

**The Eagle of the North and the Condor of the South Aquaculture Exchange Project  
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(Sustainable Development and Food Security / Activity)**

**Final Report**

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**Abstract**

This report provides a brief summary of the Eagle-Condor Aquaculture Exchange Project. Over the course of two years (2005-2007), the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project brought together North American Indian delegates to share information and exchange ideas with their Condor counterparts in Peru (April 2006) and Mexico (March 2007). The focus of these cultural exchanges centered on the water world with an emphasis on aquaculture and interrelated aquatic resource use. The benefits of these two exchanges vastly exceeded expectations and have subsequently stimulated the strengthening of traditional knowledge and practices in relation to the water world and aquatic resource use. This exchange project comes at a critical juncture in the Indigenous World. Many isolated Indigenous groups face threats from encroachment by outside development forces on traditional resources, thereby threatening sustainability of food, livelihoods, and communities. A number of central issues and experiences that demonstrated the environmental interrelatedness of fish, fields, and forests emerged during these two exchanges. Subsequently strong momentum, through a resurgent Indigenous Aquaculture Network, has emerged among participants and the supporting international organizations. The Network seeks to continue developing its vision and approach to revitalizing relations to the water world by applying Indigenous Knowledge and Practice. The Eagle-Condor Exchange was crucial to bringing together these components and rests on the need for economic development combined with traditional cultural practices. This dynamic underlies the fundamental struggle for sustainable livelihoods in the Indigenous World.

**Introduction**

The Eagle of North and the Condor of the South Exchange Project integrated a number of important development initiatives---- past, present, and future ---- regarding the standing of Indigenous People and the water world. Although Indigenous People have co-existed in a cosmological, cultural, and usage sense with the water world for millennia, encroachment by colonialists, western development, and more recently

globalization has led to the cultural deterioration of traditional ways of life (Beveridge and Little 2002). Eagle observations in Peru and Mexico clearly demonstrate this state of affairs, which has reached crisis proportions. In Peru, Eagles for example encountered numerous instances of illegal forest harvest and heard first hand from Condors about overfishing in the vast Ucayali river system. Likewise, in Mexico industrial oil production in the coastal areas, immigrant encroachment on the rainforest, and insecure land tenure issues threaten traditional livelihoods and the interconnected ecological integrity of these lands, water ways and communities.

It is within this developmental context that the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project draws concerted attention to a number of water-based issues that affect Indigenous Peoples. At present there are many Indigenous People's Organizations (IPOs), both in the North and the South, engaged in a myriad of pressing issues ranging from International Indigenous Rights, Community Forests, Land Claims, Tribal Sovereignty, Alternative Energy Development, Climate Change, Sacred Sites, Food Security, and Environmental Preservation, among others (Vinding and Parellada 2003). These pressing issues are of international, nation, and community concern and in many instances—matters of basic survival. In this broad continuum entailing the struggle for environmental justice, relatively little attention has been focused on the water world and more specifically, fisheries and aquaculture. In essence, the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project is collaboration between North American Indians with Indigenous-ethnic counterparts located in the South. The Project's point of departure is the water world and related aquatic resource uses in these traditional settings. Two exchanges have taken place thus far—in the Ucayali River Amazon region of Peru in April of 2006, and in the Tabasco-Chiapas region of Mexico in March 2007. This report summarizes the overall exchange project experiences.

## **Materials and Methods**

The methods used for the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project consisted of three basic approaches; pre-trip planning and coordination, on-site participant observation and recording, and post-trip report writing, follow up, and related activities. Critically important was the requirement for cross-cultural sensitivity and the following of protocols among the different organizations, delegates, and Tribes. Since the Eagle Condor Exchange Project brought together Eagles from a number of different Indian Tribes in North America with often very isolated Condors in Peru and Mexico, enormous planning and coordination requirements demands were placed on the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) (<http://www.ienearth.org>), the Aquaculture Collaborative Research Support Program (A/CRSP) (<http://www.pdacrsp.oregonstate.edu/>), Heifer International's Indian People's Initiative and the ACRSP Host Country PIs. The approach and methods adopted for this extraordinary North-South effort entailed the following;

1. **Pre-trip planning, coordination, and logistics** – The Aquaculture Collaborative Research Support Program (ACRSP) assigned Dr. James Bowman to assist coordination efforts between the two delegations for Peru and Mexico

respectively. Dr. Bowman was instrumental in ensuring that communications between the Eagles and ACRSP collaborators, Mr. Fred Chu in Peru and Dr. Wilfrido Contreras-Sanchez in Mexico, took place in a timely manner. Dr. Michael Skladany was hired by the ACRSP through a personal services contract to assist in these efforts and document the exchanges for Peru and Mexico respectively.

