

If the Church in America, in fidelity to the Gospel of Christ, intends to walk the path of solidarity, she must devote special attention to those ethnic groups which even today experience discrimination. Every attempt to marginalize the indigenous peoples must be eliminated. This means, first of all, respecting their territories and the pacts made with them; likewise, efforts must be made to satisfy their legitimate social, health and cultural requirements. Since all people, whatever their race or condition, have been created by God in his image, it is necessary to encourage concrete programs, in which common prayer must play a part, aimed at promoting understanding and reconciliation between different peoples. These can build bridges of Christian love, peace and justice between all men and women.

Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America*, #64, January 22, 1999

Our world is home to a variety of peoples and cultures. As the world becomes more connected, we are able to expand our knowledge and celebrate the beauty of diversity. At the same time, indigenous cultures around the globe have often been mistreated by the colonial governments-and today's governments-forced to move off native lands, forcibly inculturated, and victimized in many other ways. How much do you know about indigenous cultures and their experiences in the world? Take the following quiz, then use the case studies on the pages that follow to learn more.

True/False Quiz: Indigenous Peoples in the World

For each question, write True or False.

- _____ There are about 5000 languages and cultures within the world population of indigenous people.
- _____ In the second half of the 20th century, the U.S. and Canadian governments removed indigenous children from their families. These children were placed in boarding schools in which their native cultures were dismissed and English was the only language permitted to be spoken. This was done in their "best interest".
- _____ From the Arctic to the South Pacific, there are roughly 3 million indigenous people in the world.
- _____ There is a growing number of indigenous people who are able to live in their traditional lands.
- _____ Throughout human history, whenever neighboring peoples have expanded their territories or settlers have acquired new lands by force, the cultures, livelihoods and even the existence of indigenous peoples have been endangered.
- _____ Among the indigenous peoples of the world, levels of wealth, socio-economic conditions and access to basic social services are equal to that of non-indigenous peoples.
- _____ In most cases, treaties between indigenous peoples and the government of the country in which they reside have been respected.
- _____ Serious discrimination has led to alcoholism and suicide within the indigenous population.
- _____ The United Nations observes August 9th as International Day of the World's Indigenous People; the aim of this day is to call attention to the existence and the plight of indigenous peoples throughout the world.
- _____ About half of all Native Americans live in rural areas on or near any of the United States' 28 reservations.



Quiz Answers: Indigenous Peoples in the World

1. **True.**
2. **True.**
3. **False.** It is estimated that 300 million indigenous people live around the world.
4. **False.** The number of indigenous people living on their traditional land is decreasing.
5. **True.**
6. **False.** Indigenous peoples are amongst the poorest in the world; most lack basic social services such as water, sanitation, and electricity.
7. **False.** Although treaties exist between most indigenous peoples and the governments of the countries in which they reside, these treaties are often disputed either because they are thought of as unfairly negotiated, or because the treaty rights have been breached and obligations not fulfilled.
8. **True.**
9. **True.**
10. **False.** Only 25% of Native Americans live in rural areas. Nonetheless, Native Americans are the most rural of any ethnic group in the U.S.

Quiz Sources:

United Nations, <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/indigenous/>
 UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/indigenous/index.shtml>

Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs9.htm>

Center for World Indigenous Studies, <http://www.cwis.org/wwwvl/indig-vl.html>

Case Studies of Indigenous Peoples

The following pages, courtesy of Survival International (www.survival-international.org), provide case studies of indigenous groups around the world and the situations their people are encountering. The case studies can be used in a variety of ways:

- Divide your participants into groups and have each group research an indigenous group and then create a presentation to the class. Groups should answer such questions as:
 - How would you characterize this group's culture? How does this group contribute to the diversity of the world?
 - How has this group historically been treated?
 - What current issues does this group face?
- Groups can be asked to develop a collage celebrating the culture of a particular indigenous group.
- Participants can use Survival International's website (www.survival-international.org) for video footage, actual quotes/stories from indigenous persons, more photos, and other information about particular tribes.
- Participants can develop a drama or skit to illustrate the struggles an indigenous group faces.
- Participants can write a letter to the editor or take other action to educate others about injustices indigenous groups face.

