

# CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EARTH



INDIGENOUS VOICES  
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

*Realising Article 3 and Article 16 of UNDRIP, Conversations with the Earth uses Participatory Video to build community resilience and empower indigenous peoples with their own autonomous media.*

THE MEDIA HUBS NEWSLETTER

December 2009

Largest Indigenous delegation to attend

Global Climate Talks: see page 5

## Conversations with the Earth (CWE)

*is a way of listening closely to traditional stewards of the Earth, Indigenous Peoples, to help formulate a viable collective response to climate change.*

*It is an indigenous-led multimedia campaign to amplify indigenous voices*

## CWE

*Launched in April 2009, Conversations with the Earth is a collective opportunity to build a global movement for an Indigenous-controlled community media network. Seeded by InsightShare alongside strategic partners, the hub network should develop autonomy and local self-sufficiency over a two to three year process.*

*In Cameroon (Baka), Kenya (Maasai), Panama (Kuna), Peru (Andes/Quechua), Canadian Arctic (Inuit), Philippines (Igorot), CWE has planted the seed of Participatory Video (PV) and Indigenous videographers have filmed their communities' responses to climate change. They are now training people from other communities!*

*“I am convinced by the words of Djengui (the Great Spirit of the forest) who has predicted a radiant future: I feel it is in our hands and I am going to work for that”*

*- Venant Messe, Director of Okani, from the Baka community Association in Eastern Cameroon.*

## CAMEROON Hub

### **The Baka hunter-gatherers' first PV video on the UNDP front page news website**

Their video was screened at the Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change in Alaska in April 2009 and it received thousands of hits on the front page of the UNDP news website during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May! Entitled: «Baka People: Facing changes in African forests», it shows examples of the harsh consequences drought has on fishing and harvests.



“This drought we are having is really bad; the forest floor has no water and does not form humus.” a Baka hunter-gatherer says in the video. “Baka women love fishing, but the stream we used to fish in is drying up and we don't know where to find fish to eat.” Young people also reflect on the necessity to learn from the elders, preserve traditions and protect the forest as it is strongly tied to the Baka's identity.

**Follow this link to view Baka video on the UNDP website:**

<http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/may/indigenous-groups-bear-witness-to-climate-change-damage-en>

### **September 2009**

The Baka people, commonly isolated and treated as third class citizens, have secured, through their media hub called Okani, literally “rise up” nearly 15000 USD funding from Plan Cameroon as a result of their first video on climate change! These funds will help them to spread out their Participatory Video activities and raise awareness on children

rights in the localities of Boumba and Ngoko.

The Baka organization has started to document their women's traditional songs and the PV team took the cameras some 350km into the forest to work with Baka living more remotely. Okani is also developing a funding proposal to build fishponds in the villages as an adaptation to climate change. With support from the United Nations Development Programme and CWE, this small indigenous-led NGO is becoming a regional hub for PV capacity building among indigenous forest dwellers across Central Africa!

## PANAMA Hub

### **July 2009 -Andean PV trainers transfer skills to Panama**

Maja from InsightShare helped by Irma, a Quechua farmer from Cochabamba in the Central Andes of Peru, traveled to Kuna Yala in Panama to train the Kuna Indians who used Participatory Video in their struggle to conserve their forests, which are their main source of food and medicine.



As their traditional island territories are threatened by rising sea levels, they use their film «Kuna Conversations with Mother Earth» to ask indigenous youth to reconnect to agriculture and invite industrial countries to cooperate in the conservation of biodiversity.

Elders transmit the Kuna cosmology by singing their traditional songs, which contain wisdoms on how to nurture nature. These song sessions are

performed two times a week in the Kuna congress house. The value of filming, translating and sharing these wisdoms is an essential approach to how climate change is understood locally and to identify cultural ways to cope with it.