Heifer International (<http://www.heifer.org>), a funding partner with the ACRSP, sub-contracted the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) to recruit Eagle delegates, arrange all logistical details until arrival in Peru and Mexico, and prepare Eagles with the necessary background information concerning the country and indigenous water-based issues in Peru and Mexico respectively. Throughout the later half of 2005 and into 2006, IEN held frequent conference calls with Eagle delegates, arranged for air tickets and passports, and prepared a background briefing notebook. The notebook was prepared by Ms. Emily Powers, an IEN intern and a recent graduate (Sociology) of Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota. For the Mexican component of the project, IEN made the strategic decision to invite Eagles from the Peruvian trip to build momentum on experience gained. This proved to be a wise decision.

2. **On-site participant observation and recording** – upon arrival in Peru and Mexico respectively, the Eagle delegates were escorted throughout their stay by Mr. Fred Chu in Peru and Dr. Wilfrido Contreras-Sanchez and Mr. Ulises Hernandez Vidal in Mexico. Dr. Michael Skladany was responsible for note taking in a participant observation setting. He was greatly assisted by Ms. Brenda Jo McManama, an Eagle delegate, who also took notes and photos. Mr. Jeffery Thomas and Mr. William Simmons also contributed to the Peruvian exchange by taking photos.
3. **Report Writing and Follow-up with Participants** – a number of trip reports are currently available at the ACRSP website. Photo reports are available for both Mexico and Peru ([http://www.pdacrsp.oregonstate.edu/pubs/featured\\_titles/eagle-condor.html](http://www.pdacrsp.oregonstate.edu/pubs/featured_titles/eagle-condor.html)).

Follow up with each Eagle delegate has taken place through a number of conference and individual calls. There have been some notable developments which are further described in the sections below.

## **Results**

By any conceivable measure, the beneficial results from these two trips greatly exceeded any preconceived expectations. In the short run, the Eagles and Condors alike were effusive in articulating insights and all were grateful for the opportunity. For the Eagles, the experience of meeting Condor counterparts in Peru elicited a sense of building international relationships, concerns over the present plight of youth, fisheries restoration and a critical consideration of the benefits and costs associated with

industrial(Peru) and small (Mexico) scale aquaculture. In Mexico a highly favorable consensus emerged regarding the nascent small-scale aquaculture network in Tabasco. The Eagles drew on their relatively extensive experience with Tribal-U.S. Government relations to call for greater recognition of indigenous rights including the securing of forests for sustainable development. For the Shipibo Condors, a somewhat contrasting set of views were expressed. The Shipibo face relentless developmental pressure from outside corporations and are further burdened by a lack of sovereign rights that sustain traditional livelihoods. As Condor Rafael Lomas Rojas put it to the Eagles;

“Talking about your traditions (Eagle) has given me the strength to keep our Shipibo traditions. Through these talks and getting to know you all and your pride in who you are we will carry that back to our young people. They need to know that it is good to be proud of who they are and where they come from. We will be working to save our culture and our traditions for them and their children.”

The sentiments expressed by Mr. Rojas best illustrate a cultural approach to the integrated water world and its interconnected forests and fields—as passed through generations (Figure 1). The statement provides an excellent example of the purpose and results associated with the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project.

The Mexico Exchange unearthed similar themes but also significant differences. The Eagles as a whole were impressed with what constitutes a highly mobile and resilient Indigenous culture. In sum, the Chontal Condors exhibit a vibrant aquaculture network in the making. At the same time, the Eagles noted an absence of asserted Indigenous-ethnic identity in the specific case of the Chontal, who reside in the Tabasco coastal regions near the city of Villahermosa, Mexico. Subsequently, the Eagles emphasized a collective sense of Indigenous identity at every instance through song, prayer, language use, and culturally oriented interpretations of fisheries and aquaculture activities observed. This effort had a major impact on the Chontal Condors who, by the end of the trip, began their introductions by openly declaring their Chontal identity, first and foremost. The key tipping point in this transformation was a visit to the Lacandonan rain forest and a visit to a sacred site and subsequent ceremony conducted by a Lacandonan spiritual elder in the village of Metzabok.

