



Americas

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North America

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North America includes a wide range of communities, including black, indigenous, Latino, Arab and Asian minorities who together contribute to the region's rich cultural diversity. This is in itself a reflection of a long and often troubled history, beginning with the colonization of what is now Canada, Mexico and the United States (US) and the decimation of a greater part of the indigenous population. The ensuing centuries saw the arrival of millions of enslaved Africans until the trade was eventually abolished in the nineteenth century. More recently, successive flows of migration from across the world, but particularly from Central and South America, have further transformed the demographic composition.

While the variety of cultures in North America today is remarkable, many minority and indigenous communities also face a multitude of challenges to maintain their traditions. This is due in large part to the continued inequalities they face, rooted in past discrimination, and the indifference or even hostility certain cultural expressions are met with. The pressures of assimilation, social dislocation, poverty and the absence of supportive spaces to nurture these traditions can all contribute to the disappearance or silencing of minorities and indigenous peoples. From Muslims concealing their identities for fear of attack to First Nation youth in Canada lacking access to instruction in their indigenous languages, these barriers are closely linked to alienation, prejudice and marginalization. Nevertheless, at the same time there are also many inspiring examples across the region of communities actively re-engaging their culture, often as part of broader efforts to advocate for greater visibility and inclusion.

United States

The metaphor of the 'melting pot' is commonly used to describe the US and its diverse religious, ethnic and indigenous communities. But while this accurately reflects the rich demographic variety of a country that by 2044 will be 'majority minority', with no single ethnic group making up more than 50 per cent of the population, it fails to capture a variety of entrenched social and economic disparities between different groups. From education to health care, employment to politics, inequality and division continue to characterize ethnic and religious relations within the US. In the criminal justice system, for example, African Americans are arrested nearly six times as often as their white counterparts and constitute 1 million of the 2.3 million people incarcerated in the US. Consequently, one in every thirteen African Americans of voting age is disenfranchised due to a felony conviction, a rate four times greater than the rest of the US population.

However, a major shift in nationwide consciousness of the role ethnicity plays in the justice system began after the shooting death of an unarmed African American teenager, Michael Brown, by a white police officer on 9 August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. On 4 March 2015, the Department of Justice released a report on their investigation into the Ferguson Police Department, identifying widespread practices of ethnic discrimination by law enforcement. The report supported what demonstrators and community members had been claiming all along: that Ferguson police were unfairly targeting African American residents, violating their civil rights and engaging in a pattern of unconstitutional arrests that turned residents into a form of revenue generation.

Since Brown's death, incidents of police brutality against ethnic minorities, as well as debates surrounding institutionalized racial bias within the US law-enforcement system, have continued. While data related to police shootings is not transparently or uniformly collected by the government, independent datasets developed by various media outlets have tracked the high numbers of African Americans and other ethnic minorities killed by police. During 2015, according to figures collated by the UK's

Guardian newspaper, young African American men between the ages of 15 and 34 faced the highest risk of being killed by police, with a death rate five times higher than for white men of the same age. Another survey by the *Washington Post* uncovered similar findings: despite accounting for a little over 6 per cent of the population, African American men accounted for almost 40 per cent of those killed by police while unarmed.

These numbers have helped identify the scale of deadly force used against African Americans by US law enforcement. Furthermore, videos of many of these incidents, some recorded by the police themselves through dashboard and body cameras, have highlighted how officers have frequently failed to de-escalate situations before using deadly force. At times, the footage contradicted the official narrative from police and also depicted excessive force. This included a dashboard camera video of Chicago police shooting 17-year-old African American Laquan McDonald 16 times on 20 October 2014, which was not made public until 24 November 2015. While the city claimed that the footage could not be released during the FBI and US Attorney's investigations, others interpreted the delay as a cover-up intended to quell public outrage.

Bystander videos also shed light on apparent cases of police brutality inflicted on African Americans. Gaining particular attention was a video that appeared to show 50-year-old African American Walter L. Scott fleeing while being shot eight times by a white police officer in North Charleston, South Carolina on 4 April. The officer who shot Scott was subsequently charged with murder and awaits trial, while the family of Scott reached a US\$ 6.5 million settlement with the city that bars them from bringing civil claims over his death. Less than three weeks later another bystander video emerged of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old unarmed African American man, being dragged to a police van in Baltimore on 12 April. A week after his arrest, Gray died. The events surrounding his arrest and death are still disputed. Six officers involved in Gray's arrest have had charges filed against them; however, at the beginning of 2016, the trials were delayed after the jury in the first case could not reach a verdict.

Demonstrations against police brutality

have expanded throughout the country in the wake of the killing of Michael Brown and other lethal police shootings. A movement had started coalescing around the slogan and hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which had initially been formulated in 2013 on social media by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the 2012 killing of Trayvon Williams. From the beginning, activists used the internet to challenge the dominant narrative of the protests as 'riots'. During demonstrations in Baltimore following the death of Gray, for example, while some media outlets presented an image of the city being looted and burned, activists took to Twitter to organize street cleaning crews and share first-hand accounts.

Throughout 2015, 26 individual Black Lives Matter chapters were opened across the United States. Frequently, this movement was compared and contrasted with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, not only by the media and politicians but also former leaders of that era and Black Lives Matter activists themselves. However, while the heritage of the movement's protests has strongly informed Black Lives Matter, activists have also emphasized the distinctive aspects of their activities, extending beyond anti-racism to encompass African American women's rights; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights; and cultural rights.

Black Lives Matter is especially notable for the high proportion of women leaders and its conscious attempts to move away from the more hierarchical male-dominated model associated with earlier racial equality movements. The movement is actively working to end the marginalization of African American women and the silence surrounding violence inflicted against them, including by police.

One high-profile case in 2015 involved 28-year-old African American Sandra Bland, who was found dead in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, three days after she was arrested during a traffic stop. The events leading to Bland's death are unclear: while the official account is that she was found unresponsive due to 'self-inflicted asphyxiation', her family refuted claims that Bland would commit suicide. In December, a grand jury decided not to bring any charges in

the case; however, the police officer who pulled Bland over was subsequently indicted for perjury. The uncertainties surrounding her death received significant media coverage and drew attention to the invisibility of African American women in mainstream reporting on police brutality.

