

**TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS  
OF THE SECOYA AND AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT AT SIECOYA REMOLINO**

**A Professional Report  
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## **Introduction**

This project is a culmination of the author's work with the Ecuadorian NGO, Fundación Yanapuma or the Yanapuma Foundation, during the summer of 2007. In addition, it is the result of the author's extensive research conducted over the past year into the economic, social and political conditions that have affected and shaped the development experience of an indigenous group located in Ecuador's lower Amazon basin, the Secoya Nation. In the summer of 2007, the author had the opportunity to travel to Siecoya Remolino, a community of indigenous Secoyas, to live for a time with the community located there. Much of the information presented in this report is the result of the author's interviews with Secoyas at Remolino. Information regarding projects currently underway in the community is the result of both interviews with community members and site visits to various project locations. The author's work was performed on behalf of the Secoya community at Remolino and the Yanapuma foundation, which has recently begun to work with the community in support of the community's effort toward preserving their culture through sustainable development.

The Yanapuma Foundation is a nongovernmental organization founded in Ecuador in September of 2005. The organization is cooperatively run and based out of Ecuador's capital city of Quito. The organization works to promote sustainable development within indigenous communities throughout Ecuador and operates a Spanish school in part to fund its efforts. The organization is currently engaged in a project to develop a model for sustainable development that can be used with indigenous communities. In the words of project director and Yanapuma founder Andy Kirby, the concept is to take an integrated approach to sustainable development across all axes; cultural, environmental, health, education, sanitation, agricultural, and economic, and to create a participatory format through which the community can envision its future, and work in a coordinated and integrated fashion towards realizing its unique development plan. During program implementation phases, Yanapuma plans to cooperate with other organizations and agencies to deliver the required services to the community. The model will also include a system of self-monitoring and evaluation system by which Yanapuma can work to ensure that the desired results are being achieved at each project stage.

The organization has worked with several indigenous communities within Ecuador and has just begun working with the Secoya community at Siecoya Remolino. The community at Remolino holds a 22,000-hectare reserve which is surrounded by colonists, loggers, petrol companies, and speculators all of whom threaten the community's long-term survival. Over the past 2 years, the community at Remolino has been working to preserve its primary forest from these outside interests and to develop alternative forest products that will yield a sustainable income. The author's work with Yanapuma was to carry out research in Siecoya Remolino and work with the community to figure out how to develop an integrated response to the demands of globalization. At the time of the author's arrival at Siecoya Remolino, the Foundation had not yet sent anyone from Yanapuma to the community, and thus the organization's knowledge of the community was very limited. The author's work, therefore, was intended to be instrumental in

determining the level of community support for Yanapuma's involvement in their development plan, as well as to determine in what capacity Yanapuma could be instrumental in helping the Secoyas to achieve their goals of development, and finally in figuring out how to equitably manage resources and income in light of local values. This project report provides a discussion of the author's findings both within the community and through research, and suggests that particular steps be taken in the project planning phase to appropriately engage with the community, measure the community's intentions for each project, and to support the community as it moves toward achieving its goals.

The following chapters are intended to first introduce the reader to some key aspects of the traditional culture of the Secoyas, to show how these traditions have shifted and changed over time, then to illustrate the active role the Secoya community has taken in guiding its own development. The second portion of the report discusses the projects that the Secoya governing body has identified, and provides a guide for the Yanapuma Foundation in their work with the community toward making significant progress on some of these projects. The following section (Chapter 1) aims to provide a historical context for the project proposal through a discussion of the social and political environment that shaped early indigenous movements in Ecuador, and provided momentum for the Secoyas' struggle for rights and representation. Chapter 2 analyzes the development of the particular experience of the Secoya Nation. This chapter argues that while "outsiders" including missionaries, colonists and oil companies have irreversibly changed the culture and society of the Secoya Nation, the Secoyas have evolved in their interactions with outside forces to develop mechanisms, including a central governing body, to gain power and to determine their own development on highly valuable and sought-after territory. Chapter 3 is a proposal to guide Yanapuma in supporting the Secoya community in each of its five ongoing projects. The proposal provides recommendations on feasibility testing, determining community support for each project, recruiting and training community leadership, gaining outside support and resources and initial steps toward implementing each project. The fourth and final chapter will provide concluding remarks. Included in appendices are a summary of the expected budget for all projects combined, a list of community members currently involved in any of the five projects intended to provide Yanapuma with initial contacts within the community, and finally information regarding household and individual expenses within the community gained from interviews with community members at Siecoya Remolino.

## Chapter 1

For most of its history, the Secoya Nation remained comparatively isolated from the larger political environment in Ecuador. Secoya communities enjoyed relatively uninterrupted self-determination and autonomy for centuries, yet as migration into the lower Amazon basin exerted pressure on the Secoya Nation in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, access to essential resources became increasingly compromised. This has been the experience not only of the Secoyas, but also the Sionas, Shuar, Quichua, Cofán and other Amazonian indigenous groups, as similar pressures have been exerted against indigenous cultures throughout Ecuador. Over the past 40 years, the issues of land rights, inclusion and identity have become critical for indigenous people, who comprise an estimated 45% of Ecuador's population. (UNDP 2001)

Not solely throughout Ecuador but throughout all of Latin America, the beginning of the 1970s ushered in a period of "indianismo", or indianism. The indianismo movement was built to challenge the conception of traditional indigenous identity, and to offer a more dynamic definition that would place indigenous communities closer to the center of ongoing political discourse. The movement was in large part a response to sociopolitical changes brought on by the trend of transnational corporations asserting power over indigenous populations and territories, and further marginalizing groups lacking a legitimate statehood from which to seek representation or recompense. The 1950s and 1960s saw the advance of transnational corporations for the first time in the native territories of the Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Though they gained increasing visibility in the 1950s and 1960s, the conditions which launched the indianismo movement had historical roots reaching back to before Ecuador gained its independence in 1830. (Benavides 2004)

The debate about how to "deal" with the indigenous – a view widely held as "the problem of the indigenous" – has been a topic of discourse for social scientists, politicians, and writers for centuries. Much like his contemporaries in countries throughout the world, Simón Bolívar's constitution for the Gran Colombia (the unification of Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia) addressed the indigenous cultures of the republics as an obstruction to progress. He proposed processes for an "unindianization" that were intended to "civilize" the Indian. Subsequent proposals to incorporate indigenous people into Ecuador's national community gained popularity in the 1900s. The concept of incorporating indigenous peoples into the political realm emerged from social research which concluded that the plight of the Indian was a direct result of political inertia in incorporating indigenous communities effectively into modern society. The argument was hinged upon the assumption that there existed an inherent "backwardness" in the indigenous way of life, and that integrating indigenous communities into a social realm afforded by the state would aid in civilizing the population. (Benavides 2004) Though this conceptualization of indigenous culture led to a major backlash by indigenous communities, the acknowledgement of marginalization from the political process was an important one, and would become a pivotal element to the indianismo movement in subsequent years. Maldonado explains the dilemma of

historical oppression and the acute need for a self-directed definition of indigenous peoples as the following,

The manipulation and utilization of history started with the European invasion of our continent; that is why the history we know is the written history, thought of and conceived to protect the interests of the conquerors and the contemporary dominant classes. The history of Indian peoples, of the oppressed peoples, has been hidden, denied, or presented as acts of vandalism or violence. (Maldonado 1992: 152)

Attempts at homogenization of indigenous cultures, the establishment of political boundaries, historical alienation from nationhood, and powerlessness have all led indigenous people to demand that a re-conceptualization of Ecuadorian history be undertaken. The pursuit of an indigenous national identity as one of mixed cultures and experiences gained significant momentum in the 1980s and eventually gave rise to the formation of one of Ecuador's most powerful interest groups, the Confederación Nacionalidades de Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE). The CONAIE declare the identity of their unique nationhood as the following,

A diverse group of our communities have lived on the American continent for thousands of years, with different forms of economic, social, political, religious, and cultural organization. Some of us integrated this historical process until we formed complex sociopolitical systems such as the state. Such is the case of the Mayas, Aztec, and Incas. (CONAIE 1989: 19)

Though the Secoya Nation and other Amazonian communities remained largely isolated until the period of oil and land exploitation, indigenous communities in Ecuador's Andean and coastal regions experienced vastly different socio-political histories. The rapid transculturation of coastal indigenous groups served to broadly diffuse ethnic identity in the coastal region. Consequently, very few coastal Ecuadorians identify as a member of any indigenous group. Andean indigenous, by contrast, though also exposed to massive transculturation, formed solid identities and alliances throughout the central Andean region. As a result, the Andean region became a locus for many of Ecuador's indigenous movements. The formation of these identities and alliances may be attributed to the hacienda system that enslaved Andean indigenous communities to Spaniards during the Spanish conquest. (Benavides 2004) The hacienda system shaped power relations between Spaniards, *criollos* (Ecuadorians born in the Americas to "pure-blooded" or Spanish parents) and indigenous peoples. Uprisings in the Andean highlands were often organized by indigenous people as a response to the inequitable distribution of land and power that kept them from freely occupying their homeland and bound to wealthy landowners. (Benavides 2004) The collective experience of enslavement, defiance of the hacienda system, and relative unity in periods of institutionalized forced labor all led to a sense of identity among Andean indigenous people. Direct contact with Spaniards also equipped Andean indigenous peoples with an intimate knowledge of the

system under which they were oppressed; a knowledge that the isolated Amazonian indigenous would not gain until the late 1900s.

Land struggles amongst indigenous populations in the early 1930s were fueled in part by the political climate of social movements in Ecuador, and were supported by both the Ecuadorian communist and socialist parties. Publicized issues of class, workers' rights, unions and cooperatives became part of the national discourse during this time. It was out of this political climate that the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians, FEI) was formed. The FEI is recognized as the first attempt at establishing a nationally recognized federation created for and by indigenous peoples in Ecuador that succeeded. The FEI paved the way for other organizations to be formed, and to be successful. The FEI was initially formed in 1944 to achieve the following goals: to gain economic liberation for Ecuador's Indians, to raise the moral and cultural level of Indians while preserving important cultural customs of high moral value, to contribute to Ecuador's national unity and finally to establish linkages between Ecuador's diverse Indian populations. (FEI 1945) The organization worked primarily on issues involving land reform, abolishing traces of Ecuador's feudal system, passing ownership of land to peasants, canceling debts that Indians and farmers owed landowners and securing access to higher salaries for Indians. (Becker 2002) The nature of FEI's work, however, lacked a crucial element that has become one of the central themes in Ecuador's current indigenous struggle: issue of identity, and in particular, of the multiplicity of identities that comprise Ecuador's indigenous population. Through marches and protests in Quito, the organization was successful in creating a recognized federation of Ecuadorian Indians, bringing the plight of the Indian into the national consciousness of Ecuador's political scene. However, the actual work of the FEI was only marginally successful in achieving land reform policies. It was not until 1964 that a land reform agenda, aimed specifically at implementing a more democratic distribution of land, become part of the national agenda. The progress of the FEI began to wane during the late 1960s with the decline of the national leftist influence in the indigenous movement. Also during that time, the Catholic Church joined the indigenous movement in support of equitable land distribution. To this end, the Church formed the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (National Federation of Farmer Organizations, FENOC) in 1968. FENOC was founded to address agrarian reform, but when it failed to meet its goals, its momentum faded and the influence of the organization was severely diminished. In response to a second agrarian reform in 1972, another organization was founded, also under religious leadership. This organization was formed by the Church's most "progressive" members and was more willing to address the issue of land distribution as a largely ethnic struggle of unequal rights. The organization was called Ecuarunari, meaning "awakening of the Ecuadorian Indians" in Quichua.

Ecuarunari's work focused upon bringing nationwide awareness to the Indians' struggle against the oppression and exploitation that they had been forced to endure since the Spanish conquest. (Becker 2002) Ecuarunari sought to gain access to education, health care and other basic resources for indigenous peoples, while fighting against exploitation, oppression and discrimination. To this end, the organization took a two-pronged approach. Ecuarunari actively supported the formation of other Indian

organizations, associations and cooperatives, acting as a resource center for nascent groups. The organization also focused on development for indigenous farmers, promoting modern agricultural techniques and developing bilingual schools, among other projects. This group enjoyed limited success, however, and it was not until the 1980s that significant interaction between organizations led to a more powerful unity among indigenous groups throughout the country. The mid-1980s saw the critical unification of two groups, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana, (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENAIE), a group of unified Amazonian Indians, with Ecuarunari. The organizations merged to form the Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Central Committee of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONACNIE). (Becker 2002) In 1986, the CONACNIE became the Confederación Nacional de Indígenas del Ecuador, or CONAIE, which has matured to become one of the most prominent and influential social groups in Ecuador. (Benavides 2004)

### **The Rise of the Confederación Nacional de Indígenas del Ecuador**

In 1986, the CONAIE, formed of Ecuarunari and the CONACNIE, became the first indigenous organization to avoid associating itself with either the political left, or the church, identifying itself as an indigenous peoples' organization, and independently so. (Becker 2002) The CONAIE was formed to achieve the following objectives: to consolidate indigenous communities and nationalities, to fight for indigenous land and territory, to fight for intercultural and bilingual education, to fight against the oppression of civil authorities and churches, to fight against colonization and for the dignity of indigenous communities and nationalities. (CONAIE 2007) The organization became immediately active in pursuing its goals, and its success quickly overshadowed that of any other previous organization working on behalf of indigenous people in Ecuador.

One of the organization's earliest and most notable campaigns was launched in April of 1990, when the CONAIE approved an uprising of indigenous groups to protest the lengthy negotiations on pending agrarian reform law, and to push for the legal recognition of separate indigenous nationalities. Amazonian and central highland indigenous groups were among the most vocal in support of the protest, and were instrumental in organizing the event. One month after initial approval was granted, eighty members of a grassroots organization affiliated with the CONAIE, the Coordinadora Popular, seized a major colonial church in Quito, the Iglesia de Santo Domingo. The Coordinadora Popular demanded a role in government negotiations over reform in an attempt to force land redistribution. When the government refused to negotiate, the protesters declared a hunger strike, and six days later, on June 4<sup>th</sup>, the 80 strikers were joined by indigenous communities from all across Ecuador to participate in what was to become one of the most significant strikes in Quito. The protest blocked main roads and thwarted the distribution of agricultural products. Protestors occupied haciendas and took hostage of hacienda owners, military personnel, and police officers. They cut water supplies and staged symbolic trials wherein landowners were forced to bathe nude publicly in an emblematic ceremony of cleansing themselves of their sins. In just three days, the government declared willingness to negotiate with the indigenous

population over fair land distribution policies and recognition of separate and different indigenous groups. (Benavides 2004)

The 1990 uprising gave CONAIE the political clout and recognition it needed to begin making more significant demands, and to become a powerful voice for the indigenous population. Since the early 1990s, the CONAIE has been increasingly influential in national politics. (Benavides 2004) In 1997, the CONAIE was instrumental in forming a broad-based coalition of political parties and social movements, including labor unions, student groups, women's groups, community groups and human rights groups, to oust the government of President Abdala Bucaram. (Cuzco 1997) Paradoxically, Bucaram had been elected to office largely as a result of the support he garnered from indigenous groups. Though he initially had shown support for the indigenous movement, and had even created the Ministerio de los Asuntos Indígenas (Ministry of Indigenous Affairs), his campaign had subsequently become involved in heavy corruption and had withdrawn on its original promises. The administration began implementing severe austerity measures, raising prices of electricity, cooking gas, and phone services up to 600 percent and cutting deeply into social programs. (Cuzco 1997) The CONAIE succeeded in ousting Bucaram in 1997 while maintaining its ties with other indigenous organizations that still supported his administration.