NOTE: The case studies here focus on the lives and cultures of indigenous persons in countries outside the U.S. However, Native Americans in the U.S. have also suffered--and still suffer--grave injustices. For an entire unit on U.S. Native Americans and racial injustice, go to <http://www.educationforjustice.org/bin/view.fpl/1200/article/2096.html>.

Prayer for Healing for Injustice against Indigenous Persons

We remember the words of Pope John Paul II, who wrote, "Unjust economic policies are especially damaging to indigenous peoples, young nations and their traditional cultures; and it is the Church's task to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions."

Creator Spirit,

Gather us in as we ask God's forgiveness for the hurt and brokenness caused by our ignorance, fear and prejudice. We celebrate God's grace as we realize our healed oneness. Creator Spirit, fill us anew with the breath of life in our depths and in the presence of all peoples. Amen.

Source: Prayer excerpted from "Prayer Service In Observance of UN Day for Indigenous Peoples," by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM. This service can be found on the EfJ website at: <http://www.educationforjustice.org/bin/view.fpl/1200/article/2031.html>



Indigenous Peoples in the Americas



Yanomami women body-painting, Brazil. © 2003 Peter Frey/Survival

The Yanomami are one of the most numerous, and best-known, forest-dwelling tribes in South America. Their home is in the Amazon rainforest, among the hills that line the border between Brazil and Venezuela.

How do they live? It is not known for certain how long the Yanomami have lived in their lands, but it is probable that they have been there since the first peoples arrived in South America--perhaps 50,000 years ago. Each Yanomami community lives in a communal house called a "yano", which can house up to 400 people, although usually fewer. They build these in a large ring shape--the center is a wide open space for dancing and ceremonies, and each family has a hearth under the covered part around the edge. The family sleeps in hammocks around their fire. The Yanomami provide for themselves partly by hunting, gathering and fishing, and largely by growing crops in gardens cleared from the forest. As Amazonian soil is not very fertile, a new garden is cleared every two or three years. They grow around 60 crops, of which about 20 are for food, and the rest for medicine, making everyday tools and objects for ritual purposes. No hunter ever eats the meat that he has killed, but shares it among friends and family; in return he will be given meat by another hunter.

What problems do they face? During the 1970s and 1980s, the Yanomami suffered greatly when Brazilian goldminers invaded their land. The miners shot them, destroyed their villages, and exposed them to diseases to which they had no immunity. Twenty percent of the Yanomami died in just seven years. After a long international campaign, Yanomami land was finally demarcated as the "Yanomami Park" in 1992 and the miners at last expelled. But the Indians still do not have proper ownership rights over their land--Brazil refuses to recognize tribal land ownership, despite having signed an international law guaranteeing it, and there are many within the Brazilian establishment who would like to see the Yanomami area downsized and opened up to mining companies. The army has also increasingly used the area as training grounds and has built more and more barracks there over the past decade.



Wichi woman carrying child and a gourd full of river water - Pilcomayo River, Northern Argentina. © 2003 John, Palmer/Survival

The Wichi have lived for millennia on their land in northern Argentina, part of the huge lowland basin known as the Chaco. They live between the Bermejo and Pilcomayo rivers near the borders of Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia.

How do they live? The Wichi traditionally supported themselves by hunting, fishing, and growing food in small gardens. Their land was once fertile grassland and forest which provided for all their needs. But the introduction of cattle onto their land has turned it into a dry sandy desert, leaving the Wichi vulnerable to periods of hunger and starvation, and they have become dependent on occasional employment by outsiders for their survival.

What problems do they face? The Wichi's land has steadily been invaded over the last 100 years. Loggers have felled their forests and settlers introduced cattle, which caused desertification of the land. The land on which the Wichi live has been whittled down to smaller and smaller size, leaving them almost landless. The local Salta authorities have, since 1966, repeatedly promised to recognize Indian territory in their province--but have not followed through. On the contrary, they have awarded Wichi land to settlers and authorized deforestation by logging companies. The local government is currently considering building a trunk road near Wichi land which would connected a bridge into Paraguay to the state highway system, opening up the area to further commercialization.