Amid the demonstrations against police violence perpetrated against African Americans, the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina came under fire by a gunman on 17 June. Nine people were killed, including US State Senator, Rev. Clementa Pinckney. The suspect was arrested the following day and later pleaded not guilty to 33 federal charges, including a number of hate crime charges, for which he awaits trial. The shooting, which was quickly identified as being racially motivated based on an online manifesto from the suspect, raised further concerns about a culture of racism against African Americans in the former Confederacy of the country's south-east. Predominantly, debates focused on the continued use of the Confederate flag at the South Carolina State House and other state capitols in the region. Members of Black Lives Matter and other civil rights groups, along with a number of politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties, demanded its removal on the grounds that it was a symbol of racial hatred, celebrating the Confederacy's role in fighting to uphold slavery during the Civil War.

Ten days after the shooting, Black Lives Matter member Bree Newsome climbed the flagpole at the South Carolina State House and removed the Confederate flag. Newsome was subsequently arrested and the flag was raised again. However, an online movement began using the hashtag #KeepItDown, demanding the permanent removal of the flag. On 10 July the flag was taken down for good at the South Carolina State House grounds, after being flown there for 54 years. Other states have followed suit and ended the use of the Confederate flag at their capitols and other government buildings. The US Supreme Court also ruled in favour of Confederate flag opponents with its decision in June that Texas did not violate the First Amendment when it refused to allow specialty licence plates bearing the Confederate flag.

Beyond debates surrounding the representation

Right: A young Muslim woman plays volleyball in New York City, US. *Chris Goldberg.*

of the Confederate battle flag, the chosen location for the shooting also led to discussions around the important cultural and historical role of the church in the African American community. While forced conversions to Christianity happened during the time of slavery, churches eventually became a place for African Americans to congregate and later organize during the Civil Rights Movement. Thus the attack was seen not only as an assault targeting African Americans themselves, but also on their faith and heritage. In the weeks that followed, fears of a wider attack on the African American community were realized in a spate of arson attacks on predominantly black churches. At least eight African American churches across the South were damaged by fire in the ten days following the Charleston shooting.

Though state investigators deemed the fires unconnected to one another, the attacks echoed the long history of violence against African American churches, starting in the time of slavery, and continuing through Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and into the 1990s. It was this legacy of intimidation against African American churches that spurred a group of Muslim non-profit organizations, not unfamiliar with similar ethnic- and religious-based discrimination themselves, to lend their support towards the reconstruction of the damaged churches. Together they raised over US\$100,000 on a crowd funding site through their call to 'unite to help our sisters and brothers in faith'.

Their gesture of solidarity came at a time when discrimination against Muslims reached new heights in the US. While anti-Muslim sentiments have been present for decades in the country, the level of vitriol directed towards them in 2015 intensified to unprecedented levels. At the beginning of the year, it was reported that anti-Muslim hate crimes continued to occur at rates five times higher than before the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks in 2001. By the year's close, the political and social environment was frequently deemed, by the media as well as Muslim and civil rights activists, as even



worse than in the days, weeks and years directly following 9/11.

The reasons for the increased violence and discrimination targeting Muslims was largely associated with a backlash to the apparent resurgence of extremist groups such as Al Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and their affiliates. Many of these attacks happened in the Middle East and Africa, but garnering particular attention in the US were the attacks in Paris in January and again in November.

While President Obama has pledged to admit 10,000 new Syrian and Iraqi refugees into the country during 2016, this was in opposition to a vote by Congressional Republicans to make entry of refugees from these countries more difficult following the November Paris attacks. In the ensuing weeks, many governors and Republican 2016 presidential hopefuls publicly declared their suspicion and antipathy towards Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Thirty-one state governors, all but one being Republican, declared that they would ban some or all Iraqi and Syrian refugees – a move that critics argued was in fact unlawful under the US Constitution.

Regardless of its legality, this rhetoric created a volatile and dangerous climate for many Muslims already living, or seeking refuge, in the US. This situation deteriorated further following a 2 December shooting in San Bernardino, California that left 14 dead. While some uncertainty remains about the exact motives of the two attackers, a husband and wife, the media and US government has suggested they may have allied themselves with ISIS. As a result, incidents of anti-Islam violence spiked across the country, including acts of vandalism and arson at mosques in California, Pennsylvania and Texas, as well as individual physical attacks and death threats in Washington State, New Jersey and elsewhere.

In spite of this discriminatory public climate, in January the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that, by banning Muslim inmates from growing beards, Arkansas corrections officials had violated their religious freedoms. Later in the year, on 1 June, the Supreme Court ruled with an 8–1 majority in favour of Samantha Elauf's claims of religious discrimination by the clothing store chain Abercrombie and Fitch, when they did not hire her after she wore a *hijab* during a job

interview.

However, Muslims were not the only minority publicly vilified during 2015. During the early days of the US presidential nominations campaign, ahead of the 2016 elections, Republican candidates frequently used fear-mongering tactics to advocate for harsher immigration policies largely targeting the Latino community. The most notorious instance occurred during a campaign rally in June, when Republican candidate Donald Trump falsely drew a link between Mexican immigrants and increased crime rates in the US. However, while the data on crime rates and their correlation to numbers of immigrants is incomplete, the evidence that is available does not support Trump's claims. In fact, while immigration has increased since the 1990s, crime has decreased and crime levels among first-generation immigrants appear to be lower than those among native-born Americans.

While the negative portrayal of Latinos is not grounded in reality, the impact within the community of these representations can be devastating. This pressure has led some belonging to younger generations to assimilate more quickly and completely, to the detriment of knowing and practising their heritage and cultural traditions. The loss of cultural practices within the Latino community has had a multitude of negative consequences, including diminished life expectancy. While recently arrived Latino immigrants live on average three years longer than white Americans and six years more than African Americans, despite experiencing nearly double the poverty rates of the native-born population, this gap is seen to decrease among later generations of Latinos. The fall in life expectancy has been associated, in part, with a move away from traditional foods and increased consumption of highly processed products.

Research has found that family and community bonds are critical to the upbringing, education and passing down of cultural heritage to the younger generations, including cooking methods. Traditionally this has been achieved, to a large degree, by having multiple generations of a family living under one roof and sharing spaces intentionally set up to promote interaction. However, it has become increasingly difficult to engage younger generations in cultural education

and practices, including teaching in traditional languages. Within the Latino community, initiatives such as the Rayito de Sol Spanish Immersion Early Learning Center have been established to promote cultural learning. The school, based in Minnesota, provides children with an immersive Spanish language curriculum and instruction in Latin American cultures.