In 1996, the CONAIE made a major break from its historical disengagement with particular political parties when it formed its own party, the Pachakutik/Nuevo País, (the New Country Party). The party was formed by a consortium of both indigenous and non-indigenous organizations, and was committed to sponsoring its own candidates for office. The stated rationale behind the formation of Pachakutik is roughly the following: as political participants in Ecuador are compelled to vote, so too are indigenous people as political participants; indigenous communities, however, are not represented by the candidates sponsored by traditional political parties. Why then should indigenous people not have the option to support a candidate that would be committed to the causes affecting indigenous communities? Some maintain that the CONAIE has been very successful in providing representation for Ecuador's indigenous groups. Since its formation, the CONAIE and the Pachakutik/Nuevo País have succeeded in putting upwards of 70 elected officials in office, including major political figures, and have also ousted several elected officials. In 2001, the CONAIE called a national strike by all indigenous communities to protest the economic policies of then President, Gustavo Noboa Bejarano. The strike focused on Bejarano's implementation of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment reform policies. In the last week of January in 2001 over 10,000 indigenous Ecuadorians occupied Quito in a protest organized by the CONAIE. The government conceded to demands following days of violent confrontations, the death of four demonstrators, and a brief imprisonment of the head of the CONAIE. The occupation resulted in a reformation of economic policies, the freezing of gas prices for at least one year, a commitment by the government to continue subsidizing cooking gas, and to begin subsidizing bus fares for students, children and the elderly. The government also agreed to remove a 3% increase in value-added taxes. (Benavides 2004)



Though CONAIE has gained a strong voice for the indigenous communities throughout Ecuador, the local Secoya organization, (the Organización de Indígena Secoya del Ecuador, OISE) has had limited and infrequent interaction with the CONAIE. The underlying cause is not one of a tension between the groups, but rather is due to the fact CONAIE has been instrumental in creating national movements that are focused upon gaining political representation and pro-indigenous policies on the national rather than local level. The Secoyas' organization, by contrast, has been heavily engaged in its own political representation with specific agencies, and more focused upon politics in its local territory. The Secoya governing body, the OISE, was formed in response to a government mandate that indigenous communities must be represented by a central organization with elected officials in order to gain recognition under Ecuadorian law. (Vickers 2003) The formation of the OISE began as a result of territorial disputes and was a mechanism for gaining political recognition and power. Rather than explain the circumstances under which the OISE was formed here, however, it will be useful to provide context through an introduction to the Secoya people and an examination of their political and social development within the larger context of Ecuador.

## Chapter 2

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (LZW) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 2 shows the northwestern Ecuadorian Amazon and settlements of Siona<sup>1</sup> and Secoyas as they existed between 1973 and 1980. The three main Secoya communities are located as shown at San Pablo, Campo Eno and Remolino. (Vickers 1989)

### **La Gente Multicolor<sup>2</sup>**

Traditionally a nomadic people, the Secoya or Sieco'Pai, once occupied scattered, autonomous settlements located in territory that extended from the north bank of the Napo River to the south bank of the Putamayo River, close to the present border between Ecuador and Colombia. (Vickers 2003) Most Secoya settlements were situated around the Aguarico River. The settlements were scattered throughout Ecuador, Colombia and Peru, on the banks of the Aguarico, which flows through the northeastern Ecuadorian Amazon, the southeast of Colombia's Amazon and the northwestern Amazon territory of Peru. There are an estimated 900 Secoyas alive today—the majority of whom live in

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<sup>1</sup> The Siona is a neighboring indigenous group, closely associated with the Secoya, which also occupies Aguarico River basin territory.

<sup>2</sup> “La gente multicolor”, meaning: “the multicolored people”, is the name given to Secoyas by early Spanish explorers who were struck by the Secoyas’ brightly colored tunics. Modern day Secoyas at Remolino still wear these tunics for religious ceremonies and on regular occasions. Elders often still don traditional tunics, however younger Secoyas dress mostly in Western clothing. Author interviews and observation at Siecya Remolino, July and August 2007.

Ecuador, though an estimated 400 live in Peru. The remaining 500 members of Ecuador's Secoya Nation are currently located in the following three communities: the Secoya San Pablo de Catëtsiaya; Secoya Remolino, located in San Roque Parish, Shushufindi Canton, Sucumbíos Province; and Secoya Eno, located in Tarapoa Parish, Cuyabeno Canton, Sucumbíos Province. (OEPC Mimeo 1999)

Over their long history in the territory, the Secoya people have been witness to numerous regional transformations that have affected their cultural and social systems. From first recorded contact in the 1500s between the Secoyas and Spanish explorers, to various visits by missionaries of different religious, Secoyas have been displaced, lost land rights through the formation of political boundaries, have been subjected to foreign diseases to which they were not immune, and converted to Christianity among other interruptions. They have reacted by transforming their core belief system and developing a sophisticated mechanism for navigating political participation in the international arena. The late 20th Century brought the most rapid and aggressive change in the recorded history of the culture, as a consortium of oil companies identified substantial oil reserves in what was geographically denominated "Block 15" of the Secoyas' Amazon territory.

Despite major cultural transformations, the Secoyas remain committed to the lifestyle of their ancestry, and are exceedingly proud of their origins. Contemporary Secoya culture is characterized by a willingness to engage the outside world just enough to preserve the internal values of the Secoya Nation. Under the leadership of their political organization, they have identified a path to development that seeks to ensure the survival of their culture through participation in local economic activities, partnership with international organizations and recuperation of lost land to expand their territory. The resiliency and adaptability of the culture have allowed the Secoya people to form a dedicated leadership, organize a democratic governing body and lead it to become a recognized entity in Ecuador's national political realm. This chapter seeks to illustrate the social, political and economic contexts that have contributed to shaping the modern Ecuadorian Secoya culture, with particular attention paid to events and actors that have facilitated and forced the transformation. The first section focuses on the social context in which missionaries found the Secoya people and discusses the important consequences of this contact. The second section considers the formation of the Secoya governing body, the OISE, and the maturation of the organization through its negotiations with Occidental Petroleum. The third section outlines the goals of the OISE in preserving Secoya territory and culture to conclude that the adaptability of the culture has led to its survival, and to further conclude that political and economic participation must continue to hold the central values of the culture as its motivational core. As external ideologies and articles become a larger part of Secoya daily life, they too must become internalized within the framework of Secoya tradition under the jurisdiction of community and the OISE.

### **Tui'que Hüe'e/Casa Típica**

An introduction into traditional Secoya culture may best be approached through an examination of the typical domestic spaces of early Secoya people, as the style of the traditional home, and the changes to it that have been made over time, are largely

representative of Secoya values. Throughout history, three main domestic structures have dominated the architecture of Secoya settlements, and the evolution of the living space is representative of larger cultural transitions that have occurred over the past several hundred years. The *casa típica*, or traditional house of Secoya ancestry, is characterized by its communal nature, as it was built to provide shelter for an entire extended family including up to 20 members or more. (Arboleda 2004) As a nomadic people, Secoyas resettled several times over the course of a period of years depending upon the conditions (and changes in conditions) of the region in which they had settled. As a hunting and gathering society, Secoyas would often resettle if a region became compromised or lacked an abundance of food and other resources. Upon settling at a particular site, they took great care under the guidance of a shaman to choose a suitable placement for the structure of the household. The shaman chose the placement of the home with consideration for proximity to food and water sources, and the availability of building materials used to erect domestic structure as well as other smaller structures used for religious ceremonies and health care. Also considered were the site's relative isolation and capacity to protect from, and provide strategic advantage over outside forces including other indigenous groups and foreign explorers, as well as wild animals and other dangers. (Arboleda 2004)

The *casa típica* itself stood as a large, long, rectangular building with semi-octagonal ends. It was constructed entirely of forest products and sat directly upon the soil; bare earth served as flooring. The interior of the structure had no walls, but instead had columns, which were used to delineate separate spaces. All families in the extended family unit occupied the single home. Single homes, however, were located a considerable distance from homes of other Secoya families. (Arboleda 2004) The structure's eastward facing wall was traditionally designated as a living space, while the westward facing wall was used as a cooking and dining space.<sup>3</sup> One communal cooking area was located along the north-facing wall, and the doors were located at the northwestern and southeastern edges as off-center openings at each of the semi-octagonal ends.<sup>4</sup> Families lived side by side, each occupying its own section width-wise in the rectangular space, while the central space was kept clear and open. Areas for walking, cooking, sleeping and performing religious ceremonies were designated by social convention within the home. While beams delineated the lateral spaces, the clear and open central space remained undivided from soil to the high thatched roof, invoking a sense of diminution of individual families' spaces in deference to that of the larger community. Architecture that emphasizes the grandeur and magnificence of communal space as opposed to that of individual familial spaces has been recognized among several indigenous Amazonian communities. (Arboleda 2004)

As mentioned above, domestic structures were located a considerable distance from other Secoya extended family structures. As the culture is traditionally a nomadic one,

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<sup>3</sup> Author conversation with Gustavo Piaguaje at the site of a *casa típica*, Secoya Remolino, July 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Doors were actually open spaces located off-center. The function of the design was to allow occupants to "finish the building" by covering the openings to confuse outsiders by eliminating any point of entry.

family units were atomized and autonomous, capable of abandoning a settlement, rapidly if necessary, to find a more habitable area. Common motivations for migrations were local resource depletion (as stated above), fear of disease (believed to be the result of sorcery by shamans), and disagreements with neighbors. (Vickers 2003) It should be noted here that significant loss of landholdings and habitable territory has caused the modern Secoya people to become largely sedentary, and has limited their ability to migrate when local resources become scarce, or more appropriately in the current context, severely polluted. Constraints on modern populations will be discussed in detail further in the document. Regarding these points, however, one of the most crucial characteristics of the Secoya settlement pattern is its dynamism and responsiveness to shifting social, political and environmental changes. Over time, as the community came into extended contact with outside cultures and manmade building materials, Secoya homes began to change. The large singular communal home has long been abandoned by modern Secoyas and most now share smaller structures built for the nuclear family, while still maintaining close proximity to parents, grandparents, cousins, nieces and nephews and other extended family. Some modern Secoya homes now employ manmade building materials for construction such as zinc, for roofing. Many homes at Siecoya Remolino, however, are still built almost entirely of local forest material. While modern homes are similar to the traditional homes in this respect, they often appear quite different from traditional homes. Most Secoya homes at Remolino today are elevated and have wood flooring. Though some still don't use walls to divide the spaces within the home, others do have spaces delineated by walls, such as individual bedrooms.<sup>5</sup>

The physical structure of the traditional home is representative of the Secoya cultural values of communitarian egalitarianism. As is common to many traditional hunting and gathering societies, the Secoya share resources among the entire community. Though there are a few specified tasks that are to be performed by either only men or women, the Secoya society has long been extremely egalitarian. Traditionally, the only truly authoritarian relationship within the Secoya community was that of a parent over a child. (Vickers 1989, 2003) The traditional structure of the Secoya community lacked, almost completely, a system of authoritarian relations or leadership roles. Exerting authority in Secoya society was, and still is, viewed negatively, and Secoya scorn those who attempt to exert control over others. Similarly, the Secoya culture lacked any class system or social ranking. The social organization within the community functioned primarily at the level of the household. The structure of society as egalitarian extended to even the most celebrated members of the society, the local shaman. (Vickers 2003) Shamans were viewed as supernatural protectors of the community who convened with the spirit world and could influence events. The role of the shaman represented the only traditional leadership role in traditional society; however the shaman did not lead by authority but rather by guidance and advising. (Vickers 1989)

### **Shamanism and Secoya Spirituality**

As linkages to the powerful spiritual world, Secoya shamans were both feared and revered as important and central figures in their communities. Their ability to communicate with spirits and deities was at once an asset, as well as a potential detriment

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<sup>5</sup> Author interviews and observation at Siecoya Remolino, July and August 2007.

to the community because Secoyas viewed the activities of both spirits and shamans to be the source of joyous and dangerous or painful events.

Traditionally, the Secoya religion consisted of several heavens and myriad deities, spirits and demons, all of which possessed spiritual power and could exert control over events in the Secoya community at will. The spiritual world that ruled the Secoya community was multifaceted and intricately complex. Spirits traditionally occupied the physical world through their reign over five heavens. The heavens of the traditional belief system existed in the realm of the trees, in the atmosphere, under the seas, under the rivers and in the animal kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Though spirits regularly had a positive influence in the lives of the Secoyas, there also existed malicious spirits which threatened safety and wellbeing of the population. Shamans were viewed as crucial members of the community for their ability to understand and communicate with the spiritual world. Through religious rituals designed to open the channel between the spiritual and the physical world, shamans were believed to influence the lives of community members through contact with spirits and demons, as well as with their own spiritual power. (Vickers 2003)

Shamans are referred to in the Secoya native tongue as *yahé ùnkuki* meaning: the drinker of yajé. The term yajé refers to a hallucinogenic infusion prepared from local plant sources by shamans, and used to contact the spiritual world in a sacred ceremony. Yajé ceremonies were intended to allow shamans to make critical contact with the spiritual world, and as a sort of vision quest for understanding the intricacies of the physical and spiritual worlds around them with guidance from spirits and deities. Ceremonies were sometimes held in order to address a particular issue within the community, the illness of a child, for example, and in other instances ceremonies were held as a regular part of community life. In preparation for the yajé ceremony, shamans adorned themselves in newly made tunics, and painted their faces with a plant dye known as *achiote*. They dyed their lips black and painted elaborate designs on their feet, calves, arms and hands. They further adorned their bodies with fragrant plants and flowers, and their heads with crowns made of bright feathers. (Payaguaje 2006) The shamans also decorated special hammocks, which they brought to the yajé house for use during the long ceremony. According to the testimony of the Secoyas' last shaman, Fernando Payaguaje, no shaman entered the yajé house unadorned, and those who lived a great distance from the yajé house would travel to the ceremony unadorned and dress for the ceremony a short distance from the house before entering. Upon arrival at the ceremony, shamans would prepare the yajé, then climb into their decorated hammocks. There they remained reclined from the beginning of the ceremony at dusk, until the end of the

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<sup>6</sup> Author conversation with César Piaguaje at Siecoya Remolino, July 2007. Though César is a religious leader at Siecoya Remolino and orchestrates weekly worships, he practices Evangelical Christianity. When speaking about spirituality, he first mentioned God, referring to the singular Christian god. He mentioned that Evangelical missionaries came to teach the Secoyas and discussed the Secoyas' choice to blend the two religions in order to avoid conflict. He was reluctant, however, to talk about Secoya spirituality and had difficulty recalling the details of the five heavens. Of the two faiths he said, "I can't speak with a tree because it doesn't hear me, but the spirit hears, and listens."

ceremony at dawn. Throughout that time, they experienced powerful hallucinations that would lead them to a greater understanding of the spiritual world. In the words of Payaguaje,

You're reclining in the hammock, but, at the same time, you're in another world, seeing the truth of everything that exists; only the body remains behind. The angels come and offer you a flute. You play it; it's not the healer who teaches you, but the angels themselves that make us sing when we're inebriated. How beautiful it is to see the totality of the animals, even the ones that live beneath the water! How could it not be lovely to distinguish even the people who live in the interior of the earth? You can see everything! That's why it's exciting to drink yajé.

But it's not easy. When I drank thick yajé, the strong stuff, I was able to see the sun, the rainbow, everything. That vision ended and I felt my heart as hot as a newly fired clay pot. I felt the heat inside, burning me, and although I wasn't working, I sweated all day. Visions continuously assaulted me. From time to time I bathed. I felt myself capable of bewitching and killing people, though I never did it, because my father's advice restrained me. (Payaguaje 2006)

As is evidenced in the testimony above, shamans' ability to commune with the spiritual world was accompanied by an ability to cause harm to both the immediate community, and to neighboring communities. Shamans were sometimes mistrusted by their community and would be killed if thought to be practicing harmful magic. As a result, outbreaks of disease or other disasters were attributed to the work of a neighboring shaman, and less often to the work of a shaman within the community.<sup>7</sup>

The path to becoming a shaman was a long and arduous one, marked by abstinence, fasting and frequent drinking of psychotropic potions, including yajé and others, all made from local plant sources. (Vickers 2003) Only the most committed young Secoya men graduated from the apprenticeship to become respected shamans. The lengthy process of induction is cited by some Secoyas as the primary reason for the fact that there are only a few students of shamanism today.<sup>8</sup> However, shamanism was historically central to the Secoya religion and was an honorable and greatly respected role that young men aspired to prior to the religious shift precipitated by contact with missionaries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>7</sup> The attribution of disease to unseen outsiders created an embedded cultural mistrust and fear of outsiders that continues to a large extent today.

<sup>8</sup> Author conversations with César Piaguaje and Manolo Piaguaje at Siecoya Remolino, July and August 2007. Both César and Manolo cited laziness among youth and the difficult and long process of becoming a shaman as possible explanations for the lack of young students of shamanism.

### **Missionaries, Colonists and Oil in the Amazon**

By the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, foreign influences had begun to intrude upon the territory and lives of the Secoya people. Spanish explorers, searching the Amazon basin in search of gold, recorded accounts of *los encabellados* or “the longhaired people.”<sup>9</sup> (Vickers 2003) Early contact with foreign populations decimated Secoya communities by spreading of infectious diseases including influenza, smallpox and measles. Disease epidemics quickly devastated entire settlements and cleared riverbanks within Secoya territory. Though official population counts do not exist, it is widely recognized that European explorers contributed to the massive decline in population through transitory encounters.

Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Jesuit missionaries made frequent trips to Secoya territory. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, close to 20 Jesuit missions had been established in Secoya territory along the Napo and Aguarico Rivers. (Vickers 2003) Despite their prolonged presence in the region, Secoyas largely resisted conversion to the teachings of the Jesuit missionaries. Rather than as a reaction against conversion based upon religious conviction, however, resistance was actually largely a result of the model the missions employed for mass conversion. Having little knowledge of Secoya culture, Jesuits attempted, as a practical model for converting a large and dispersed population, to aggregate Secoya settlements, joining families from different settlements into one camp. As discussed earlier, Secoyas believed that the disease was the result of the work of a shaman in a neighboring village. Thus, the fear of unknown families amongst Secoyas thwarted Jesuit efforts to aggregate the autonomous and diffuse populations; the Jesuit missions therefore failed in most cases. Additionally, Jesuits, like Europeans, brought diseases to which Secoya people had no immunity. Missions often resulted in severe outbreaks causing massive reductions in the population and further dispersion as families fled unhealthy and unsafe conditions.

Few records of foreign accounts of the Secoya people exist for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. (Vickers 2003) The 20<sup>th</sup> Century, however, was marked by an increased presence of outsiders, both foreigners and Ecuadorians, into Amazon territory. The result was an end to the relative isolation of the Secoya Nation peoples and a shrinking of the territory over which they held sovereignty. Increased interactions with outsiders had profound impacts upon Secoya communities. One mission in particular succeeded in changing the Secoya tradition and culture so vastly that the Secoyas no longer practice their traditional religion, but rather identify as Evangelical Christians.

### **The Summer Institute of Linguistics Mission**

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) is a faith-based organization that “documents, and assists in developing the world’s lesser-known languages” (Brief History of SIL, 2007). The organization also has a significant religious component, and the institute’s staff “shares a Christian commitment to service, academic excellence, and

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<sup>9</sup> Similar to the name “la gente multicolor”, “los encabellados” was a name used by Spanish explores to refer to the Secoya people whose striking physical characteristics surprised and impressed them.



professional engagement through literacy, linguistics, translation, and other academic disciplines.” (Brief History of SIL, 2007) Founded in 1934 by linguist William Cameron Townsend, the institute was established with the outwardly declared intent of preserving indigenous languages, and an understated secondary purpose of saving indigenous people from the “devil’s work” that SIL missionaries saw in indigenous religion and spirituality. In 1955, two American missionaries from SIL, Mary and Orville Johnson, settled in the Secoya community at Cuyabeno. (Vickers 2003) Their mission’s objective was to translate the bible into the native Secoya language. The impact of their mission upon the entire Ecuadorian Secoya community, however, would be much greater than this simple objective suggests.

The Johnsons worked through SIL under a contract with the Ecuadorian government’s Ministry of Education. Their stated aim was to develop programs of “practical, patriotic and moral service”. (SIL 1969) To this end, SIL missionaries typically installed bilingual schools and health clinics in the native villages in which they worked. They promoted agricultural practices and livestock projects introducing non-native cultivars including rice, beans and onions, as well as non-native mammals such as cattle and pigs. Mary and Orville Johnson were fundamentalist evangelical Christians and were particularly devoted to the conversion to Christianity of indigenous peoples. They began their conversion work by installing mistrust of local shamans and by spreading messages of a more loving and powerful singular god. Fernando Payaguaje, the local shaman, came almost immediately under attack as the Johnsons spread their messages throughout the community.

“I know Fernando is great among you,” said Mary, “but I must tell you that the greatest above Fernando and above the moon and all the demons and evil spirits—and Satan himself—is Jesus Christ. He alone is God’s Son, and He alone has the power to overcome Satan.”

“Fernando works his power from himself for selfish gain, to hold people in fear. But Jesus is stronger because He comes to us in love. And you and all the Secoyas can have this power and freedom from fear just by taking Jesus into your mind and heart. It is Jesus alone who has conquered death, and He alone can deliver us from fear.” (Steven 1988: 131)

The presence of SIL in the Cuyabeno community led to major changes in the traditional Secoya way of life. Soon after their arrival, Secoyas began to approach the Johnsons for advice on technical matters, such as medical assistance. The community would, however, frequently consult both the missionaries and the local shaman when seeking medical advice and treatment. And while the missionaries became a powerful presence in the community, the characteristically adaptive nature of the Secoyas allowed them to create a set of religious beliefs that brought in elements from both traditional Secoya spirituality and newly introduced Christian values. The Secoyas preserved their belief in spirits and in shamanism by accepting Christianity not as an absolute and final

faith, but rather as an additional facet to the already complex worldview occupied by hundreds of spirits, ghosts and other supernatural forces. (Vickers 2003)

One tactic SIL missionaries used to embed their religious beliefs was to train local leaders who would embrace the Christian belief system and become critical of the traditional religion. In employing local Secoyas as native teachers in the newly established bilingual schools, the Johnsons created an opportunity to train young people to fill these roles, and to teach their newly adopted faith to younger generations. SIL created a base located not far from Cuyabeno in a town called Limoncocha (located on the map in Figure 2) where they brought handpicked young candidates for comprehensive training and careful grooming in preparation for teaching positions within the community. The Johnsons did not bring the candidates away from the community to hide their intentions of training them to become leaders in the village, but rather were explicit about their motivations. The new leaders, unlike shamans, were taught to converse in and read the Spanish language and therefore were able to successfully navigate the world around the Secoya villages without the confusion of a language barrier. They were able to effectively represent the Secoya community in its dealings with outside entities including government agencies and NGOs. Though these Secoya leaders were evangelical Christians and trained to serve as role models of their faith, national curricular policies mandated by the Ministry of Education prevented them from officially incorporating faith-based lessons in the classroom. (Vickers 2003)

Celestino Piaguaje, nephew of the shaman Fernando Payaguje, was the first Secoya selected by the Johnsons to be trained as a native teacher. Celestino has been characterized in numerous documents as a bright and energetic person. He quickly emerged as an influential and capable leader within the community. Celestino has testified that as a boy he had hoped to embark upon the path of shamanism guided by his uncle, but that the missionaries opened a new path for him. Celestino eventually became the director of the village school at Cuyabeno and acted as a supervisor of other native teachers. He also led the Sunday worship in the newly established Protestant congregation. (Vickers 2003)

During this period, Fernando stopped performing yajé ceremonies at the urging of his newly converted Christian family members. He still, however, proclaimed himself to be a healer and to possess significant power gleaned through the vast knowledge and experience acquired in his years as a practicing shaman. Other shamans in neighboring villages continued practicing yajé ceremonies but became increasingly marginalized by the pressure of their Christianized community. Shamans and Secoyas who were not educated in the bilingual school system also became increasingly marginalized. The community began conducting meetings and important gatherings exclusively in the Spanish language. SIL had begun also organizing tours for the Ministry of Education and hosting Ministry inspectors and military officers to issue formal approval of the SIL program. In conjunction with these meetings, Secoya delegates were periodically sent to education conferences held locally at the SIL base in Limoncocha, as well as at the nation's capital city of Quito. Celestino represented the Secoya community in most cases of Secoya communication with government agencies and conferences. That contact

between outside agencies and Secoyas was conducted in Spanish became a major obstacle to broad inclusion of the community and limited the participation of elder Secoyas. Elders became powerless to represent themselves at community meetings organized by SIL and were thereby excluded from official proceedings. (Vickers 2003)

The SIL mission succeeded in changing the nature of the native religion, which led to a psychological shift in perception of the environment in which they live, as well as other significant losses. However, the formation of the bilingual school system launched the Secoya community into a position in which those who attended school were able to communicate effectively with the outside world. The community became better equipped to take command of its culture and natural resources, and to create a voice for itself within the Ecuadorian government. As mentioned above, the SIL mission also worked in conjunction with the Ecuadorian government. This partnership served to bring the Secoyas into direct contact with the federal agency, the Ministry of Education. This contributed to some level of legitimacy and federal recognition, not previously enjoyed by the community, which would prove crucial in protecting the Secoya people in later years. The complexity of consequences of outside contact becomes even more apparent through an examination of the role that the installation of an authoritarian and leadership driven value system plays in both eroding traditional value systems, and contributing to the survival of the Secoya culture and people. Though they thrived under a largely egalitarian system throughout the majority of their history, the implanted authoritarian system of leadership became critical when the government mandated that any indigenous group seeking representation under national law be required to form a democratically structured organization. The Secoya community benefited from having already installed, in part, an experienced leader and liaison to the outside world that would be well equipped to spearhead such an organization.

## **Colonization**

By the early 1970s, as the modern world was becoming more influential in their lives, the Secoyas' ability to effectively interact with surrounding settlements and emerging municipalities was becoming increasingly important. Around that time, the Amazon was beginning to undergo a process of colonization by poor Ecuadorians from the coastal and mountainous regions of Ecuador. Beginning in the early 1940s, an informal process of self-displacement was launched in which the urban poor of Ecuador's two largest cities, Quito and Guayaquil chose to leave the Andean region and the coast in search of a better life in the rainforest. The migration created the phenomenon referred to in Ecuador as colonization. Though the process was informal and appeared to be largely self-directed, the Ecuadorian government actually played a considerable role in initiating and expediting the process. (Simon 2000)

Government strategies to advance the process of internal self-displacement involved initiatives designed to encourage people to populate the Amazon. Messages created by the Ecuadorian government emphasized the opportunities for a new life and framed relocation to the rainforest as a nationalist gesture. In reality, failed land reform attempts in 1964 precipitated an effort to amend Ecuador's feudal land system. The policy, similar

to the American Homestead Act of 1861, granted large tracts of Amazon territory to a population that had previously been universally poor and landless, in exchange for colonization. (Simon 2000) Additionally, threatened by the risk of border disputes with Peru, and the 1941 Peru-Ecuador border war, the Ecuadorian government sought to create a “living border” where residents would act as a natural barrier against attack, and as an indicator of invasion that would protect the nation’s interior. (Arboleda 2004) The process of migration was further expediated by the construction of roads, which also encouraged an expansion of industrial activity in rainforest territory. Oil exploitation hastened the construction of roadways as contractors sought new entrances to oilfields during this period. In a short of time, the Amazon became highly profitable territory.

While the increase in roadways affected the physical environment within Ecuador’s Amazon basin, it also affected the internal colonization of the region. The increase led to a heightened level of migration of Ecuadorians from western Ecuador into the Amazon rainforest. To this day, Ecuadorians who occupy the rainforest and are non-indigenous to the region are referred to as *colonos* or colonists. Colonists found diverse economies within the rainforest from which to reap substantial profit in extraction processes, harvesting both timber and non-timber forest products. As migration continued, colonists began to settle not just along roadways, but also along rivers using canoes to transport goods for sale along the waterways. Colonists’ economic practices and lifestyles had a major impact upon the areas in which they settled. Upon moving into a region, they typically clear-cut the land; first to create a living space, and later through the extractive processes upon which they based their economic activities.

Much of the land that colonists cleared in the 1960s and 1970s was land that the Secoyas had relied upon for hunting and harvesting building materials. As the trend of colonization continued, deforestation led to a rapid decrease in resources available to the Secoyas, resources upon which they depended entirely to sustain their lifestyle. Because the Secoyas held no formal or legal claim to the land, the government considered their territory free and available to enterprising colonists and others. The result was that colonists were often put in direct confrontation with the Secoya, which led to occasional conflict. It should be restated here that colonists were themselves formerly landless peasants with few prospects before the government’s resettlement program. It may be argued that conflict between the colonists and the Secoyas was largely the result of a struggle for legitimization and resources of two groups marginalized from mainstream political concerns of the Ecuadorian government. In an attempt to exert control over the increasing conflict in the region, however, the Ecuadorian government opted to grant legal title to colonists for the land they occupied, and restricted them from accessing additional land. Secoyas viewed these initiatives, in which their land was legally allotted to outsiders while they themselves held no legal title to any territory, as grossly unjust. As a result of the policy, the Secoyas effectively became squatters, and lacked legal rights to land that they had occupied for hundreds of years. Furthermore, colonists’ destructive use of the forest substantially impacted the region’s natural resources and caused major deterioration in the shrinking territory that the Secoyas occupied at that time. (Arboleda 2004)

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 1 shows the extent to which colonization exerted pressure on indigenous groups in the Ecuadorian Amazon including the Quichua, Cofán, Secoya, Shuar, and Siona. (Bremner and Lu 2006)

Destruction and deterioration of the rainforest may be largely attributed to the legal and political structures that existed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Governmental policy consistently marginalized indigenous groups throughout Ecuador by implementing policies such as the colonization effort. Though marginalization of indigenous peoples has led to indigenous movements and the formation of important organizations like the CONAIE, as discussed in Chapter 1, indigenous groups have remained vulnerable to private and national interests. This is especially true in cases in which there are substantial financial gains to be made by any one party. The struggle over land rights began in the late 1960s, and began with only a few different interest groups competing for power over the territory. It has continued over the past 4 decades and is as fierce as ever in the present day due to the involvement of a larger variety of powerful interest groups including indigenous peoples, the Ecuadorian government, domestic oil companies and transnational corporations. The Secoyas' governing body, the OISE, has struggled since its inception to secure land rights and general human rights for the Secoya people. The formation of the organization is in itself the result of the struggle for land rights and legitimization that gained momentum in the late 1970s.

### **The Formation of the Organización Indígena Secoya del Ecuador**

As a response to the myriad interests entering the rainforest territory, including loggers, oil extractors, agribusinesses and colonists, Anthropologist Enrique Vela from

the Instituto Nacional de Colonización de la Region Amazónica (National Institute for the Colonization of the Amazon Region, INCREA) began encouraging the Secoyas to create a local organizing body that could begin interacting effectively on the national level. Vela witnessed the Secoyas struggle for legitimacy as an underrepresented group in contested land and began offering crucial support and encouragement in the Secoyas efforts to represent themselves. His work with the Secoyas proved critical to the formation of the OISE. Six years prior to the formation of OISE, the Secoya and Siona received legal title to 7,043 hectares of territory from the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización (Ecuadorian Institute for Agrarian and Colonization Reform, IERAC). The land received represented only a small portion of their mutual territory. Thus nine years later, in 1987, the Secoya proposed that a joint assembly of the Secoya and Siona meet to discuss the formation of what was to be the Organización Indígena Secoya-Siona del Ecuador, OISSE. The alliance began to work closely with other organizations including the CONAIE and CONFENAIE, and forged alliances with relevant government officials, NGOs and other influential Ecuadorians. By 1989, through its dealings with the government and support from other relationships, the OISSE received title to an additional 32,414 hectares. Though this was a significant increase and also represented a major victory for any indigenous group, the combined titles granted of 39,457 hectares still represented only one third of the territory occupied by the Secoya and Siona prior to colonization and the oil boom. (Vickers 2003) Soon after the victory, a dispute over funding allotted for the demarcation process from a Danish organization, as well as feuding between the Secoya and Siona, led to the eventual withdrawal of the Siona from the OISSE. The Secoya reverted back to the original OISE, while the Siona formed their independent organization the Organización de la Nacionalidad Indígena Siona del Ecuador (Organization of the Indigenous Siona Nationality of Ecuador ONISE). (Vickers 2003) The severance could have been anticipated as disputes between the Secoya and Siona are relatively common and have characterized the historical relationship between the neighboring communities.

The structure of both the OISE and ONISE was modeled directly after that of the Ecuadorian bureaucratic institutions they were designed to deal with. The structure follows a hierarchical order and includes both elected and appointed positions. Elected officials include positions of the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Appointed positions include a board of director, local officers and directors for each of the three settlements of San Pablo, Remolino and Campo Eno. The OISE also has ministries of health, agriculture, education, tourism and women's affairs. (Vickers 2003)

The OISE has faced several challenges since its inception in 1983. Yet the most prominent and publicized has been that of its battle with the Occidental Exploration and Petrol Company over drilling in its territory at "Block 15." The decades-long disputes of over oil expedition and drilling have forced the OISE to become an organized and informed body bolstered by support from key agencies, and able to effectively represent Secoya culture. Though the hierarchical structure of the organization is antithetical to the traditional egalitarian society, the OISE has been forced to be the vehicle by which the Secoya Nation preserves its way of life and as such, it has developed as an organization relatively equipped to fulfill its purpose. Rather than document decades worth of

negotiations, it will be instructive here to examine the original agreements with Occidental Petrol and the adoption of a Code of Conduct to illustrate the evolution of the OISE.