INDIGENOUS PERSONS



Yora children, Serejal River, S.E Peru, 1997.
© Jonathan Mazower/Survival

The Yora are an isolated tribe living in the Amazonian rainforest in south-east Peru, close to the border with Brazil. Their land is in a remote part of the rainforest near the headwaters of several tributaries of the Amazon river.

How do they live? The Yora are one of several tribal groups which speak related languages (collectively known as the Panoan language group). The Yora and other tribes in their area first fled into the headwaters where they now live around 100 years ago. Their retreat into the deep forest was an attempt to escape massacres, slavery and disease as companies moved in to exploit the Amazon's rubber trees during the "rubber boom" of the 19th century. The Yora today live mostly in voluntary isolation, largely uncontacted

by outsiders. They are nomadic, living in small family groups which move around frequently. During the dry season families tend to live by the rivers, as fishing is relatively easy and turtle eggs can be collected from the sandy beaches. In the wet season they retreat further into the forest to hunt and collect fruits, berries and nuts.

What problems do they face? The Yora's refuge was invaded in the 1980s by Shell, who was looking for oil. The oil exploration paths subsequently acted as an easy entrance for other outsiders, who brought with them colds, flu and other diseases which the isolated Indians had never encountered. In the ensuing epidemic, between 50 and 100 Yora died in the forest. In 1996, the oil company Mobil also explored in this region, but international protests eventually caused the company to pull out, and the government to declare much of the area an Indian reserve. However, a crucial area was left out of the reserve, and most recently, logging companies operating nearby have begun lobbying the government to allow logging inside the reserve. Advocates for the Yora fear that the deforestation would be destructive to the indigenous lifestyle and would cause the Yora and others to flee once again. They also fear that violent confrontations could occur.



Kanama, resting with her son after returning from the forest, Colombia. © C.Franky & D.Mahecha/Survival

The Nukak-Maku live between the Guaviare and Inirida rivers, on the fringe of the Amazon basin, in Colombia. They are just one of six groups who together make up the Maku peoples, all nomadic hunter-gatherers living in the headwaters of northwest Amazonia.

How do they live? The Maku are one of the few Amazonian societies who live as hunters and gatherers (unlike most Amazonian Indians, who live in settled communities). The Maku live in small family groups, prefer the deep forest to the rivers, and are constantly on the move. Because they are mobile, they have very few possessions, and those that they do have are easily portable. At a minute's notice, they can wrap up their fibre-string hammocks

(which are their only real furniture), put their pots and few remaining items in home-made rucksacks, and move on. Each family uses its own hearth, which is used not just for cooking and warmth, but certain plants are burned on the fire at night to keep mosquitoes away. The Maku eat fish, game, turtles, fruit, vegetables, nuts, insects and honey. The men hunt using blowguns, with darts coated with curare, a poison made from up to five different plants.

What problems do they face? The Nukak have already suffered the devastation of their population by malaria and flu since their first contact with outsiders in 1988; now their lands have been occupied by coca growers, left-wing guerillas, right-wing paramilitaries and the Colombian army. Both Colombia's main left-wing guerilla army, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and the right-wing paramilitary army (the United Self-Defense Forces), have large numbers of forces in the Nukak's territory. Both groups seek to control the lucrative coca crop, and sometimes force the Indians to work in the coca fields. The Indians have therefore become embroiled in Colombia's quasi-civil war, and some have been forced to flee their land.



Indigenous Peoples in Asia



Khanty children of Siberia. © J.P Razon/Survival

The Khanty are a reindeer-herding people of western Siberia, one of the region's 30 different tribal peoples.

How do they live? The Khanty are semi-nomadic, as are most herding peoples. In their homeland, the Siberian taiga, temperatures can reach as low as negative 58 degrees Fahrenheit, and little grows. Traditionally, the Khanty have moved around with their reindeer, sometimes staying in "chum" (reindeer-skin teepees), and sometimes in log houses in which a fire is kept burning at all times. Moss is stuffed between the logs for insulation. The Khanty depend largely on reindeer for their food and livelihood, getting most of their nutrition from the animals. They also hunt and fish, gather berries, and sell reindeer and furs that they have hunted in order to purchase other supplies.