Overall, the Chontal Condors were extremely grateful for this extraordinary opportunity because they had a chance to visit the ancient ruins in Palenque, the Lacandonan rainforest and especially exchange water-resource based ideas with their Condor and Eagle counterparts. Pressing issues included land tenure, improving aquaculture performance, operating and planning for the growth of a co-op run hatchery and remaining vigilant in the face of ever present environmental degradation. In Mexico the Eagle-Condor delegates were accompanied by Mr. Alejandro Musalem, the Country Director for Heifer Mexico. Mr. Musalem’s contribution to this exchange was invaluable as he potentially provides the Condors with an opportunity to develop aquaculture projects, thereby establishing a necessary

link for future development activities. This same relationship would be beneficial in Peru, as Heifer has an ongoing program presence there.

In May of 2006 articles about the Peru trip were published in *Indian Country Today*, *Native Outreach*, and as a supplemental Sunday feature in the *Bemidji Pioneer*, Bemidji, Minnesota. As of this writing, intermediate results from the Eagle Condor Exchange point to the establishment of a strong collective momentum far beyond the actual trip. First, the Indigenous Aquaculture Network (IAN) (<http://www.ienearth.org/ienaqua/>) acted as a source for recruiting Eagle delegates. At the time of the Peru Exchange, the Network was relatively inactive and without an organizational base due to some key changes in foundation funding and non-profit support. Fortunately, based on the connections made and enthusiasm developed during the Peru exchange, the Indigenous Environmental Network re-vitalized the dormant IAN and made the necessary arrangements with the former non-profit organizations (The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the First Nations Development Institute) to house the Network within IEN as a special project. This proved to be an excellent move as the IEN provides strong leadership, oversight and stability.

Second, a number of presentations have been made by the Eagles and associated project participants on the Peru experience. Note below that presentations are also forthcoming for Mexico. In July of 2006, Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of IEN, and Dr. Michael Skladany were invited by Heifer International's "Indian People's Initiative" to a strategy meeting attended by senior Heifer "Program of the Americas" personnel. Dr. Skladany detailed the Peru Eagle-Condor exchange which he then used to contextualize the IAN. Later, Mr. Goldtooth discussed how the IAN fits within IEN's broader mission. A "Project Prospectus" was submitted to attendees outlining IAN's vision and next steps ([http://www.pdacrsp.oregonstate.edu/pubs/featured\\_titles/eagle-condor.html](http://www.pdacrsp.oregonstate.edu/pubs/featured_titles/eagle-condor.html)). As of this writing, further Heifer and other foundation support is pending in the United States and Mexico.

Third, in the fall of 2006, IEN's Advisory Board approved and prioritized their support for moving forward with development of the IAN. The overall vision is to eventually "spin-off" the IAN as an independent 501-(3c) non-profit organization (Tom Goldtooth, personal communication). This strategic move provides the Network with much needed stability, oversight, and extensive linkages to other Indigenous People's Organizations. IEN has prepared a grant proposal for submission to major foundations during the fall funding cycle.

