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The Voice of the Taíno People®

*The Voice of the Taíno People) is the Official News Journal of the United Confederation of Taíno People and is distributed by the UCTP Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination
Volume 5, Issue 1, January – March 2002 © All Rights Reserved • ISSN 1553-9350*

The Indigenous Presence in Bieke (Vieques)

The 508 Year Old Struggle Against Invasion, Contamination, and Relocation

By Naniki Reyes Ocasio

BIEKE, BORIKEN – While it may not be obvious to many, the presence of Taíno people and indigenous consciousness has been very much present for over 508 years in the unrelenting struggle for peace in Bieke (Vieques). This unprecedented situation continues to threaten the very existence of the people today.

Our Ancestors **Kasike Kasimar** and his brother **Yahueribo** (who killed the infamous mastiff *Berecillo* used to disembowel Taíno women and children), were the first to die fighting to protect Bieke against the Spanish invaders. From this time forward, the foundation of the struggle against injustice and the destruction of our Mother Earth is to keep our Ancestral ways alive through our words, deeds and acts.

According to Taíno tradition, one of the most heinous crime against another human being is to steal the tools of their livelihood, (means through which they provide sustenance for their family). Prior to the occupation of Biekés by the Navy, the main means of support and

sustenance was the land and fishing. In 1938 the Navy began using Biekés without permission to conduct target practice.



Berecillo by Boricua Artist, Agustín “Gus” Anavitate Cordero

Two years later, in 1940, the Navy initiated a campaign of forced expropriation. Doña **Severina Guadalupe** (74) recalls how the Navy sent a Bulldozer that flattened her parents' wooden farmhouse in 1940 and expelled the family from their land with a 24-hour notice. The US Navy took two thirds of the best farming lands and prohibited the Fisherman of Bieke from fishing in their traditional fishing waters. These acts by the US Navy are tantamount

to a proclamation of death to the people of Bieke.

The truth is that Bieke is not used to train American soldiers. It is used to demonstrate weapons for sale around the world. In March 2001, the government of Holland was to use Bieke to test weapons that they were purchasing from the U.S. government.

The truth is that in the past 10 years, all bombing on uninhabited U.S. mainland islands, including *Bloodworth Island* in the **Chesapeake Bay**, has ceased due to protests of noise pollution and quality of life issues by the surrounding communities.

The truth is that any legitimate US military and naval goal can be accomplished in places other than the inhabited Island of Bieke (Vieques). The truth is that the US Navy has 121 uninhabited islands to test their weapons on; or train soldiers. The only reason they use the inhabited Island of Bieke is its convenient location to the Roosevelt Roads military base on the larger island.

(Continued on page 2)

The Indigenous Presence in Bieke (cont. from page 2)

The truth is that the propellers of US Navy ships entering the one hundred-foot deep waters, where Bieke fishermen have their traps, destroy the buoys that mark the location of these traps. The unfound traps stay at the bottom of the sea 8-12 months attracting many fish that ultimately die. A study by the US Dept. of Agriculture found that a single net collects from 4,500-5000 pounds of fish in ten months, which poses a severe environmental threat to the fragile marine ecosystem [See www.viequeslibre.org Why The US Navy is in Vieques, Puerto Rico?].

The truth is that the cancer rate in Bieke is 26% higher than in Puerto Rico and an increase of rare diseases like Scleroderma, lupus, thyroid deficiencies as well as increased asthma among children has been documented by Rafael River-Castaño. (See www.viequeslibre.org. Why is the US Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico?).

Truth is, currently the most conservative estimates indicate that over 50% of the 2,400 inhabitant of Bieke are unemployed and that General Electric, one of the few large companies, will end its operations this summer.

The truth is that the only thing brought about by the 63 year presence of the Navy in Bieke is widespread contamination of the land, water and delicate ecosystems of the coral reefs, beaches, death and serious threats to the life, health, social and economic stability of the peoples.

On the civilian lands of Monte Carmelo, *Tierra de Valientes*, Navy guards set a brush fire near his home where his five grandchildren were sleeping. This is the only piece of **sovereign** native **Taino** land on the Island of Biekés. Don Carmelo, who affirms his Taino heritage, has been

consistently fighting for the land since the mid-70s.

In support of the call for peace in Bieke, Taino people have marched in front of the White House, given presentations at the *American Indian Prayer Breakfast* held in the Capitol Building as well as signed and distributed petitions. On the island, Tainos have fasted, participated in the peaceful "civil disobedience", written letters and in general talk to whoever will listen.

In New York, a musical concert to raise funds for Monte Carmelo (one of the original camps) was organized in September of last year. Tainos have donated food, school uniforms and money to the families of Bieke and those incarcerated. We have informed the public on the issue of Bieke via WBAP's *Circle of Red Nations* radio program. Tainos are involved with economic strategies to protect the land and provide jobs such as the windmill project on Monte Carmelo.

The truth is that the Taino People have never stopped struggling to protect our children, the Earth Mother and all our relations.

A fundamental guiding Ancestral principle is that knowledge equals responsibility. Responsibility is our ability to respond and act in the best interest of the people. With each voice that learns to cry out against the genocide and injustices, with each action taken against the devastation, destruction, of Mother Earth we leave a healthier, fertile, beautiful, vibrant Earth Mother for future generations. Together, our actions will protect and preserve the gift of breath and life, the most sacred legacy that we can leave for all our relations and future generations to come. •

Editor's Note - If you would like more information, please read back issues of VTP or you can visit: www.viequeslibre.org.

