

BRIEF FOR THE FIRST TECHNICAL MEETING ON THE
PROBLEMS OF THE INDIAN POPULATIONS OF THE
AMAZONIAN REGION - PUYO, ECUADOR, JULY 26 -
29, 1981

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1. Legal Situation regarding the Indian Population of the country.

(a) The Amerindians of Guyana are first class citizens like any of the other five races which form the total population of the country. However, because of the fact that during Colonial occupation the Amerindians were driven farther and farther away from the developed areas of the country, the majority now live in the Hinterland. Consequently, their educational and economic development have not kept pace with other Guyanese and as a result the Amerindian Act, Chapter 29:01, remains in force for their protection and preservation of certain rights.

This Act is in the process of being revised and several sections that no longer apply to Amerindians are to be deleted and amended.

For example:-

- (i) Under Section 3(a) of the Amerindian (Amendment) Act, No. 6 of 1976, the definition of Amerindian has been amended by the deletion of the words 'of a tribe indigenous to Guyana or to neighbouring countries' and the substitution of the words 'who is a citizen of Guyana'.
- (ii) Section 4 of the Act has been deleted as Amerindians are no longer required to be registered.
- (iii) The whole of Part II, Sections 7 - 11 has been deleted.
- (iv) The whole of Part VII, - Intoxicating Liquor has been deleted.

- (v) Section 41 - Enticing of wife of Amerindian has been deleted.
- (vi) Section 42 - Power of Commissioner to exempt Amerindian from Act has been deleted.
- (vii) In view of the strengthening process of democracy, Amerindian Villages have been electing their Captains and Councillors since 1969 and consequently, Parts III and IV which speaks of Appointments is to be amended accordingly.

The Amerindian (Amendment) Act, No. 6 of 1976, has amended the Act and declared 64 areas to be statutory Amerindian Local Authorities made up of 62 Amerindian Villages and 2 Amerindian Districts. Consequently, communal title has been vested in the 64 Councils whose responsibility is general management and development of people and resources.

(b) As mentioned above the Amerindian is a first class citizen of Guyana, and is subject to and benefits from the general laws of the State as well as from special provisions under certain Acts as follows:-

- (i) Firearms Act, Cap. 16:05. Section 19(5) which states -
'No licence fee shall be payable by an Amerindian in respect of any firearm.'
- (ii) River Navigation Act, Cap. 50:01, Section 4 (e) which states -
'Boats belonging to Amerindians and used by them solely for their own purposes exempt from inspection under this Act.'
- (iii) State Lands Act, Cap. 62:01, Section 39 (k) which states -
'The Amerindians shall have the right at all times to enter upon any unenclosed or enclosed but otherwise unimproved part of the land leased for the purpose of seeking their subsistence

therefrom in their accustomed manner without molestation but shall not have the right to disturb the lessee in the peaceable occupation and enjoyment of the land comprised in his lease.

- (iv) Forests Act, Cap. 67:01, Forests Regulations 2(4) which states -
'No Royalty shall be payable by any Amerindian in respect of any forest produce cut or taken by him for his personal or domestic use and not for sale.'

The 62 Amerindian Village Councils and 2 Districts which have legal titles to lands have the right to exploit Forest resources for their own benefit. However, the State owns all minerals and any exploitation of any minerals within the boundaries of the above-mentioned Villages and Districts that are not exploited by the Amerindians themselves are only exploited with the permission of the relevant Village Councils after agreement on payment of a satisfactory percentage toll to the relevant Council.

For example:-

- (i) A registered Mining Company exploiting gold and diamonds in the North Pakaraimas in an area occupied by five Amerindian Villages have entered into an agreement with the five Village Councils to pay five percent of all finds in cash to the five Village Councils.
- (ii) The State has issued permits to Miners to exploit gold and diamonds from a section of the Upper Mazaruni River and these miners pay five per cent of finds to the Amerindian Village Councils involved.

The State has also provided the eight Amerindian Villages of the Upper Mazaruni with 12 - 6 inch dredges valued at half a million Guyanese dollars to assist them to get their fair share of finds in the Mazaruni River until such time as the Hydro-Power Scheme becomes a reality and the area is flooded.

Apart from the 62 Amerindian Villages and 2 Amerindian Districts which have title to lands as described in Schedule A and B of the Amerindian (Amendment) Act, No. 6 of 1976, there are two very remote areas that are held in reserve and these are the Baramita area (Carib) and the Kanashen area (Wai-Wai), because it was felt that the level of sophistication of these Amerindians have not reached a stage where they could be integrated into the wider Guyanese Society.

