



Declaration of Quito

JULY 1990

(unofficial translation)

INDIGENOUS
ALLIANCE OF
THE AMERICAS
ON 500 YEARS
OF RESISTANCE

The Continental Gathering "500 Years of Indian Resistance," with representatives from 120 Indian Nations, International Organizations and Fraternal Organizations, meeting in Quito, Ecuador, July 17-20, 1990, declare before the world the following:

WE INDIANS OF AMERICA

have never abandoned our constant struggle against the conditions of oppression, discrimination and exploitation which were imposed upon us as a result of the European invasion of our ancestral territories.

Our struggle is not a mere conjunctural reflection of the memory of 500 years of oppression which the invaders, in complicity with the "democratic" governments of our countries, want to turn into events of jubilation and celebration. Our Indian People, Nations and nationalities are basing our struggle on our identity, which shall lead us to true liberation. We are responding aggressively, and commit ourselves to reject this "celebration."

The struggle of our People has acquired a new quality in recent times. This struggle is less isolated and more organized. We are now completely conscious that our total liberation can only be expressed through complete exercise of our self-determination. Our unity is based in this fundamental right. Our self-determination is not just a simple declaration.

We must guarantee the necessary conditions that permit the complete exercise of our self-determination; and this in turn must be expressed as complete autonomy for our Peoples. Without Indian self-government and without control of our territories there can be no autonomy.

To achieve this objective is a principal task of the Indian Peoples. However, through our struggles we have learned that our problems are not different, in many respects, from those of other popular sectors. We are convinced that we must march alongside the peasants, the workers, the marginalized sectors, together with the intellectuals committed to our cause, in order to destroy the dominant system of oppression and construct a new society, pluralistic, democratic and humane, in which peace is guaranteed.

The existing nation states of the Americas, their constitutions and fundamental laws are judicial/political expressions that negate our socio-economic, cultural and political rights.

From this point in our general strategy of struggle, we consider it to be a priority that we demand complete structural change; change which recognizes the inherent right to self-determination through the Indian People's own governments and through the control of our territories.

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Our problems will not be resolved through the self-serving politics of governmental entities which seek integration and ethno-development.

It is necessary to have an integral transformation at the level of the State and national society; that is to say, the creation of a new nation.

In this Gathering it has been clear that territorial rights are a fundamental demand of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas.

BASED ON THESE aforementioned reflections, the organizations united in the First Continental Gathering of Indigenous Peoples reaffirm:

1. Our emphatic rejection of the Quincentennial celebration, and the firm promise that we will turn that date into an occasion to strengthen our process of continental unity and struggle towards our liberation.
2. Ratify our resolute political project of self-determination and conquest of our autonomy, in the framework of nation states, under a new popular order, respecting the appellation which each People determines for their struggle and project.
3. Affirm our decision to defend our culture, education, and religion as fundamental to our identity as Peoples, reclaiming and maintaining our own forms of spiritual life and community coexistence, in an intimate relationship with our Mother Nature.
4. We reject the manipulation of organizations which are linked to the dominant sectors of society and have no indigenous representation, who usurp our name for (their own) imperialist interests. At the same time we affirm our choice to strengthen our own organizations, without excluding or isolating ourselves from other popular struggles.
5. We recognize the important role that the indigenous woman plays in the struggles of our Peoples. We understand the necessity to expand women's participation in our organizations and we reaffirm that it is one struggle, men and women together, in our liberation process, a key question in our political practices.

6. The Indian Peoples consider it vital to defend and conserve our natural resources, which right now are being attacked by the transnational corporations. We are convinced that this defense will be realized if it is the Indian Peoples who administer and control the territories where we live, according to our own principles of organization and communal life.

7. We oppose national judicial structures which are the result of the process of colonization and neo-colonization. We seek a New Social Order that embraces our traditional exercise of Common Law, an expression of our culture and forms of organization. We demand that we be recognized as Peoples under International Law, and that this recognition be incorporated into the respective Nation States.

8. We denounce the victimization of our Indian Peoples through violence and persecution, which constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights. We demand respect for our right to life, to land, to free organization and expression of our culture. At the same time we demand the release of our leaders who are held as political prisoners, an end to repression, and restitution for the harms caused us.

THE INDIAN NATIONS and

Indigenous Organizations which have participated in the First Continental Gathering of Indian Peoples want to show our acknowledgement and thanks to our sister organizations of Ecuador for their efforts towards the success of this event. We want to express our solidarity with the struggle of the Ecuadorian Indigenous People for liberty and democracy.

