses made of weathered mahogany, a wood native to the forest, sit high up on stilts. Beneath them, goats, chickens, and pigs take shelter from the alternating blazing sun and torrential downpours. Inside homes, multi-generational families reside without the benefits of electricity, running water or any connection to the outside world through cellular or satellite networks. On the riverbanks, women wash clothes and float plantain crops downriver on bamboo rafts while children ride horseback, two at a time, and splash in the river currents. Men, machetes in hand, walk the well-worn paths at the river's edge that connect the crops that need tending.

It is a simple life, but with not-so-simple challenges. Having returned to their traditional lands after the contra war of the 1980's, which saw the indigenous peoples relocated from their ancestral lands along the Rio Coco to work on the coffee plantations of Nicaragua's central highlands, life in the BOSAWAS has not been easy. Challenged by a location that sees the people here being marginalized

by modern government, a river that makes trade and economic activities challenging, and natural disasters that threaten a way of life that relies on the land and its bounty, subsisting on the banks of the Rio Coco is difficult.

Despite its challenges, it is here that the Miskito and Mayagna peoples have worked relentlessly to maintain their territories, their traditions, and their culture. Nevertheless, they are still struggling for the recognition of their rights to govern their lands, to provide for the needs of their peoples and to decide on their own economic development priorities, their own health programs and their own education systems.

But, strides have been made here. Thanks to the self-governance efforts of the Miskito and Mayagna peoples, they have successfully lobbied the Nicaraguan government for land title to their traditional territory, and both of their indigenous languages are taught in their primary schools in addition to Spanish. Faced with a Nicaraguan government providing little support, these are not small victories for the Miskito and Mayagna peoples. Theirs is a resilience that inspires – a commitment to the land, to Mother Earth, to future generations.

BRIGHT MINDS: BRIGHT FUTURES

Jaseña giggles as she nervously reveals that she wants to be a nurse. She pans for gold during the week and spends Saturdays in the classrooms of the primary school studying her fifth and final year of Secondary School in the community of Pamkawas. Primary school attendance here is strong, and there is simply no room to host both primary school and secondary school during the week. Secondary School is reduced to Saturdays and, unfortunately, the curriculum is reduced in turn – a common practice in marginalized communities lacking infrastructure.



Secondary school construction means that girls will attend school beyond grade six. It means an educated indigenous population; it means local people occupying positions of responsibility in the area; It means informed decisions for the people and the forest being made by those who hold the highest stake.



"There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in" – Graham Greene

THE EAGLE AND THE CONDOR

The Eagle and the Condor is an indigenous prophecy widely embraced by many of the diverse tribes of the Americas. The prophecy speaks of human societies splitting into two paths – that of the Eagle, the path of the masculine, the mind and of the industrial, and the path of the Condor, the path of the feminine, the heart and of intuition. The reign of the Eagle peoples was foretold to nearly bring into extinction the Condor peoples before the end of the twentieth century. The twentieth century would be a time for the peoples of the Condor and of the Eagle to fly together to heal the wounds of the past, to restore the Earth and to work in community towards a brighter future. Many indigenous peoples believe that we are now entering the time of the Condor. **The time is now for a future of community, harmony and respect for Mother Earth.**

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

MAYAN MAM OF GUATEMALA

In the western highlands of Guatemala, indigenous populations are being pushed off their traditional lands by agri-export businesses, gold mining and hydroelectric projects. Forced to grow food on unproductive lands, and thwarted in this endeavor by climate change and frequent disasters, the Mayan Mam peoples of Comitancillo are facing increasingly high levels of extreme poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and marginalization from public services. With insufficient access to lands on which to grow affordable and nutritious food, a lack of pre- and post-natal care and education, and limited access to health services, a cycle of malnutrition has limited futures for indigenous youth in the Guatemala highlands. **Change for Children works with the Mayan Mam Association for Research and Development (AMMID) to support programs which address urgent needs for educational infrastructure, agricultural training, increased access to food through assistance**



with diversifying and equipping family and community gardens, and nutrition education for pregnant and lactating mothers.

MISKITO AND MAYAGNA OF NICARAGUA

Stewards of the largest rainforest north of the Amazon basin, the Miskito and Mayagna peoples of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve are struggling with the increasing encroachment of non-indigenous settlers on their traditional lands. Although they have obtained self-government rights to their territories, the Nicaraguan central government has been slow to transfer powers over education and health, so these populations remain marginalized and continue to struggle with high rates of poverty and increased vulnerability to climate change. **Change for Children works with the Indigenous Government of Western BOSAWAS on a number of initiatives such as improving education infrastructure and supporting programs that encourage young people, including girls, to continue to secondary school and beyond.**





MOSETEN OF ALTO BENI, BOLIVIA

The Moseten Indigenous peoples living in the Alto Beni region of North Central Bolivia are currently facing high rates of poverty and malnutrition. Local resources on their traditional lands are being over-exploited by industry and damaging the delicate rainforest ecosystem. Rural indigenous populations depend heavily on subsistence agriculture so here **Change for Children** works with **Fundacion Renace**, an indigenous organization that helps farmers to diversify their agricultural production while promoting collective organizing for small-scale economic development.