Campaign Update for the Respect of Taino Ancestral Remains in Boriken

JAYUYA, BORIKE - On Friday, February 15, 2002, **Ihuche Rareito Coalition**, the **Native Youth Movement** and the **United Confederation of Taino People**, covered the ancestral remains of a **1,500-year-old** Taino woman ancestor that is currently being held at the **Cedetra Museum in Jayuya, Boriké** (Puerto Rico).

The remains were being displayed under the stairs with our relative's bones on the floor. As our community has long stated, this practice is a total disrespect and desecration of our ancestors. However, we are now one step closer in getting a long over due respect for our loved ones, and these particular remains are no longer exposed and displayed for tourists to view.

Our ancestor is now hidden from view of the public, but the proper ceremony and burial still needs to be done. Cedetra Museum still considers our ancestral remains as PROPERTY and we are demanding that they give the bones to the traditional Taino Elders in order to do what is right: to put her to rest and let her ancient spirit FREE. We need to put international pressure on this institute in order for them to do what is right.

The power is in your hands! For the spirits of our ancestors, PLEASE sign this online petition and spread the word to others. The petition is located at:

<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/taino/>

Bo'matum! Kukstsemc! (thank you) in advance for all your support! ■

Editor's note - This article was submitted by members of the Native American Youth Movement who were in Boriken visiting with UCTP Representative, Naniki Reyes Ocasio. For more information please contact caney@prtc.net

GE FOOD - NEW THREAT TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The following article appears courtesy of the Environmental Research Foundation's, RACHEL'S ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH NEWS

The survival of indigenous people, within the U.S. and across the globe, is being directly threatened by **genetic engineering (GE)** of food crops.

In September, 2001, scientists discovered genetically engineered (GE) corn at 15 locations in the state of Oaxaca, deep in southern Mexico, a country that has outlawed the commercial use of all genetically engineered crops.[1] No one knows how it got there.

In the U.S., genetically engineered corn has been grown commercially since 1996 and 26 percent of all U.S. corn acreage is now genetically engineered. The remote region of Oaxaca where the illegal GE corn was discovered is considered the heartland of corn diversity in the world. Scientists had hoped to keep Oaxaca's rich diversity of corn uncontaminated by GE strains because Oaxaca retains the wealth of genetic varieties developed during 5500 years of indigenous corn cultivation. Scientists now say that aggressive forms of GE corn, let loose in Oaxaca, may drive native species to extinction, causing the loss of irreplaceable cultivars.

It is unclear whether the GE corn was carried deep into Mexico by birds, or was intentionally spread there by corporations or governments promoting GE crops.

All genetically engineered varieties of corn are owned and patented by transnational corporations. The only legal way to acquire such seeds is to purchase them from the corporation holding the patent. Such patents are called "intellectual property" and their enforcement under international law has been a major goal of "free trade"

agreements in recent years. The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** contains strict protections for **Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)**, and patented forms of life, such as GE crops, are explicitly covered by TRIPs.

Under WTO rules, national governments are required to protect the intellectual property rights of corporations. In the U.S. and Canada, farmers have complained that they have become victims of gene drift, or genetic pollution, as GE crops have drifted across property lines, contaminating non-GE crops with patented GE varieties. Genetic drift of GE crops to non-GE fields has, in fact, been well documented and even the GE corporations and their regulators in government acknowledge that it is a serious problem.

Now, however, Monsanto, a leading supplier of GE seeds, has cleverly turned the tables on the alleged victims of genetic pollution by suing them for stealing Monsanto's patented genes. In the first case that came to trial, in Canada in 2001, Monsanto sued Percy Schmeiser, an organic farmer who complained of genetic pollution.

Monsanto said that after 40 years of growing crops organically, Mr. Schmeiser had a change of heart and decided to raise a genetically engineered crop by stealing Monsanto's patented genes. Monsanto won and Schmeiser must pay. With this important victory in the bank, Monsanto now has similar lawsuits pending against farmers in North Dakota, South Dakota, Indiana, and Louisiana.[2] Thus farmers that fall victim to genetic pollution may find themselves sued for violating the intellectual property rights of a corporation and be forced to compensate the genetic polluter.

The purpose of patenting seeds is to prevent seed saving – the ancient

indigenous practice of keeping seeds from this year's crop to grow next year's crop. Farmers who purchase GE seeds sign contracts requiring -- under penalty of law -- that they not save seed from one crop to the next. Thus farmers who employ GE seeds must purchase new seed year after year, making them dependent upon whatever transnational corporation owns the patent. Farmers who can't afford to buy seed each year will simply not be allowed to grow a crop. In free-market societies, such displaced farmers are free to move to a city where they are free to be unemployed.

Today's GE crops can't guarantee that farmers won't save seeds. Corporations intent on preventing seed-saving must hire agents to travel from farm to farm, reporting any unlicensed crops. Such monitoring is expensive.

To avoid the need for monitoring, and to gain 100 percent control over farmers, the GE corporations have developed a new technology -- terminator genes. Terminator genes prevent a crop from reproducing itself unless certain "protector" chemicals are applied to the crop. Any farmer using terminator seeds must buy the "protector" chemicals each year. As terminator technology spreads around the world, it will end indigenous agriculture, and much biodiversity as well. An estimated 1.4 billion indigenous people currently grow their own crops for subsistence, worldwide.[3]

In many instances, their land is being eyed for corporate "development" and GE crop technology offers a legal way to separate indigenous people from their land.