But while cultural erosion remains a significant challenge for many communities, a related problem is that of misrepresentation and even caricature – one that has long afflicted the country's Native American population since colonization. TV and cinema, for instance, have for decades subjected indigenous people to harmful and inaccurate portrayals, a situation that remains evident today. This was highlighted during the year by reports that a number of indigenous actors working on the Netflix film, *The Ridiculous Six*, left the set in protest against what they saw as inaccurate depictions of Apache people, coupled with disrespectful dialogue and bigoted characterizations of Native Americans. Several of the actors in question subsequently produced a short film in response to their experience, as well as to highlight the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Native Americans.

Beyond film, the use of racist mascots to represent sports teams, both professional and in schools, was also challenged publicly during the year through targeted campaigns. Among these was the Native Education Raising Dedicated Students (NERDS), begun by Dakota Franklin Kicking Bear Brown, a 17-year-old high school student in Jackson, California and member of the Wilton Miwok. Brown harnessed the success of NERDS – which he began as a peer-to-peer mentoring and tutoring programme to help Native American youth succeed academically – to lobby to change the mascot at his high school from the racist epithet of 'Redskins'. As Brown explained, research suggests that these pejorative labels and imagery are detrimental to the mental health and well-being of Native American youth. According to another campaign, Change the Mascot, about a dozen schools had changed Native American mascots by the end of 2015 and another 20 are considering doing so. Meanwhile, the prominent Washington Redskins American football team lost a federal court case to maintain

trademark registrations on their name and logo; the judge specifically cited the team name's offensiveness in his reasoning. The team has stated that it will appeal the decision.

Equally damaging to Native American communities has been the appropriation of indigenous dance, art and costume by mainstream entertainment industries. One of the most egregious examples of this is the popular use by non-indigenous fashion models of headdresses resembling those worn traditionally by male (and on very rare occasions female) leaders of Plains nations during ceremonial events. Similar accusations have been levelled against the film, fashion and music industries by indigenous activists, who regard such appropriation as a form of theft and a one-way exchange that primarily benefits the white elite that continues to dominate these arenas. Headdresses have been popular among artists and audiences at music festivals, for instance. A further problem is that these symbols are often combined in haphazard ways, despite the fact that they may belong to totally different cultures. Activists have highlighted how, besides being disrespectful to Native American culture, the misuse and abuse of these artefacts draws attention away from the rich heritage of these communities – a living culture that remains vibrant despite continued discrimination.

Central America

Janet Oropeza Eng

In recent decades many Central American countries have enacted new Constitutions and legal frameworks that acknowledge and guarantee indigenous and Afro-descendant rights. In practice, these measures have not been sufficient to prevent continued discrimination, criminalization of peaceful community protests, and violence by state and non-state actors, most especially around such issues as land rights

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Case study by Mariah Grant
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Challenging cultural appropriation in Canada: the misuse of indigenous symbols in Halloween costumes

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In October 2015, Jeffrey McNeil-Seymour walked into a Halloween costume shop in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada with his sister and teenaged nieces. McNeil-Seymour, an instructor of social work at Thompson River University and a Tk'emlúps Tee Secwépemc, quickly found what he had suspected the shop was selling – costumes poorly mimicking the dress of indigenous peoples in Canada. From Facebook posts and group pages, he already knew how upset many were that shops in Canada continued to stock and advertise costumes that culturally misrepresented indigenous peoples, despite years of protests. For this reason, as McNeil-Seymour puts it, he took it as 'a call to action' – 'because,' he says, 'it is an issue that I've dealt with before'.

Within the Halloween shop, he and his family came upon costumes such as one titled 'Chief Many Feathers' and others that McNeil-Seymour described as a 'hypersexualized Pocahontas costume'. But when he decided to speak with an employee at the checkout stand, he found them unreceptive to his appeal to have the offensive costumes removed. In response to

the employee's justification that Canada was a free country, McNeil-Seymour responded, 'How is it a free country when racism still prevails?' McNeil-Seymour decided to address the issue with the store's head office and also raised the issue publicly over social media. Subsequently, in response to attention from local and national media, the shop released a statement claiming that the costumes were not meant to offend but were simply part of the 'fun' of the Halloween festivities. However, as highlighted by the response of many activists and community members in the following weeks, this sort of misrepresentation is often a source of deep hurt and humiliation for Canada's indigenous population.

But are not most cultures mocked during Halloween? For McNeil-Seymour, this argument is a familiar one. Indeed, during his visit to the costume shop he also observed stereotyping costumes of Mexicans and Saudis. Nevertheless, he does not concede that this means the discussion on the harm of misrepresenting indigenous people during this holiday, or in other forms throughout the year, should be muted. Nor does it imply that one costume is absolutely worse than another. What is important, though, is that for some indigenous peoples these costumes perpetuate a long history of discrimination that trivializes their lived experiences.

McNeil-Seymour sees the issue of Halloween costumes as one that goes far beyond the problem of one night of fancy dress. Instead, it is an opportunity to highlight the deficiencies in Canada's education system regarding its history of colonization and the continued typecasting of indigenous peoples as primitive: in his words, 'the vibrancy of the culture is relegated to the past versus looking at it now as a culture of revival, of renewal'. As he has highlighted, this overlooks the fact that indigenous peoples in Canada are part of a 'resurgent culture', evidenced by many established and emerging indigenous fashion designers. Projects such as the Toronto-based Setsuné Indigenous Fashion Incubator also provide spaces for designers to learn new and traditional pattern, clothing, jewellery and accessory-making techniques.

Even more troubling, however, is McNeil-Seymour's assertion that the costumes are a clear 'metaphor' for the continued violence inflicted against indigenous women and girls. Communities have faced decades of deadly inaction, at many levels, and of failure to confront and address the disproportionately high rates at which indigenous women, girls, transgender and two-spirit people are murdered and go missing in Canada. These Halloween costumes, he argues, serve to reinforce the invisibility of this issue by normalizing the role of indigenous women and girls, and also transgender and two-spirit people, as readily consumed and discarded: 'Here are people going out and purchasing these cheap plastic costumes, and they're for a one-time use, and they're easily disposed of afterwards.' By sexualizing even those most sacred and respected of traditional roles and symbols, he believes, these costumes have the effect of casting indigenous individuals as objects and thus targets for gender-based violence.

