

## Voicing Differences: An Initiative on Indigenous Radio

“Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.” (Article 16.1, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations, September 2007).

We, a collective of scholars and radio producers who share a commitment to Indigenous self-representation in media, met at Harvard on March 6 and 7, 2009 to promote the development and reproducibility of Native and Indigenous radio programming in the Americas.

This initiative originated from a conference held in Santiago, Chile on October 14 and 15, 2005. The conference, entitled *¡Culturas en el aire!/Cultures on the Air!*, convened various Indigenous and inter-cultural radio producers and communicators as well as scholars and intellectuals (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) from Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, and the United States. Held at the Centro Cultural Estación Mapocho in Santiago, the conference resulted from a collaboration between the Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard and the Mapuche radio program *Wixage Anai!* The David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard, the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at New York University and Fundación Avina were also important supporters of this initiative.

In continuing the endeavors of the 2005 conference, a collective of scholars and radio producers met at Harvard on March 6 and 7, 2009 to expand the dialogue on Native and Indigenous radio and to address the following key questions: How can radio foster the resurgence of Indigenous languages and oral traditions? How does it revitalize local communities and cultural memory? What are the types of aesthetics and modes of speaking that emerge from bilingual and intercultural radio? In recent years, academic and cultural discussions have placed a strong emphasis on visual culture, which tends to dismiss the tremendous relevance of orality and sound technologies in contemporary communities, especially for those who belong to the First Nations. Indigenous voices on the radio have played a key role in making our audio environments more diverse, and the linguistic, cultural and political differences of the Indigenous Peoples “more audible.”

In this meeting, we committed ourselves to establishing a long-term initiative devoted to supporting and multiplying the voices, the presence and the agency of Indigenous individuals and communities in contemporary media. Radio—oral, accessible and highly flexible—is a medium that has become an important tool for Indigenous language revival and Indigenous community agency in the Americas and in the world. Within this framework, we want to focus on a set of initiatives aimed at building more sonorous, physical and symbolic spaces for Indigenous voices on the radio, and we hope to find solidarity and collaboration across geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders.

We agree:

1. To set up a blog as a space for hemispheric and global communication and for the storage of information about Native and Indigenous radio projects;
2. To create an annotated directory of Native and Indigenous radio shows in the Americas by activating assessments through existing networks;
3. To strengthen the connection among Indigenous radio activists in the Americas, with periodic meetings to share experiences and elaborate collective projects as well as to establish more permanent inter-communication through a multilingual network of correspondents;
4. To engage in hemispheric solidarity with Indigenous radio producers to support the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-representation in mass media;
5. To grow and expand Indigenous radio production by training new generations and activists through existing Indigenous knowledge in radio programming;
6. To build a forum on Native and Indigenous radio in academia to facilitate collaboration between scholars and Indigenous radio activists;
7. To promote and revitalize Indigenous languages through radio;
8. To share with one another information, strategies, and other resources that will ensure the autonomy, self-sufficiency, and sustainability of Native and Indigenous radio programming.

We have conceptualized this endeavor as a collective work (*minga* in the Quechua language) sharing a hemispheric vision that is deeply engaged in an Indigenous perspective of community and communications.

Signatories:

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