Story cont. on pg.4

Our news journals and other documents are now online at our website. Have you had a chance to visit lately?

GE Foods and Indigenous Peoples (continued from pg. 3)

The ETC Group (www.etcgroup.org) of Winnipeg, Canada, revealed last week that two of the world's largest genetic engineering firms -- DuPont and Syngenta (formerly Astrazeneca) -- during 2001 were awarded new patents on "terminator" seeds, engineered for sterility. In 1999, Syngenta's (then Astrazeneca's) Research and Development Director claimed that all work on terminator technology had ceased in 1992, but the ETC Group found that the Director was either mistaken or dissembling: Syngenta's latest terminator patent was applied for March 22, 1997 and awarded May 8, 2001.

"Terminator [technology] is a real and present danger for global food security and biodiversity -- governments and civil society cannot afford to let 'suicide seeds' slip beneath their radar," said Hope Shand, Research Director of the ETC Group.[4]

Despite the grim social consequences that seem likely to follow the widespread adoption of genetically engineered crops, few scientists have questioned the safety of the technology itself. The major GE corporations have insisted for 15 years that their technology is thoroughly understood, reliable, and safe, and government regulators have agreed (or at least remained silent).

Now a new report, released this month, asserts that the scientific theory underpinning the genetic engineering industry is dangerously outdated and wrong.[5] 5

The new report, by Dr. Barry Commoner of Queens College, City University of New York, says, "The genetically engineered crops now being grown represent a massive

uncontrolled experiment whose outcome is inherently unpredictable.

The results could be catastrophic," the report says.

The Voice of the Taino People®
ISSN 1553 -9350
 Vol. 5, Issue 1 ♦ Jan. – March 2002 ©
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Research Sources:
The Environmental Research Foundation; Indigenous Peoples Literature List; The NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples
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The Voice of the Taino People is a quarterly publication of the United Confederation of Taino People and is distributed by the UCTP Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination.
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At present, 68 percent of U.S. soybean acreage, 26 percent of our corn acreage, and more than 69 percent of our cotton acreage have been genetically engineered. "[A] ny artificially altered genetic system, given the magnitude of our ignorance, must

sooner or later give rise to unintended, potentially disastrous, consequences," says the new report.

The safety assurances of the genetic engineering industry are based on the scientific premise that one gene controls one characteristic. If this is true, then removing a gene from one species and inserting it into a new species will give the new species one new characteristic, no more and no less.

Unfortunately the theory that a single gene controls a single characteristic, while it may have seemed true 40 years ago, is known to be wrong today:

1) Genes are composed of segments of DNA, a long molecule coiled up within each cell's nucleus.

2) The 40-year old theory (developed by Francis Crick, who, with James Watson, discovered DNA in 1953), says that DNA strictly controls the production of RNA which in turn strictly controls the creation of proteins which give rise to specific inherited characteristics. Because DNA is the same in all creatures, this theory says that a gene will produce a particular protein (and a particular characteristic) no matter what species it finds itself in -- thus making it possible for the genetic engineering corporations to claim that inserting genes from one species to another will not lead to any surprises or dangerous side effects.

3) It was -- of all things -- the Human Genome Project that revealed most starkly that Crick's theory was wrong. There are about 100,000 different proteins in a human and, if Crick were right, there should be 100,000 genes to produce these proteins. However, the Human Genome Project announced last February that humans have only about 30,000 genes. (See many articles in SCIENCE Feb. 16, 2001.) Thus there must be something more than mere genes controlling the development of proteins and the resulting characteristics.

Story continues on pg. 5



4) Actually, scientists had known for many years (since 1981 in the case of human genes) that after DNA creates RNA, the RNA can split into several different parts, giving rise to several different proteins and several different characteristics. This is called "alternative splicing." By 1989 more than 200 scientific papers had been published describing alternative splicing.

5) As cells split and reproduce themselves, their DNA molecule also reproduces itself, but sometimes errors occur in DNA reproduction. Special proteins repair these errors of reproduction, so genetic inheritance is not simply a matter of genes -- it's a matter of interaction between genes and repair proteins. Will these complex interactions always work reliably and identically when a gene is placed into the entirely new environment of a different species?

6) Proteins function as they do because of two characteristics: they have a specific chemical (molecular) make-up, and they are physically folded into a particular shape. The Crick theory assumes that a particular gene always gives rise to a single protein that is chemically identical and is identically folded. However, scientists now know that proteins get folded in a particular way by the presence of additional "chaperone" proteins. More protein-gene interactions.

7) Furthermore, during the 1980s, in searching for the causes of fatal "mad cow" disease, scientists made the startling discovery that some proteins can reproduce themselves without involving any DNA whatever -- an impossibility according to the Crick theory. These proteins are now called "prions" and, as Dr. Commoner points out, they reveal that processes far removed from the Crick theory are at work in molecular genetics and can give rise to fatal disease.

Thus the basic theory underlying genetic engineering of crops is quite wrong. Single genes are important, but they do not invariably give rise to a single characteristic in an organism. A gene's action is modified by alternative splicing, by proteins that repair errors in reproduction, and by the chaperones that fold the final protein into its active shape.

In nature, such a system works reliably within a species because it has

been tested and refined for thousands of years. But when a single gene is removed from its familiar surroundings and transplanted into an alien species, the new host's system is likely to be "disrupted in unspecified, imprecise, and inherently unpredictable ways," the Commoner report concludes. In practice these disruptions are revealed by the vast number of failures that occur whenever a gene transplant is attempted.