### **Oil in the Amazon**

In 1967, Texaco drilled its first commercial well in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Five years later, Texaco signed a 20-year production contract with the Ecuadorian government granting access to the lower Amazon basin for oil exploration and production. Through the duration of its time in the territory, Texaco drilled 339 oil wells in the region, largely unmonitored, dumped millions of gallons of toxic brine into unlined waste pits and burned tens of millions of cubic feet of gas when pits were expected to overflow. (Kimberling 1991) Texaco's activity in the region had devastating effects on the biodiversity of flora and fauna, as well as on indigenous groups who occupy the territory including the Quichua, and the Cofán in particular, whose population fell from 15, 000 to 300 during that period. (Carson 1995) The Tetetes were completely decimated in that time and are no longer a represented group. (Carson 1995) In 1992, Texaco's contract with the Ecuadorian government came to an end and Ecuador's national oil company, Petroecuador, signed an agreement with the Occidental Exploration and Production Company (OEPC). The agreement granted concession to exploration rights of 200,000 hectares in the Amazon, which included Siona-Secoya territory known by OEPC as "Block 15." Before beginning exploration of this territory, OEPC required that a socio-environmental impact survey of Block 15 be conducted, and commissioned the North American environmental consulting firm, Walsh Environmental Scientists and Engineers (WALSH) to perform the survey. The firm's findings reported that:

...Evaluation of socioeconomic and cultural impacts of the next phase of seismic exploration in Block 15 [shows that]....most of the area directly affected by the proposed activities is tropical rain forest, very undisturbed and with great biodiversity of flora and fauna....The proposed geophysical prospecting activities will have a very serious impact for the Sionas and Secoyas, and should not be implemented in their territory or so close to the boundaries of their territory that it will be affected. (Garzon 2001: 78)

Block 15 territory was found to be extremely fragile territory. The Block was noted for its extraordinarily high level of biodiversity and included three national parks and a protective forest. Two major tributaries of the Amazon River run through the block; these are the Napo River and the Aguarico River. As mentioned above, the Aguarico River is the main river around which the Secoya people have based their settlements for centuries. Additionally, oil extraction in the region would affect not only the Secoya people, but also the Siona people, the Quicha and the Shuar all of whom relied upon affected rivers as their main source of water. (Groth 1998)

Despite report conclusions and expected effects upon the region, Occidental began exploration in Block 15 in 1995. Activity in the Secoya region followed years of

exploration in Block 15 Quichua territory. Upon entering Secoya territory, Occidental contacted the Secoya's governing body, the OISE, to obtain permission from the Secoyas for advancing activity in Block 15. The Secoyas were largely uninformed about Block 15 territory and the petrol company's intent with the land. A meeting was soon called between the Secoya and Occidental to obtain Secoya approval for exploration. The meeting's result was a first agreement, signed by the Secoyas in July of 1996, which established sweeping authorization for Occidental to proceed with its next steps. In exchange for approval, Occidental provided the community with five solar powered water pumps and an offer of indemnity for the construction of a road. In October of 1996, the Secoya renegotiated their contract with Occidental offering the company approval of a "seismic prospecting stage" which left an open door for further negotiations regarding activity in the territory. (Garzón 2001) In exchange, Occidental granted the Secoya Nation three water pumps, three medicine chests, an outboard motor, three industrial cooking stoves, and 10 million Sucre. A year later, Occidental offered the "immediate and urgent materials" of zinc roofing sheets, cooking pots, rolls of wire mesh, and barbed wire in exchange for the approval to begin exploration and exploitation of the oil fields at Block 15. (Garzón 2001) In addition to the materials granted, Occidental promised further compensation including ponds for fish farming, a sports field, a dock, education grants for school-age children and an additional motor. In an agreement signed a year later in June of 1998, Occidental was granted restricted authorization for topography activities and in exchange, the Secoya received \$95,000. (Garzón 2001) Though each agreement granted a greater reward to the Secoyas, Occidental also gained greater access to the pristine Secoya territory. The circumstances reported here make it apparent that the petrol company took extreme advantage of the position of the Secoyas as uneducated in the oil industry, unaware of the terrestrial impacts that drilling would have on the land, and unversed in the general practice of negotiating.

In an effort to circumvent negotiations with the OISE, Occidental Petroleum began seeking independent negotiations with the community at Secoya Remolino. The company justified its actions by maintaining that the community at Remolino would be the most adversely affected by Occidental's activities. In September of 1996, Occidental signed an agreement with the Remolino community that granted the company authorization to build an access road and a platform for Block 15 in territory near the oil well. The agreement also extended Occidental rights to sell the affected land to Petroecuador. The company agreed to pay \$85,000 to the community over a set period, with an upfront payout of the first \$20,000. The negotiations succeeded in galvanizing the community around the issue and launched a process whereby communication between OISE and represented communities would become continuous and supportive. (Garzón 2001)

In response to Occidental's attempt to divide the OISE and the community at Remolino, OISE leaders recognized the need for a Code of Conduct that would dictate interaction between the OISE and Occidental Petroleum. In search of guidance and support, the OISE contacted the Ecuadorian NGO, Centro de Derechos Económicos y Sociales (Center for Economic and Social Rights, CDES). CDES works directly with



indigenous organizations and other NGOs throughout Ecuador to support disenfranchised communities' struggles for economic and social justice. (CDES 2008) CDES worked with the OISE to guide the organization toward a greater understanding of how to conceptualize their dealings with OEPC, and helped OISE to create a framework for negotiations. Together, the organizations formed guidelines which included stipulations ensuring that the Secoyas be kept informed and updated by Occidental, that OISE be granted sufficient time to educate itself in preparation for further negotiations, and that advisory support be provided to the OISE by at least one or more outside parties. With the support of CDES, the OISE created a Code of Conduct to be agreed to by Occidental Petroleum prior to any further negotiations between the two parties. When the OISE presented their Code of Conduct to Occidental, the company maintained that in order to proceed in accordance with the International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples<sup>10</sup>, the government of Ecuador must become involved as a third party to negotiations. On September 7<sup>th</sup> 1999, a full three years after Occidental's attempt to divide the Secoya community, as well as several issuances of revised versions of the Code of Conduct and countless meetings later, the parties finally agreed on a document to guide further negotiation. The Code represented a major accomplishment for the OISE and an unprecedented willingness (by force) of an international corporation to engage an indigenous community on terms to which they had both fully and knowingly agreed. Terms set forth in the final document include the following: mutual respect for the rights of each party, in particular, the right to participate, to consult, and the right to self-determination. Also included are the principle that transparency and honesty govern negotiations, the recognition of OISE as the official and only representative body of the Secoya Nation, and the possibility to appoint advisors and host independent observers. The Code also granted the Secoyas the right to legal representation to be financed entirely by Occidental Petroleum.

The Code of Conduct represents a major accomplishment for any indigenous community dealing with a multinational corporation. Additionally, it illustrates the evolution of the OISE from a nascent, inexperienced organization to a resourceful, well-organized and informed body that has become a powerful advocate for Secoya rights in only a matter of years. The Code of Conduct successfully advanced the rights and representation of the Secoyas on paper; however, in practice, much of Secoya territory has been severely distressed by the oil extraction activities in the region. Major oil spills have resulted in unregulated and widespread toxic pollution that has impacted plant and animal species in the region. During Texaco's term in the region (prior to the agreement with Occidental) the company spilled a reported 16.8 million gallons from its main pipeline alone into Amazon territory; this is compared to the 10.8 million gallons that Exxon Valdez spilled into the Prince William Sound. (Kimberling 1991) Additionally, in the years following Texaco's activity in the region, tests revealed the drinking water to have toxic contaminants at levels reaching 1,000 times the safety standards recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (Carson 1995) In 1993, a

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<sup>10</sup> Article 2 of the International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples stipulates that: "Governments shall have the responsibility for developing, with the participation of the peoples concerned, co-ordinated and systematic action to protect the rights of these peoples and to guarantee respect for their integrity." (ILO 1989)

coalition of several indigenous and human rights and environmental groups in Ecuador including the CONAIE and CONFENIAE called for an international boycott of Texaco's products. The coalition charged Texaco with well-documented abuses including 30 major oil spills, discharging 20 million gallons of toxic chemicals, abandoning hundreds of toxic waste ponds, clearing 2.5 million acres of Amazon rainforest territory and contributing to major health effects of the indigenous groups who live there. (Abya Yala 1993)

Over the past several years there have been numerous reported unexplained deaths among the Secoyas and unprecedented rates of cancer, likely caused by exposure to pollutants. (Reich 2004) The media attention and awareness that has come from the negotiations between the Secoyas, Occidental, and the international community has been instrumental in supporting the Secoya Nation and the Amazon Rainforest. Still, Occidental continues to take advantage of its power, refusing to pay for clean up of spills and leaving large open pits of toxic pollutants at project sites throughout Secoya territory. The past 30 years since Texaco's involvement in the region has been an uphill battle for indigenous groups and though there have been some small victories, the tremendous devastation and continued destruction of the region overwhelms any recourse that may be offered these groups.

### **Current Campaigns**

A discussion of the economic conditions of the Secoya people has not been addressed to this point because the Secoya history until the late 1900s was one in which resources were shared within the community, and an economic system other than micro level exchange was in most cases unnecessary, and therefore largely nonexistent. Some early reports of trade between Secoyas and colonists passing through the Amazon River Basin do exist, however they are scarce. Secoyas traditionally used only forest products to sustain their lives well into the late 1900s, and still use the Amazon to sustain their lives in almost every realm today. The introduction of property rights and pollution, however, has created the need for economic resources within the Secoya community. Not only has scarcity produced this need, but extended contact with Western ideals has also introduced a knowledge of, and desire for, "things." The nature of exchange between Occidental Petroleum and the OISE in a sense educated the Secoya community on the economic value of their territory, and also illustrated that ceding their land could result in gaining access to money and resources that would otherwise be out of reach.

Prior to extended contact with outsiders in the 1950s, the Secoya's economy was, and still is in many respects, organized as largely communal. The concept of the *minga* is instrumental in explaining this point. When Secoyas families have a particular project that is too large to be accomplished by an individual or family, or for regular agricultural work in individual fields, a family will announce that they will be holding a "minga". The *minga* is essentially a community workday. All community members who wish to participate, which is usually most of the community—men and women included—travel together to the work site and spend the length of the project's duration working from early morning to sunset. The host of the *minga* is usually male, and his wife plays a

critical role in the process. The wife of the host prepares chicha<sup>11</sup> in the days leading up to the minga. During workdays, she travels with the workers to the work site and spends the day trailing closely behind them, periodically serving them chicha from the communal supply. After the work has been completed for the day, the wife of the host prepares a large meal to feed the workers in exchange for their labor. Mingas are still the current work system at Siecoya Remolino and occur frequently, sometimes several times a week.<sup>12</sup> The system stands in obvious contrast to the Western concept of individual occupations. Though the minga system is still present and dominant, there are several Secoyas who also work in other occupations in local tourism, education, medicine and local non-timber forest product industries.<sup>13</sup>

The need for earning an income has become more and more pressing as the commoditization of the rainforest has led to pollution and scarcity. At present, the reported needs of the population at Siecoya Remolino (needs which can only be met through the attainment of an exchangeable currency) are consistent across households and relatively simple. Secoyas cited needs for basic goods almost uniformly including, cooking oil, matches, soap, rice, lard, onions, sugar, pasta, eggs, machetes and motor oil. The one extra expense most commonly cited was school tuition.<sup>14</sup> Though the community has two teachers and a schoolhouse that holds roughly fifty children, the community lacks the resources to provide education past the sixth grade including a lack of incentives to offer teachers for recruitment to the school, as well as the lack of a secondary schoolhouse to accommodate higher grades and a need for books, paper, pencils and chalk. The lack of expendable income in the community constrains the community's ability to purchase these simple items and provide a higher level of education for the community's children. A fund for the Ministry of Education gains an annual \$70 in collected dues from community families to be allocated towards education for all the children.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, families that can afford to send their children outside the community for education choose to do so. Additionally, the lack of gainful employment available at Siecoya Remolino has caused young Secoyas who have been educated outside the community and have spent their formative years outside of Siecoya Remolino to often choose to settle where they can earn a living, usually outside of the community. A final and increasingly crucial need within the community is the need for access to a well-developed health care system. Currently families must travel to one of two ports to gain access to medical services. Travel time is about 20 minutes to the closest port, which is not fully equipped to provide medical care, but does have nurses available. A trip to the nearest working hospital takes at least a half hour. Often when Secoyas are ill, they hesitate to use medical services first for the high cost associated with receiving medical care, and second because of the difficulty in reaching care. This

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<sup>11</sup> Chicha is the traditional beverage of the Secoya Nation and is common to indigenous groups throughout the Ecuadorian Amazon. It is a fermented beverage made from masticated yucca and mixed with water. Only women are allowed to make chicha and a sour or spoiled batch is taken as a bad omen.

<sup>12</sup> Author experience at Siecoya Remolino, July and August 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Author interviews at Siecoya Remolino, July and August 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Author interviews at Siecoya Remolino, July and August 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Education meeting at Siecoya Remolino, July 2007.

issue has become more acute in the past several decades as traditional healing and shamanism has declined, and as the dangers of pollutants and toxic waste in the water and the land further endangers Secoya families. The Secoyas do have a small building which once functioned as a medical center. The center was opened after the community settled with Occidental Petroleum and received a lump sum in exchange for oil exploration. The community constructed the building and had it fully functioning with certified medical personnel and a supply of medications. The system of payment used was one of credit for the medications, however, and most families never paid for the services and medications they received. As a result, the center ran out of funding and soon closed its doors. Today the cement building stands in stark contrast to the thatched-roof homes located around it. The building sits abandoned in a densely overgrown area at the edge of the forest in the central area at Siecoya Remolino.<sup>16</sup> Income generated through a community-wide project at Siecoya Remolino could be very beneficial to the community if it was dedicated to securing more regular access to medical services and medical education for mothers in the community in particular, and the wider community in general.

As mentioned in the introduction, the community Siecoya Remolino has begun to develop five projects intended to provide gainful economic opportunities to the community and generate more income with which to support and preserve the tradition and culture of the people, and to improve the general quality of life for the community. The projects were identified by the OISE, with the support of Ecuadorian NGOs and international organizations. The majority of the projects are designed to enhance the community's food supply, and to create surplus, which can be sold at markets in surrounding communities. The projects are as follows: fish breeding (aquaculture), harvesting cacao, community-based tourism, poultry breeding (aviculture) and the recuperation of lost territory. As mentioned above, the Ecuadorian NGO Yanapuma Foundation is currently engaged in a project to develop a model for sustainable development that can be used with indigenous communities and has recently begun working with the community at Siecoya Remolino to develop an integrated response to the demands of globalization. The following chapter is a proposal intended to guide the Yanapuma Foundation in its initial interactions with the community at Siecoya Remolino to begin working toward achieving the goals set forth by the Secoyas and the OISE. The first section is a Terms of Reference for the project proposal, which provides the background and objectives of the proposal, as well as an introduction into each project. The second section contains the full project proposal, and the third section includes a suggested project timeline and anticipated budget summary for the projects.

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<sup>16</sup> Author conversation with Colon Rajúl Piaguje and observations, August 2007.

## Chapter 3

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# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR PRE-PLANNING PHASE

## YANAPUMA FOUNDATION COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROJECT: SIECOYA REMOLINO

### Background and Objective

Traditionally a nomadic people, the Secoya once occupied scattered autonomous settlements located in territory that extended from the north bank of the Napo River to the south bank of the Putamayo River close to the present border between Ecuador and Colombia. (Vickers 2003) Most settlements were situated around the Aguarico River, which flows through the northeastern Ecuadorian Amazon, the southeastern Colombian Amazon and the northwestern Peruvian Amazon. The remaining 500 members of the Ecuadorian Secoya Nation are currently located in the following three communities: the Secoya San Pablo de Catëtsiaya, Siecoya Remolino, located in San Roque Parish, Shushufindi Canton, Sucumbíos Province; and Secoya Eno, located in Tarapoa Parish, Cuyabeno Canton, Sucumbíos Province. (OEPC Mimeo 1999)

Over the history of their occupation in this territory, the Secoya people have been witness to countless regional transformations that have affected their cultural and social systems. From first recorded contact in the 1500s between Secoyas and Spanish explorers to various visits by missionaries, the Secoya nation, marked by flexibility and adaptability, has been displaced, lost land rights through the formation of political boundaries, changed its core belief system and developed a sophisticated mechanism for navigating political participation in the international arena. The late 20th Century brought the most rapid and aggressive change in the recorded history of the culture, as a consortium of oil companies located substantial oil reserves in what was geographically denominated “Block 15” of Secoya Nation territory. Though the Secoya Nation currently holds legal title to a 22,000-hectare reserve, the future of the culture is threatened by outside groups such as colonists, loggers, petrol companies, and speculators that have exerted great pressure on the Secoya population.