**“Nature is our mother, our supermarket, our pharmacy, where we get our food and medicine.”**

**“On Tuesday the 6th of October 2009, there was a march of the indigenous group in Panamá, rejecting mining and hydroelectric projects in the indigenous territories. Our video camera participative was present. I have material.”**

*-Jesùs Smith, a Kuna Indian who is attending the Climate Summit in Copenhagen*

## PHILIPPINES Hub

Since the Participatory Video training in May, three projects were completed: on culture and development of indigenous identity, on youth perspectives, and on indigenous traditional knowledge.

In November, a new project on deforestation and climate was launched as well.



**“We conducted a training with indigenous youth in Bagio City over three days at the Cordillera Peoples Alliance building with youth from various indigenous groups from the Cordillera on how they will adapt and attempt to mitigate the impacts of climate change. After the initial training**

**they spent four days shooting and we will be sending copies of their completed film for the CWE exhibit and website.”**

*- Keidy Transfiguracion, Indigenous PV facilitator and trainer at the Philippines hub*

**“Prior to the PV workshop, climate change was just a blurred concept for most of us, but now we are able to act! PV was also for us a good tool to mobilize people. It had a significant impact on building our capacity network especially our youth network since it deals with another form of information, which implies images and action, and this is really appreciated by youth. It is usually difficult to make young people work and it did happen with PV!”**

*- Jennifer Awingan, coordinator of the Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network (APIYN), October 2009*

The Philippines hub is now receiving many requests to facilitate PV workshops and therefore they aim to train more facilitators, so they can meet the demand! Keidy and Haydee as well other members of the hub are training new facilitators. They are attending the Climate Summit in Copenhagen.

## KENYA Hub

**May 2009**

Isabelle and Gareth from InsightShare went to Oltopesi in Kenya to train members from the Maasai community in Participatory Video. «Eng’eno Eishoi Ng’ejuk (Knowledge for the young generation)» is their first video. It documents the difficulties children, women, men and animals experience because of the water shortage, the ways they cope and the alternative livelihoods they envisage for the future. Their film shares testimonies from the group and their family and friends as visual evidence of the impacts of the extreme drought.

After producing their first video, the Maasai community, in collaboration with the MPIDO organisation, has started to use video to document their activities and events e.g. traditional ceremonies. «Before, media houses always documented these events and the videos were not accessible to the population!»



**“Due to the prolonged drought, many families lost all their livestock. When you interview them and ask them how many livestock they have lost they break down in tears. Since you also come from that community you are emotionally affected too. Climate change is also affecting our culture. Cattle, in particular, have an importance that goes beyond meat production. Cattle are traditionally used for paying dowries and blessings.”**

*- Stanley Selian Konini, a local PV facilitator*

## ARCTIC Hub



**April 2009**

A high school group in Cambridge Bay (Canada) first made a video entitled «Growing up in Cambridge Bay».

**May 2009**

The Inuit youth who were trained using Participatory Video in April have been

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*"We don't have much, but what we have is out there."*

[www.conversationearth.org](http://www.conversationearth.org)

Charley Swaney, Arctic Village

Photography: Nicholas Willaume

busy creating a new video on recycling. They used video as a tool to show how recycling could make Cambridge Bay healthier and even, create jobs. Their project had wonderful results as they have started a great project on recycling in the town and Cambridge Bay will have its own recycling program!

**July 2009**

Erin is a local from Yellowknife who trained with InsightShare and works with several Arctic communities. She helped out on the Qajaq revitalisation project –a youth/elder project to build a traditional sealskin kayak using traditional tools.

«Building a Qajaq for the future» is the latest video produced in the Arctic hub.

*"We caught this seal, but it was very sick inside and we could not eat it."*

*"Food is less tasty than when I was growing up."*

*—an elder from Cambridge Bay, in Building a Qajaq for the future*

Participatory Video made the youths aware of the importance to keep their culture and traditional skills alive. In a sister-hub in Fort Good Hope, some youth started to use their interviews

with elders as a way to learn Slavey by listening to the language and build up word lists when translating the video.

