



WONE CONGRESS IN TIPISCA

“Wone” is the name in Tikuna for the biggest tree in the Amazon, the ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra*). In the history of the Tikuna, in the beginning of the world, it was dark on earth because the crown of such a tree covered the whole sky. After a complicated story, the first two “gods” (Yoi en Ipi) manage to cut this tree so sunlight could reach earth. When the tree finally falls, the crown converts into the Atlantic ocean, the trunk becomes the Amazon river and the root system all the small tributaries that end up in the Amazon river. Just in time a rodent succeeds in taking the heart of the tree from the trunk and burying it. From this heart grows a tree, the fruit of which becomes the first woman for the two gods. And then of course a much more exciting story follows!

For the Tikuna Cocama and Yagua (TICOYA) reserve, the name Wone is therefore suitable for the most important event of this reserve, the Wone Congress, which is only organised for special reasons and if decisions need to be taken about which all 22 communities need to debate. This was the case on October 15 2014, when a majority of these communities voted

for the recognition of the ancestral lands of San Martin de Amacayacu and Palmeras as an independent reserve for these two communities (Newsletter 58).

As a result of the disastrous meeting in Bogotá with the department of Indigenous Affairs of the Ministry of Interior Affairs on last August 24, there was a need again to organise a Wone Congress. The aim this time (amongst other topics) was to obtain a majority vote for the enlargement of the TICOYA reserve with the ancestral lands of San Martin de Amacayacu and Palmeras. Finally, the event was held between November 24 and 26 in the community called Tipisca (much further to the west of Puerto Rico beyond the map in Newsletter 58).

Even though the Department of Indigenous Affairs promised money for fuel and food, the Small World Foundation eventually bought fuel and the TICOYA reserve administration a little food. Of the latter there wasn't enough and many participants complained heavily.





After a short presentation about the situation of the ancestral lands of San Martín de Amacayacu and Palmeras and the recognition process, it was clear that the majority of the participants were really bored with the topic and wanted to proceed with other issues quickly. So a unanimous vote then, in favor of the enlargement of the TICOYA reserve with the lands of San Martín de Amacayacu and Palmeras.

With this result, the National Land Agency (*Agencia Nacional de Tierras*) expected a new

land application as soon as possible, for the enlargement of the TICOYA reserve.

This application became a virtual copy-paste of the 2012 one (Newsletter 45), with adjustment of the chapter “Facts” in which the history up until this last Wone Congress has now been included. Apparently it takes a while for those responsible to effectively sign this application: The festivities were coming up and have only just passed now... ;)





The Wone Congress was also organised to choose a new TICOYA reserve administrative board. The previous board was evaluated by means of “how many hands up” and all except one was elected again. This can be interpreted in different ways. It can certainly be that they actually had a good administration. At the same time it is a thankless task, because the work has to be done voluntarily. The board

members do not receive and monetary or other compensation for the time or spent resources. Therefore it can be that there is simply no other volunteer who would like to carry out the same task! The secretary, for example, has to maintain all the paperwork and assist all meetings but hardly has a computer or adequate knowledge on how to keep a basic administration.

A SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION

In the last newsletter we mentioned the creative campaign by Martijn Rovers for the Small World Foundation, this being the sale of self-made banners. The festivities certainly helped and the amount he aimed for (€600) was complete in no-time! The money is enough to buy a long tail engine for San Martin’s environmental guard. Thanks a lot Martijn!



ENVIRONMENTAL GUARD ACTIVE

By the end of November it had been raining a lot, much more than around the same time in the last two years. As a result, the water levels in the rivers went up much earlier. This results in fish migration to the newly flooded lands. For example, massive amounts of *sabalo* (*Brycon amazonicus*) full of millions of eggs swim up the Amacayacu river. When there were at least ten boats found with their fishing nets across the Amacayacu river mouth, it was time for a conversation with the fishermen.

Most told the guards that fishing these days is so hopeless that today they were happy to be able to catch something.

This is the problem with fishery: If the fish are not caught in one location, they will be caught in the next. A regional management is difficult because the Amazon is so huge supposedly there is not enough money to put police on every corner. The conversations were very heated, so no pictures.

The guards allowed the fishermen to do a few more "sweeps" each and then they should leave. They obeyed and did not come back again the next day. Two days later maybe, but then the guards were not on patrol anymore!



In any case, the fish were able to swim to their spawning grounds safely for two days and deposit their eggs. Great work!

Challenges like this will keep presenting themselves. Hopefully, the constant presence and conversation with the environmental guards will hopefully make people reflect for themselves and understand the situation for what it is. Maybe they will make other decisions?

Would you like to support the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin together with the Small World Foundation, and stay informed about local developments in this remote corner of Colombia?

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to the following bank account in the Netherlands:

Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION
SWIFT/BIC Code: RABONL2U
IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03

Or check out the online contribution module on: www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page_id=68

Please DON'T FORGET TO INFORM US ABOUT YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS!!
(heike_van_gils@hotmail.com)

The contributions will be spent exclusively on the development and realization of local initiatives in San Martin de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon. No wages are being paid to anyone. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the newsletters. For alternative contributions, please contact Heike van Gils at: heike_van_gils@hotmail.com.

For more information about this initiative, please check the website:
www.smallworldfoundation.org.