Most ominously, the report points out, **Monsanto Corporation** acknowledged in 2000 that its genetically modified soybeans contained some extra fragments of a transferred gene. Despite this, the company announced that it expected "no new proteins" to appear in the GE soybeans. Then during 2001, Belgian researchers announced that the soybean's own DNA had been scrambled during the insertion of the new gene. "The abnormal DNA was large enough to produce a new protein, a potentially harmful protein," Dr. Commoner concludes.

Thus genetically engineered crops threaten not only the agricultural systems and the cultural survival of all indigenous people, but also the food security and safety of all people everywhere. •

Article footnotes

[1] Carol Kaesuk Yoon, "Genetic Modification Taints Corn in Mexico," NEW YORK TIMES October 2, 2001, pg. unknown. Available at www.nytimes.com for a fee.

[2] David R. Moeller, GMO LIABILITY THREATS FOR FARMERS (St. Paul, Minn.: Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc., November 2001). Available in PDF format at www.iatp.org.

[3] Pat Roy Mooney, THE ETC CENTURY; EROSION, TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION, AND CORPORATE CONCENTRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY (Winnipeg, Canada: The ETC Group, 2001); available in PDF: http://www.rafi.org/documents/other_etccentury.pdf. The ETC Group (formerly RAFI, the Rural Advancement Foundation International) can be reached at 478 River Avenue, Suite 200,

Winnipeg, MB R3L 0C8 Canada; Tel: (204) 453-5259, Fax: (204) 284-7871. This report is **"MUST READ"** for all activists.

[4] News Release: "Sterile Harvest: New Crop of Terminator Patents Threatens Food Sovereignty," January 31, 2002. Available in PDF:

http://www.etcgroup.org/documents/new_terminator_patent_jan2002.pdf

[5] Barry Commoner, "Unraveling the DNA Myth," HARPER'S MAGAZINE (February 2002), pgs. 39-47.

Editor's Note: The staff at 'La Voz' looks forward to hearing from all of you, and we thank you for your comments, suggestions, and inquiries. To submit items to the **Community Bulletin Board**, please email your request to the Chief Editor at rjhny@yahoo.com

The Voice of the People

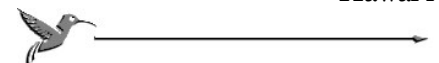
Hi ...I really like what you guys are doing. If there is anything at all I can do to help out don't hesitate to let me know. I'm 25 yrs old, Boriqua, born and raised in the Bronx, and although NYC is my home, Puerto Rico is always in mi corazon. I have a lot of love para mi Isla de Borinquen. I serve as an Alternate Delegate with the Nation Conference of Puerto Rican Women (NaCOPRW). Where I am the youngest board member.

Iliana-Beth Diaz, National Conference of Puerto Rican Women (NaCOPRW), Bronx, NY

Messages from our Native Relatives:

“Mahalo for your mana'o maika'i and may sprits of my ancestors be with you and your love ones. May the new year be better than last year but not as much as the following year”.

Kihe Soli Niheu, Hawaii'i



**Editorial: Taino DNA Testing –
Important Things to Consider**
by Tony Castanha

“The application of this form of property rights over living things as if they are mechanical or industrial inventions is inappropriate”

Aloha Guatiao. The quote above is taken from the Indigenous Peoples statement on Intellectual Property Rights. It is a statement written by Indigenous Peoples in response to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Conference in December of 1999.

Before going out to register for DNA testing, every “Puerto Rican” claiming to have the “fire of the Taino in blood” should read this statement very carefully. “Living things” does not only refer to plant and animal life but also to “human genetic resources”, as in human DNA samples becoming the “subject of proprietary ownership.”

In terms of education and awareness-building regarding all issues which pertain to our people, we should carefully consider what organizations such as the “benevolent” National Science Foundation may have in store for those of us wishing to be tested. We should further continue to question the motivation of any one-group or person promoting such questionable practices.

The only possible justifiable reason I can see for anyone wishing to be tested is if they are fully uncertain if they possess the *koko* (blood). I know some fall into this predicament. Nevertheless, there are other means of determine ancestry.

Those wanting to be tested should know that the patenting of all life forms is very real, just as human cloning may not be of. They are cloning mice here in Hawaii and don't forget about Dolly the lamb a few years ago!

As far as DNA testing and our “recognition”, this will happen, as has been the case with many other indigenous groups, by our continual assertion of our legal right to self-determination in every aspect of our daily lives. Again, the theory regarding the extinction of Caribbean Indigenous Peoples, as put forth by “scholars”, is not measured physically but culturally.

Anthropological “gurus” Irving Rouse and Ricardo Alegria (the two most responsible of perpetuating the extinction lie for the past 50 years) would agree. “Even though Tainos themselves are extinct, persons claiming Taino ancestry have survived...” (Rouse, *The Tainos*, p.161).

Alegria writes, “...the Taino Indians of the Greater Antilles disappeared as a cultural group in the first century of the Spanish colonization” but “in the physical type of the present-day country people there is ample evidence of Indian Blood. (Alegria, *Ball Courts and Ceremonial Plazas in the West Indies*, p.1-2) Alegria is writing this in 1983!

Although he does contradict his theory, he continues to profess the “extinction myth”. It would seem that both of these so-called experts have absolutely no concept of cultural survival, cultural evolution or ancestry.