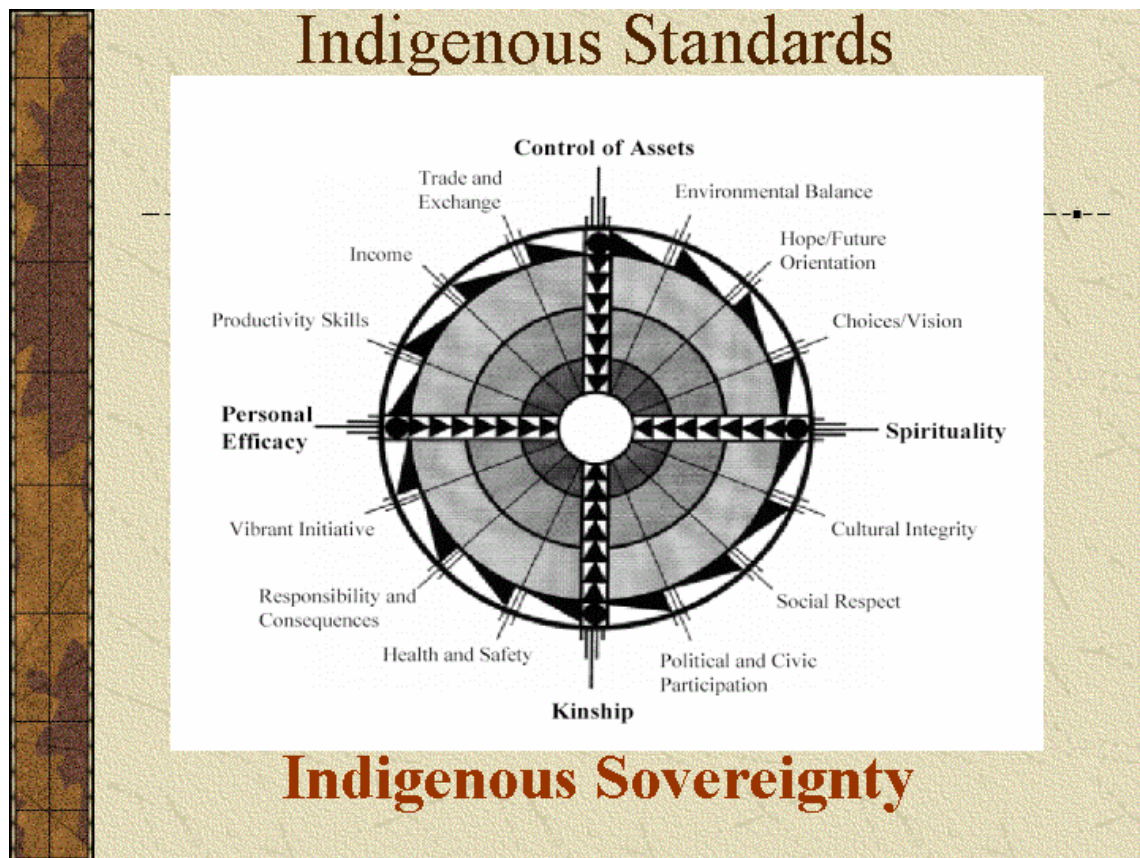
Fourth, Eagle David Vanderhoop (Wampanoag) will be giving a presentation on the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project to the Tribal Council in the Fall of 2007 (David Vanderhoop, personal communication). Likewise, Ms. Brenda Jo McManama (Seneca) will give a presentation on the Eagle-Condor Project to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribal Council and to the general Asheville, North Carolina public this summer (Brenda Jo McManama, personal communication). Lastly, Mr. Tom Edwards from Lummi Nation recently hosted four Condors from

Peru and assisted in arranging an exchange trip between the National Intercultural University of the Amazon and the Northwest Indian College. Details regarding this exchange are currently being prepared for a press release (Tom Edwards, personal communication).

## Discussion

The Eagle-Condor Exchange Project successfully galvanized the development of a relatively loose network of American Indian fish-cultural practitioners—the Eagles. In Peru and Mexico, the Condors consisting of Shipibo and Chontal delegates, respectively, were able to forge linkages with their Northern counterparts. That said, the actual trips themselves were enormously successful in achieving the stated purpose of reinforcing Indigenous Knowledge and the cosmivision of Indigenous Peoples in the North and the South concerning relations with the water world.

The Exchanges provided a setting and activities to further articulate an emerging shared vision: One that is not exclusively technical and geared for economic development or one that exclusively avoids the challenges of modern development. In other words, the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project fostered a balance between economic development and Indigenous Knowledge and Culture. Figure 1 below (adopted from Black 1994) summarizes the overall guiding vision of the Eagle-Condor discussions:



Adopted from Black 1994

Figure 1 conceptually illustrates the substantive and visionary content of Eagle-Condor exchanges and the IAN. Specifically as observations, discussions, and reflection took place on the part of the Eagles and Condors in Peru and Mexico, indirect reference to this “circle of life” informed all responses. This dynamic required the establishment of trust that further informed and enlightened Eagle Condor discussions.

A few brief examples here will suffice. In Peru, the Eagles visited a large Paiche (*Arapaima gigas*) cage culture complex located at Caimito. Among *both* the Eagles and Condors frank questioning of this Peruvian Government sponsored demonstration project ensued. While diplomatic and understated in their comments, Eagles and Condors raised issues concerning “Control of Assets” and “environmental balance” among other concerns over a project that was simply an outsider-controlled commercial enterprise. In contrast, Eagles and Condors were impressed by a hatchery where work is being conducted to restore Paiche to natural bodies of water utilized by local Shipibo fishers. In Mexico, the major issue of land ownership literally exploded, forming the basis of one critically important exchange between Eagles and Condors. In the village of Tucta (the lack of ) “Control of Assets” once again undermined any Condor effort to maintain a viable livelihood, thereby restricting vision and clouding the future opportunity for subsistence income streams.

