brought conquistadores, missionaries, and slaves to the Americas," said Eden. The Chilean vessel was also used as a torture ship during the regime of Pinochet.

And if the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria ever make it to San Francisco, the International Indian Treaty Council is busy organizing a massive floating demonstration aimed at disrupting the celebration. The replicas are tentatively scheduled to arrive in San Francisco in October, 1992. Plans are underway to stage a mock trial that will try Christopher Columbus for crimes against humanity.

## Sponsors Leave the Sinking Ship

The constant Native-orchestrated controversy, demonstrations and protests over the replica ships have led to some financial headaches for the sponsors. The Associated Press reported on May 3rd that the ships left South Florida still owing almost $18 thousand.

Several major corporations that promised sponsorship of the Spain '92 Commission have pulled out their dollars. Texaco claimed Spain '92's failure to provide a specific itinerary was the reason for its pullout. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, admitted that it pulled sponsorship because of all the controversy. Meanwhile, souvenir companies are fighting the foundation over access to the ships, and the on-site management company is threatening to sue the organizers over unpaid bills.

Rafael Mazarrasa, president of the Spain '92 Foundation, indicated that the financial problems may force the cancellation of some stops on the flotilla's tour. "If I can't find the money, there is no way I'm going to take the ships to the West coast."

Native organizers take credit for the problems the replica ships are having. "It really feels great to think that we have won something," stated David Goyette, co-director of Native Peoples Information Exchange, Inc. (NPIE). "I've heard it said that in the fight for Indigenous rights, we only win 10%. I guess this (financial problems for Spain '92) is our 10%."

In fact, even the sailors on board the three ships are having second thoughts about their adventure. A number of them held a conference in Puerto Rico a few months ago to protest the poor living and working conditions on the ships, and complained that they have been getting a chilly reception in the U.S. They demanded to be sent back to Spain, and the Spanish government was forced to fly in replacements.

Photo: Najah Tamargo, Entertainment News and Views

*An American Indian Movement (AIM) flag leads the way in a march to protest the replica ships' arrival in Tampa, Florida.*

## Building a Movement

For most organizers and activists, however, the continuing protests over the arrival of the replica ships are merely one part of a long-range strategy to build a continent-wide Indigenous movement for justice. In fact, all of the hoopla over the Columbus Quincentenary is a reflection of a groundswell of activism in Native American communities from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.

American Indians see the Quincentenary as a great handle with which to organize and get their concerns on the world's political agenda, but are concerned that the attention and the interest will disappear after 1992.

For example, Billy Tayac, hereditary Chief for the Piscataway Nation, views some of the organizing around the 500 year anniversary as "...short sighted. What's going to happen in 1993 or 1994?" he asks. "After the ships are long gone, what progress will have been made for the rights and sovereignty of Indian people?"

Taking a longer view, some organizations are developing plans to force change by capitalizing on the momentum from the Quincentennial protests.

One of the projects in the works is the League of Indigenous Sovereign Nations (LISN), founded by Tayac. LISN is a campaign that brings together many Native nations in an effort to force the United Nations into providing voting representation to the League in the General Assembly. LISN's goals are to encourage Indigenous people to restore their traditional forms of government, to defend Native sovereignty over the land they occupy and to obtain equality for Native peoples.

Other organizations, including '92 Alliance, Rethinking Schools, and others are using the 500 years to produce changes in the curriculum of US schools. History textbooks are being rewritten to reflect indigenous perspectives and cultural sensitivity. A large quantity of educational materials have been developed that address the controversy surrounding the Quincentenial.

The success of utilizing the ships to promote a global awareness of Indigenous issues is seen as critical for the survival of the people during the next five hundred years. This is viewed by organizers as the "real agenda."

"The ships can be used to demand that governments honor treaties, respect sovereignty of Indian nations, and stop the continued genocide being inflicted against the Indigenous people of this hemisphere," argues Sheridan Murphy, executive director of Tiyospaye American Indian Student Organization and organizer for the Florida protests. "This is the only demand we make. Stop the genocide that began with Columbus and stop the legacy that continues today."

Maryanne Rienhart speaks with conviction. "We survived the last five hundred years and we will survive the next five hundred."

*Lois Tomas works with the Native People's Information Exchange.*

### References and Resources

Native People's Information Exchange. P.O. Box 1954, St. Petersburg, FL 33713. (813) 823-3534.

South and Meso-American Indian Information Center. P.O. Box 28703, Oakland, CA 94604. (510) 834-4263.

Kines, Lindsay. "B.C. Natives Seize Ship to Oppose Celebrations," *Vancouver Sun*, 12/16/91.

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