



Welcome

Welcome back to the NGO Office newsletter. We had to skip the December issue but now we have returned with an interesting issue which comes with two new features. As you may have noticed, the newsletter has a new layout which complements the design of our website that was premiered in the fall. And from now on, this newsletter will also be available in large print. Happy reading!

A special thank you goes to Carolina Cordon-Bouzan, who has put this issue together as a “guest editor.” Carolina is a Sacred Heart graduate who returned as an intern to the NGO Office for the summer. Thank you, Carolina, for bringing your youthful creativity to the office and this newsletter.

Calendar

**18 September 2012 -
September 2013**

The 67th Session of the UN
General Assembly

President of the 67th Session of
the General Assembly will be Mr.
Vuk Jeremić of Serbia

25 September 2012 – Start of the
general debate

Website

Have you looked at our new website lately? We have posted the following articles since January 2012:

- Children and the Holocaust
- Preparing for Rio +20
- World Interfaith Harmony Week 2012
- UN Observances
- Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
- The General Assembly
- International Women’s Day 2012
- Common Ground for the Common Good
- Water and Food Security
- Romero Day
- Haiti: More Questions than Answers
- Women and Politics
- Do One Thing For Diversity and Inclusion
- Prayer for Mother Earth and Rio +20
- Launch of GEO-5 report
- Environmentally-induced migration
- Statement on Rio +20

Indigenous Forum 2012

by Carolina Cordon-Bouzan

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UN-PFII) is a relatively new UN entity, which discusses issues of indigenous peoples around the world. The mandate of the Forum deals with indigenous issues such as culture, education, health, human rights, and social and economic development. The Forum works as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by providing recommendations, raising awareness within the UN community, and gathering information on indigenous issues. In May 2012, the UNPFII met for its annual two-week session at the United Nations in New York to discuss this year’s special theme: *The Doctrine of Discovery: its enduring impact on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests (articles 28 and 37 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)*.

In writing this article, I had the opportunity to interview Sister Mary Corbett, CND, a strong advocate for indigenous issues,



Photo by Marigela Orvañanos

who attended this year’s session. Sister Corbett began by explaining that the 15th century *Doctrine of Discovery*, has had disastrous effects on the world’s indigenous peoples. “It had become institutionalized in law and policy, at national and international levels, generating levels of dehumanization and dominance, which still negatively affect all aspects of the rights and lives of indigenous peoples to this day.”

When asked what indigenous groups are the most vulnerable today, Sister Corbett indicated that effects are present in both developed and developing countries; she identified extractive industries as the source of the

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We are proud to announce that Sacred Heart alumna Alexandra Codina received a prestigious film award for best documentary in her directorial debut of **Monica & David**. Through this documentary, Ali was able to capture the love between her cousin Monica and her husband David and their everyday struggles with Down syndrome. This hopeful movie allows the viewers to journey through Monica and David's pivotal steps of their wedding day, their honeymoon, and adjusting to an unconventional married life, still being supervised by their parents.

Monica & David received much acclaim, won many awards internationally, and was even nominated for an Emmy Award! Two editions of the DVD are available for purchase online: a Home Video version for private use inside the home, and an Educational Edition which comes with a license to show the film publicly, for example in a school, a library, or a parish. Both editions include subtitles in English and Spanish and audio description for people who are blind or vision impaired. You can find more information on the film and buy it on the film's website: monicaanddavid.com.

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most severe impacts. A telling example is the Tar Sands in Canada. However, the highest incidence of extraction of rich natural resources globally is found in the territories of indigenous people in developing countries, where corruption and/or weak governance is often more prevalent. She has witnessed firsthand the negative impact of extractive industries on indigenous peoples in Guatemala where she lived in the 1980s.

Our interview then led us to talk about the Forum itself and its recent session. Sister Corbett described the Forum as being different from ECOSOC commissions because the Forum is composed of both government officials and indigenous peoples themselves. Given the special focus, Sister Corbett explained that, with Rio +20 at our doorstep “we were

talking about the future of the planet.” In that regard, the rights of indigenous peoples as upheld in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and in *ILO Convention 169* were repeatedly emphasized.

At the end of the two-week meeting, a special commemoration celebrated the fifth anniversary of the *UN Declaration on the Rights*

of Indigenous Peoples. It is evident that the Forum is working diligently to find solutions for the multiple challenges facing indigenous peoples. To learn more about the Permanent Forum, please visit their colorful and informative website, which is available in the six official languages of the UN, including English, French, and Spanish.

Dear CEDC*,

I know I am speaking for many others who are in admiration of the new “Sacred-Heart-at-the-UN” website. I have some idea of the work that goes into website creation, but this one is striking in its user-friendliness, design and ease of navigation. We have grown accustomed to having the site in the three Society languages, but now being able to choose from so many other languages really facilitates the global sharing of our mission. You have produced something beautiful that we can click on with anticipation!

A very grateful RSCJ

*Center for Educational Design and Communication