In this light, the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project has stimulated activity and momentum far beyond any conceivable set of prior expectations. At the same time however, significant gaps exist between Eagles in North America and Condors in Mexico and Peru. The role of Heifer International and the continued and unwavering support of Paul Smith, Director of the Indian People’s Initiative, is critical to *any* further project development. As of this writing, Heifer was undergoing significant organizational re-alignment and the status of the Initiative (where the IAN would be situated) is uncertain. Notable in this regard, however, was the participation of Mr. Alejandro Musalem, the Country Director for Heifer Mexico. As a result of his participation in the Exchange, Mr. Musalem is now seriously considering investigating aquaculture more carefully and he intended to explore future project development. A similar set of investigations for Peru should be also initiated by Heifer or by another non-profit such as the Pucallpa-based Association for Investigation and Integral Development (AIDER) in conjunction with the Instituto de Investigaciones de la Amazonia Peruana (IIAP).

Consistent follow-up effort is greatly needed as the Exchange is a highly *complex* undertaking with multiple organizational challenges and levels. First, the recently galvanized IAN remains a loose “network” and as such Eagle participants are often engaged in livelihoods but always volunteer their time and energy, despite a myriad of more immediate tasks at hand. Internal discussion clearly points to the need for one or more FTE’s to staff IAN’s development as a cutting edge Indigenous Initiative and development as an independently based 501 (3c). Along these same lines, IAN’s delegate pool requires expansion and more representation by youth and more inclusion of women are necessary. All of these desired activities will be considered by an IAN Advisory Committee and will require future funding in order to crystallize the effort.

While this will be no easy task, the Eagle participants are optimistic that these objectives can be attained given the significant interest and momentum sparked by the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project provided the impetus for bringing Eagles from the North and Condors of the South together to meet and exchange experiences and ideas concerning traditional culture-based uses of resources in the water world. The effects of this innovative exchange far exceeded expectations for all participants. An emerging consensus and shared vision concerning aquatic resource use is evident among the delegates. Overall, Eagles and Condors expressed feelings of empowerment and a new-found recognition of their global standing and the challenges they collectively face as Indigenous Peoples in terms of development, both internal and external, in relation to the other participants, communities, and nations. On another organizational level, the IEN's oversight of the IAN has provided strong momentum for stabilizing the network with the aim of transforming it into an independent entity. Funding support remains the critical factor in the future attainment of these goals.

## **Anticipated Benefits**

On an immediate level, all participants greatly benefited from the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project. Future benefits are evidenced by a growing momentum that has led to a number of related developments both on the Tribal and International level. As the IAN seeks further funding, the long term development of balancing economic development with cultural resources provides the vision, concepts, and guidelines for practice (Indigenous Standards) necessary to make a very unique contribution to restoring and revitalizing all our relations with the water world.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, acknowledgements are especially due to Drs. Hillary Egna and James Bowman for providing unwavering and consistent professional support throughout this nearly 2-year ACRSP effort. In Peru, Dr. Fred Chu tirelessly acted as our in-country host and coordinator. In Mexico, Dr. Wilfrido Contreras-Sanchez and Mr. Ulises Hernandez Vidal undertook the same tasks with a high degree of professionalism. These Host-Country staff did an outstanding job in organizing and providing logistical support throughout both exchanges, despite other pressing professional obligations. Second, Mr. Paul Smith and Mr. Alejandro Musalem played key roles from Heifer's perspective. Mr. Smith has been committed to this Initiative since its inception in 2002. Mr. Musalem's participation on the Mexican Exchange opened up new project possibilities for the Chontal Condors. Third, Mr. Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, worked tirelessly with the Eagles to sort out logistical matters and provide a sound protocol basis for approaching and understanding water-based indigenous issues. There were many other individuals involved in the overall effort behind the Eagle-Condor Exchange Project, ranging from the Shipibo villagers who



turned out in numbers to graciously greet the Eagles and perform traditional songs and dances to Lacondonan elders who escorted us to a sacred site and invited all to a Mayan prayer ceremony. Our hosts at the three universities we staged our trips from were all especially warm and gracious. All translators in Peru and Mexico worked to the point of exhaustion. The best acknowledgement to extend to these individuals is to return to their homelands one day. Finally, all of the Eagles and Condors are truly acknowledged for their integrity, insight, and wisdom for becoming truly teachers and students throughout the whole process of this exchange project.

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