Thus, our real work ahead lies in practicing and promoting our continued cultural existence and presence as a people. So if and when you go to Rouse, Alegria and the “experts” and show them your DNA stamp of approval, they will just say “I told you so”. •

The Taíno Language

As per the request of our readers, in this issue we have included more **Taíno** words translated in English and Spanish, which your family can practice.

1. **Oma'bahari**: with respect ; con mucho respeto
2. **Siguayo**: long hair ; pelo largo
3. **Ají**: pepper - pimienta
4. **Sínatú**: irritated - irritado
5. **Koa**: digging stick - azada de Madera, instrumento de labranza
6. **Maní**: peanut - cacahuete
7. **Manaka**: royal palm - palma real
8. **Guanajo**: turkey - pavo común
9. **Kaona**: gold - oro
10. **Teketá**: a lot - mucho
11. **Guaio**: grater - rallo
12. **Guiabara**: grape-like fruit found at the seaside - uvero de playa
13. **Ni'toa**: river - rio
14. **Kolibrí**: hummingbird - chupaflores
15. **Guákara**: cave - cueva

Until next time, keep practicing.
Han Han Katu (so be it – asi-sea) •

BOOK REVIEW

Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York

By Evan Pritchard

Council Oak Books - \$29.95
(ISBN 1-57178-107-2)

“Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York” will hit the bookstores in May, and it will be interesting to see how New Yorkers in general will react to it. Just the cover alone is provocative, a giant “full-blooded” Indian from Long Island's past hovering over the Mid-town skyline.

(Continued on page 7)



BOOK REVIEW (cont.)

In the words of Roberto Mukaro Borrero, quoted on the back cover, "Pritchard has opened a whole new chapter in Native American Studies, which is sure to generate some invigorating dialogue on the subject."

The book is filled with surprising new theories and findings, ancient documents previously unpublished, synthesis work on many other long out of print sources, oral traditions little known outside of the Native world, and some surprising archaeo-linguistic analysis, which has led the author to believe that some of New York's pre-Columbian settlers were from Central America and the Caribbean.

Some may have been specifically from Puerto Rico, the Taíno. Their seagoing traders may have followed the coast north along the trade wind currents, which run into Long Island. It is here the author finds a trade language, which is distinctly different from Munsee (the main language featured in the book; there is an extensive glossary which may contribute to the resurrection of this endangered tongue).

Pritchard has named this other way of speaking "Renneiu" (they are the people) and is the first to describe it as a separate language. In trying to determine why this "Long Island" language is so different from all those surrounding it, Pritchard has proposed, mostly in the endnotes of the book, that many words are not Algonquin, but are of a Central American origin, seemingly Taíno in nature.

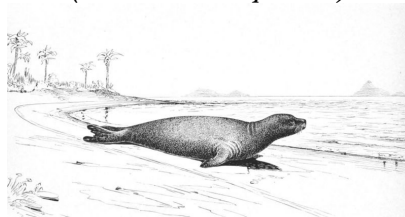
Many sociological issues are hinted at but left unsaid. Perhaps some of the 1.5 million Puerto Rican descendants in New York City today are part of an unbroken continuum of trade between the two islands, Borinquen and Manhattan. As Native New

Yorkers suggests, those powerful Canarsie sea traders had an awful lot in common with the people of the Caribbean.

This book will make you think, and will make you see New York City as you have never seen it before --- Through the eyes of its Indigenous People. •

Our Universe :
The Caribbean Monk Seal
by Sylvia Karayaturey Rosario

Caribbean Monk Seal
(*Monachus Tropicalis*)



A Drawing of the Caribbean Monk Seal from "The Fisheries and Fisheries Industries of the United States", by George Brown Goode (1887).

A sub-tropical marine mammal, the Caribbean monk seal was first recorded in modern scientific terms by Columbus in 1493 during one of his infamous voyages to the Americas.

The monk seal had existed for thousands of years and was well known to Taíno islanders. Observing Caribbean "sea wolves", as he called them, on the coast of Santo Domingo, Columbus ordered his crew to kill eight of the animals for food, paving the way for exploitation of the species by the European immigrants who came in his wake.

The slaughter continued up until the 20th century, with hunters sometimes killing as many as a hundred seals in a night. These animals were documented as being easily approachable and not aggressive.

Caribbean monk seals were also killed by scientists for museum collections. Very little information was gathered before the seal disappeared.

The species is thought to have inhabited the beaches, cays and reefs of the Caribbean, including at least the Greater Antilles, the northern Lesser Antilles, the Bahamas, the northeastern coasts of Central America, Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and the Florida Keys.

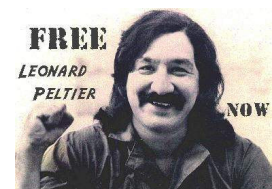
The last remaining colony is believed to have been at Serranilla Bank (between Jamaica and Honduras) where the last confirmed sighting occurred in 1952.

They are thought to have reached a length of 2.4 meters and a weight of about 160 kg; females may have been slightly smaller. The backs of adult seals were brown with a gray tinge; the underside was pale yellow, as was the muzzle.



Captive Caribbean monk seal, *Monachus tropicalis*, of unknown sex at the New York Aquarium in ca. 1910. The seal was originally captured from either Arrecife's Triangulos (Campeche) or Arrecife Alacra'n (Yucatan) in Mexico (Townsend 1909).