The Amerindians who live in approximately 33 other communities described as mixed have individual title to the lands they traditionally occupied prior to Independence in 1966.

(c) In 1966, an Amerindian Lands Commission was established with terms of reference as follows:-

- (i) To determine the areas of Guyana where any tribe or community of Amerindians was ordinarily resident or settled on the relevant date 26th May, 1966, including, in the case of Amerindian Districts, Areas or Villages within the meaning of the Amerindian Ordinance, (Chapter 58) the part, if any, of such District, Area or Village where any tribe or community of Amerindians was ordinarily resident or settled on the relevant date, and to identify every such tribe or community with as much particularity as practicable;

- (ii) To recommend, with respect to each tribe or community of Amerindians, whether persons belonging to that tribe or community shall be given rights of tenure with respect to the areas of residence or settlement determined under paragraph (i) above or with respect to such other areas as the Commission may specify, being areas in relation to which such rights of tenure would be no less favourable to such persons than similar rights held in relation to the areas determined as aforesaid.
- (iii) To recommend with respect to each such tribe or community of Amerindians, the nature of the rights of tenure to be conferred in accordance with any recommendation under paragraph (ii) above.
- (iv) To recommend, with respect to each such tribe or community of Amerindians, the person or persons in whom such rights of tenure shall be vested; and where the Commission recommends that the legal and beneficial interest in such rights shall be differently held, to recommend the terms and conditions under which such legal rights shall vest and such **beneficial rights** shall be conferred.
- (v) To determine, with respect to each such tribe or community of Amerindians, what freedoms or permissions, if any, other than to reside or settle, whereby tradition or custom enjoyed on the relevant date by persons belonging to that tribe or community in relation to any area of Guyana, including areas other than those in which such persons were ordinarily resident or settled on that date.

- (vi) To recommend, with respect to each such tribe or community of Amerindians, what rights, whether by way of easements, servitudes or otherwise, most nearly correspond to any freedoms or permissions determined under paragraph (v) above and the person or persons to whom such rights shall be granted in substitution for the freedoms and permissions aforesaid.
- (vii) To make such recommendations in relation to all or any of the matters aforesaid as may to the Commission seem appropriate.
- (viii) To report to the Minister with respect to the matters set out in paragraphs (i) to (vii) above.

In 1969, the Commission reported and recommended that Titles be granted to 79 Amerindian communities, and these recommendations were approved in principle by the State.

The Amerindian (Amendment) Act, No. 6 of 1976, granted title to 67 Amerindian communities as described in Schedules A and B of this Act an area of approximately 5,000 square miles with a population of approximately 37,000.

The Upper Mazaruni Akawaio and Arecuna Amerindians have not been given Title to the lands traditionally occupied by them because of the proposed Hydro-Power Scheme. However, they still occupy and live in their eight villages covering approximately 2,000 square miles as if they had Titles, and there is a Re-settlement Committee on which there are five Amerindian Representatives whose responsibility is to ensure orderly and equitable re-settlement from areas likelu to be flooded to areas identified and chosen by the Amerindian so affected.

Baramita, an area of approximately 500 square miles and Kanashen, an area of approximately 1,000 square miles have not been given titles and remains as reservations.

The total population of the State of Guyana is approximately 850,000 with a growth rate of 2.4% per annum. Amerindians who number approximately 50,000 have over the past fifteen years experienced a growth rate of approximately three percent per annum.

2. Political and administrative systems of organisation within the reserves or districts and their relations with the Central Government.

(a) As mentioned previously, the Amerindian (Amendment) Act, No. 6 of 1976, declared 62 Amerindian Villages as Local Authorities, and 2 Amerindian Districts.

An Amerindian Village Council consists of an elected Captain and elected Councillors with the Captain as Chairman of the Council.

A District Council consists of the Captains of each Village with the State District Officer as Chairman of the Council.

The Village and District Councils may make rules for the management, orderly administration of their village and district with the approval of the Minister responsible for Amerindian Affairs.

(b) The entire Local Government System of the country is in the process of revision and briefly the process is as follows:-

(i) The entire country is divided into ten Regions to be administered by ten Regional Democratic Organs whose Council members have been elected simultaneously at the country's last General Elections.

- (ii) Each Region has Sub-Regions with a Sub-Regional Democratic Council to be elected.
- (iii) Each Sub-Region has Districts with District Democratic Councils to be elected.
- (iv) Each District has Neighbourhoods with Neighbourhood Democratic Councils to be elected.
- v(v) Each Neighbourhood has Communities with Community Democratic Councils to be elected.
- (vi) Each community has Co-operatives with Co-operative Democratic Councils to be elected.