The Yanapuma Foundation is currently engaged in a project to develop a model for sustainable development that can be used with indigenous communities. The organization’s goal is to create an integrated approach to sustainable development that considers cultural, environmental, health, education, sanitation, agricultural, and economic factors to allow the community to formulate and realize its own participatory community development plan. Throughout the planning stages and during project implementation, Yanapuma will continue to collaborate with the community itself as well as other organizations and agencies to deliver support and services to aid in program implementation.

Yanapuma has recently begun working with the community at Secoya Remolino to develop an integrated response to the demands of globalization. The community itself has identified some primary areas from which to gain revenue to support its efforts in other initiatives including supporting higher levels of education at Secoya Remolino, securing greater access to health care for the community, improving administration of the OISE and the three Secoya communities of Ecuador, and generally maintaining and preserving the Secoya culture. This project proposal should be a guide for Yanapuma to direct its preliminary activities and interactions with the community at Secoya Remolino.

## **Narrative Scope**

Over the past four years the Secoya Community at Siecoya Remolino has identified and begun to develop five projects to enhance economic opportunities available to the community in an effort to support and preserve the tradition and culture of the people, and to improve the general quality of life for the community. The projects are as follows:

- Aquaculture
- Cacao
- Community-based tourism
- Aviculture
- Recuperation of territory

Progress in each of these projects has been halting and slow due to a lack of technical expertise among the local community and poor organization of the community's efforts toward reaching specific and attainable goals, compounded with a chronic and severe lack of capital. The community has contacted the Ecuadorian NGO Yanapuma Foundation to assist in the development of these initiatives. As a volunteer with Yanapuma, the author performed an investigation of the economic system of the community of Siecoya Remolino to identify income and expenses and assess the needs of the community. The work aimed to direct Yanapuma's work in Siecoya Remolino by providing a framework for completing assessments of each of the aforementioned projects. The result is a project proposal for furthering progress in each of the above areas. The proposal will assist the Yanapuma Foundation in supporting the initiatives in Siecoya Remolino, and in reaching the goals as stated by the community's governing body the OISE.

## **Aquaculture Assessment**

Currently, the Aguarico River provides a scarce quantity of consumable fish which is insufficient to feed the community. This is partly attributed to increased population pressures due to a recently adopted sedentary lifestyle which has led to over fishing in the region; it is also due in large part to the introduction of chemical pollutants by petrol plants located directly upriver of the community. A scarcity of native mammals has compounded with the lack of fish to result in a severely diminished supply of protein for consumption. The OISE has identified the practice of fish cultivation as an opportunity for increasing the supply of protein-rich food for consumption as well as providing an extra income-generating activity.

### **Objective**

Completed assessment of current project progress and an assessment of the needs of the community's existing fish pools to be developed by and presented to the Secoya community so that they may begin the aquaculture project. The aquaculture project aims to ensure that each family is trained in the maintenance of the pools and the proper methods of raising fish.

### **Scope of Work**

- Examine history of previous aquaculture project in Secoya Remolino led first by ISIS of Hampshire College, then by Las Lianas.
- Identify project model and extent of community participation in all project phases.
- Research current work of Las Lianas within Remolino.
- Conduct site visits to all aquaculture pools and conduct interviews with families who maintain the pools, both functioning and nonfunctioning, to determine both reasons for success and impediments to progress.
- Compile information on the nature of the project between Las Lianas to determine whether a partnership between Las Lianas and Yanapuma would be beneficial.
- Determine costs of making each existing pool functional and expanding access by building new pools.
- Research grant opportunities through organizations such as the New England Biolabs Foundation and other funding sources to cover costs.
- Conduct site visits to test toxicity levels in water at both existing pool sites and sites which have been designated as future pool sites.
- Determine level of willingness among community members to begin amending nonfunctioning pools.
- Compile report of project profile from project with Las Lianas, with expectations of cost, funding opportunities and expected timeline.
- Encourage community to hold planning meeting at which Yanapuma may present the report of project expectations to be discussed by the wider community.



## **Cacao Assessment**

The local cacao cultivation effort is the result of another initiative identified as a potential asset in Secoya development. Most families at Sicoya Remolino are involved in cacao cultivation, however most fields share common problems with the exception of a few families, which exhibit cultivated healthy, productive plants. The majority of cacao fields are wildly overgrown with weeds and plagued by various insect infestations. Farmers tend to their fields not more than once a week and seem to follow an irregular schedule of tending to the plants a few times per month. The Secoya community has not been properly trained in the cultivation of the cacao crop and lacks the technical skills to produce healthy, fruit-bearing plants, despite the fact that cultivation of this crop could lead to major economic gains for the community.

## **Objective**

Assess local crop conditions and determine feasibility of developing a model to train Secoya farmers in the proper cultivation of cacao, establish markets for the regular sale of cacao for local distribution or international fair trade business and direct funds to community health care and education projects.

## **Scope of Work**

- Recruit agricultural specialists to conduct site visits to cacao fields at Sicoya Remolino.
- Conduct interviews with Secoya farmers on their experience in growing cacao, including challenges and expectations.
- Conduct site visits to cacao field during mingas to gain an understanding of Secoya agricultural practices.
- Compile report on agricultural practices of Secoyas and cacao crop conditions with recommendations for beneficial combination of Secoya traditional growing methods and modern agricultural practices.
- Perform desk review of models used by other organizations in creating cooperatives and initiatives with cacao and other non-timber forest products.
- Research local markets at Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to determine feasibility of earning substantial income from sale at local sites.
- Perform site visits to Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to create profile of selling cacao at each town and document any identified inefficiencies.
- Determine feasibility of exporting cacao internationally to gain greater market access for farmers.
- Encourage community planning meeting at which Yanapuma staff, agricultural specialists and Secoya farmers present findings.

## **Community-based Tourism Assessment**

Tourist boats travel regularly along the Aguarico River on their way to popular tourist destinations such as Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, Limoncocha Biological Reserve and Nueva Loja. The Secoya witness the passage of several tourist boats each week and have thus identified tourism as a relatively easy way to gain a substantial amount of income for the community. Accordingly, they have constructed a hut for tourists to stay in located on the opposite bank of the river from the community's center and the majority of the Secoya family's dwellings. Most Secoyas have little experience with tourists and outsiders in general, and are unaware of how to accommodate individuals and groups of people on their land.

### **Objective**

Assess the impact of community-based tourism on the community at Secoya Remolino and determine whether developing tourism will be feasible and beneficial.

### **Scope of Work**

- Conduct research to develop database of tour operators in the Amazon basin.
- Consult Secoyas to determine which tour operators work with the community at Secoya Remolino.
- Perform research to determine the impact of community-based tourism on the indigenous communities in the Amazon basin.
- Conduct interviews with Secoyas to determine the development plan for building tourism business and to identify intentions and expectations.
- Perform site visits to tourism businesses that operate out of indigenous communities at Cuyabeno Reserve and visit the Secoya tourist site.
- Determine feasibility of building partnerships with tour operators downstream at the Cuyabeno Reserve.
- Compile report on models adopted by other successful community-based tourism efforts led by indigenous communities; include a current report on the progress of tourism at Secoya Remolino.
- Based upon findings, determine extent to which the organization has the capacity to meet the community's needs in establishing a tourism industry.
- Promote community-wide planning meeting to present report findings regarding tourism industry and determine next steps.

## **Aviculture Assessment**

Currently most families at Siecoya Remolino keep roosters and hens, however few families actively feed fowl. Fowl lives outside of the homes and runs free throughout the day searching for food on the forest floor and inside human dwellings. Hens and their young regularly enter human dwellings in search of food. The lack of refrigeration and proper storage containers in homes leads to unsanitary conditions and can cause health problems for the local population. Additionally, most families at Siecoya Remolino purchase eggs for consumption rather than gather eggs from local hens. Community members report that purchasing eggs represents a significant amount of family expenditure.

## **Objective**

Assess the current conditions of fowl at Siecoya Remolino, determine necessary inputs in the construction of hen houses, present report of findings to community to inform community's development of an aviculture project.

## **Scope of Work**

- Conduct site visits to community to interview families that keep fowl.
- Determine the level of enthusiasm for the aviculture project.
- Interview families to determine their level of experience with chicken coops.
- Conduct desk review of chicken coops and fowl in the lower Amazon basin to determine necessary building materials and proper design for rainforest conditions.
- Consult with Secoyas to determine which building materials can be found locally and which may be substituted for local materials.
- Research grants and funding opportunities to cover any construction costs, as well as initial cost of poultry feed.
- Contact specialists to determine proper care of and maintenance of fowl in the rainforest.
- Research local markets to determine feasibility of selling surplus eggs.
- Compile report on findings and encourage community to hold a planning meeting at which the report may be presented and discussed.
- Encourage follow-up meeting less than one month later to begin planning the project.

## **Recuperation of Territory**

The Secoya currently own 22,000 hectares of primary Amazon rainforest, however this represents only a small fraction of the territory historically occupied by Secoyas. Border wars, disputes, colonization and oil exploitation have limited the land that the Secoya occupy making it significantly difficult for the community to live in their nomadic ancestral tradition. Additionally, continued destruction of the rainforest remains a major threat to Secoya health and wellbeing. High rates of cancer and unknown disease have been reported in the community likely due to increased pollution from oil extraction processes. The Secoya have therefore been working with the local and national governments to recuperate lost land and expand their holdings.

## **Objective**

Assess past work that has resulted in the recuperation of lost territory to begin creating a plan with the community to protect Secoya holdings and ensure that the land once owned is secured and continues to be used in the cultural tradition of the community.

## **Scope of Work**

- Determine location and extent across borders of former Secoya territory
- Research former territory to determine what percentage is privately and publicly owned
- Determine whether Secoya leaders are knowledgeable about where to seek information regarding ownership, and whether they already are aware of who currently owns former territory
  - If leaders do not know how to seek this information, hold training sessions on how to research land holdings
- Form working groups with community leaders and Yanapuma staff to jointly research land holdings
- Research past land rights disputes and recuperation by indigenous communities
- Determine local political heads responsible for districts in which lost territory is held
- Organize meetings with local politicians and community leaders to assess willingness of politicians to cooperate in land recuperation campaign
- Form relationships with local politicians at all levels as well as community leaders in lost territory
- Organize local NGOs working with indigenous communities to rally support for recuperation campaign
- Research law firms that work with indigenous communities and seek legal support for the recuperation campaign

YANAPUMA FOUNDATION AND  
ORGANIZACIÓN INDÍGENA SECOYA  
DEL ECUADOR COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROPOSAL**

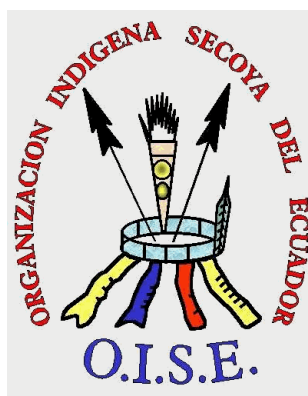
*Prepared for:*

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And

Organización Indígena Secoya del Ecuador



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## **Project Description**

This proposal is intended to guide the Yanapuma Foundation in its initial interactions with the community at Siecoya Remolino. Each project should begin with a period of thorough review of project progress at Siecoya Remolino, consultation with local experts (Secoyas) and technical experts in each project field, research of local markets and export possibilities, as well as assessments of the expected impacts of the projects upon the community. The following serves as a guide for each project that will culminate in at least one project report to be developed with the community and presented at Siecoya Remolino during planning sessions at which the community can determine which projects to pursue and in what capacity the community will develop each component. The projects outlined in this proposal are precisely the five projects outlined by the OISE for their development. They are as follows: aquaculture, cacao cultivation, community-based tourism, aviculture and the recuperation of territory.

Information contained in this proposal report is based upon author's experience and interviews with Secoya people at Siecoya Remolino. The Background and Current Progress sections are included to inform Yanapuma of the program in place at Siecoya Remolino. As the organization has only recently begun working with the community, the development plan presented here is almost entirely new information for the organization. A list of contacts has been added as an appendix to supply Yanapuma with community members who have been involved in some of the projects as is specified in the document.

## AQUACULTURE

### Situational Analysis

#### *Background*

Historically a hunting and gathering society, the Secoya have long relied upon the abundance of the rainforest to sustain their lifestyle. For centuries fishing has been an important component in the Secoya diet, especially at times when over-hunting has forced a reduction in the local mammal population. As a nomadic population, the Secoya traditionally abandoned sites to resettle in areas of abundance when a decline in mammal and fish populations offered insufficient sustenance for the population. Outside populations however have settled on Secoya territory constraining land opportunities for resettlement. Changes to the Secoya culture, mostly through contact with missionary groups, have also resulted in pressure to become sedentary rather than remain nomadic. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, large sections of Secoya territory have been used for oil exploration and drilling, rendering it uninhabitable.

Currently, the Aguarico River provides a scarce quantity of consumable fish to feed the community. This is partly attributed to increased population pressures which have led to over fishing in the region, but may also be attributed in large part to the recent introduction of chemical pollutants by petrol plants located directly upriver. A scarcity of native mammals has resulted in a severely diminished supply of protein for consumption. As stated above, the traditionally nomadic population would customarily respond by uprooting substandard settlements and relocating. Modern Secoyas however are left with few options. The result is that the Secoyas at Remolino must adapt to the present conditions at their current site. The OISE has therefore identified the practice of fish cultivation as an opportunity for increasing the supply of protein-rich food for consumption as well as providing an income-generating activity for community members.

#### *Current Progress*

The fish breeding initiative was begun at the suggestion of Massachusetts-based Hampshire College. The initiative was launched at the request of then OISE president Elias Piaguaje in 1997 after he spent time at Hampshire College's Institute for Science and Interdisciplinary Studies (ISIS). The institute launched its Indigenous Aquaculture Initiative to specialize in building fish pools for sustainable development at Secoya settlements. The organization aided initially in obtaining pipes and construction materials managed to reach only a limited number of families. In 2003, the College decided to endow its program to an emerging organization and under the leadership of Jim Oldham (ISIS Amazon Project Director). It was through this endowment that Las Lianas Resource Center for Science, Culture, and Environment was formed. Las Lianas has continued work with the Secoyas however progress in the aquaculture project is difficult to measure. (ISIS 2007)

As of 2007, many of the pools have been left only partially equipped and others are completely nonfunctional. Most families do not have expendable income enough to

invest in the purchase of supplies to finish construction, or of fish to add fish to their pools. Progress of the fish pools has been limited for almost all families with the exception of a few, which have constructed working pools and regularly harvest fish for consumption. Pools vary in sized depending upon the location of the pool and the resources of the family. Most pools are family-owned rather than community property; however there are about 38 very large families at Siecoya Remolino, and a single family's pool may therefore need to provide fish for up to 20 or 30 people. The limited progress of the pools is the result of a lack of resources necessary for the construction of pools. In some cases, pools have been constructed but do not contain fish due to the limited finances in the family. The majority of pools need piping to direct water, as well as filtration systems and finally fish for completion. Pools that have been constructed and are in use are in some cases poorly maintained and therefore do not produce a high yield of fish for consumption. Poor maintenance of the pools is a result of the lack technical expertise in aquaculture among Secoyas at Remolino.

## **Recommendations**

### *Project History*

In order to formulate a well-informed and comprehensive approach to the aquaculture project, it will be essential to fully understand the ten-year history of aquaculture at Siecoya Remolino. To this end, Yanapuma Foundation should contact Jim Oldham of Las Lianas to gain an understanding of the institutional experience of Las Lianas, as well as Oldham's personal experience in working with the community at Siecoya Remolino. Particular attention should be paid to the model that the organization used to guide its work with the community, and especially the extent to which the participation of the community was sought in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, Yanapuma should gain information on the current work of Las Lianas in Siecoya Remolino as well as the future plans for projects in the community.

Yanapuma Foundation should also seek to understand the experience of the Secoyas in the project. Yanapuma should conduct site visits to all aquaculture pools and conduct interviews with the families who maintain the pools. Interviews should be conducted with community members connected with both functional and nonfunctional pools to determine both reasons for success and impediments to progress. Attention should be paid to the relationship between the Secoya Nation and Las Lianas as it is perceived by the Secoyas. Las Lianas claims to currently be involved in aquaculture with the Secoyas and creating sustainable aquacultural practices that are aimed at encouraging reproduction of fish and promotion of local species within pools. The organization is not necessarily involved in the creation of new pools or maintenance of existing pools that are not being used for observation purposes.