Since 1964, there have been several alleged sightings of a seal-like animal in Puerto Rican waters, as well as on the coasts of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas; the most recent sighting being in 1984. This has led some to believe that the remnants of the population may exist but most scientists believe that this is not the case. Formal aerial surveys in 1973 and 1984 of the former range of the seal provided no sightings or evidence of their presence. The Caribbean Monk Seal was officially declared extinct in 1992. ♥





Editorial: Planetary Homeland Security
by Roger Añihuancex Hernandez

We currently live a fear-based society and security is an inalienable planetary right. The quest for American expansion has been built on and continues to grow on the foundation of security, and the subsequent exploitation of security.

Each era of American growth has been signified by the methodology of security employed by the American body-politic to achieve its ends. We fear what we don't know. It is a basic human condition. Fear based religions have been developed to address this human shortfall. And consequently, fear demands security. Security has made America fearless.

Technology is America's latest security tool. Technology is viewed as America's source of strength. The [technological] tragedy against the WTC and the Pentagon has affected the entire planet. The next targets may center on America's other technological symbols of wealth - other skyscrapers, nuclear power plants, and networked computers. Not fishing villages, pueblos, or farmlands.

Well-entrenched interests are demanding more technology to protect us, and billions of dollars are being earmarked for sophisticated technological systems to protect us. But billions will not be sufficient. This technological security is so

complex that there will always remain simple ways to turn it against us. In a metaphorical sense, the WTC and Pentagon were wrecked with handful knives and box cutters - tools that so-called "stone-age persons" would have understood. True security cannot be won, and will be lost if we continue to rely on technology as our mantra.

Our dangers are internal and self-inflicted. America has devoted itself to acquiring mass marketed goods and services and the build up of the corporate dominated techno-economic system that provides them. This has resulted in major damage to the true infrastructure of our planetary homelands and a waste of human and natural resources on an incomprehensible scale.

As long as we continue to concentrate all our efforts on protecting a technological, social, economic system that is not sustainable - we leave ourselves vulnerable. This is true on a global scale. This system is cheap to disrupt, and expensive to guard and [prohibitively] costly to rebuild and repair.

We must rebuild our homelands by repairing our communities and rejuvenating our neighborhoods. We must conserve energy and develop cost effective soft technologies that are sustainable. We must rebuild and modernize an energy efficient national transportation system. We must seriously work for food and water security throughout the world. Or security must be based on global ethics.

We will never be secure again until we free ourselves of the inefficient need for corrupt oil production based products.

Rachael Carson epitomized what our elders have known from time immoral - "He who knows and understands nature shall never be

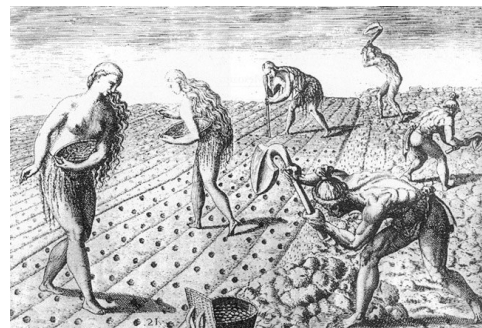
afraid." Be fearless/ Be Free! It is time to focus on our planetary homeland security. What do you suggest? •

Historical Image Archive



Tobacco Plant

Did You Know: Tobacco was used by the ancient Taino in practical, ceremonial, and medicinal ways. Today, Taino elders still consider this plant sacred and it is still used as an offering before the taking of medicinal herbs. The word "Tobacco" comes from the Taino language.



The above image is 16th Century Engraving of Timucua men and women planting in Florida by Theodore DeBry. The Timucua are said to be related to the Taino People.

If you are Taino, Arawak, or Carib and would like to take part in our UCTP Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registration Project, please visit our website or write to our postal address.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

"The Permanent Forum promises to give indigenous peoples a unique voice within the United Nations system, commensurate with the unique problems which many indigenous people still face, but also with the unique contribution they make to the human rights dialogue, at the local, national and international levels."

Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



History and Mandate of the Permanent Forum

The proposal to create a permanent forum focused on indigenous issues was officially introduced at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. Its establishment then became one of the central objectives of the programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004).

Subsequently, two UN workshops were held to discuss the possibility of a permanent forum. The first workshop took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995 (for the report see [E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7](#)) and the second in Santiago de Chile in 1997 ([E/CN.4/1998/11](#)). A review conducted by the Secretary General ([A/51/493](#)) supported the creation of a permanent forum.

In February 1999, an ad hoc working group of the Commission on Human Rights met in Geneva to elaborate proposals for the forum

([E/CN.4/1999/83](#)). A second ad hoc working group met the following year, in February 2000, to finalize a proposal for the Commission on Human Rights ([E/CN.4/2000/86](#)). At its fifty-sixth session, the Commission on Human Rights decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that it set up a permanent forum on indigenous issues. On 28 July 2000, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution [E/RES/2000/22](#) establishing the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Mandate of the Permanent Forum

The purpose of the Permanent Forum is to serve as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

The Permanent Forum shall:

Provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the UN through the Council;

Raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities relating to indigenous issues within the UN system; and

Prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues.

The Forum meets once a year for ten working days and submits an annual report to the Council on its activities, including any recommendations for approval. The report is also distributed to relevant UN organs, funds, programmes and agencies as a way of furthering the dialogue on indigenous issues within the UN system.