Main Objectives of the Local Government System

- (1) The Local Government System is intended to be a major institution for transferring power to the people for socialist development. In terms of the Constitutional provisions, it is oriented towards development. Essentially, its overriding objective is to activate and speed up the process of development in every region, and create self-reliant, productive communities of people who understand the nature of national development and accept individual and collective responsibility for the task.
- (2) Chapter VII of the Constitution outlines a dynamic and pervasive role for Local Government. Given our concept of democracy, there is no aspect of national life that cannot fall within the purview of Local Government and which Local Government cannot influence and enrich. Its maintenance and service functions will be preserved and enlarged. But its primary objective will be to promote and protect the permanent interests of the citizens.

To this end, local authorities will be required to create, sustain and systematically improve the material and cultural conditions of life in the various communities. Their responsibility carries with it a right and duty to be involved in planning the development of their areas, exploiting its resources, and marketing its produce. Equally, it implies a power to engage in economic enterprises of all kinds and in the providing of all kinds of goods and services which can accelerate the pace of development.

(3) All Local Government activity must aim at improving people's living standards and cultural and environmental conditions. Local Government mechanisms will therefore be geared to facilitate the mobilisation of people for production, and for cultural and educational activities. Such mobilisation is the basis for rapid and sustained improvements in production and productivity.

(4) In sum, the objective of the system is to provide the institutional channels for harnessing power and collective wisdom of the people for the development of their regions and for the continuous improvement of their living standards and quality of life.

(c) As mentioned previously, Amerindian Villages are administered by a Captain and Councillors elected by their communities, and a District Council is chaired by a State Officer. However, it should be pointed out that under new Local Government System the Amerindian Villages and Districts will be equated to one or other of the new organs and this Amerindian District Council will no longer be chaired by a State Officer but an Amerindian elected by his people.

As a matter of fact, representation by Amerindians on the National Parliament are 4 and on the Regional Democratic Councils as follows:-

Regional Democratic Council, Region 1 - Barima/Waini

Vice Chairman and six councillors out of a council of fourteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam

Vice Chairman and three councillors out of a Council of thirteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 6, East Berbice/Corentyne

One Councillor out of Council of nineteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni

Vice Chairman and four Councillors out of a Council of fourteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 8 - Potaro/Siparuni.

Chairman and eleven Councillors out of a Council of fifteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 9 - Upper Essequibo/Upper Takatu

Chairman and Vice Chairman and twelve Councillors out of Council of fifteen.

Regional Democratic Council, Region 10 - Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Two Councillors out of a Council of eighteen.

3. Projects completed with Indian groups, experience, problems, analysis of the causes and difficulties of the problems, projections for the future.

(a) Projects completed with Amerindian groups are as follows:-

Projects - 1979 - 1980:-

Pure Water Supply	-	43 wells, 43 hand pumps, 4 electric pumps, 4 windmills, 3 overhead tanks.
Education	-	10 Schools, 4 Head Teachers' Houses.
Health	-	1 Hospital, 9 Health Facilities.
Markets	-	4 Markets with Bonds.
Bridges	-	4 Bridges
Community Centres	-	3 Community Centres
Agriculture	-	Empoldering Lands - $\frac{1}{2}$ million G\$.
Roads	-	4

(b) Hinterland Scholarships

In an effort to upgrade the standard of education in Amerindian areas, Government has built and upgraded over forty schools in Amerindian Areas. In addition, a special scholarship scheme was introduced in 1966 for Amerindians in the Hinterland to attend the best schools in the Capital to improve their academic and technical skills to return to serve their various communities

<u>Hinterland Scholarships</u>	<u>Past 10 years</u>	<u>Presently in roll</u>
Secondary School	325	210
Nurse/Midwives	39	
Medical Rangers	8	
Carnegie School of Home Economics	36	14
Government Technical Institute	94	18
Guyana School of Agriculture	44	6
Guyana Industrial Training Centre	<u>31</u>	<u>15</u>
	<u>577</u>	<u>263</u>

Pocket Allowance - \$G20.50 per month

Guardian Allowance - \$G100.00 per month

4. Organisation of Indian groups, their relations with official and private organisations. Legal Status of these organisations..

(a) Amerindians are organised into groups such as farming, logging, handicraft and Consumers Co-operatives.

In the Upper Mazaruni there is an indigenous religion described as the Halleujah Religion which is registered with the Guyana Council of Churches.

(b) There is also the Upper Mazaruni Amerindian Committee comprising of the Eight Captains of the eight villages for the exploitation of gold and diamonds by the 12 Dredges supplied to them by the state.