Ultimately, McNeil-Seymour does not see these costumes being entirely removed from store shelves before the next Halloween, despite the attention his protests have attracted. But he does see promise in the way social media has been used to mobilize and educate. Open dialogues on the internet and public platforms have also brought to light other important issues surrounding cultural misappropriation and intellectual property rights for indigenous communities. A month after the controversy over the Halloween costumes, for example, another story broke about the apparent wholesale lifting of a sacred Inuit design by a Canadian clothing company. While this was hardly the first time that indigenous heritage has been appropriated, what was more surprising was the retailer's subsequent apology and the withdrawal of the offending article – a small but promising sign of progress for Canada's indigenous population. ■

violations, political exclusion and access to public services. Extractive industries such as mining, and other forms of development, such as agricultural plantations, are frequently the primary cause of these abuses. In this challenging environment, minority and indigenous communities face a constant struggle to preserve their traditional practices, languages and unique worldviews. Nevertheless, these also provide an important platform to mobilize and assert their distinct identity against the pressures of assimilation and cultural extinction.

Guatemala

During 2015, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the Attorney's Office uncovered several high-profile cases of corruption involving former high-level public officials and those who were in power at the time. These scandals ultimately led to the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina and Vice-President Roxana Baldetti, who are currently being prosecuted. The subsequent presidential elections were marked by violence between different political factions before the eventual victory of the National Convergence Front, led by Jimmy Morales, a former comedian with only a few years of political experience. Against this political backdrop, the country's indigenous and Garifuna communities continue to suffer widespread discrimination and human rights abuses. Political participation is also limited, with only 21 (13.3 per cent) of the 158 congressional deputies elected in 2015 having an indigenous background, although not all of these self-identify as indigenous. Official figures indicate that around 40 per cent of Guatemalans are indigenous – though some estimates are significantly higher. Only 2 of those 21 deputies are women. Minority Rights Group International understands that not a single deputy from the Garifuna community, who make up around 1 per cent of the population, was elected.

While poverty and exclusion characterize the lives of many Guatemalans, the challenges are often especially acute for its minority and indigenous communities. For instance, while the country's health system struggles with lack of resources and under-staffing, which undermines the ability of all citizens to secure adequate care,

poor health outcomes disproportionately affect the indigenous population. For example, while only 59 per cent of children between the ages of 12 and 24 months were vaccinated at a national level, levels were even lower in departments that are predominantly indigenous, such as Huehuetenango (38 per cent) and Quiché (44 per cent). As in other public services, the limited availability of culturally appropriate medical care is a barrier. Nevertheless, indigenous traditions continue to play an important role in health care, with 79 per cent of births in predominantly indigenous areas attended by traditional midwives. A public policy on traditional midwives was approved in 2015 and will seek to strengthen their relationship with the public health system, disseminate their knowledge and support the delivery of more culturally appropriate health care.

While the 2003 Languages Law mandates the protection of Garifuna, Mayan and Xinka languages in all areas of public life, including the stipulation that education and other services are to be provided in the predominant language of each community, in practice bilingual options may lack resources or capacity. This serves to further entrench educational inequalities that have left Garifuna, for example, with illiteracy levels as high as 97 per cent. Indigenous language instruction is also limited and, as a result, some languages such as Ch'orti', Sakapulteko, Chalchiteco, Mopán, Tektiteko and Uspanteco are at risk of disappearance.

Guatemala's justice system is another area where Garifuna and indigenous communities are still marginalized. In May, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reported that the country still lacked a law acknowledging legal pluralism. Despite this lack of support, communities have maintained their traditional justice systems, with around 40 per cent of legal conflicts resolved through these systems – an important service when the formal justice system regularly fails to deliver. While a welcome development in March was the creation of a specialized unit dealing with discrimination complaints within the prosecution system, the unit reportedly had only five staff members and has yet to prove its effectiveness. By the end of the year, of the 98 complaints of discrimination



Left: Garifuna woman in Guatemala. *Adam Jones.*

pervasive. In 2015, the Observatory of the human rights organization UDEFEGUA reported 493 attacks against human rights defenders, 252 of whom were activists or leaders defending indigenous rights and the environment. Much of this violence is related to the development of energy and extractive projects on indigenous or Garifuna land. While public institutions often side with corporations and private investors by criminalizing protesters, violence and intimidation against communities frequently goes unpunished.

Palm oil production has caused severe environmental degradation over the years in many indigenous areas. As much as 30 per cent of the country's production is located in Sayaxte, where nearly three-quarters of the population is indigenous. In September, a judge ordered the temporary closure of a palm oil plantation in the Petén region, where the majority of the population are indigenous, following the death of thousands of fish due to contamination of the nearby La Pasión River. Energy and extractive concessions have also affected many communities. In the north of Huehuetango, several hydroelectric and mining projects have been undertaken, despite the opposition of the Mayan inhabitants in these areas. During the year, various confrontations between these communities and local authorities took place. In January, the community radio of the Q'anjob'al population, Snuq Jolom Knonb', in Santa Eulalia, was closed by the municipal mayor and some broadcasters were threatened. Rigoberto Juárez, Domingo Baltazar and Bernando Ermitaño López Reyes, three human rights defenders from these communities, were arrested and detained without due process. All three were involved in protests against mega-projects, specifically hydroelectric dams; by July, a total of nine indigenous and community activists had been detained. Besides causing environmental degradation, these development projects have often been situated in sacred spaces with unique spiritual value for local communities.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua's history, distinct within the region, of

both British and Spanish colonialism still shapes the country's social and political landscape today. With the arrival of the first conquistadors in the early sixteenth century, much of the western part of its present-day territory by the Pacific was occupied and its indigenous population decimated or enslaved, with only a few Mayagna communities still surviving in the area. On the eastern, Atlantic side, however, the relatively limited encroachment of Spanish colonizers meant that a larger portion of the indigenous population, including Mayagna and Rama, survived. The subsequent arrival of British colonizers and enslaved Africans was eventually followed, after the abolition of slavery, by that of economic migrants from the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, and led to the formation of a sizeable English-speaking Creole population. Nicaragua's multi-ethnic population is now characterized by a white and *mestizo* majority, who largely dominate the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front, and a variety of indigenous (5 per cent) and Afro-descendant (9 per cent) populations. The relationship between the central government and its minority and indigenous communities has frequently been characterized by tensions over political autonomy, cultural assimilation and other concerns – issues that have at times been reflected in violence and other human rights abuses.

A recurrent source of conflict in recent years has been the state's failure to protect ancestral lands from large-scale development, energy projects and illegal settlement. This includes the Nicaraguan Canal, a controversial programme involving the government and a Chinese company to construct what would be the world's largest canal between the Pacific and the eastern coast. Though the project has struggled with funding in the wake of the stock market slump in China, meaning progress since its ground-breaking ceremony in December 2014 has been slow, the canal will likely have a disastrous impact on pristine local environments, as well as the many indigenous communities whose lands it will pass through. Since the project was approved, without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples it will uproot, protests against the development have been met with violence and repression.

it received, not a single case had yet been brought before a judge.