Members of the Permanent Forum

The Forum is comprised of 16 independent experts, 8 of whom are nominated by governments and 8 of whom are appointed by the President of the Council, following formal

consultations with governments on the basis of consultations with indigenous organizations. All members serve for a period of three years with the possibility of re-election for one additional year.

The historic first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 13 to 24 May 2002. The provisional agenda includes a general debate and review of the activities of the United Nations system relating to Indigenous Peoples. •

Editors Note: As you may be aware Taino People via the UCTP have been actively involved in this process. The UCTP is represented with in the NGO Committee on the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples as its President, Roberto Mukaro Borrero, is also the current Chairperson of this Special Committee of the Conference of Non Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations (CONGO). For more information about the Permanent Forum or the work of the NGO Committee, contact the UCTP at uctp_ny@yahoo.com

Community Close-up



A member of the Travesia Taina Cultural Troupe in Puerto Rico

Community Bulletin Board

Special recognition...

On behalf of the UCTP, we would like to welcome and introduce our two newest representatives, Millie *Mucara* Torres-Speeg and Cyril O. Taylor.

Millie, a Boriken Taino, will be representing the UCTP as our Liaison Officer in the State of Georgia. An artist, wife, mother, and grandmother, Millie is also the Founder of and long time activist. She has United Nations Accredited NGO experience working with the foundation.

Cyril will be our second Liaison Officer in the State of Virginia working in collaboration with UCTP Rep., Maria Figueroa. Cyril has been a long-time activist who has worked with and supported the issues of Indigenous Peoples throughout the region. A Carib, whose family comes from the island of Nevis, Cyril is also the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Guyana...

Congratulations to **Michael Hernandez** for being chosen as a WINNER for Fleet Youth Entrepreneur Day for his work in promoting "Temporary Taino Tattoos"...

Taino Educational Video Programs are now available free! NYC's **Manhattan Neighborhood Network** is currently sponsoring the video streaming of our Taino and Indigenous Educational Series produced by **Roger Atihuibancex Hernandez**, in collaboration with the UCTP. The programming airs every Monday night at 10:30pm (EST) via the World Wide Web. Just tune into **Channel 67** on the **MNN.ORG** website to download and view the weekly thirty-minute installments. For more information, contact rjhny@yahoo.com ...

Congratulations to *Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos* President, **Elba Anaca Lugo** for the completion of her latest collaborative video project, *Tibes: Nuestro Patrimonio Indigena* where she provide the musical score as well as various consultation in the casting of local people for various film scenes. This is the second work released of this type to released from and . In other important news, **Anaca** has also been appointed by the Mayor of Trujillo Alto of Folklore Bellas Artes.



The Logo of the Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos

Happy Birthdays...

Our January, February and March Birthday wishes go out to *La Voz* Editor **Sylvia Karayaturey Rosario**, and *La Voz* Chief Editor **Roger Atihuibancex Hernandez**, UCTP Webmaster **Glenn Welker**, **Joseph Borrero**, **Calissta Conde** **Sylvia Guarixcoa Santiago** ...

Keeping them in our prayers...

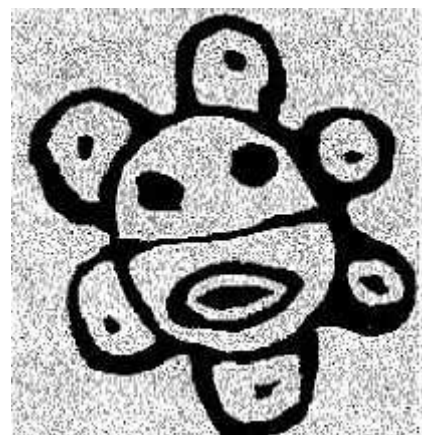
...The Secretariat of the International Indigenous Peoples Think-Tank in St. Lucia has informed the UCTP that aboriginal rights and anti-racism/human activist **Rodney BOBIWASH** has passed away. Rodney was a very strong supporter of the IIPT and in communication on various issues with the UCTP. On behalf of the UCTP, we extend our most sincere condolences to his family and community.

Editors Note: Although we cannot print all the letters we receive, we would like to thank the following persons for their correspondence, especially those who sent messages of solidarity for the solstice and for upcoming the New Year:

George Simon, Guyana ; **Edward Lebron**, Dallas, PA ; **John Brown**, Florida ; **Dr. Jose Barreiro**, Ithaca NY ; **Nicky Santiago**, Ogdensburg, NY ; **Tommy Barrios**, VT ; **Angel Cintron**, Brooklyn, NY ; **Maximillion Forte**, Trinidad ; **Hector Trujillo**, Ponce, Puerto Rico, **Dr. Ray Petty**, Ponce, Puerto Rico ; **Colin Klautky**, and **Chief Christine Lowe** of the Guyana Organization of Indigenous Peoples, Guyana ; **Bert Correa**, Oneida Territory, NY ; **Damon Corrie**, Barbados ; **Carter Camp**, Ponca Territory, Oklahoma ; and **Vicente Sanchez**, CT

Taino Petroglyphs

The ancient Taino carved symbols like the ones below in stone. This symbols told stories or provided announcements etc. Some to the images we can decipher and some we cannot as they refer to spiritual symbols or represent abstract references.



**UCTP SPECIAL FOCUS:
KISKEIA AND HAITI**



The Kasikasgos (Chiefdoms) of Kiskeia and Haiti

When Cristobal Colon (Columbus) arrived on the island of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti) in the 15th century, there were at least five indigenous political territories on the island. These regions are now identified as "Kasikasgos" and they included: Marien, Magua, Maguana, Higüey or Yguayagua and Haragua or Aniguayagua.

