

Sorry, we have ruined our world?!

The movement for indigenous rights is a move that is happening worldwide. This move was perhaps acknowledged the most clearly throughout the world in 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Its objective was

to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous communities in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.

The question still remains however, how do indigenous people find their place in a capitalist consuming society when their own lifestyle is based on conservation, and living in harmony with the land and its environment? Without a doubt one lifestyle uses and abuses the land and its resources for their consumer needs and greed's, whilst the other simply utilizes the land to simply survive. How can two such contrasting cultures come together as one, everything about them is conflicting. Perhaps the following comment best points a way for two such contrasting cultures to come together.

With crisis such as global warming, deforestation, desertification and depletion of the ozone layer surging to the top of the international agenda, indigenous people find themselves in an ironic position. Once dismissed as too "primitive" to cope with modernization, and for centuries the victims of discrimination, land seizures and worse, indigenous people have begun to be recognized for their prowess at environmental management, and acknowledged as key players in the global effort to chart a more hopeful course of development for the future of humanity. (*United Nations Information Centre (1993), 'Who are the World's Indigenous People?' Issues No.24 Indigenous People, pg.8*)

The very word reconciling is about merging differences rather than any one party conforming to the ways of either party. It is all about taking the good points from both sides and working together with them. It is all about living with different cultures, views and lifestyles which are not like ours and respecting their differences and not demanding them to change to ours.

In the midst of working together with our different positive aspects both parties need to be acknowledged for contributing something positive to the world as a whole. Perhaps the most significant and critical issue facing the world at the moment is the environment. White western ways are bringing about the death of the world that indigenous cultures have restored for centuries. What greater worth than indigenous cultures offering sustainable answers to the problems of a dying world.

For centuries we have proclaimed our white superiority, boasting of our technological and educational prowess, only to find that we have turned the world and its environment into an awful mess. We have despised the culture and lifestyle's of indigenous cultures worldwide; thinking that we know it all and they have nothing to offer. Isn't it ironic that we should have to look to the very ones we have labeled less than human for solutions to the mess we have made. We can no longer ignore the demise of our environment; isn't it time to acknowledge our sins and say 'sorry we have ruined our world' but together we might be able to save it!