The failures of Guatemala's justice system have contributed to a persistent climate of impunity for perpetrators of human rights abuses, particularly those targeting Garifuna and indigenous communities. The most high-profile example is former president Ríos Montt, responsible for the killing of 1,700 Ixil

Mayans in the early 1980s. While a court found Montt guilty in 2013, his 80-year sentence was withdrawn shortly afterwards and subsequent legal proceedings against him have been marred by delays and procedural irregularities. In January 2016, his retrial was again suspended before a new trial was opened in March 2016. Nevertheless, the problem of targeted violence against indigenous communities remains

Another ongoing source of conflict within the country is the struggle between Miskitos, an indigenous population with Amerindian and African ancestry, and non-indigenous *mestizo* peasants settling illegally in their lands. Tensions between the two groups escalated during the year, leaving a number of people dead. Among those killed were two Miskito leaders, Rosmeldo Solórzano and Mario Leman Müller, while many others experienced aggressive tactics and intimidation. Indigenous women have also been targeted in this conflict. In February 2016, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) reported that in the previous four months, besides several killings, kidnappings and house burnings, three indigenous women had been sexually assaulted. Over the years, Miskitos have denounced the government for failing to protect their land rights and allowing illegal settlement to take place on their territory. As a result of this conflict, in the last few years hundreds of Miskitos have been forcibly displaced within the country or across the border to Honduras.

Two autonomous regions have been created in the North and South Caribbean Coast regions, established under the 1987 Autonomy Act and supported by subsequent legislation, allowing these ethnically diverse regions to manage their own land and resources. Both have the right to design health services with an inter-cultural approach and have developed ten-year regional inter-cultural health programmes, ending in 2015, which combine ancestral and western medical knowledge. These regions also provide education in indigenous languages and there are even tertiary institutions, such as the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN), with inter-cultural teaching models that support the preservation of minority and indigenous knowledge and practices. However, indigenous peoples elsewhere in the country do not enjoy the same legal protections and, as a result, have been more prone to rights violations. To tackle this, a Draft Bill for the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific, Center and North of Nicaragua has been developed, but not yet approved.

Nicaragua's diversity is reflected in a rich legacy of Afro-descendant and indigenous culture

that continues to be an important element in the identity of these communities. One of the most well-known celebrations is the annual King Pulanka festival, a Miskito festival with traditional music and dance that subversively mocks the colonizers who historically occupied the country. The celebrations bring together neighbouring groups for a feast hosted by the indigenous community. Other festivities include the Palo de Mayo, held every May on the Caribbean Coast, and the *Walagallo*, a Garifuna religious celebration rooted in African spirit worship and traditionally carried out to cure disease. These and other celebrations remain an important source of pride and identity today.

South America

Alfredo Gutierrez Carrizo
and Carolyn Stephens

South America is known for its vibrant and politically active indigenous and minority communities, with their rich heritage and cultural traditions. The diversity of the region is considerable, both in terms of the original indigenous inhabitants of the region and the many groups that arrived later, including descendants of the Africans who were brought as slaves to South America, and Europeans who came first as invaders and later as economic immigrants. Both indigenous and Afro-descendant communities across the region continue to suffer a legacy of discrimination and exclusion, rooted in their traumatic histories of colonialism.

Indigenous peoples throughout the region have experienced a long-term decline in population, including the extinction of many communities, initially due to war and disease following the arrival of the first Europeans and then, once colonial rule was established, displacement, violence and destruction of their way of life. Where indigenous peoples survived, their cultural practices were also suppressed or denigrated

by the invading Europeans. This has had a devastating impact on a unique and extraordinary heritage. The so-called pre-Columbian cultures were artistically, spiritually and architecturally sophisticated societies, with their own concepts and understanding of astronomy, medicine, mathematics, arts, philosophy and religion – civilizations that, with the onset of the European invasions, were decimated and violently suppressed. Despite their decline, the older civilizations continue to show their influence in many aspects of culture in South America – not least in languages and in symbols of nationality. Quechua, the language of the Incans, is still widely spoken and is an official language in Peru, as is Guarani in Paraguay. Nevertheless, indigenous customs and traditions have typically lacked adequate representation or visibility in official or mainstream cultural platforms.

Afro-descendants have also experienced an inhumane history, forced to work in plantations, mines and remote areas in the newly formed South American countries. Though the excluded Afro-descendant populations were gradually incorporated into society as slavery was abolished, they continued to suffer extreme marginalization in most countries. This history of violence and discrimination has also shaped the development of their culture to the present day. Enslaved Africans, forcibly introduced to European customs and religions, often held onto their cultures in covert ways. Although suppressed or maintained in secret, there is now a resurgence of interest in Afro-descendant culture across the region. This has been accompanied by a greater social and political visibility as these communities have successfully mobilized for their rights. In this regard, the commencement in 2015 of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent has particular resonance in a region where tens of millions of Afro-descendants reside.

But while both indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have enjoyed renewed interest in their cultures and beliefs, linked to their broader struggle for recognition and respect, the benefits of this development can be double-edged. For example, many 'celebrations' of indigenous art have led to the exploitation of communities by urban boutiques or galleries, where many indigenous

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Case study by Genna Naccache
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Peru's Afro-descendant population: from invisibility to a national 'month of culture'

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Afro-Peruvians, who make up around 10 per cent of Peru's population, have long suffered marginalization in every area of their lives. From health to education, many community members have limited access to basic services and few are able to rise up to senior positions in business, government and other fields. But while their status as a readily identifiable minority has often led to direct discrimination and even racial slurs in the street, in public life the problem they still struggle with most is invisibility – a challenge that anti-racism and human rights organizations in the country have worked hard to confront.

Historically, Afro-Peruvians had relatively little in the way of community organizations until the emergence in the 1950s of a cultural revival, with dance and theatre groups providing an important platform for a broader mobilization. While the Afro-Peruvian community has arguably not managed to achieve the same recognition as Afro-descendant communities in some other South American countries, their advocacy has nevertheless delivered some important milestones. In 2006, the Peruvian government formally inaugurated the first National Afro-Peruvian Culture Month, centred around 4 June, to promote awareness of their history and contributions through conferences and

activities. These events, held every year since, have managed to attract both national and international coverage. The beginning of the 2015 celebrations was marked by the Minister of Culture, Diana Alvarez-Calderón, formally petitioning the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to add the Afro-Peruvian dance *Hatajo de Negritos y las Pallas* to its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Despite the government's attempts to provide greater recognition of Afro-Peruvian culture, the issue has caused some division among activists within the community. While many believe that these are important public initiatives that acknowledge the contribution of Afro-Peruvian heritage – something largely absent until recently – others argue that these alone do not address Peru's deeply embedded ethnic inequalities, still so powerful in the country's popular beliefs. Indeed, some have even argued that the emphasis on areas like cooking, music and other cultural aspects may serve to reinforce stereotypes about the community. According to this perspective, without a wider social transformation, these official celebrations risk being a token gesture that distracts from the real issues.