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"AMMID works to protect the collective rights of our peoples, our territories and Mother Earth in the face of resource extraction mega projects that threaten our lives and livelihoods. We work to harmonize our communities with traditional teachings

MAPUCHE OF CHILE

The Mapuche Nation continues to struggle for constitutional inclusion, self-determination and recognition of traditional lands, which include the southern parts of both Chile and Argentina. Under siege by hydroelectric dam projects, mining operations, oil and gas fracking and logging operations, the Mapuche peoples are defending their rights to their traditional territories and seeking solutions through international alliances. **The Mapuche Territorial Alliance is Change for Children's newest partner, and together we are working to support cultural and bilingual education for Mapuche youth.**



regarding health, nutrition, culture and education. We value and appreciate the 25 years of solidarity from Change for Children in support of our work."
– Ruben Feliciano,
AMMID Guatemala

"We are proud to walk with Change for Children as we work to improve education, health and environmental protection on our lands and as we adapt to the challenges of climate change. We protect our traditional territories in the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve not only for the preservation of our own lands and our own health, but for the health of the entire planet."
– Primitivo Centeno,
Leader: Indigenous Government of Western BOSAWAS

SIONA PEOPLES OF ECUADOR

The Siona peoples of the Cuyabeno reserve in Northeastern Ecuador are plagued by poverty, and the rainforest in which they live is being threatened by mining and oil exploration companies seeking to enter their traditional territories. **Here, Change for Children works with the Siona peoples to support indigenous-led tourism operations that provide an employment alternative to short-term resource extraction projects on their traditional lands. Every dollar invested in tourism projects here results in five dollars in spin-off local economic development projects. The Siona people need this economic boost to successfully assert their democratic, economic, cultural, and social rights over their traditional territories.**





- Care for the Earth
- Give thanks frequently
- Respect and support Indigenous sovereignty
- Learn about treaties
- Demand that our nation honor its treaty commitments
- Consider future generations in all your actions
- Question and resist stereotypes including team names and mascots
- Learn about and reject the "Doctrine of Discovery"
- Reach out to your Indigenous neighbours
- Notice where you are
- Live with gratitude
- Live lightly on the earth
- Support renewable energy
- Stop hydrofracking, dirty coal and uranium mining
- Don't co-opt Native cultures or ceremonies
- Return sacred objects
- Read and promote the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day every October 12
- Learn about the people indigenous to wherever you are
- Read Native Authors • Support Native craftspeople, businesses and events
- Remember that all beings (animals and plants) are your relatives not your resources
- Appreciate the diversity of nations, cultures and people

Adapted from Syracuse Cultural Workers

CATCH UP CANADA!

Building on existing human rights standards, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides guidance to better understand the rights of indigenous peoples and sets minimum standards specific to the needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples taking into account their specific cultural, social and economic circumstances.

Although Canada voted against the adoption of UNDRIP in 2007, it was endorsed by Canada three years later. But, despite its endorsement, the Canadian government continues to refuse to recognize indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) with respect to activities that impact on indigenous peoples, their property or territories, thus resisting full implementation of the UN Declaration. **We can do better, Canada.**



Indigenous peoples face exploitation of the natural resources of their territories around the world, and the UNDRIP seeks to ensure that decisions about resource development benefit rather than harm indigenous peoples. Canada's position that the UN Declaration should have no effect on development decisions is at odds with progressive trends. An alternative to the imposition of decisions without the involvement of indigenous peoples is an approach based on human rights and reconciliation. It is an approach that we, as Canadians, should advocate and actively support.

"Implementation of the Declaration should be regarded as a political, moral and legal imperative without qualification."

– James Anaya, UN Special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UN DECLARATION

Basic human rights and fundamental freedoms include:

- Right to unrestricted self-determination
- An inalienable collective right to the ownership, use and control of lands, territories and other natural resources
- Rights in terms of maintaining and developing political, religious, cultural and educational institutions
- Right to the protection of cultural and intellectual property.