What problems do they face? The Khanty were persecuted under the Soviet regime in the 1930s--their children taken and put in boarding schools and their shamans killed. Today, however, it is the oil exploitation on Khanty land which is polluting their forests and sacred lakes, killing the reindeer, and scaring off other game. The oil companies set up operations without consulting the Khanty and have been known to make false promises of compensation. Many Khanty have now been forced off their land and no longer have any reindeer. They are reduced to living in "National Villages" away from their ancestral hunting grounds, and have become dependent on the administration and the oil companies for their survival.



Jarawa in government administration boat at Vhara jetty, Andaman Islands, Bay of Bengal, India. © 2003 Pankaj Sekhsaria/Survival

The Jarawa people of the Andaman Islands (Bay of Bengal, India) lived until very recently in almost complete isolation. Both British and Indian settlers have moved onto their islands over the last 150 years, but until 1998 the Jarawa chose to resist all contact with them.

How do they live? The Jarawa are very different in appearance from their Indian neighbours, and DNA tests suggest that their closest relatives are African. Although little was known about them until very recently, it is known that the Jarawa live a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, hunting pig and monitor lizard, fishing with bows and arrows, and gathering seeds, berries and honey. They are nomadic, living in bands of 40-50 people. Most Jarawa live self-sufficient lives in the forest, but in 1998 some Jarawa started

coming out of their forest to visit nearby towns and settlements. Since communication with the Jarawa began eight years ago, interpreters have revealed that pressure from poachers on the coast drove the Jarawa inland.

What problems do they face? The principal threat to the Jarawa's existence comes from encroachment onto their land, which was sparked by the building of a highway through their forest in the 1970s. The road has increasingly brought settlers, poachers and loggers into Jarawa land, who steal the tribe's game and expose them to disease. There are also reports of sexual exploitation of Jarawa women. In 1990 the local authorities announced that they intended to forcibly settle the Jarawa in another area, but nothing happened. A local lawyer brought a court case in 1999 in an attempt to force the government to carry out its promise. Forced settlement was fatal for other tribes in the Andaman Islands, and has always been so for newly contacted tribal peoples worldwide: it introduces diseases, destroys all sense of identity and society, robs tribes of their self-sufficiency, and leaves them vulnerable to social problems and despair. In response to an international campaign, authorities have, for now, ceased discussion of settling the Jarawa.



Yali people, West Papua, Indonesia. © 2004 Survival



Penan man, Sarawak, Malaysia. © Robin Hanbury-Tenison/Survival

The Papuan tribes live on the western half of the island of New Guinea, which is officially part of Indonesia. The island as a whole has an extraordinary cultural and linguistic diversity, containing 0.01% of the world's population, but 15% of the world's known languages.

How do they live? Papua is home to around 312 different tribes, including some uncontacted peoples--the island has the largest number of uncontacted peoples outside Brazil. The central mountainous region of Papua is home to the highland peoples, who raise pigs and cultivate sweet potatoes. The lowland peoples live in swampy and malarial coastal regions, and live by hunting game and gathering. Some of the many Papuan tribal languages are related to others, but some are completely unique. The people are ethnically distinct from the Indonesians who control their country.

What problems do they face? The Papuan peoples have suffered greatly under the Indonesian occupation, which began in 1963. The Indonesian army has a long history of human rights violations against the Papuans, and the Indonesian soldiers generally view the Papuan people as unequal to themselves in human dignity. Papua's natural resources are being exploited at great profit for the Indonesian government and foreign businesses, but at the expense of the Papuan peoples and their homelands. When international companies come to Papua, the Indonesian

military accompanies them to protect the "vital projects". However, the military presence has been associated with human rights violations such as killings, arbitrary arrests, rape and torture.

Indigenous Peoples in Africa



Maasai, Kenya. © Survival

The Maasai, famous as herders and warriors, once dominated the plains of East Africa. Now, however, they are confined to a fraction of their former range.