5. Resume' on the state of research on Indian groups. Organisations dedicated to research, existing mechanisms or possible mechanisms that can incorporate their results and recommendations, to policies and programmes of action.

(a) In the past Colonial Civil servants and prominent citizens, students and professors from expatriate Universities and a few Guyanese citizens did studies and have submitted reports, theses etc. some of which are listed hereunder:-

The Aboriginal Indian Committee - Interim Report

Report of a Survey on Amerindian Affairs in the Remote Interior by P.S. Peberdy.

The Report on the Amerindians of Guyana and suggested Development Programme by S.C. Knapp.

Report of the Rupununi Land Tenure Committee.

Evans Settlement Commission Report.

McGill University of Savanna Research Project:

Series No. 7 - Cultivation of Food Plants of the Rupununi by Jo. Dagon.

Series No. 8 - Current Agricultural Practices among the Waiwai by Ronald R. Dagon.

Series No. 9 - Ethnographic Notes on Amerindian Agriculture by R.F. Salisbury, M.J. Dummet, T.L. Hills, D. Cook.

Series No. 10 - A Socio-Demographic Analysis of St. Ignatius-Kumu, Rupununi District by D.A.M. Lea.

Report of the UNESCO Educational Survey Mission to Guyana.

UNESCO Planning Recommendations 1966 - 1971 - Guyana Teachers Training.

Articles: 'Amerindian Policy and Development' by W.H. Seggar.

'Some Problems of Amerindian Development in the Rupununi' by M.J. Eden, M.A., M.Sc.

'Orealla - An Amerindian Village in Guyana' by Andrew Sanders, B.Sc., M.Sc., F.R.A.I.

in Journal of the Guyana Museum and Zoo No. 42 - January-December, 1966.

Article: 'The Changing Amerindian' by W.H. Seggar in the Journal of the Guyana Museum and Zoo No. 40 - June 1965.

Articles: 'Amerindian Villages' by W.H. Seggar.
'Some Notes on the Social Study of Amerindians in Guyana' by Andrew Sanders, B.Sc., M.Sc., F.R.A.I. in the Journal of the Guyana Museum and Zoo No. 41 Dec. 1965.

Land Use and Social Organisation of Tropical Forest Peoples of the Guianas by Audrey Butt.

The Present State of Ethnology in Latin America: The Guianas, by Audrey Butt.

Barama River Caribs by J. Gillen.

Animism and Folk Lore of British Guiana Indians by W. Roth.

Animism of Indians of British Guiana by E.F. Im Thurn.

Articles: 'The Burning Fountain whence it came' by A. Butt.
'Aspects of Development' by W.H. Seggar.
in the Journal of R.A.C.S. - Timheri No. 33, October, 1954.

Article: 'The Mazaruni Amerindian District' by W.H. Seggar in the Journal of R.A.C.S. - Timheri No. 31, Sept., 1952.

Article: 'Institutions among Wai Wai' by Neils Fock in the Journal of R.A.C.S. - Timheri No. 37, Sept. 1958.

Articles: 'The Birth of a Religion' by A. Butt
'Amerindian Local Authority Election' by W.H. Seggar
'Community Development Amongst Amerindians' by W.H. Seggar.
in Journal of R.A.C.S. - Timheri No. 38, Sept., 1959

The Development of Land Law in British Guiana by Fenton H.W. Ramsahoye, B.A., LL.M., Ph.D.

Archaeological Investigations in British Guiana 1960 by C. Evans and B. Meggers.

The Central Arawaks by W.C. Farabee.

British Guiana by L. Crookal

Among the Indians of Guyana by E.F. Im Thurn.

The Approaches to Local Self-Government by Allan Young.

Waramadong, A Case Study for Amerindian Resettlement in Upper Mazaruni Area, Guyana by Alain Fournier.

(b) The Amerindian Languages Project, University of Guyana

Guyanese Socio-Linguist, Dr. Walter Edwards, one of the first graduates from the University of Guyana who now holds a Doctorate in Linguistics was the driving force of the whole project. After doing his dissertation in Guyanese Creole English felt that he should pay some professional attention to the description of the Amerindian languages since very little had been done in this area.

He also felt that linguists operating in Guyana should accept the responsibility of providing careful linguistic analyses of all indigenous language systems, including Amerindian languages. In 1976, the first step was taken and intensive research began on the Arawak and Akawaio.