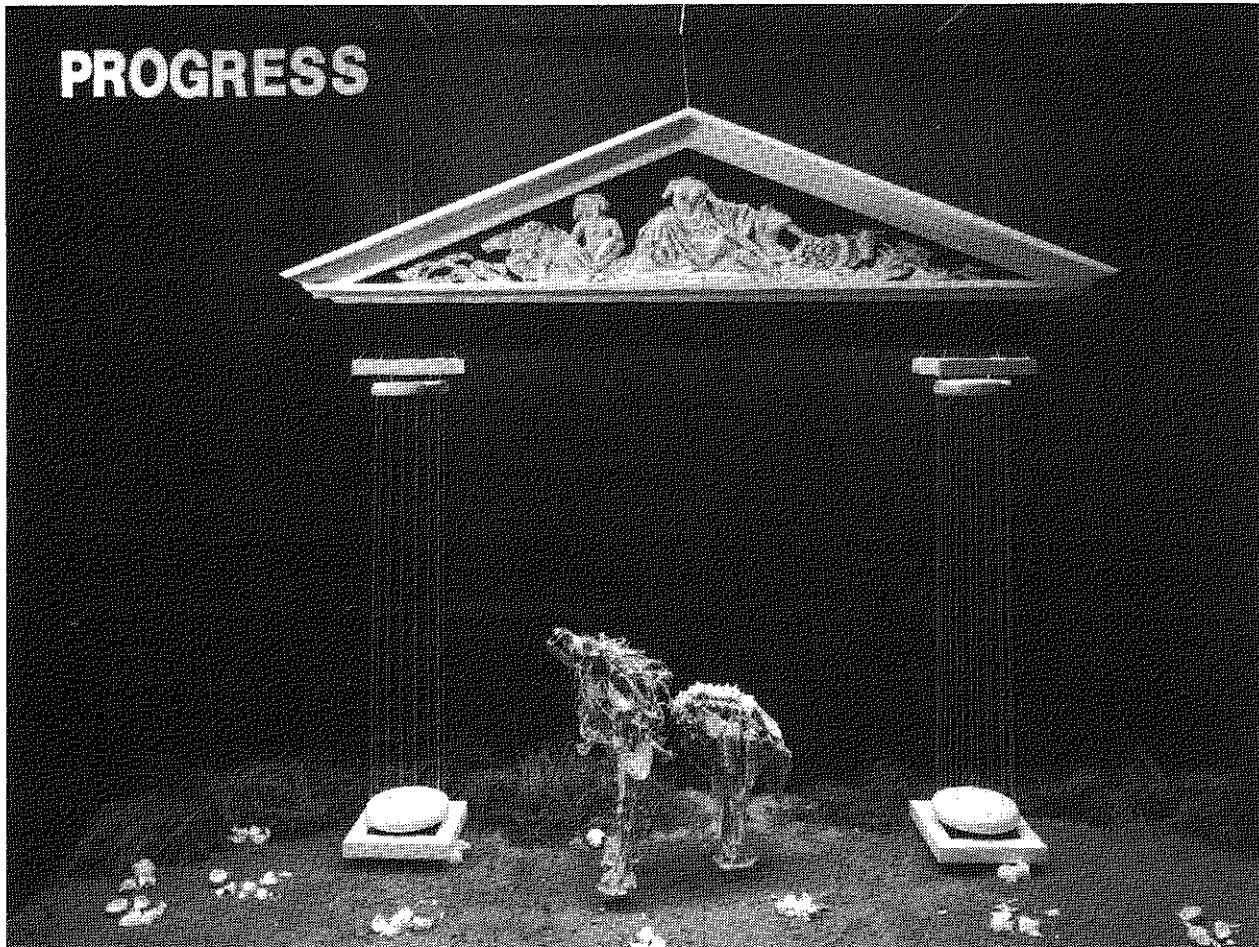
Our actions should be geared towards strengthening our grassroots organizations and towards achieving greater levels of coordination and communication with all popular sectors.

The continental campaign for 500 years of Indigenous and popular Resistance should be empowered by the participation of all Indian Nations and organizations, so that we become a true alternative force. The response to 1992 should be Mobilization and Unity.

The articulation of our Campaign should be governed by the principle of solidarity with all People's struggles for liberation, and by realizing multilateral relations at the international level. ♦

Quito, 21 Julio-de 1990





Ed Poitras
Progress
installation at Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina
Fall 1991

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