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The Voice of the **Taino People**®

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Indian Treaty Council Expands Board of Directors



Panama (UCTP Taino News) - At its recent meeting held in Panama, the **International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)** voted in representatives from Mexico and the Caribbean to its Board of Directors.

Founded in 1974, the IITC is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, and South America, the Pacific, and most recently from the Caribbean, working together for the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as well as the recognition and protection of Indigenous Rights, treaties, traditional cultures and sacred lands.

The nominations of **Saul Vicente Vasquez** (Zapoteca) of Oaxaca, Mexico and **Naniki Reyes Ocasio** (Taino) of Borikén (Puerto Rico) were unanimously accepted by all standing

board members. **Roberto Borrero** (Taino) was also nominated for and accepted as an alternate Board member. Both Reyes Ocasio and Borrero are representatives of the **United Confederation of Taino People**.

The IITC Board meeting followed a special Human Rights Workshop and the annual International Treaty Council Conference with indigenous representatives arriving in **Kuna Nation** territory from throughout the Americas. ●

Economic Crises in Borikén (Puerto Rico)

Borikén (UCTP Taino News) - Puerto Rican Governor **Luis Fortuño** has implemented widespread job cuts affecting all sectors of the island's population. In the midst of Puerto Rico's worsening economic crises, Fortuño plans promote the privatization of basic infrastructural services such as electricity, water, and the education system.

Reports estimate that nearly 20,000 civil servants already have or will lose their jobs. Analysts note that the loss

of jobs in the government sector will affect similar losses in the private sector.

The island's cultural patrimony is one area that will be particularly impacted by job losses. Reports indicate that museums and national parks under the control of the **Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP)** such as the **Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Center** will now be forced to close. These institutions will not only lose staff for daily operations but collections and archives are now potentially at risk without proper supervision and controls.

In the form of several recent amendment proposals to controversial "Law 7", ICP President **Marisol Rodriguez** supported Governor Fortuño's plan to do away with the protective functions of the Institute's mandate. The result of these proposals would facilitate development projects that are expected to have an adverse affect on the island's national patrimony.

Story continues on pg. 2



Borikén Economic Crises

Opponents state that these amendments are in clear violation of a 60 year law that created the ICP protections in the first place.

The **Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos**, a local Taino organization has proposed a volunteer initiative to the Institute to keep Caguana open.

In response to the current economic crises and the administration's privatization policies, diverse workers unions as well as community and student organizations plan to unite in a mass National General Strike throughout the Puerto Rico on the 15th of October. •

Filmmakers Reconsider Columbus Day



New York, NY (UCTP Taino News) - Filmmakers **Carlos Germosen** and **Crystal Whelan** of **Nu Heightz Cinema** have produced a new Public Service Announcement (PSA) urging the American Public to "**Reconsider Columbus Day**".

The 60 second spot features a compelling message which they hope will "encourage people to learn the other side to the story of Columbus".

"We want to help shed light on the truth by using mass media" stated Whelan. She continued stating "We hope people will petition for a nationally recognized indigenous holiday to honor the people who were here first."

The producers reached out to local community activists and indigenous organizations like the **United Confederation of Taino People** to help develop the script.

"We were honored to be asked to collaborate on this project as our ancestors in particular were the first to be negatively impacted by Columbus" stated **Roberto Borrero**, a representative of the Confederation.

"The issue goes beyond Caribbean Indigenous Peoples however, it is really about society being complacent with symbols of genocide." said Borrero.

The Reconsider Columbus Day PSA is currently being featured on **You Tube** and the producers are working to broadcast it on local television networks. Nu Heights Cinema has also set up a *Reconsider Columbus Day* website at www.reconsidercolumbusday.org to help bring more attention to the issue. •

Barbadian "Indian Jones" Makes Discovery of a Lifetime in Guyana

Pakaraima Mountains, Guyana (UCTP Taino News) - Barbados born **Damon Gerard Corrie** well known locally as "**the Snake Man**", may soon be known throughout the Caribbean as '*Barbadiana Jones*'. Corrie has watermarked and copyrighted photos of his "*discovery of a lifetime*" made recently in Guyana.

According to the 36 year-old discoverer, he is the first person to identify and compile physical and photographic evidence of an ancient Amerindian culture of skilled stonemasons formerly inhabiting an estimated 200 sq. mile mountainous area of Guyana.



Since the culture area covers a large area in the Pakaraima Mountains of Guyana - Corrie has decided to name the long lost ancient culture that inhabited this region and left a treasure trove of unique artifacts - the '**Pakaraimans**'.

Corrie who is of maternal Guyanese Amerindian descent states he has been searching this area over the past decade at his own expenses and "purely to satisfy his own curiosity".

