

PARTY MONTH OVER

Also in catholic San Martin the December month revolved around Christmas and New Year. Both parties were held in the community church as well as at home. The church masses are led by a local man who is a teacher at San Martin's school and who has also followed bible classes. The days before the festivities, everyone makes sure that there are sufficient food supplies in the kitchen to prepare big meals for family and visitors (more family and neighbours). And of course, there is a big barrel of *masato* (fermented yucca drink) in every home! When that is finished, people usually change to *cachaça*, a strong Brazilian drink made of sugarcane. After dinner, people drink and dance (on Colombian and Peruvian music) until the early hours. Some people make a doll, according to Colombian tradition. This doll represents something or someone bad from the past year and is burnt at midnight before January 1st. Let's burn and cheers to the new year!!





WORK TO DO

Over the last months, it has been raining a lot in the region around San Martín de Amacayacu. As a result, water levels rose immediately. Many agricultural plots on the lowlands along the rivers are flooded again. This means that people have to hurry to harvest their yucca or cassava. Such enormous quantities can not all be consumed straight away. Additionally, certain varieties of yucca produce a poisonous root and which is not suitable for human consumption. These roots have to undergo an elaborate process. After harvesting, they are peeled and left in still standing water for a few days. After that, they are soft enough to rasp manually or with a machine. The rasped substance is put under pressure in plastic rice bags or in a *tipití* (on the picture left), so all liquid is squeezed out. The slightly humid substance is then sieved with a rough sieve (on the picture left), so all big fibres can be taken out. The dry substance is slowly heated in a large pan. Revolving the substance for hours with a kind of square paddle, small yellow dry grains are produced, which are called *fariña*. These grains can be stored for a long time in barrels and can be added to soup or rice. Indigenous communities who only dispose of floodlands sometimes only eat fish soup and *fariña* for months!



COMMUNITY ELECTIONS

In many communities in the region, the first week of January is the moment to elect a new representative (=curaca) or to reelect the past one. These democratically (with most votes) chosen *curacas* find their origin in law 89 of 1890. With this, the indigenous people (or *savages*, according to this law) got recognized for the first time in Colombian law. This law was mainly designed to integrate indigenous people into mainstream Colombian society and only became a reality in the 1970's in the region around San Martin. The relatively sudden transition, from a traditional permanent (until his death) head of a *maloka* (enormous communal home made of huge wooden poles and a leaf roof) to such a democratically chosen figure which can change annually, has brought significant social consequences. Before, the *maloka* head had power as a result of age, experience and family line. They often also had chamanistic abilities, with which the spiritual world was incorporated into daily life. They were loved as well as feared in their *malokas* and outside. To the contrary, the current *curacas* mostly serve as administrative middlemen between the government and the communities. The democratic election system (= the biggest family) and the fact that the position is voluntary (= no pay), not always assure that it is the most indicated person occupying the post. Additionally, most electable people in the communities have only finished secondary school, whereas they often have to fulfill tasks that demand higher capacities. The voluntary status of the *curacas* also promote corruption. For example, in exchange for money (because they have to maintain their family while organizing and assisting numerous meetings everywhere) resource extraction permits are emitted or missionary activities allowed in the community. Ironically enough (because the community itself chose them), the credibility of the *curacas* is often minimal, and lots of conflict exist as a result. The positions and tasks of the *curacas* are therefore a theme closely looked at during the project currently being carried out in the Tikuna Cocama Yagua reserve (described in earlier newsletters).



2013: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Small World Foundation supports the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin de Amacayacu in its highest priority to get their ancestral lands officially recognized by the Colombian government. The application for this was filed in July 2012 at the INCODER offices in Bogotá. The first meeting as a result of this was in Leticia in October 2012. 2013 will also be a year of meetings. For us, it is very important to emphasize that these meetings are possible because of your support to the Small World Foundation. In 2013 we hope we can count on you again!! **Thanks in advance.**

In San Martin we finished half 2012 with the installation of 40 toilets in San Martin. Largely thanks to toilet cleaning events and contributions from KVO region Breda and the family Hendriks (former Baarle-Nassau mayor), we can add another 20 toilets in 2013!! Follow the project on :

www.facebook.com/pages/get-shit-done/299897286770994

In the Netherlands, 2013 will also revolve around fundraising for a new kindergarden in San Martin de Amacayacu; a project developed with Sanne Buursma. You will hear more about this for sure!! If you know of any possibilities to participate or launch fundraising activities at certain events or occasions, please do not hesitate to write us!! **sbuursma@gmail.com**. Follow the project on:

www.facebook.com/kleuterschoolsanmartin?ref=nl



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

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

Bank name: Rabobank

Bank Address: Singel 4

5111CD

Baarle-Nassau

The Netherlands

Account number: 13 27 26 203.

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.