**PERU Hub**



**March 2009**

Maja and three Quechua farmers (Irma, Rosio and Balvino) trained three communities in Participatory Video. Their video is called:

«Indigenous communities of the Peruvian Andes and climate change». The thematic Participatory Video project motivated the communities to find solutions and activities to reduce the effects of global warming. In Cusco the community members of Karhui recognized that since the road from the city was built, their village was invaded by plastic waste; bottles and bags can be found everywhere including in their fields. They decided to place bins in different places in the village and dump the plastic waste there. They also asked the mayor of the district to send a waste pick up service to their village. Now, they have a free plastic zone. Another decision

they took is to reforest their sacred mountains with native trees once the rains start (November) to nurture Mother Water. In Huancavelica the main reflection was regarding a protestant official, who rejects the Andean rituality, especially dealing with climate. Since they have suffered with hail, frost and rains damaging their plants, harvest, they have decided to start the new cultivation year with all the needed rituals related to climate. This decision making process took place after having made a participatory video that focused on these ideas. This will bring about a proper conversation with the sacred mountain Tambaico which is in charge of the local climate.

In Cochabamba the first participatory video on climate change gave the Irma's family a sense of pride regarding their culture. In the making of the second video more people participated enthusiastically having felt the importance of recuperating their rituality. The video project also encouraged the communities to reaffirm themselves in what their ancestors have always done and retrieve ancient knowledge and wisdom that seem to be disappearing among the youth.

The outcome of these training courses have been five videos on climate change dealing with the perceptions of Quechua women, young men and elders about rain, hail, frost, sun, snow and sacred mountains. The videos reflect community visions regarding the origin and possible solutions on climate change which is an issue affecting everybody on this planet. The first three videos came out as part of the dvd «Conversations with the Pachamama» and the last two videos are part of the dvd «Conversations with the sacred mountains». The dvd «Conversations with the Pachamama» has been shown in August in the Microcinemas of Peru. These are around 20 small community cinemas showing Latin-American productions all over Peru. Irma's mother, Angelica, will officially open the Klimaforum People's Summit in Copenhagen on December 7th with a traditional blessing ritual.

***“My vision is to continue having conversations with the elders who are still alive so that they can teach us how to take care of Mother Earth”***

*-Irma, PV facilitator and Quechua farmer*

## A Unique Gathering

**Community representatives of the 6 indigenous Hubs to attend COP15 and Klimaforum09 in Copenhagen in December**

Klimaforum09, a counterpart of the official UN COP15 conference and a parallel forum of international civil society, has offered CWE a large exhibit space to set up a permanent platform from which Indigenous-led workshops and outreach will occur! Klimaforum09 gathers citizens from all around the world to create a socially just and sustainable future and will now inject indigenous voices into the global discourse on adaptation to climate change.

Indigenous members of CWE network are leading simultaneous events across Copenhagen and at Klimaforum09, sharing their stories, presenting the exhibit and film festivals, organizing video workshops, and creating lasting connections with the global civil society movement. Men and women, youth and elders - from all the media Hubs will come to Copenhagen to represent in person the CWE indigenous network partners at both the official COP15 event and Klimaforum09. Among the group, grassroots activists, traditional knowledge holders, shamans and other community leaders - most of whom will be traveling outside their regions for the first time will represent their communities on a global platform!