### *Partnerships*

Yanapuma Foundation may be able to aid the Secoyas in the process of incorporating more successful aquaculture pools by forming a partnership with Las Lianas to encourage greater access to pools throughout the community. The community may benefit from knowledge-sharing workshops at which families with successful pools teach other



families about the process of building a successful fish pool. The community may organize several mingas to first amend nonfunctioning pools and rebuild faulty infrastructure and later to build pools for families without access to existing pools. This may help to ensure that by the end of the project implementation phases, all families within the Secoya Remolino community who wish to have access to a pool be afforded that opportunity. These are merely suggestions, however, and all project phases should be determined by the community with assistance from the Yanapuma Foundation and potentially Las Lianas.

Additionally, there is a great potential for this and the other four projects to benefit from the construction of a resource center, similar to a telecenter or Internet research station. Several Secoya leaders mentioned in interviews that they would like Secoyas to have greater access to computers, Internet, and other communication tools. The leaders were particularly interested in incorporating computers and Internet use into their education system however this could also be a significant resource for many of the other projects. The Internet could provide a significant resource for researching fish pool maintenance techniques, harnessing support from international agencies through discussions of the project over the Internet, and researching different varieties of fish and prices of fish in markets outside of the immediate region. To this end, Yanapuma and the Secoya community may seek to partner with an IT business or an NGO that provides Internet and other technological services to stakeholders such as the Secoya community.

## **CACAO**

### **Situational Analysis**

#### *Background*

Cacao is an important crop for much of South America, and grows especially well in Ecuador's Amazon basin. The OISE has identified cacao production as an important component to the community's development process because the sale of cacao in local markets at Lago Agrio and Shushufindi has the potential to generate some income for community members. The OISE recognizes, however, that these markets are relatively small and though they are near Secoya Remolino, travel to these sites presents significant cost and time, cutting deeply into earnings. Secoyas have therefore been seeking to connect with a larger producer of cocoa to which they can sell their cacao for a larger percentage of profit.

Most families at Secoya Remolino are involved in cacao cultivation. Each family has cacao cultivating at different stages. As of July of 2007, most of the crops had been in the ground between 9 months and 1 year. Again, most farmers share common problems with the exception of a few families who have cultivated healthy, productive plants. The majority of cacao fields are wildly overgrown with weeds and plagued by various insect infestations. The leaves of many young plants have been severely damaged by insects and have been strangled by vines. Most cacao fields yield stunted, unproductive plants. Plants are still young in most fields as they take at least four to five years to bear fruit and the project has only fairly recently been implemented. Growers therefore somewhat falsely believe that as their plants mature, they will become healthier and more productive. Farmers tend to their fields not more than once a week and seem to follow an irregular schedule of tending to the plants a few times each month. The Secoya community has not been properly trained in the cultivation of the cacao crop and currently lacks the technical skills to produce healthy, fruit-bearing plants.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Cultivation Methods*

Lack of technical expertise has been cited by Secoya farmers as the primary hindrance to progress in the cacao cultivation projects. Sustained agricultural support would be of major benefit to the Secoya community as it continues to cultivate cacao. Technical requirements should be assessed based upon current agricultural practices and the condition of cacao plants with respect particularly to insect infestation, weeds, soil quality, and other factors. Yanapuma should therefore seek to recruit agricultural specialists to work on behalf of the community at Secoya Remolino, to perform initial assessments of crop conditions, and to interview Secoya farmers on their experience growing cacao, paying particular attention to learning about the farmers' methods, their growing schedule, and their plans for the next year of growing cacao.

### *Farmer Training*

Yanapuma should assess farmer interest in learning new agricultural methods. The author's experience at Secoya Remolino suggests that farmers will be eager to learn new techniques and gain technical knowledge of the cacao crop. Research should be conducted to understand Secoya teaching methods and all workshops and teaching should follow the traditional methods. As the Secoya culture has historically been egalitarian, teaching is an act of offering guidance and not from an authority figure but rather as the passage of information among equals. The framework for conducting workshops and experimental plots should be determined by the community at Secoya Remolino with guidance from agricultural extension workers and Yanapuma Foundation.

One tactic that may be beneficial for the community in both harnessing traditional teaching methods and engaging modern technology is to record trainings with video equipment using local farmers as the subjects of the videos and as trainers of other farmers. This may present an added element of entertainment and artistic expression to the initiative. As Secoyas often gather in the evening at a family member or neighbor's home to watch videos, this form of communication could create a heightened level of popularity for the cacao project, particularly among community members not directly involved in the farming initiative. The Secoya community has been involved in a number of multimedia projects and has been involved in filming television specials to promote tourism, and to bring awareness to the fight against oil interests in the region. As such, this forum will not introduce a foreign concept into the community but will harness a form that the Secoyas have utilized over the past several years to aid in their development.

Each Secoya at Remolino is granted ownership of 100 hectares of land at birth. Secoya guidelines dictate that only a small percentage of this individual land may be altered by agricultural practices. The average Secoya at Remolino is only able to work one or two fincas (fields) and the percentage of individual plot used for farming is well below the 20% allotted for combined cleared living space and agricultural practices. As each Secoya works an individual finca, the amount of time and energy spent on any given finca is far below that which is necessary to sustain healthy crops. While farmers host mingas to clear fields or tend to crops, they rotate on several fields a month and therefore devote only a fraction of the time to each individual finca. This practice is the result of blending the traditional Secoya practice of the minga, a community-wide work structure, with the Western ideology of ownership and individual work. Within the traditional Secoya culture, as with many hunting and gathering societies, the concept of individual ownership is nonexistent. This particular mix of traditional Secoya cultural norms with Western ideology has led to an unproductive use of labor and land. Yanapuma should therefore seek to meet with the community at Remolino to understand whether or not they find this to be an issue and possibly to formulate a solution. As the goal of the OISE in their development plan is to protect and preserve Secoya culture, it may be in the community's interest to work collectively on designated plots for the gain of the community with a predetermined method for dividing work and benefits from the field's productivity. It is unlikely that farmers will prefer to cease work on their individual fincas. Individually owned land could then be designated to smaller crops used for

familial consumption such as yucca, plantains, and bananas. Mingas could continue to rotate among these plots while work on a community cacao field would be more regular.

### *Markets*

Yanapuma should perform extensive research of local markets at Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to gain an understanding of the market for cacao at these sites. The organization should consider the costs of bringing items to market and of reaching the market by canoe (the cost of fuel), and the cost of transport from the river port to reach Shushufindi. Upon determining these costs, Yanapuma should conduct field visits to interview farmers who sell their products at these markets to gain an understanding of the culture of selling the items at each market and determine any inefficiency in the process of getting items to market. Yanapuma should then conduct research on the feasibility of creating a fair and equitable partnership between the Secoya community and a local shop owner or business to determine the level of profitability for the community if the Secoyas designate a specific location for selling their products.

Yanapuma should also conduct research on the potential for linking with international chocolate producers interested in rainforest conservation and fair trade chocolate to create a larger and more consistent market. Though this kind of a partnership would require that the Secoyas produce a consistent crop for export, the effort put forth may lead to sustained and substantial profits for community-based initiatives. There must be extensive research into the history and background of any organization or business with which the Secoya intend to become involved to avoid potential exploitation. Careful monitoring by Secoyas and the Yanapuma Foundation will also aid in ensuring that the business is beneficial for the Secoya community and that the community is in control of its dealings with outside organizations. That said, a growing number of companies are becoming interested in fair trade chocolate to sell to the growing niche market and there have been some examples of successful initiatives with indigenous Amazonian cacao farmers forming cooperatives and exporting their high quality product to international chocolate producers. One such example is of the indigenous Kichwa of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The Kichwa have formed a self-governed cooperative called the Kallari Association. The initiative began in 1997 and has grown substantially over the past ten years from an association of 50 families to one of over 800 families. The Association exports high quality cacao from the Ecuadorian Amazon to chocolatiers throughout Europe and the US and has recently begun working with chocolatiers in Quito to manufacture gourmet chocolate locally. (Kallari 2007) The Association has opened a café in Quito and plans to market gourmet chocolate bars in Ecuador and for export over the next several years. The initiative may be highly reproducible with the community at Siecoya Remolino. Reaching the current level of production of the Kallari Association of the Kichwa, however, will take many years of sustained and directed efforts to achieve. Secoyas have placed great emphasis on their desire to develop cacao as a sustainable non-timber forest product that has the potential to bring income into the community, but currently an acute lack of experience and guidance has created a fragmented effort with little progress to show to date. With proper research and a prolonged partnership, Yanapuma could potentially replicate appropriate aspects of the Kallari model and with assistance from Yanapuma, Siecoya Remolino could attain a similar level of success.

## **COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM**

### **Situational Analysis**

#### *Background*

Tourist boats regularly travel along the Aguarico River on their way to popular tourist destinations such as Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, Limoncocha Biological Reserve and Nueva Loja. These sites offer tourists the opportunity to explore Ecuador's tropical forests and lakes, and view diverse wildlife including a substantial number of bird species, mammals, reptiles, and fish including monkeys and caiman. The Secoya witness the passage of several tourist boats each week and have thus identified tourism as a relatively easy way to gain a substantial amount of income for the community. Accordingly, the Secoya have responded by constructing a tourist house in a designated tourist area on the opposite bank of the river from most of homes.

#### *Current Progress*

The Secoyas have built a replica of the casa típica or typical house as described in Chapter 1, which is designed to give tourists an experience in the Secoyan ancestral tradition. As such, the house is one large room constructed entirely of local building materials with a thatched hut. In keeping with the traditional design, the casa típica has no floor, but sits directly upon the soil. Apart from a toilet, the tourist area lacks amenities including electricity, and running water. The Minister of Tourism of Siecoya Remolino hosted several mingas to construct a cooking hut in July of 2007, so there should be a cooking hut at the site. There is no transportation for tourists except in the case that they borrow a canoe from one of the families. Additionally, most Secoyas have little experience with tourists and outsiders and are unaware of how to accommodate individuals and groups of people on their land. This proposal addresses tourism as it has been identified as a priority by the Siecoya community. Expanding community-based tourism at Siecoya Remolino is not recommended however unless the tourist area is located a substantial distance from Secoya family settlements and is designed to only minimally impact Secoya culture and community. If the community chooses to expand tourism, the recommendation is to form relationships with tour operators in Cuyabeno, Limoncocha and Nueva Loja to market the site as a one or two-night stay en route to any of these locations.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Research on Regional Tourism*

Yanapuma should conduct extensive research and develop a database of tour operators that work with indigenous communities throughout the Amazon basin, as well as those that work within the basin and currently have no direct contact with indigenous community. The organization should consult the Secoya community to compile a list of tour operators that work with the community at Siecoya Remolino because are several. Yanapuma should also perform extensive research to determine the impact of community-based tourism on indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Yanapuma should consult community members at Secoya Remolino who have been organizing efforts to incorporate community-based tourism into the development plan about their intentions for the business, and the extent of outside assistance they have been receiving. Depending upon the community's response to these inquiries, Yanapuma should determine whether the organization has the capacity to meet the community's needs for the level of effort in this industry. In order to determine this, Yanapuma should perform site visits to communities in which tourism has been implemented to gain an understanding of what kind of facilities will be needed to attract tourists interested in community-based tourism.

The organization should research methods of ownership-building among communities with tourism projects and create a comprehensive plan with the community for all stages of the process of designing a tourism site and program, including training community members, advertising the experience, creating partnerships with tour operators and managing funds. Yanapuma and the community members should assess the different skill sets of the Secoyas to estimate the extent to which local labor will be employed in the various sectors of the tourism business. Yanapuma should contact tourism operators that manage locations at Cuyabeno, Limoncocha and Nueva Loja to determine feasibility of forming partnerships. Upon assessing the feasibility of creating partnerships that may be beneficial to the Secoya community, Yanapuma should determine the frequency and capacity of tourism groups expected to stay at Secoya Remolino in order to begin planning next steps for developing a tourism program provided all parties agree that the initiative have the potential to be successful and beneficial. The recommendation for tourism is to develop this project after some of the simpler projects have been implemented and are stabilized. This will help address some of the Secoyas' immediate needs as well as build trust and a healthy relationship with the organization as one that works with and for the community for the community's sake.

## **AVICULTURE**

### **Situational Analysis**

#### *Background*

Prior to industrialization and oil extraction in the region, Secoya Remolino teemed with wildlife and supplied abundant sources of food for the Secoya community. As mentioned above, the relatively newly adopted sedentary lifestyle of the Secoyas has led to a decrease in protein sources. As a result, food security has recently become an important issue in the Secoya community as it has never been before. In the mid 1950s, missionaries from the Summer Institute for Linguistics introduced aviculture to the Secoyas as well as other domesticated animals such as pigs and cattle as well.

#### *Current Progress*

Currently most families at Secoya Remolino keep roosters and hens, though few families actively feed fowl. Fowl live outside of homes and run free throughout the day searching for food on the forest floor and inside human dwellings. Hens and their young enter human dwellings, which lack refrigeration and proper storage containers, leading to unsanitary conditions that can cause health problems for the local population. Additionally, most families at Secoya Remolino purchase their eggs which represents a significant amount of family expenditure. The OISE has therefore identified aviculture as a means of creating greater food security for families, eliminating the need to purchase eggs for consumption and as a potential source of income.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Community Perspective*

The Yanapuma Foundation should conduct site visits to Secoya homes to interview families and gain an understanding of the use of fowl within the community. The Foundation should determine the level of desire among community members to become involved in building hen houses. As most families keep fowl around the human settlement, and the OISE has prioritized aviculture as an important component in development, it should be expected that the community will be eager to begin the project.

#### *Materials and Resources*

The Secoya rely upon the rainforest for most of their building supplies. Yanapuma should conduct interviews with Secoyas to determine whether or not they have previously built hen houses at Secoya Remolino, and should note the design of the hen houses if they have been built. Yanapuma should inquire into any design flaws the Secoya may have identified in their hen houses and also note dangers to hens cited by the Secoya from wild foxes, snakes, etc. Yanapuma should then conduct research to determine which building materials will be necessary for the construction of hen houses and consult with Secoyas to determine which materials can be found locally and which can be substituted for local materials.

Research should be conducted to determine funding opportunities for construction of poultry breeding facilities and funding opportunities for obtaining poultry feed for the first several months of the program until the sale from eggs begins to pay for feed and other costs. Yanapuma should research the proper care of fowl, and aid Secoyas in conducting workshops upon project implementation to encourage safe practices in the proper care of fowl.

### *Markets*

The project should initially be aimed at meeting consumption needs within the community and eliminating the need to purchase eggs from local markets. If the project proves to be successful, however, and hens yield a surplus of eggs, Yanapuma should research local markets to determine feasibility of selling these eggs. Depending upon community response to the concept, Yanapuma may also determine the feasibility of setting up a small stand on the riverbank on the edge of the community to sell eggs to local colonists and passing boats. This may present an opportunity to earn extra income in the instance that the project is successful for consumption but would be operating at a loss if people had to travel to Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to sell extra eggs. Yanapuma should determine community's willingness to do this and assess the potential impact on the community that this activity may have.



## **RECUPERATION OF TERRITORY**

### **Situational Analysis**

#### *Background*

The Secoya currently own 22,000 hectares of primary Amazon rainforest. However, this represents only a fraction of their original territory. Border wars and disputes have limited the land that the Secoya occupy making it difficult for the community to live in their ancestral nomadic tradition. The community has long fought to gain legal title over its territory as it has witnessed colonization of the rainforest and the destructive effects of oil exploitation on natural resources. The formation of the OISE was originally a response to colonization in Secoya territory, and initial battles resulted in Secoya legal ownership of large tracts of land. The Secoya have therefore been working with the local and national governments to recuperate lost land and expand their holdings. The OISE has identified the recuperation of land as a major component to securing the Secoya lifestyle and tradition. This element is in fact crucial, because as the Amazon becomes more and more commoditized and modern life encroaches more rapidly upon the Secoya territory, without legal title to the land, the Secoyas are powerless to stop pollution, deforestation, destruction of local flora and fauna and other negative impacts of industrial activity.

#### *Current Progress*

Over the past several decades, the land recuperation effort has been a main priority for the Secoya in all three settlements. The OISE has worked with several NGOs to secure land and efforts are ongoing. Some land recuperation efforts are focused on granting Secoyas legal title, while others have been focused upon securing the land for legal protection as national reserve. Several organizations have worked with the Secoya in these efforts.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Research*

Yanapuma may best be of use in supporting the land recuperation project by providing guidance and resources to the OISE as it navigates difficult political and legal terrain, and forms new partnerships with a variety of organizations.