How do they live? Cattle have always been central to Maasai existence: they raised cattle and enjoyed nutritious milk and meat, using a communal land tenure system in which everyone shared access to water and pasture. Today, they still move their herds from one place to another, so that the grass has a chance to grow again, but many Maasai have been forced to settle and take jobs in towns because their land access is shrinking. Maasai society is organized into male age-groups whose members together pass through initia-

tions to become warriors, and then elders. They have no chiefs, although each section has a Laibon, or spiritual leader, at its head. Maasai traditionally worship one god who they believe dwells in all things.

What problems do they face? Since the colonial period, most of what used to be Maasai land has been taken over for private farms and ranches, for government projects or for wildlife parks. They have been allowed to retain only the driest and least fertile areas. Governments have also attempted to intervene in the Maasai livestock production system, believing that the Maasai keep too much cattle for amount of space available. However, the Maasai are in fact very efficient livestock producers and rarely have more animals than they need or the land can carry. The efforts to try to change the system of shared access to land have been devastating. While the government's new system has suited outsiders and some entrepreneurial Maasai who have been able to acquire land for themselves or sell it off, it has often denuded the soil and brought poverty to the majority of Maasai, who are left with too little and only the worst land.

INDIGENOUS PERSONS



Bushman children, CKGR, Botswana. © 2004 Survival

The ‘**Bushmen**’ are the oldest inhabitants of southern Africa, where they have lived for at least 20,000 years. Their home is the vast expanse of the Kalahari desert. There are many different Bushman peoples; they have no collective name for themselves, but terms like “Bushman”, “San”, and “Basarwa” (in Botswana) are used variously. Most of those which are widely understood are imposed by outsiders and have some pejorative sense, but “Bushmen” has now become the widely known and accepted term for these peoples. They speak a variety of languages, all of which incorporate “click” sounds represented in writing by symbols such as ! or /.

How do they live? The Bushmen are hunter-gatherers who for thousands of years supported themselves in the desert. They hunt--mainly various kinds of antelope--but their daily diet has always consisted mainly of the fruits, nuts and roots which they seek out in the desert. They make their own temporary homes from wood that they gather. Many Bushmen who have been forced off their lands now live in settlements in areas that are unsuitable for hunting and gathering, so they support themselves by growing some food or by working on ranches.

What problems do they face? The Bushmen homelands were invaded by cattle-herding Bantu tribes starting about 1,500 years ago and by white colonists over the last few hundred years. From that time they faced discrimination, eviction from their ancestral lands, murder and oppression, amounting to a massive though unpublicized extermination, which reduced them in numbers from several million to 100,000. Today, the “civilized societies” around them often see the Bushmen’s lifestyles as “primitive” and most are not accorded land or other rights. In South Africa, the !Khomani now have some of their land rights recognised, but many other Bushman tribes have no land rights at all.

The Gana (G//ana) and Gwi (G/wi) tribes in Botswana’s Central Kalahari Game Reserve are among the most persecuted peoples. The Botswana government has forced them from almost all of their land, with harassment beginning in 1986, and the first forced removals were in 1997. Those that remained on their land faced torture, drastic restrictions in their hunting rights, and routine harassment. In early 2002, this harassment intensified, accompanied by the destruction of the Bushmen’s water pump, the draining of their existing water supplies into the desert, and the banning of hunting and gathering. Almost all were forced out by these tactics, but a large number have since returned and many more are desperate to do so.



Pygmies, Democratic Republic of Congo. © Kate Eshelby/Survival

The **Pygmies** are forest dwellers, and know the forest, its plants and its animals intimately. There are many different “Pygmy” peoples living across a huge area of central and western Africa. In many places they are recognised as being the first inhabitants of the region. The different Pygmy groups speak different languages, mostly related to those of neighbouring non-Pygmy peoples. However there are a few words which are shared between even widely separated Pygmy tribes, suggesting they may have shared a language in the past. The Pygmies were given their name because of their small body size (“pygmy” means “an individual small in size”), which is said to be an evolutionary adaptation because the demands of their environment favored decreased body size over many generations.