**EXHIBIT: CWE artfully blends local knowledge of land and seascapes, media expertise, high-tech tools, and participatory action to convey intimate stories of climate change.**

## Main Activities

**CWE Exhibit: 60 photographs covering 6 stories with audio testimonies and supporting text spread over 2 permanent venues:**

- **National Museum of Copenhagen from December 10th-January 30th**

- **Klimaforum from December 7th-18th in the DGI-Byen -Tietgensgade 65, Copenhagen**

**Also... A dozen short community-made films from the 6 media hubs, official COP15 side events, an indigenous delegation of 30 strong!**

**Participatory Video training for civil society groups and activists led by indigenous facilitators**

**Indigenous Voices on Climate Change Film Festival at the National Museum cinema from 9th-13th December**

**And... Journalism -Follow these links to read the two online articles: [www.motherjones.com/environment/2009/11/gms-money-trees](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2009/11/gms-money-trees) and [www.resurgence.org/magazine/article2908-People-of-the-Caribou.html](http://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article2908-People-of-the-Caribou.html)**

# CWE asserts Indigenous peoples' inherent rights

Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

**UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples  
ARTICLE 26**

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights.

**UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples  
ARTICLE 18**

... they also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

**UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples  
ARTICLE 31**

Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions.

**UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples  
ARTICLE 13**

Each contracting party shall... respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

**The Convention of Biological diversity  
ARTICLE 8(J)**

## InsightShare's work

Since 2003, the InsightShare team has worked on local capacity building across more than 25 countries with horizontal and vertical sharing at the centre of the process. At the heart of InsightShare PV methodology are: collective action, building community resilience, learning from doing, and gaining the ability to shape the future. See our core charter and values on our website: [www.insightshare.org](http://www.insightshare.org)

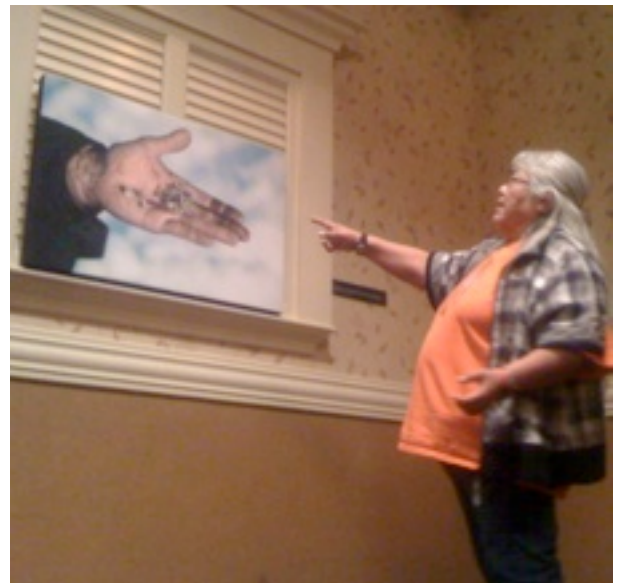
*"We have learned from our work with local partners that simply making a film and having a "global" voice are not enough –they are not an end, but a means to an end. Without concrete action and measurable impacts, PV alone would soon lose its appeal. So it is important to help community filmmakers to focus on an audience and the desired outcomes. For example, in order to carry through the issues identified in the films all the way to achieving a positive result, it can be useful to use PV within a broader rights-based strategy. Whether the community authored-videos are shown at large community screenings, through local film festivals, broadcast on national television or aimed at just getting one small group of decision makers to watch a 10 minutes clip... in the end what counts is: "has the situation improved?"*

Nick Lunch, Director InsightShare, [nlunch@insightshare.org](mailto:nlunch@insightshare.org)

Link to Nick's article: [www.glocaltimes.k3.mah.se/viewarticle.aspx?articleID=172&issueID=20](http://www.glocaltimes.k3.mah.se/viewarticle.aspx?articleID=172&issueID=20)

To have an update on Indigenous Peoples' position on climate change negotiation, please visit:

[http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?searchword=IIPFCC&ordering=&searchphrase=all&Itemid=1&option=com\\_search](http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?searchword=IIPFCC&ordering=&searchphrase=all&Itemid=1&option=com_search) <=en



At the 2009 Bioneers Conference near San Francisco in October, Gwich'in elder Sarah James discusses a CWE portrait from her home, Arctic village.