Among other efforts, activists are currently advocating for the expansion of ethnic classifications in the 2017 National Census to include Afro-Peruvians. This initiative stems from the fact that Peru has not included its Afro-Peruvian population in its census data collection since the early 1940s. Another issue

is popular attitudes of racism, a widespread but rarely acknowledged reality for many Afro-Peruvians. However, 2015 saw an important step forward, with the country's first ever conviction for racial discrimination in November. The case concerned an Afro-Peruvian woman who, after being racially abused at her work for a municipal water utility by a colleague, found her complaint ignored by her supervisors and was subsequently fired from her job after filing a criminal case. The ruling found both her former manager and head of human resources guilty, sentencing them to a prison term as well as a fine.

This progress testifies to the enormous efforts made by the Afro-Peruvian community to achieve greater respect and equality within society – though the struggle continues. Denial of Peru's Afro-descendant population is now hopefully being superseded by greater recognition of the community's rich and distinct identity. While the celebration of Afro-Peruvian culture is only one part of this, it does offer an invaluable public platform to articulate the community's urgent social and political concerns. By maintaining control over their heritage and traditions, including but not restricted to artistic mediums such as theatre, music and dance, Afro-Peruvians can engage their rich culture in their struggle to end discrimination. ■

Bolivia

While indigenous peoples now comprise only a fraction of the total population in most of the region, Bolivia is notable for its indigenous majority, with 62 per cent of Bolivians self-identifying as indigenous in the country's most recent census in 2012. Bolivia also has one of the most progressive legislative systems to support indigenous peoples and the first indigenous president in the region, Aymara leader Evo Morales. Following his inauguration in 2006, his government passed a number of major reforms, including in 2009 a new Constitution that recognizes that indigenous



territories comprise 'areas of production, use and conservation of natural resources, and spaces of social, spiritual and cultural expansion'. The following year, Bolivia passed Law 061: the André Ibañez Framing Law of Autonomy and Decentralization, an ambitious piece of legislation that aims to provide some degree of autonomy to local institutions and recognizes the pre-existence of native communities. These and other measures all reflected the promises Morales made to end the marginalization of the country's indigenous population, a strategy that brought him two further campaign victories in 2009 and 2014, making him the longest-serving president in Bolivia's history. However, his attempts to negotiate a constitutional amendment to allow him to serve an additional term beyond his third term, set to expire in 2020, was rejected by popular referendum amid concerns about extending his authority further beyond the limits set out by the 2009 Constitution. According

Above: Indigenous woman in Bolivia.
CE/ECHO/ R. Silva.

to its provisions, any president cannot exceed a maximum of two terms in office. Morales was only able to run for his third term after a 2013 ruling by the Bolivian Constitutional Court that his first term, which began before the approval of the new Constitution, did not apply.

In addition, despite Bolivia's relatively progressive legal framework, many indigenous communities face similar challenges to those elsewhere in the region. As many as 15 of the country's 36 indigenous communities are at risk of extinction due to systematic neglect, social exclusion and their geographic isolation. A number of these communities are very small, with fewer than 200 members, and their disappearance would significantly reduce Bolivia's unique cultural diversity. This points to the complexity of the indigenous political movement

in Bolivia and the reality that, even with relatively strong protections in place, the cultural survival and even the very existence of many smaller indigenous communities is by no means guaranteed in a context in which they themselves are marginalized by more dominant indigenous groups.

Afro-Bolivians, as a minority population in a largely indigenous country, also continue to be marginalized. Besides having some of the highest levels of poverty in the country, the community also lacks political representation and remains largely invisible in Bolivia's public life. Nevertheless, Afro-Bolivians have recently been able to use their cultural activities as a platform to highlight their presence and communicate their identity to wider society. In September 2015, the Afro-Bolivian community held a national event to celebrate their legacy in Bolivia with a festival of music, literature, food and dance. The aim of the event was to showcase the important contribution of Afro-Bolivians in the struggle for independence and Bolivian culture today, such as the *Saya* – a traditional dance based on African traditions but now an integral part of Afro-Bolivian culture. Juan Carlos Ballivián, President of the National Afro-Bolivian Council (CONAFRO), explained at the time of the event that, 'The Afro-Bolivian people do not want to be made visible for the stigma of the slavery of the past' but only want others to appreciate the contribution that African culture has made to the country as a whole, and that the community 'therefore deserves the same respect and opportunities as other Bolivians'.

Brazil

Brazil's diverse population of close to 200 million is comprised primarily of Euro- and Afro-descendants, the latter including both 'preto' (black) and 'pardo' (mixed) individuals. But while generations of intermarriage and the absence of a formal system of segregation has led some scholars to celebrate the country as a 'racial democracy' where different ethnicities have been able to enjoy equal rights, systematic inequalities remain. For the first time in Brazil's history, the country's 2010 census found more Brazilians self-identifying as black or mixed race than as white: of the 191 million Brazilians, 91

million declared themselves white, 15 million black and 82 million mixed race. While a number of factors may have contributed to this development, a number of commentators suggested that many Afro-Brazilians were now more willing to self-identify due to an increased pride in their identity.

Nevertheless, the census also highlighted the severe inequalities that continue to divide Brazilian society along ethnic lines. Besides experiencing widespread social exclusion, lower wages and fewer educational opportunities, Afro-Brazilians also suffer significantly higher levels of violence than Brazilians of European descent – a trend that appears to be increasing today. In 2015, a research study by the Latin American Faculty of Social Studies revealed that, while the number of violent homicides committed against white Brazilian women had decreased by 10 per cent between 2003 and 2013, for Afro-Brazilian women they had increased by 54 per cent during the same period. This is a reflection of their continued marginalization within Brazilian society.