How do they live? The “Pygmy” peoples live by hunting animals such as antelopes, pigs and monkeys, fishing, and gathering honey, wild yams, berries and other plants. For them, the forest is a kind spirit who provides for their needs. All Pygmy groups have close ties to neighbouring farming villagers, and work for them or exchange forest produce for crops and other goods. At its best this is a fair exchange, but it can involve exploitation of the Pygmies, especially where they have lost control of the forest and its resources.

What problems do they face? Problems vary by tribe and location, but deforestation is problematic for these traditionally forest-dwelling peoples, and they are often exploited by traders and persecuted as a minority group in the countries where they dwell. In recent years, that have been reports of mass murder and cannibalism, carried out by the military and other armed groups against the Pygmy minority in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Indigenous Peoples in Australia



Aboriginal young man with painted face, © Sheila Smart

The Aboriginal peoples, together with the peoples of the Torres Strait Islands who are ethnically and culturally distinct, are the original inhabitants of Australia. Archaeologists believe they have been there for around 40,000-60,000 years.

There are about 500 different Aboriginal peoples in Australia, each with its own language and territory and usually made up of several different clans. Their land was invaded from the end of the 18th century onwards, with catastrophic consequences.

How do they live? Land is at the center of the physical and spiritual lives of the Aboriginal peoples. Before invasion, most Aborigines lived in semi-permanent communities along the coast, and subsisted through agriculture, fish farming, and keeping animals. Aborigines who lived inland in the bush and the desert lived by hunting and gathering, burning the undergrowth to encourage the growth of plants favoured by the game they hunted. They were experts in seeking out water. Today more than half of all Aborigines live in towns, often on the outskirts in terrible conditions. Many others work as laborers on cattle ranches that have taken over their land. Many, particularly in the northern half of the continent, have managed to cling on to their land and still hunt and gather “bush tucker”.

What problems do they face? Ever since the British first invaded, Aboriginal peoples have had their land stolen from them or destroyed. Until 1992, when it was finally overturned, the legal principle governing British and then Australian law regarding Aborigines’ land was that of *terra nullius* - that the land was empty before the British arrived, belonged to no-one, and could legitimately be taken over. Most has yet to be returned, and the loss of their land has had a devastating social and physical impact on Aboriginal peoples. The initial invasions also sparked huge waves of disease that killed thousands--many others were massacred. In just over one hundred years from the first invasion of their land, their numbers were reduced from up to an estimated one million to only 60,000. During much of the 20th century, outright killings were replaced with a policy of removing Aboriginal children from their parents and giving them to white families or placing them in mission schools, to eradicate traces of Aboriginal culture and language. Today they still face racism and violence, and many live in terrible conditions. As a result, Aborigines have a far higher infant mortality rate and suicide rate and a lower life expectancy than the rest of the population, and make up a disproportionate section of the prison population. Although a landmark judgment in 1992 finally threw out the *terra nullius* principle, the government has since done everything it can to obstruct Aborigines from reclaiming title over their lands. Despite the many hurdles placed in their way, however, some Aborigines such as the Martu of western Australia are finally securing ownership titles to their land.

Discussion Questions

1. What images immediately come to mind when you think of indigenous peoples and cultures? What are some stereotypes that you and others might have about indigenous persons?
2. How well do you think the people of God are doing in responding to Pope John Paul II’s message that “Every attempt to marginalize the indigenous peoples must be eliminated”? The Pope specifically mentioned 1) respect for territories and pacts made with indigenous peoples, and 2) the social, health, and cultural requirements of indigenous persons should be satisfied. Are these demands being met? What more could be done?
3. Many indigenous tribes experienced devastation when colonial powers invaded their lands, forcibly removing them from their land, taking children away from indigenous parents in order to inculturate them, and violating the rights of the indigenous in many other ways. Should reparations be made to indigenous persons for past violations of their rights?
4. How could CST principles help guide current leaders in their relations with indigenous groups? Consider: the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; stewardship of creation; solidarity; the common good; human dignity; etc.

Tribal descriptions republished with permission from Survival International (<http://www.survival-international.org/>), 6 Charterhouse Buildings, London, EC1M 7ET, UK, 00 44 20 7687 8700.

Photo by Sheila Smart, http://www.pbase.com/sheila/aboriginality_of_sydney_australia