The main aims of the project are as follows:-

- (i) To reach out to the interested layman.
- (ii) To reach teachers and administrators who come into daily contact with Amerindians in Amerindian communities. We think that these persons require dictionaries, word lists, and easy-to follow grammatical descriptions to help them to communicate effectively with Amerindians.
- (iii) To acquire a scholarly level by sending articles abroad to be published in linguistic and other relevant journals.

What has been done by the Amerindian Languages Project, so far:-

The following seven publications have been completed and are on the market:-

- (1) An introduction to the Akawaio and Arekuna peoples of Guyana - Walter Edwards, 1977.

- (2) A brief Introduction to some aspects of the Guyana Arawak (Lokono) - Walter Edwards, 1980.
- (3) An annotated glossary of folk medicines used by some Amerindians of Guyana - Walter Edwards; Kean Gibson, 1978.
- (4) Folk tales and Legends of some Guyana Amerindians - Walter Edwards; H. Hubbard, 1980.
- (5) Focus on Amerindians - Walter Edwards, 1980.
- (6) A short grammar and Dictionary of the Akawaio and Arekuna Languages of Guyana - Walter Edwards, 1980.
- (7) A short dictionary of the Warrau Peoples of Guyana - Walter Edwards; Elezibeth Charette, 1980.

Also Bulletins of the Amerindian Languages Project have been published.

Balps to be published:-

- (1) The origin of fire, its use in everyday life and rituals in Amerindian communities.

Balps published:-

- (1) Handicraft Among the Akawaios of Guyana, by Desrey C. Fox. Vol. 1, No. 2, August, 1977.
- (2) Some Important Customs among the Arekunas, by Lawrence Anselmo. Vol. 1, No. 3, September, 1977.
- (3) Some meals and beverages used by Guyanese Arawaks, by Lynette Bennett. Vol. No. 1, No. 4, October, 1977.
- (4) A small lexicon of Arawak words and phrases relating to food and drink, Vol. 1, No. 5, November/December, 1977.
- (5) Customs relating to birth, death and punishment among Makushis in Guyana, by Maisie Holden and Dhankumarie Narine. Vol. 2, No. 1, February, 1978.

- (6) Daily routine of a Makushi Family, by Maisie Holden, Vol. 2, No. 2, April, 1978.
- (7) The Dietary Habits of three Amerindian Tribes of Guyana - Akawaio, Arekuna and Makushi, by D. Ramphal, D. Fox, L. Anselmo and M. Holden. Vol. 2, No. 3, June, 1978.
- (8) Some traditional meals of the Akawaios of Guyana, by Desrey Fox, and Janice Hall. Vol. 2, No. 4, August, 1978.
- (9) Some traditional meals of the Arekunas and Makushis of Guyana, by Desrey Fox, Maisie Holden and Janice Hall. Vol. 2, No. 5, October, 1978.
- (10) Some comparisons between Akawaio and Makushi Amerindians, by Desrey Fox, Maisie Holden and Janice Hall. Vol. 3, No. 1, December, 1978.
- (11) The Arawak (LOKONO) Amerindians of Guyana, by Kean A. Gibson and Lynette Bennett, Vol. 3, No. 2, May, 1979.
- (12) How the Akawaios interpret dreams and a short English to Akawaio word list, by Desrey Fox and Janice Hall. Vol. 3, No. 3, July, 1979.
- (13) Some general information about the Wapishanas - 1 - 7
Some words and phrases with Wapishana equivalents - 8 - 9
by D. Ramphal, Vol. 3, No. 4, October, 1979.
- (14) Historical sketches of the Warraus (Water) People, by E. Charette, Vol. 3, No. 6, November, 1979.
- (15) Introduction to the Carib Tribe of Guyana, by E. Charette. Vol. 3, No. 6, December, 1979.

- (16) Amerindians and their community, by L. Henrito. Vol. 4, No. 1, January, 1980.
- (17) Four Amerindian Plays for Children (Ages 8 - 13), by E. Charette. Vol. 4, No. 2, February, 1980.
- (18) The Amerindian Phenomenon of Tareng by Daisal R. Samad. Vol. 4, No. 4, June, 1980.
- (19) Meanings of some Amerindian Place Names in Guyana, by Verona Bynoe and Desrey Fox. Vol. 4, No. 5, July, 1980.

Books also in process:-

- (1) A book of Guyanese Place names of Amerindian derivation.
- (2) A dictionary of the Makushi Language.
- (3) A dictionary of the Wapishana Language.
- (4) Puberty rites among Guyana Amerindians.
- (5) Customs related to marriage, birth and death among all Amerindian tribes of Guyana.

On going Radio Programme twice weekly entitled - 'Focus on Amerindians' where social, cultural and other matters are focused.