Despite this harsh reality, Brazil's Afro-descendant population has also achieved international fame for its rich cultural heritage. Afro-Brazilian culture has a history that dates back to the arrival of the first slaves from West Africa. To preserve their heritage, they developed sophisticated ways to maintain their cultures in secret, which continue to be practised in different forms to this day: for example, the spiritual practices of *Candomblé* and *Capoeira*, a martial art and dance sport that is now celebrated worldwide. There are also strong African heritage roots in the annual Carnival in Brazil, with the 2015 Rio Carnival showcasing Afro-Brazilian culture around themes of racial pride and anti-discrimination.

A number of exciting initiatives during the year illustrated the continued vitality of Afro-Brazilian culture. In April, for example, the city of Recife opened its first ever Afro-Brazilian museum, hosting exhibitions of Afro-Brazilian art and literature as well as seminars and workshops. The national museum of Afro-Brazilian culture in São Paulo also held an extensive programme of events during 2015. And, more broadly, in December Brazil hosted one of the first major events of the

UN International Decade for People of African Descent – a reflection of its importance as the country with the region's largest Afro-descendant population.

Brazil also has a varied indigenous population, though they make up a much smaller part of the national population. Based on the 2010 census, just 817,963 people (around 0.4 per cent of Brazilians) self-identified as indigenous. Just as Brazil's large Afro-descendant community is a legacy of colonialism, the decimation of the country's indigenous peoples from a population of tens of millions to a fraction of that size today began with the arrival of the first European settlers. Today, they continue to be marginalized and struggle to secure recognition of their cultures and land rights, and other rights. Notwithstanding these challenges, Brazil's diverse indigenous population still resides across the country, with some 230 different peoples speaking 180 indigenous languages. This includes 69 communities without contact.

Indigenous culture in Brazil was systematically attacked by the original Portuguese settlers, but the more remote communities, particularly in the Amazon, managed to retain their cultures largely intact due to their relative isolation from the European invasion. Nowadays, after many years of invisibility, indigenous culture enjoys renewed appreciation: Amazonian artists and performers are famed for their elaborate woven handicrafts and their dance, traditional dress and heritage. Furthermore, with increasing international awareness about the challenges of climate change and resource destruction, Brazil's indigenous peoples have been praised for their culture of respectful stewardship towards the Amazonian forest and other eco-systems.

Yet this recognition comes at a time when indigenous culture is as much under threat as ever. Language is often one of the first, and most important, cultural forms of expression that indigenous communities begin to lose. There are demographically larger groups, such as Guarani (Kaiowá, Mbyá and Nandeva), Guajajara, Kaingang, Munduruku, Ticuna, Xavante and Yanomami, living in different regions of the country, which have a greater chance of protecting their languages due to their size. However, there are also less

populous communities with languages moving towards extinction, some with very few and elderly speakers. For example, according to the governmental agency FUNAI (National Indian Foundation), the indigenous Apiaká and Umutina peoples of Mato Grosso recently lost their last elderly representatives who were fluent in their ancestral languages.

The 12th annual indigenous games, hosted by Brazil and opened by President Dilma Rousseff, were held in October 2015. The games proved to be an important milestone for indigenous culture as it was the first time that indigenous foreign nationals could compete, making it a high-profile international event. Widely hailed as innovative and important, the games celebrated the diversity of indigenous cultures in a globalized world. Unlike the official Olympics, which will also be hosted in Brazil in 2016, the indigenous games provided an alternative to the usual competitive hierarchy of gold, silver and bronze medals, with a holistic approach that moved beyond a concept of individual winners and losers: instead, awards were shared among the winning groups, and every competitor was eligible for a medal to commemorate their participation.

But even as the games were inaugurated, some indigenous activists in Brazil were highlighting the hypocrisy of a government that, while publicly celebrating indigenous culture, was failing to address continuing discrimination against them within the country, particularly regarding their right to land. The Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples (CIMI) launched a scathing report on violence and prejudice against indigenous peoples in Brazil, and accused the government of presenting itself as supportive of indigenous culture internationally while destructive policies continue to undermine the country's indigenous population. Central to their protests was a major proposed amendment to Brazil's Constitution, the Constitution Amendment Bill 215/2000, known as PEC 215, which will devolve the authority to protect and allocate indigenous territories from the executive (the president, FUNAI and the Ministry of Justice) to Congress. As hundreds of its members are reportedly associated with 'ruralist' business interests such as the extractive industries and agricultural corporations, the

amendment is widely expected to pave the way for land allocation that favours the agricultural and mining sectors, at the risk of many already beleaguered indigenous territories. Among other provisions, PEC 215 would enable a range of caveats and exceptions to current protections that could jeopardize the integrity of communal areas and expose them to the risk of redevelopment.

Approved by the Senate in September and then the Special Commission for the Demarcation of Indigenous Territories the following month, the amendment will be referred to the Brazilian National Congress. If approved, it could present a major threat to the ability of many indigenous communities to maintain their way of life and identity in the future. In its report, the CIMI highlighted how essential land is to indigenous culture: 'For the indigenous peoples, the land is much more than a material asset; it is fundamental for the construction of identities, ways of being, thinking, living together, building life experiences.' It went on to highlight that there had been no new ratifications of indigenous territory since the beginning of the Rousseff administration and claimed that: 'The increase in possession conflicts, murders and the criminalization of indigenous leaders is closely connected to this unconstitutional decision by the Brazilian government.'

Venezuela

As in many countries, the way indigenous and minority populations are identified through Venezuela's census has had a major impact on the numbers of people counted and how they are perceived. Up until the 1982 census, there was no clear criterion for recognizing the indigenous population. From 1992 to the latest census in 2011 the criterion was self-identification, thus allowing for better comparative analysis. Strikingly, the self-identified indigenous population increased by 41.7 per cent between the 2001 and 2011 census – an increase that suggests a growing sense of community identity. Within this population, which comprises 2.7 per cent of the national total, there is, however, a diverse range of indigenous cultures that differ substantially, depending largely on their location in the country: ethnographers distinguish 10 separate peoples in Venezuela, ranging from the coastal Carib indigenous communities, reliant

on fishing and agriculture, to the Amazonian Arawak communities. In line with the country's avowedly multicultural Constitution, Venezuela has developed an innovative model of governance for its various indigenous communities, with a dedicated ministry for indigenous affairs, known as the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples. Its aims include strengthening the shared ancestry of indigenous communities, responding to their needs and promoting respect for their customs.