• **Kasikasgo Marien: (led by Kasike Guacanarix) ***

Composed of seven yukayeke (provinces): Marien, Cuajaba, Haitiey, Jaibon, Baynoa, Yguamuco and the island of Camamaní (Tortuga Island).

The main yukayeke (villages) were Buyaiba, Dajabon, Guabo, Jaibon, Guaraguano, Guarico, Caribata, Buyuja, Maguaca, Caunoa, Caoba, Chacuey, Limbe, Jabobaba, Couri, Macoris arriba and others.

• **Kasikasgo Magua: (led by Kasike Guarionex)**

Composed of seven provinces: Magua, Macorix , Bonao, Yasica, Cotuy, Xamana, and Sabanacoa.

The main yukayeke (villages) were: Cabia-Acaonex, Acaya, Maimon, Sosua, Banica, Quinigua, Moca, Ximenoa, Xanique, Xarabacoa, Tireo, Burende, Yuma,Guama, Cebicos, Agu, Manyico, Guarana, Nagua, Guaricano, Chinquela, Baitoa, Bacuí, Anadel, Jagua, Guacara and others.

• **Kasikasgo Maguana: (led by Kasike Caonabo)**

Composed of five provinces: Maguana, Banique, Azua, Cibao, and Maniey.

The main yukayeke (villages): Daguao, Jayaco, Cjaya, Cjava, Guanarate, Bao, Buy, Nibaguana, Canasibana, Bani, Ocoa, Nisao, Alcobaza and others.

• **Kasikasgo Higüey o Yguayagua: (led by Kasike Cayacoa)**

Composed of seven provinces: Higüey, Osama, Macao, Jaina, Cayacoa, Bayaguana and the island of Adamany (Saona).

The main yukayeke (villages) were: Yaguata, Cumba, Yamasa, Dajao, Agueybana, Cumayasa, Ayalibix, Nisibon, Dicayagua, Bayaguana, Yabacao, Guaymate, Yguagua, Asui, Yuma, Yanigua, Boya, Cucama, Anamuya, Guayacanes, Guaimate and others.

• **Kasikasgo Haragua (Jaragua) or Aniguayagua: (led by Kasike Boechio)**

Composed of six provinces: Jaragua, Aniguayagua, Cahay, Cayguani, Baoruco, and the island of Guabo (Gonaibe).

The main yukayeke were: Trujin, Biran, Neyba, Barbacoa, Ximani,

Berbesi, Careybana, Aramacao, Manajaba, Manicarao, Aguava, Caoyo, Ybocoa, Cajal, Xaquimino, and others.

***Kasike: Chieftain**

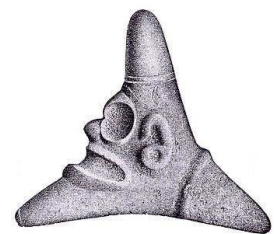
Community Close-up



Taino Youth in Puerto Rico taking part in a cultural re-enactment grating Yuca on a Guayo.



Contemporary Boricua Taino leaders Pablo Haguéy Rosario and Elba Lugo demonstrate traditional "Jibaro" music during their visit to New York for a special cultural presentation. The program was organized by the Presencia Taina Cultural Arts Organization.



The above figure is called a Cemi in the Taino language and it was considered a spiritual icon. It is sometimes erroneously referred to as an "idol".

CALENDER OF EVENTS

• **Carib Pearls: The Impact of the Spanish – Caribbean Pearl Trade on the Indigenous People of the Caribbean**

Date: March 2-3, 2002 • Time: 1:00pm • Place: Linder Theater, American Museum of Natural History, NY

*This lecture examines the indigenous origins of the pearl trade and the subsequent creation of the “Pearl coast” by the Spanish colonialist. Professor **A. Michael Auld**, Bell Multicultural School, will explore how local communities of mainland South American Caribs and Lucayan (Bahamas) Taino have been affected by this European industry. A question and answer period will follow the presentation. This program is in conjunction with **PEARLS**, the most comprehensive exhibition ever presented on highly sought after treasures. Also scheduled for the same weekend are a performance by **Kinding Sindaw**, an indigenous dance group from the Philippines, and an additional lecture, *Powhatan’s Pearls: Freshwater Wealth During the European Contact Period of Early America* by **Rose Powhatan** (Pamunkey).*

• **United Confederation of Taino People Day**

Date: March 27, 2002 For information on an observance in your area, please information contact the UCTP at uctp_ny@yahoo.com

• **NATIONAL VIEQUES SUMMIT FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE**

Date: Sat, April 13, 2002 • Time: 9am – 7pm • Place: Hostos Community College, NY (450 Grand Concourse at 149th St., Bronx)

The National Vieques Summit seeks to reactivate the national- international campaign to work in tandem with the leading organizations of Vieques in order to outline a strategy and redefine a work plan to guide Vieques solidarity work in the United States. The National Vieques Summit will bring together community activists, environmentalists, labor leaders, religious leaders, cultural workers, artists and elected officials who have been in solidarity with and who have shown commitment to the struggle for peace with justice in Vieques. Look for the information table of the United Confederation of Taino People.

• **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

Date: May 13 - 24, 2002 • Place: United Nations Headquarters, NY

For ,ore information concerning this historic initiative, contact the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

**The Voice of the Taino People
C/O UCTP Office of International Relations
P.O. Box 4515
New York, NY 10163**