While amassing the material he soon realized that the discovery was too important to keep to himself. However as an indigenous rights activist, Corrie is never far from controversy, so as a precaution he was careful to amass as much evidence as possible before sharing news of the discovery.

This solo effort on Corrie's part may prove to be an invaluable contribution to the science of Anthropology, and a vital missing chapter to the pre-Colombian history of Guyana. •

Editor's note: Damon Corrie is the leader of the Eagle Clan Arawaks - a member of the United Confederation of Taino People.



Taino Honor Island's First Hero



Professor Jalil Sued Badillo addresses those gathered to honor Taino leader Agueybana II in Ponce, Borikén (Puerto Rico)

Ponce, Borikén (UCTP Taino News) – Local **Taino** gathered in Ponce, Borikén on November 19, 2009 to pay respect to **Kasike (Chief) Agueybana II**, a 16th century warrior considered by many to be the island's first hero to stand against colonialism.

Organized by the **United Confederation of Taino People's Liaison Office in Borikén**, the special event took place at the monument to the great Taino leader who led confederated indigenous communities against Spanish conquistadors at the battle of **Yahueca** in 1511. The program was enthusiastically attended by members of the local community, scholars, government officials, and school children.

Among the presentations featured was a historical biography of "*Agueybana el bravo*" by Professor **Jalil Sued Badillo**, a musical tribute by elder and artist **Miguel Anel Guzman**, and a Taino cultural presentation by members of **Esencia Tabonuco**.

The program received additional support from the office of the honorable **Victor Vassallo Anadon**, the congressional representative for Ponce and Jayuya. Vassallo issued a proclamation for the occasion designating Nov. 19 as **Kasike Agueybana Day**. ●

Negotiations continue on American Indigenous Rights Declaration

WASHINGTON D.C. (UCTP Taino News) — Indigenous leaders from throughout the Americas gathered in in Washington DC this week to participate in the negotiations on an **American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. The proposed legal framework focuses on the protection of the economic, cultural, and political rights of Indigenous Peoples. The meetings took place from Nov. 30 - December 2, 2009 at the headquarters of the **Organization of American States (OAS)**. The OAS is a regional inter-governmental organization that seeks to build peace, solidarity and collaboration in the Americas.

"This work needs to be completed," said **Armstrong Wiggins**, director of the **Indian Law Resource Center's** Washington office. "The declaration is not yet adopted, and I fear it could become an orphan if states do not act more seriously on it."

Damon Corrie, an *Aravak* activist from Barbados agrees. Corrie and other Caribbean indigenous delegates from Dominica, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent, and Suriname continue to be concerned about the lack of participation from CARICOM governments within these important negotiations.

"The only CARICOM member State showing any interest in this process is the Republic of Guyana" noted Corrie. "This process will have a tremendous impact on whether future relations between Indigenous Peoples and political states will be equitable and harmonious or unjust and adversarial."

According to a recent press release from the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC), this dialogue comes as global initiatives are threatening indigenous rights. The **World Bank** and **United Nations** for example have funded several projects that are designed to provide climate change solutions but instead could harm indigenous communities if developed on their lands and territories. These projects could lead to violations of indigenous peoples' land and natural resources rights.

The ILRC and other participating organizations assert that the declaration would address these threats and establish a legal framework to protect indigenous rights from potential violations. ●

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Presencia Taina TV**

Date: Saturday nights through 2009 • **Place:** <http://www.MNN.org>

Presencia Taina.TV is televised weekly throughout the worldwide web this season on Saturday night at 9 PM (EST) by viewing it locally on Channel 67 (cableTV) in the New York City area or you can listen in online at <http://www.MNN.org>

- **UCTP Taino Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registry**

Are you a registered and enrolled member of the Taino Tribal Nation? Get more information on the UCTP Taino Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registry at the UCTP Web Portal www.uctp.org. For more information contact karaira@uctp.org.

- **UCTP Online Store**

Available at <http://www.cafepress.com/taioshop>

This is the official UCTP online merchandise store where you can purchase a number of high-quality products with unique United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) graphics on them. You can now show your support of a Unified Taino Nation as well as contribute to the precedent-setting work of the UCTP. Proceeds from sales go directly to the Confederation and help to increase the visibility of our great Nation throughout the Caribbean and the Diaspora.

Editor's Note: *The staff at 'the Voice' looks forward to hearing from all of you, and we thank you for your comments, suggestions, and inquires. To submit items to the **Community Bulletin Board**, please email your request to mukaro@uctp.org*

Public Notice: The Voice of the Taino People reserves the right to reprint in full or in part, any and all correspondence sent to the editors, the United Confederation of Taino People, Inc., and or its officers.

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