In order to provide this support, Yanapuma should work with the Secoyas to determine how they envision the future of the campaign, with whom they seek to form new partnerships, and what land in particular they see as most immediately in danger of being seized or destroyed. Yanapuma must perform extensive research to understand the history of the land recuperation struggle, from both the governmental and Ecuadorian legal perspective, as well as from the perspective of the Secoyas. Yanapuma should determine the extent and location of former Secoya territory, and research this territory to determine what percentage is privately and publicly owned. Yanapuma should determine the extent to which Secoya leaders are knowledgeable about where to seek legal land and

ownership information, and if leaders do not know where to seek this information, Yanapuma should train a land recuperation committee on how to perform research on land holdings. Yanapuma could then form working groups with community leaders and Yanapuma staff to jointly research land holdings. Groups should research past land rights disputes and recuperation by indigenous communities.

Most Secoyas at Remolino are very knowledgeable about the history of the land struggle, so research on land rights disputes can be done through interviews with Secoyas and at meetings of land recuperation committees. As a communication component, these interviews could be recorded and used to educate younger Secoyas in the local school, or those who may not have a firm knowledge of the land rights struggle. Additionally, the community and Yanapuma may consider inviting a documentary filmmaker to the community to work with the community on documenting their efforts at recuperating lost territory. If successful, the effort could bring crucial awareness and international support to the Secoya community.

The committee should determine, if it is not already known, which local political heads are responsible for districts in which lost territory is held. The committee should then organize meetings with local politicians and community leaders to assess willingness of politicians to cooperate in land recuperation campaign. Yanapuma should aid in forming relationships between local politicians, at all levels in lost territory, and community leaders at Secoya Remolino, if these relationships are not already in tact. Yanapuma should identify other NGOs working with indigenous communities to rally support for recuperation campaign and should also identify law firms that work with indigenous communities to seek legal support for the recuperation campaign. Yanapuma should seek this information first from within the community before performing desk reviews as it is likely that leaders will have immediate access to detailed information regarding past disputes and relations with legal teams. Yanapuma should inquire within the community about the effectiveness of past campaigns-factors that aided in success and hindered progress-identify allies and seek to form relationships with other organizations or supporting agencies to address what have been identified as weaknesses in campaigns. Yanapuma should also seek to gain information about agencies with which the Secoya have worked closely to identify any issues that have caused hindrances to past campaigns that the Secoya community has not itself identified. Upon compiling information on all of the above factors, Yanapuma should attend a Secoya community meeting at which the working groups can present their findings to the community. The community can then determine the campaign's next steps. Yanapuma should assess the possibility of forming working groups to meet regularly with law firms to determine legal rights for each area, organize meetings with government land rights committee, hold rallies and press conference to bring visibility to the issue and organize meetings between indigenous community and President Rafael Correa.

## **WORK PLAN & BUDGET SUMMARY**

As this proposal is intended to guide Yanapuma in its initial interactions with the community, the following recommendations have been outlined for the preliminary phase of each project. In order to prepare for this pre-planning stage, it is recommended that Yanapuma perform a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) with the community at Siecoya Remolino to ensure that the priorities of the whole community are addressed in the recommendations of the OISE. The PRA should be instrumental in forming relationships with the community that will prepare Yanapuma and the community for the work that lies ahead in the preplanning stage and should also seek to determine the order in which projects will be approached based upon the momentum, enthusiasm and direction of the community.

## **AQUACULTURE**

The implementation of a thorough and well-planned aquaculture program in Siecoya Remolino will be instrumental in creating enhanced food security and potentially contributing to the sustainable income generating activities available to Secoyas at Remolino. In order to ensure that the aquaculture project is implemented using safe practices that utilize clean, high quality water for fish pools, and that project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation phases are community-directed and participatory, several aspects of the project must be evaluated prior to project commencement.

### **Scope of Work**

- Examine the history of the previous aquaculture project in Siecoya Remolino led first by ISIS of Hampshire College, then by Las Lianas.
  - Contact director Jim Oldham for interviews about institutional experience of the project and personal experience in working with the community.
  - Conduct site visits to interview Secoyas who have worked with ISIS and Las Lianas on their experience working with the two organizations, differences between the organizations and experience in working with director Jim Oldham.
- Identify the project model and the extent of community participation in all project phases through consultation with both Jim Oldham and the Secoya community.
- Research current work of Las Lianas within Remolino through interviews with the community and observations of sites.
- Conduct site visits to all aquaculture pools.
- Conduct interviews with families who maintain the pools, both functioning and nonfunctioning, to determine both reasons for success and impediments to progress.
- Compile information on the nature of the project between Las Lianas and Siecoya Remolino to determine whether a partnership between Las Lianas and Yanapuma would be beneficial.

- Identify potential leaders to work directly with Yanapuma in initial research and data gathering phase, and to present findings to the larger community,
- Determine the costs of making each existing pool functional and expanding access by building new pools.
- Research grant opportunities through organizations such as the New England Biolabs Foundation and other funding sources to cover costs.
- Conduct site visits to test toxicity levels in water at both existing pool sites and sites which the Secoya have designated as future pool sites.
- Determine the level of willingness among community members to begin amending nonfunctioning pools.
- Compile a report of the project profile from the project with Las Lianas, with expectations of cost, funding opportunities and expected timeline.
- Encourage the community to hold planning a meeting at which Secoyas involved in researching may present the report of project expectations to be discussed by the larger community.
- After initial meeting encourage follow-up meeting within one month so that the community may begin planning project phases.

### **Human Resources and Qualifications**

- Aquaculture Project Leader
  - C.E., Civil Engineering or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years of relevant work experience in project planning and management
  - Minimum 3 years managing projects in indigenous communities
  - Languages: English and Spanish
- Project Advisor
  - B.S., Marine Biology, Animal Science or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years experience in community development
  - Minimum 3 years experience working with indigenous communities
  - Languages: English and Spanish
- Junior Consultant
  - 3+ years of work experience in aquaculture in Ecuador
  - Minimum 3 years experience working with indigenous communities
  - Languages: English or Spanish
- Proposal Writer
  - 2+ years experience in grant writing
  - Languages: English and Spanish
- Interns/Volunteers (4 Positions)
  - Relevant experience in at least two of the following:
    - Community Development, Aquaculture, Environmental Science, Capacity Building, Indigenous Communities
  - Languages: English and/or Spanish

### **Deliverables and Timeframe**

- Consolidated report on initial project profile including information on past project, analysis of expected costs vs. benefits, grants and funding sources, expected hindrances to progress and expected benefits to community and preliminary business plan to be delivered at community meeting.
- Initial planning preparations should be completed in 3 months (60 working days).

## **CACAO**

Creating a successful cacao cultivation project could be very important for the community at Secoya Remolino. In order to prepare a project that will gain the most positive impact possible, several aspects of current practices including the work culture of the community, local markets for cacao and possibilities for export must be assessed. The following suggest data to be compiled and research that will support this effort.

### **Scope of Work**

- Recruit agricultural specialists to conduct site visits to cacao fields at Secoya Remolino.
  - Assess crop conditions including insect infestation, possibilities for integrated pest management, invasive plant species, weeds and health of soil as well as farmer knowledge of crop, growing, tending and general work schedule and other factors.
- Conduct interviews with Secoya farmers on their experience in growing cacao, including challenges and expectations.
- Conduct site visits to cacao field during mingas to gain an understanding of Secoya agricultural practices and work culture.
- Compile report on agricultural practices of Secoyas and cacao crop conditions with recommendations for beneficial combination of Secoya traditional growing methods and modern agricultural practices.
- Perform site visits to assess farmer interest in incorporating new agricultural methods in cacao fields.
- Identify potential leaders to work with Yanapuma in initial performing research and to present findings at community-wide planning meeting.
- Perform desk review of models used by other organizations in creating cooperatives and initiatives with cacao and other non-timber forest products.
- Contact the Kallari Association to learn about the model used to develop its cooperative.
- Research local markets at Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to determine the feasibility of earning substantial income from sale at local sites.
- Perform site visits to Lago Agrio and Shushufindi to create profiles of selling cacao at each town and document any identified inefficiencies in the current system.
- Determine feasibility of exporting cacao internationally to gain greater market access for farmers.
- Research Secoya teaching methods to inform all workshops and farming training.
- Encourage community planning meeting at which Yanapuma staff and agricultural specialists present findings with Secoya farmer-leaders.
  - Address tensions between private ownership of fincas and minga work party system to encourage collective cacao system.
- Urge Secoya farmers to organize follow-up meeting to begin planning farmer training workshops and community involvement in cacao plots.

## **Human Resources and Qualifications**

- Cacao Cultivation Project Leader
  - B.S., Agricultural Science or equivalent qualification,
  - 7+ years work experience in non-timber forest products in Ecuadorian Amazon and particular experience with cacao
  - Minimum 3 years managing projects in indigenous communities
  - Languages: English and Spanish
  
- Project Advisor
  - B.S. in Agriculture or related field
  - 2+ years work experience in cacao or other Amazonian non-timber forest products
  - Minimum 3 years experience capacity building with indigenous communities
  - Languages: English and Spanish
  
- Researcher
  - B.A. or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years relevant work experience in project planning research particularly in indigenous communities, knowledge of local markets, fair trade and marketing products for export
  - Experience in site visits and interviews
  - Languages: English and Spanish
  
- Interns/Volunteers (4 Positions)
  - Relevant experience in at least two of the following:
    - Community Development, Emerging Market Economies, Agriculture, Cacao Cultivation, Food Science, Capacity Building, and Indigenous Communities
  - Languages: English and/or Spanish

## **Deliverables and Timeframe**

- Consolidated report agricultural practices of Secoya farmers, cacao crop conditions and recommendations.
- Compiled information on markets at Lago Agrio and Shushufindi, as well as markets for international cacao export.
- Proposed budget for project and cost benefit analysis
- Initial planning preparations and reports should be completed in 3 months (60 working days).

## **COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM**

Tourist boats travel along the Aguarico River on their way to popular tourist destinations such as Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, Limoncocha Biological Reserve and Nueva Loja. The Secoya witness the passage of several tourist boats each week and have identified tourism as a relatively easy way to gain a substantial amount of income for the community. Accordingly, they have constructed a hut for tourists to stay in located on the opposite bank of the river from the community's center and the majority of families' dwellings. Most Secoyas have little experience with tourists and outsiders and are unaware of how to accommodate individuals and groups of people on their land.

### **Scope of Work**

- Conduct research to develop database of tour operators in the Amazon basin.
- Consult Secoyas to determine which tour operators work with the community at Siecoya Remolino.
- Perform research to determine the impact of community-based tourism on the indigenous communities in the Amazon basin.
- Conduct interviews with Secoyas to determine a development plan for building tourism business as well as to identify intentions and expectations.
- Identify Secoya leaders interested in tourism to work initially with Yanapuma on research and present findings to the larger community.
- Perform site visits to tourism businesses that operate out of indigenous community at Cuyabeno Reserve and visit the Secoya tourist site.
- Determine feasibility of building partnerships with tour operators downstream at the Cuyabeno Reserve.
- Compile report on models adopted by other successful community-based tourism efforts led by indigenous communities; include current report on the progress of tourism at Siecoya Remolino.
- Based upon findings, determine extent to which the organization has the capacity to meet the community's needs in establishing a tourism industry.
- Promote community-wide planning meeting to present report findings regarding tourism industry and determine next steps.

### **Human Resources and Qualifications**

- Community-based Tourism Project Team Leader
  - B.A., Hotel Administration, Hospitalities or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years relevant work experience in project planning and particularly in community-based tourism
  - Minimum 3 years managing projects in indigenous communities
  - Languages: English and Spanish
- Small Business Specialist
  - M.B.A. Small Business or Entrepreneurship



- Minimum five years experience in community-based tourism and experience in working with indigenous communities
- Community development and capacity building experience
- Languages: English and Spanish
- Researcher
  - B.A. or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years relevant work experience in project planning research particularly in indigenous communities
  - Experience in site visits and interviews
  - Languages: English and Spanish
- Interns/Volunteers (4 Positions)
  - Relevant experience in at least two of the following:
    - Community Development, Community-based Tourism, Capacity Building, Indigenous Communities
  - Language: Spanish and/or English

#### **Deliverables and Timeframe**

- Consolidated report on community-based tourism in indigenous communities and current state of tourism industry at Sicoya Remolino.
- Preliminary business plan including anticipated budget and cost benefit analysis
- Initial planning preparations should be completed within 3 months (60 working days).

## **AVICULTURE**

There is currently a fairly substantial community of fowl at Siecoya Remolino. The majority of families that keep fowl interact with them only when chasing them from inside their homes. Families do not actively feed fowl, and due to a lack of hen housing, do not collect eggs from the birds. Most Secoya homes do not have doors, but rather cover openings at night with a curtain. Hens and their young therefore enter human dwellings daily in search of food. Droppings and other contaminants that are regularly deposited within and around food pose a substantial health risk to families without proper food storage containers or knowledge of health risks. Rather paradoxically, most families at Siecoya Remolino purchase their eggs, which they report represents a significant amount of family expenditure.

### **Scope of Work**

- Conduct site visits to community to interview families that keep fowl.
- Determine the level of enthusiasm for the aviculture project.
- Interview families to determine their level of experience with chicken coops.
- Identify leaders to work initially with Yanapuma and to present research findings to the larger community.
- Conduct desk review of chicken coops and fowl in the Amazon basin to determine necessary building materials and proper design for rainforest conditions.
- Consult with Secoyas to determine which building materials can be found locally and which may be substituted for local materials.
- Research grants and funding opportunities to cover any construction costs, as well as initial cost of poultry feed.
- Contact specialist to determine proper care and maintenance of fowl in the rainforest.
- Research local markets to determine feasibility of selling surplus eggs.
- Compile report on findings and encourage community to hold a planning meeting at which the report may be presented and discussed.
- Encourage follow-up meeting less than one month later to begin planning the project.

### **Human Resources and Qualifications**

- Aviculture Project Leader
  - B.S, Aviculture, Poultry Science or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years of relevant work experience in project planning with experience in aviculture projects or animal husbandry in the Amazon
  - Minimum 3 years managing projects in indigenous communities
  - Language: English and Spanish

- Project Advisor
  - B.S. in Animal Science or related field
  - 2+ years work experience in animal husbandry in the Ecuadorian Amazon and particular experience with fowl
  - Minimum 1 year experience working with indigenous communities
  - Language: English and Spanish
  
- Interns/Volunteers (4 Positions)
  - Relevant experience in at least two of the following:
    - Community Development, Emerging Market Economies, Agriculture, Aviculture, Food Science, Capacity Building, and Indigenous Communities
  - Languages: English and/or Spanish

### **Deliverables and Timeline**

- Compiled Report detailing current aviculture practices, standard practices for successful chicken coops and healthy hens, and necessary inputs, and preliminary project plan.
- Planning and preparation for the aviculture project should not exceed 3 months (60 working days).

## **RECUPERATION OF LAND**

The Secoya currently own 22,000 hectares of primary Amazon rainforest, however this represents only a small fraction of the territory historically occupied by Secoyas. Border wars, disputes, colonization and oil exploitation have limited the land the Secoya occupy significantly making it difficult for the community to live in their nomadic ancestral tradition. Additionally, continued destruction of the rainforest remains a major threat to Secoya health and wellbeing. High rates of cancer and unknown disease have been reported in the community likely due to increased pollution from oil extraction processes. The Secoya have therefore been working with the local and national governments to recuperate lost land and expand their holdings.

### **Scope of Work**

- Determine location and extent across borders of former Secoya territory.
- Research former territory to determine what percentage is privately and publicly owned.
- Determine whether Secoya leaders are knowledgeable about where to seek information regarding ownership, and whether they already are aware of to whom former territory currently belongs.
  - If leaders do not know how to seek this information, hold training sessions on how to research land holdings.
- Identify leaders in land rights issues to perform initial research with Yanapuma and present findings to the larger community.
- Form working groups with community leaders and Yanapuma staff to jointly research land holdings.
- Research past land rights disputes and recuperation by indigenous communities.
- Determine local political heads responsible for districts in which lost territory is held.
- Organize meetings between Secoyas and local politicians to assess the willingness of politicians to cooperate in land recuperation campaign.
- Form relationships with local politicians at all levels in lost territory and community leaders.
- Organize local NGOs working with indigenous communities to rally support for recuperation campaign.
- Determine which national politicians are directly involved in land rights.
- Research law firms that work with indigenous communities and seek legal support for the recuperation campaign.
- Encourage community to hold a planning meeting at which research findings are presented to the larger community so that the community may determine the possibility of pursuing the following modes of action.
  - Forming a working group to meet regularly with law firm to determine legal rights for each area.
  - Organizing meetings with government land rights committee.
  - Holding rallies and press conferences to bring visibility to the issue.

- Organizing a meeting between indigenous community and President Rafael Correa.