Notwithstanding these positive measures, indigenous Venezuelans still struggle with a historical legacy of discrimination that persists to this day. In particular, indigenous peoples have faced continuous pressure from state-owned companies and international corporations to appropriate their land for extractive projects such as mining – a cause of frequent displacement, violence, arrests and health hazards for these communities. Of particular concern during the year was Presidential Decree 1,606, passed in February without prior consultation or consent, awarding a 30-year lease over 24,192 hectares of land in the western region of Zulia to a Chinese-owned company, Sinohydro, for coal extraction and the development of a hydro-power plant. The project, which would have caused widespread environmental destruction in the area and potentially created a variety of health risks for the indigenous population, was subsequently revoked later in the year, when President Nicolás Maduro published a 'correction' in acknowledgement of the damage it would cause to the ecosystem and indigenous communities in the area. While two existing mines will continue to operate, the amendment in principle bars any further exploitation in the area, though indigenous activists remain wary of further attempts in future to appropriate their land.

Indigenous activists have frequently been attacked, even killed, in land-related conflicts with powerful interests who have often enjoyed high levels of impunity for their crimes. However, a historic ruling in August finally brought to justice the assassin of a Yukpa leader, Sabino Romero, murdered in March 2013 after leading a series of land occupations of his community's ancestral territory. The killing, which activists claim was sponsored by wealthy cattle ranchers, was one of many violent incidents inflicted against

indigenous communities over the years. While the murderer received the maximum sentence of a 30-year term, community members are now seeking to bring those responsible for funding the attack to trial, and also calling for the retrial of a number of policemen who, despite being convicted for their involvement in the crime, received light sentences of only seven years.

Afro-Venezuelans, like Venezuela's indigenous population, have historically been under-represented and it was only in the most recent census in 2011 that citizens were able to self-identify as Afro-descendants – a term that itself may have been unfamiliar to many respondents and contributed to significant under-reporting. The community, long marginalized, have enjoyed stronger rights under the left-wing governments of former President Hugo Chávez and now Maduro. During the year, activists spoke out against the persistent impacts of discrimination on the community. Highlighting continued shortfalls in areas such as education and health, Francisco Tovar, communication coordinator of the Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo de las Comunidades Afrodescendientes de Venezuela (Conadecafro), called for targeted assistance and investment to ensure greater equality for the Afro-Venezuelan population. In particular, he argued that the state needed to counter the legacy of colonialism by acknowledging and celebrating the contribution of Venezuela's Afro-descendant population to its national identity, freedom and culture, moving beyond a purely 'folkloric' representation of African traditions.

A welcome milestone for the community occurred in October, when the first ever Afro-Venezuelan woman was finally given the honour of burial in the state mausoleum. Born into slavery in Guárico, Venezuela in 1790, Juana Ramírez fought against colonial rule during the Venezuelan War of Independence, commanding an all-women's artillery unit. ■

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Case study by Alfredo Gutierrez Carrizo and Carolyn Stephens

Making a dream reality: the story of Argentina's first indigenous vineyard

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When, in late 2010, the indigenous Diaguíta Cacique of Amaicha del Valle, Eduardo 'Lalo' Nieva, was walking early one morning near his home in the beautiful Valles Calchaquíes of Tucumán, Argentina, he came to a small hilltop in the centre of the enormous valley between the mountains and looked around. From there he could see the high Andean mountains leading to Chile, north along the valleys towards the mountains bordering Bolivia and south towards the neighbouring province of Catamarca.

As this moment, Eduardo came to a sudden decision – this would be the site of the first indigenous winery (*bodega*) and craft centre in Argentina. He called together the Council of Elders and brought them to the hilltop. At this point, as Eduardo admits, the project was just a dream.

'We wanted to do something innovative, and it was a huge challenge – to make viniculture in the valleys part of our own future. But this was not just about wine. It was also about creating a space for our artisans and local products, and recuperating security for the community in terms of food, and economic and social sustainability.'

This would be the real challenge for the community: the region, on both sides of the Andes in Chile and Argentina, is home to many major international vineyards, themselves fighting for space in the fiercely

competitive international wine market. But the difference is that, while the country's wine industry in general is almost entirely controlled by people of European descent, this would be owned and managed by the local community. Building an indigenous *bodega* was no easy task, however, and many hours were spent discussing how the indigenous community could create a sustainable process with high-quality products that could compete with established vineyards while bringing the unique heritage of the Diaguita peoples of the ancient Calchaquí Valleys to the process.

From these first discussions, progress to a fully functioning vineyard required a steep learning curve for the community. The first concern was about water – while the site was striking and highly symbolic, no one knew whether it would have enough water – but almost immediately the community found that they had a spring that could supply the *bodega*. There was then the challenge of locating the first 25 producer families to plant and care for the vines on small plots of land. As none of the producers wished to use pesticides and had little or no training in commercial wine-making themselves, the harvest and transport of the grapes to the *bodega* has been supported by the whole community. There was also the need to identify appropriate grape varieties, including an ancient variety brought by priests during the Spanish invasion of Argentina, used by the community but rarely commercialized, and a more common variety of Malbec. And, finally, there was the sourcing of all the equipment and the construction of the actual *bodega*, a traditional circular building made of symbolically selected local stones.

Fortunately, funding, advice and donations came from far and wide: besides support from the national government, a major and highly respected vineyard, Rutini, donated some of their own barrels and local wine experts, engineers and architects offered their technical support free of charge. As one local specialist in viticulture says, 'The atmosphere here in the harvest and production of the wine is totally unique – a shared enterprise, with everyone working together with a shared solidarity.'

The vineyard aims to produce a small batch

of organic, high-quality wine that will help support not just the producer families, but also the whole community through vino-tourism, tastings and trade in local artisanal products and traditional medicine. With its first harvest in 2015, the *bodega* will be officially launched in April 2016 with a major indigenous festival to celebrate this exciting initiative.

The key challenge is to ensure this whole enterprise is sustainable and continues to benefit the community, both socially and economically. Representing a creative interaction of ancient indigenous traditions with the more recent European art of wine cultivation, it raises broader questions regarding the opportunities that interaction with the modern globalized world can bring, alongside the potential pitfalls of assimilation and cultural loss. Other indigenous wineries exist in the world and have faced the same challenges, including the first indigenous winery in Canada, founded in 1968 and now established as a model of First Nation eco-vino-tourism, taking on major players in the North American wine industry while complementing the production of wine with a distinctive experience of indigenous culture.

There is clearly no simple panacea to the protection and conservation of historical indigenous cultures, particularly in the context of globalization and free trade agreements, and the community of Amaicha are aware of the tightrope that must be walked between ancient heritage and contemporary culture. As Eduardo Nieva says, 'The trick is to break the mould' – an achievement the winery has managed to pull off by drawing on living traditions to create an enterprise that, while adapted to today's world, has nevertheless stayed true to the rich heritage of the community's past. ■