The Declaration highlights:

- The requirement for prior and informed consultation, participation and consent in activities that impact on indigenous peoples, their property or territories
- The requirement for fair and adequate compensation for violation of the rights recognized in the Declaration
- Guarantees against ethnocide and genocide
- The provision of acceptable procedures to resolve conflicts between indigenous peoples and States

LOCAL SOLUTIONS FROM AND FOR THE SIONA PEOPLE



Four hours upstream from Siyoqueya, tourists board boats to discover the gifts that the Amazon has to offer. The Siona indigenous peoples living in rainforest communities, however, already know. They have hunted the lands and fished the rivers of the Cuyabeno rainforest for generations. Aurora works as a guide for an eco-lodge owned by outside interests. She uses the natural dye of a local fruit to garnish bare cheeks with traditional symbols and proudly shares the cassava bread that she bakes. And while her people share the native land with the eco-lodges that operate, her community currently sees little benefit. Communities currently face lack of sanitation, clean water, and education, and Aurora's employment in the tourism sector is one of the few roles offered to those native to the area. Eco-sensitive economic development by locals for locals will help Aurora and her community improve opportunities for livelihoods while preserving and respecting the delicate rainforest ecosystem.

LAND RIGHTS AN UPHILL STRUGGLE

Ruben, the Director of project partner AMMID, raises his hand often in a wave, gives a honk or delivers a deliberate head nod as we drive through remote communities in Guatemala's central highlands. Having founded the indigenous rights development organization 17 years ago working to address food shortage and protect the rights of the Mayan Mam peoples, Ruben is clearly easily recognized and welcome here. As the truck climbs a steep ascent, Ruben becomes animated and shakes his fist toward the terraced lands that make up the view out the passenger window. It is this hill that is at the height of local controversy - the cause for communities conflicted and families divided. If the foreign mining company in pursuit of the rights to literally take it down to open-pit mine for gold is successful, many will be forced from their homes onto less-productive land. Ruben shares the fear of many that if history is repeated, water sources will become contaminated, food will become even scarcer, and the Mayan Mam people will lose another piece of themselves.



TRADITIONS ROOTED IN THE RAINFOREST



Live music plays and traditional dance ensues as beaming women proudly present breads, cakes, marmelades, and fresh fruit juices made from every fruit, nut, and root vegetable known to the jungles of Alto Beni, Bolivia. Workshops and training to revive the traditional agriculture practices of the Mosen peoples, which promote familial production and processing and permaculture, have clearly been successful. So successful that the women's co-ops participating in the project supply the region's school breakfast program with nutritious home-made foods. The women gathered take the floor one by one to speak of schools where attendance has tripled and of the increased health of their own children. They speak not of prior lack of food, but of lack of nutrition because of lack of knowledge. "We had lost tradition here. We are hopeful now that knowledge will continue to be passed down as we teach our children to use all that the forest provides."

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

At the Taltimiche weaving co-op in the Guatemala highlands, repurposed bicycle rims are hand cranked to spool thread before the lengthy process of transferring the spooled thread into multi-coloured loops can begin. After years of working in the co-op, Olindia now owns her own weaving loom that takes up prominence in her small home where she undertakes the three-hour process to thread the loom before the actual weaving can even begin. Her hands skillfully trail the myriad of threads and her eyes expertly monitor the moving parts as she demonstrates her craft with ease. The space is dimly lit and dusty, but her wares are beautiful. She is proud, and she should be. "This is my work," she says, holding a brightly coloured textile close to her heart. "It has kept my family alive." Change for Children projects such as the Taltimiche weaving co-op work with local indigenous cultural organizations to promote cultural preservation and economic independence.



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Annual
**Development
Dinner**

September 23, 2016

You are invited to our Open
House on Friday, December 11,
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(10808-124 Street, 2nd Floor)

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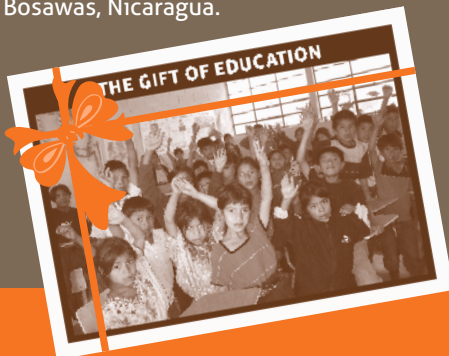
Change *the* Present

Giving one of Change for Children's *Gifts that Change the World* is a meaningful way to contribute to solutions that alleviate global poverty. This holiday season, consider gifts that provide clean water, tools, seeds and training, or access to education and healthcare where it is most needed. Personalize the card of your choice with your own message and *change someone's world* this holiday season. Visit www.changeforchildren.org or call 780-448-1505 to order your gift cards.



TURNING CAN'TS INTO CANS IN THE BOSAWAS

In an area riddled with CAN'TS – nearly 50% of the population can't read; many students can't attend secondary school in their own community simply because there isn't one; most girls can't travel outside their own communities or the indigenous territory to attend classes because of obligations to the household – you CAN help give girls a chance in Bosawas, Nicaragua.



Be part of something BIG this
holiday – together we can
Change the World



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Government of Alberta ■
Culture and Community Spirit