### **Human Resources and Qualifications**

- Recuperation of Territory Project Leader
  - M.A., Human Rights or equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years of relevant work experience in project planning with experience in land rights disputes particularly in Amazonian territory
  - Minimum 3 years managing projects in indigenous communities
  - Language: English and Spanish
- Attorney (2 Positions)
  - J.D., equivalent qualification
  - 5+ years work experience in territory disputes and land rights issues in Ecuador with particular experience in the Amazon
  - Minimum 5 years experience working with indigenous rights
  - Language: English and Spanish
- Interns/Volunteers (4 Positions)
  - Relevant experience in at least two of the following:
    - Community Development, Land Rights, Indigenous Rights, Law, Ecuadorian Government Policy toward Indigenous Communities, and Capacity Building.
  - Languages: English and/or Spanish

### **Deliverables and Timeline**

- Compiled Report detailing past land disputes, current holders of non Secoya-owned territory, and list of supporting organizations, agencies and government personnel.
- Planning and preparation for the territory project should not exceed 3 months (60 working days).

## BUDGET SUMMARY

<b>Cost Estimates</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
1. Personnel	
a. 5 Project Leaders at \$150/day	\$9000 <sup>1</sup>
b. 10 Consultants and Advisors \$75/day	\$4500
2. Logistics and Insurances*	\$1350
3. Administration, Miscellaneous and Support Costs**	\$7425
4. Contingencies***	\$2228
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$24,503</b>

1 All amounts are in US dollars as USD is official currency of Ecuador.  
\* Rule of Thumb 01 - Calculated as 10% of combined total of 1.  
\*\*Rule of Thumb 02 - Calculated as 50% of combined total of 1 & 2.  
\*\*\*Rule of Thumb 03 - Calculated as 10% of combined total of 1, 2 & 3.

## Chapter 4

### Observations and Concluding Remarks

It is of crucial importance that the above discussed development projects be understood as means to a greater end, rather than as an end in themselves. Each project represents a step toward sustainable development within the community that should lead to self-sufficiency and greater access to basic resources including land rights, education, medical care, and clean air, water and food. Some of the projects are aimed at increasing the level of income in the community, namely the cacao and community-based tourism projects. Others are designed to increase the level of income for Secoya families while also contributing to increasing the level of food security and reducing family expenditure on basic food products; these include the aviculture and aquaculture projects. The recuperation of territory project is designed to secure the resources of the community and enhance the community's power within the region. While each of these projects is important and has the potential to lead to significant benefits, none directly address the most critical concerns cited by the community. When asked what is most difficult about life within the community, almost all Secoyas interviewed cited either the lack of access to health care. In most interviews, both medical care and education were cited as either a pressing concern or as something that was necessary yet unattainable in the community. The above projects do little to directly address either of these issues. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the community continue to work toward realizing goals of creating the capacity to provide a higher level of education within the community, and of addressing the community's health care needs.

Amending the education system at Siecoya Remolino will be crucial for myriad reasons. As mentioned, the children at Siecoya Remolino who have been educated outside of the community rarely return to settle permanently in the community. The lack of economic activity available at Remolino regularly forces young adults to make a choice between pursuing a career and returning home to reside within the community. Not only do families lose their children to the surrounding towns and larger cities, but the community as a whole loses its educated population. Additionally, it was widely cited by leaders within the community that the problems associated with many of the community's on-going initiatives are largely due to a lack of technical expertise among the people managing the projects. In conversations regarding different projects, leaders cited several times that the Secoyas have no technical training in any of the projects which they have undertaken. Though outside organizations have been intermittently involved in the community, it appears that these relationships have mostly been transitory, or have been cut short before successful transference of the project to the community was achieved. Though the formation of the OISE and other significant initiatives have been successful within this environment, progress on these and future projects would be much more easily achieved with a well-educated and highly trained base within the community leading them. Training and education have been at the foundation of community for decades, however, the different and varied forms of training that modern society requires represent a significant departure from the traditional forms passed down through generations. Additionally, traditional Secoya

training and education have become lost within the community, and several leaders have cited the need for a greater understanding of these forms of knowledge as well. Knowledge of medicinal plants, for instance, has become increasingly limited to older generations as the younger Secoyas strive to become integrated into modern society. All of these issues highlight to the critical need for the community to expand upon its capacity to educate its younger generations.

Regarding formal education within the community, the Secoya are very proud of the education that they are able to offer children in the community up to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The schoolteachers are both local Secoyas who are passionate about ensuring that the bilingual education they offer to the students is uniquely Secoya, and of the highest quality possible. Regular meetings with the OISE's Ministry of Education involve the community directly in the education that their children are receiving. Education meetings pack the one room schoolhouse with adults seated in desk chairs and the floor, and spilling out the doorway. Community members take notes and actively participate throughout the hours-long meetings. Teachers use the forum to explain the curricula and to discuss individual children's progress. The two Secoya teachers teach six grade levels in their schoolhouse. The children in levels 1, 2 & 3 face east to focus their attention on the board and teacher on one side of the room, while the older children in levels 4, 5 & 6 sit facing west to direct their attention to their lesson located on that side of the room. Though there are major obstacles to educating children in a system like this, the teachers recognize the issues and attempt to minimize them. For instance, both teachers often teach the same lesson to their students but at different levels of difficulty, or they coordinate lesson plans to ensure that they are teaching at least the same subject. Located adjacent to the schoolhouse is a second building which sits empty. This building was originally built for use as second schoolhouse to enable the community to educate more children at higher grade levels. However, the community lacks the funding needed to purchase furnishings and basic school supplies. As mentioned, the community contributes annually to a fund for its educational program. Due to the lack of income amongst most of the community members, however, the education system is severely under funded.

The second schoolhouse is likely the result of a project begun and abandoned by an outside group. Neither the first schoolhouse, nor the second are constructed from traditional Secoya building materials. The buildings are each constructed of cement and the roofs are tin, which keeps each building overheated in the hot Amazon sun, as well as extremely loud during the long rains which occur throughout the year. The Ministry of Education previously had three teachers and educated children up to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the community. As mentioned, there are now only two teachers, each teaching three separate grades every day, and adding three more grades seems an impossible task. The teachers at Sicoya Remolino are government employees and therefore receive their salary from the state. A potential campaign for the Yanapuma Foundation and the Secoya community may then be to work toward obtaining more funding from the Ecuadorian government for an additional instructor and for supplies. The Ministry of Education at Sicoya Remolino is a complex and well-organized institution. The people behind it are intelligent and driven. For example, the Ministry has published nationally



recognized bilingual dictionaries and is currently working on compiling a comprehensive set of bilingual schoolbooks for its students. The Ministry works under very difficult conditions and with limited resources, constraining its ability to offer the community a comprehensive education system that serves children from pre-kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade or even high school.

In some sense, however, it seems that the community is bound its awareness of its financial and resource limitations. One example of this is a school lunch program that one of the schoolteachers discussed in an interview. He stated that he would love to be able to offer children a meal at school because some of the children travel from long distances downriver and have nothing to eat for many hours during instruction. He was dismayed by the fact that the community lacks the resources to offer this for the children. Yet the school is located in one of the richest, most biodynamic regions in the world. The population is constricted by the lack of animal and fish protein available, however fruits and vegetables are in abundance. Just outside the schoolhouse is a neglected garden, likely implemented as a community garden program by an outside organization. There are a few corn plants that struggle to grow; however most of the garden is wildly overgrown. The garden appears to have remained untended for some time. It is a logical step for someone from outside of the community to conceive of a community garden program that would allow families to tend and harvest at will, and use the excess to provide a healthful school lunch for the children. However, the project has been implemented and the garden is not productive. The project is therefore not a natural step for the Secoyas, or the garden would be green and healthy. It could be that the vegetables introduced in the garden were non-native vegetables (corn) and were unable to survive. The community may have then been dismayed by the lack of progress and abandoned the project. The specific reasons for the failure, however, are almost insignificant because the message is that the Secoya must conceive of, direct, manage, and oversee all of their own projects within the community. Vision can be provided from the outside, but the Secoyas are the experts of their territory and community. Education within the community is therefore crucial to the community's development as a primary tool in accomplishing these tasks. As mentioned, each year the Secoya lose their 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders to nearby towns like Shushufindi and Lago Agrio, which have schools to offer them in their youth and jobs to sustain them in their adulthood. That most of the children choose not to return represents a significant drain on the intellectual resources available to the community. Any income derived of the projects described above should be used in large part to fund the education system at Sicoya Remolino. Considering the nature of the OISE, the projects they chose to fund with the money they received from settlements with OPEC, and their stated commitment to allocating funding toward education, it is almost certain that education will be one of the first priorities to receive funding from the success of above discussed projects.

The example of the vegetable garden illustrates another point, which was mentioned briefly in the project proposal, but is perhaps relevant to a discussion of education, training and progress. Unlike many of their neighboring indigenous communities, Secoyas are not strong farmers and have little experience in cultivating crops. At Sicoya Remolino, families cultivate a limited variety of crops for consumption, mainly

yucca and plantains; however they tend to purchase a substantial portion of the food they consume. As a nomadic hunting and gathering group located in a region teeming with edible plant and animal life, the transition to a sedentary lifestyle and a constriction on local resources has presented numerous challenges. Perhaps more importantly than a lack of agricultural skills, however, is the fact that Secoyas have ceased in some cases to identify the natural resources available to them as valuable. In several interviews with Secoyas in the community, and particularly Secoya women, they stated that ensuring that children have access to an adequate amount of food is the most important and pressing issue in the community. Yet the *centro* or central area at Sicoya Remolino, home to several Secoya families, has an array of wild plant species that bear edible fruit including avocado trees, papaya and mango trees, a variety of citrus fruit trees, as well as almond trees and countless others. The variety of edible plants that grow naturally in the region is astounding, yet it is underutilized. The phenomenon may be similar to that of wild apple trees in New England, under which there is almost always a great quantity of ripe apples uneaten and rotting. However the Secoyas struggle to provide food for their children and families. This may be due in part to a transitional period that has left Secoyas living parts of both a traditional and a modern lifestyle. Many Secoyas at Remolino work primarily in the traditional work structure, under which they receive almost no monetary compensation for their labor. However, they eat foods such as rice and pasta, which they must use the limited amounts of money that they do make at irregular intervals to purchase. The crops that Secoyas spend most workdays tending are not crops for consumption, but rather are crops that they intend to sell, and which, in some cases, will take years to mature enough to yield a profit.

The implications of this system are dire considering the fact that several community members stated that they often go without food because of the lack of food sources available. This information does not seem to quite match up, however, upon considering the fact that the community is regularly exposed to the local economy and modern amenities yet works in the traditional system, it is clear that the community is caught uncomfortably between tradition and the modern world. Secoyas regularly purchase eggs though they have hens, and they regularly purchase sugar, while sugar cane grows wild behind their homes. Though agricultural projects may have the capacity to alleviate some food security issues, this information suggests that food insecurity is an issue that has to do less with a lack of resources, than it does with a need to reevaluate the resources that are available. Oil extraction and industrial activity has had a significant impact upon the region and the safety of the resources upon which the Secoya depend. As mentioned above, there is a severely limited supply of animal protein available, and polluted water sources may have contaminated the soil upon which agricultural products and wild plants are growing. The trauma of the past decades, including the knowledge of their polluted landscape, and the observable changes in the ecosystem, have had only a negative impact on the community and may be affecting the consciousness of the Secoyas, encouraging them to seek entry to the modern world as the stability of the traditional Secoya way of life is eroded. The projects identified by the OISE certainly seek the modern security of capital accumulation. However these programs are intended, as stated above, to secure the rights to practice traditional culture and the freedom to survive in their territory. To this

end, training in agricultural practices for consumption will be crucial in sustaining the community, as will a renewed appraisal of the Secoyas' resources.

A second major concern within the community and an area in which the Secoya plan to invest is health care. Access to health care is crucial for the community, the lack of which was stated by almost every community member interviewed at Secoya Remolino as the most difficult aspect of life in the community. As mentioned above, medical consultations are expensive for Secoyas, and in most cases the costs associated with health care are prohibitive. Limited access to medical attention results in more than just the inability to get preventative care, or even to be treated for a disease, but results in a lack of critical knowledge about health and safety. As mentioned in the introduction to the aviculture project, hens and other animals regularly enter Secoya homes searching for food, and many families do not store food in containers that will prevent animals from gaining access. The practice of properly storing food is one that exists in some homes and not in others within the community and may be correlated with levels of access to education about causes of disease and preventative action. Additionally, practices such as childcare would benefit from a nurse or health care professional regularly visiting the community to hold workshops and treat ailments. Health care concerns beyond preventative medicine have become increasingly important more recently as exposure to toxins in the water and environment have led to several forms of cancer within the community. To this end, the community may benefit from workshops offering information about how to avoid exposure, as well as thorough testing of pollution levels of the land and the water. Programs aimed at training community members on healthcare and agriculture could be very beneficial for the community. Though as with all other initiatives, these programs must be a self directed effort.

The Secoya people have struggled for the past 60 years to maintain their lifestyle in an isolated portion of the Amazon Rainforest. Rights to their territory have been subject to decades of dispute, border wars have separated the community from their neighbors and family, and communities have been exposed to foreign diseases and religions. The Secoya have had to fight hard to preserve their land and their environment. They have an intimate knowledge of the plant and animal species in their territory and have witnessed these species decline over the past several decades. Though the community has adapted to many of the changes that have occurred around them, they remain in a time of transition. Several organizations have reached out to support the Secoyas and many have since abandoned projects with the group. That the Secoya have created a comprehensive development plan, and have actively taken steps toward achieving it is commendable. They will, however, need a substantial amount of support to achieve their goals, and will need to exercise discretion in choosing their partners. Despite decades of hardship, the Secoyas remain a fun-loving and affectionate people who artfully combine work and play. Their knowledge of and respect for their surroundings is natural and easy, and unparalleled in the modern world. The Secoyas have a long fight ahead of them, but they have worked hard to make tremendous progress and if the next several years are dedicated to achieving their goals, the community will be in a good position to progress and continue in the region as a unique and important society.

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## **Appendix 1: List of Contacts at Secoya Remolino**

### **César Piaguaje:** Director of Tourism and Ecology

Excellent contact, very knowledgeable about Secoya history, active in OISE, mobile, makes regular trips to Quito, sells art at the University, leads church gatherings, is very willing to talk about the direction of the community, is bright and reliable.

### **José Piaguaje:** Teacher, Centro Educativo Comunitario

Son of César, another excellent contact, is very committed to community education at Secoya Remolino, teaches with Mirelle Piaguaje at Centro Secoya Remolino school. Is committed to bilingual education and preserving Secoya culture through education, has developed bilingual teaching materials, published books and is developing a comprehensive dictionary of Spanish and SecoPai.

### **Fannie Piaguaje**

Excellent contact, daughter of Secoya elder Carlos Marcel Piaguaje, is a local expert in aquaculture, aviculture and cacao. Harvests large, healthy fish, cacao seeds and other products to sell at Shushufindi and Lago Agrio. Is very interested in women's issues and the development of the community, is also concerned with food security for Secoya children. Very willing to engage in conversation and give tours of her property. Would be an excellent resource for leading trainings with Secoya women in health care, agricultural practices and other issues. Travel to the community to contact her.

### **Colon Rajul Piaguaje-Luicitade:** Nurse

Very good contact, married to Fannie, very knowledgeable about Secoya recent political battles and lawsuits with Texaco, traveled to the US with OISE to defend Secoyas. Works just outside the community and is therefore only a "good" contact because he is not so easily accessible. He has a work telephone number which can be obtained through Gustavo.

### **Gustavo Piaguaje-Payaguaje**

Good contact, very willing to engage in conversation about the Secoya culture and the emergent projects. Worked with Jim Oldham of ISIS and still remains in contact, is involved with tourism and works outside the community. Is very willing to engage outsiders for help and assistance with community matters.

## **Appendix 2: Community Budget Information**

When the Secoyas were interviewed about their budget, the answers were almost universally the same. The Secoyas work almost every day, but rarely earn money. According to their accounts, they spend the majority of their income on the following items:

Cooking Oil–La Favorita \$1.55, Oro (Most Used) \$1.40 (1 Liter)

Matches

Eggs

Cartridges

Soap for laundry and bathing - \$0.65 Protex per bar

Lard–\$1.35 kg.

Onions

Sugar–\$3.50/500 kg.

Pasta–\$1.42 per package

Toothpaste–Colgate \$2.25

Toothbrush–\$0.50-\$2.65

Pencils

Machete

These are the items that were almost universally mentioned and are almost the only items mentioned. The Secoya still get most of the material they need from the forest but their budgets are so limited that even the above items are sometimes too costly. Most Secoyas make little money doing work on nearby property working in short-term tourism jobs, or selling agricultural products.