

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES

CANADA'S

IDRC

in the AMERICAS

**SINCE 1970,
CANADA'S
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
RESEARCH CENTRE
(IDRC)
HAS HELPED
RESEARCHERS AND
COMMUNITIES IN THE
DEVELOPING WORLD
FIND SOLUTIONS TO
THEIR SOCIAL,
ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROBLEMS. HERE ARE
A FEW EXAMPLES
OF IDRC'S WORK
IN THE AMERICAS.**

ON LINE IN REMOTE PERU

In an open grass hut where the Peruvian Andes meet the Amazon jungle, an unlikely sight heralds a revolution: a computer on a rough plank table, displaying Web pages. The computer is owned by the Asháninka people of the village of Marankiari Bajo, and it connects to the Internet via high-powered radio. At 400 kilometres from Lima, the tiny Indigenous community is remote yet in touch with the world. Perhaps more important to the villagers, the computer allows them to network with other Asháninka communities nearby. Until recently, they didn't even have telephones.

The Asháninka do not regard the Internet as the spearhead of a cultural invasion from the North. Instead, they have seized upon it as a tool for

reinforcing and perpetuating their own culture, and for building a larger sense of community purpose among the 400-odd Asháninka villages scattered across South America.

With help from the IDRC, the villagers are exploring how to use the Internet for their economic advantage. For instance, the Internet helps them choose the best time to take their produce to market in Lima. Before setting out from their villages they now know whether market prices are good, and consequently their economic standing has improved. The Internet also opens opportunities for strategic alliances not only with nearby communities but with First Nations around the world.

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photo: Ricardo Gomez, IDRC

Mino-Eustio Castro,
project leader (right),
village of Marankiari Bajo, Peru

