

# ENCUENTRO DE MAYORES

TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS  
AUTHORITIES

FROM PREDIO PUTUMAYO

AMAZONAS - OCTUBER 9-13

2018



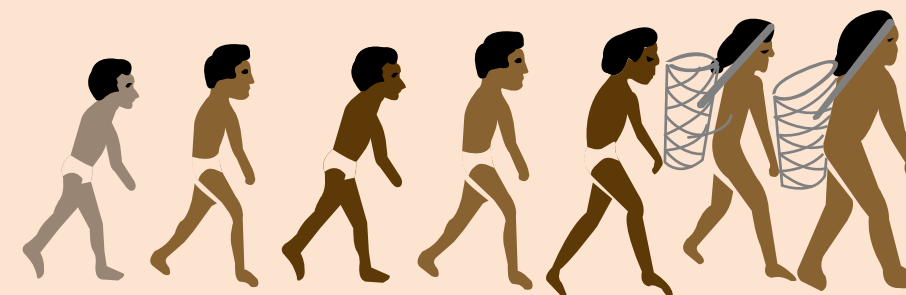


PREDIO PUTUMAYO  
30 YEARS  
1988 - 2018

# WHAT IS THE PREDIO PUTUMAYO?

The Predio Putumayo is in the Amazon department and it is the biggest indigenous reserve in Colombia, with a territory of 6 million hectares.

A number of indigenous nations who speak different languages live in this reserve, such as the Uitoto (Murui), Mirañas, Boras, Andoques, Ocainas, Muinanes and Nonuyas, along with communities of the Carijona, Yucuna, Cabiyaquí, Inga, Siona and Letuama ethnic groups, among others.





# HISTORY

**I**n 1989, these lands were formally returned to their original owners by the then president of Colombia, Virgilio Barco, after a long struggle led by the traditional authorities or elders of those nations, with the support of the Colombian government's Indigenous Affairs Bureau.

The restoration of this territory was part of a process of recovering the rights of the communities over their territories, after the massacre of many of the indigenous inhabitants of the region between 1900 and 1930, caused by the Western extraction of wild rubber undertaken by an Anglo-Peruvian company known as “La Casa Arana” or House of Arana, after its founder, Julio César Arana.

It is estimated that between 60,000 and 80,000 indigenous people from different ethnic groups in the region were enslaved,

tortured and massacred during this period, known as “La Cauchería” (roughly, the time of the rubber exploitations).

This genocide is one of the saddest and least known chapters in the history of Colombia. All of the indigenous elders of this territory lived through the “Cauchería” in different ways and they are the living memory of this genocide and the promoters of the reconstruction of their cultures which took place afterwards.

In addition to the great historical and cultural value of this reserve, the Predio Putumayo is a territory of vital importance for the conservation of the Amazon jungle. It is a strategic enclave in the fight against global warming, since its nearly 6 million hectares of forests help to regulate the temperature of the Earth.















# WHAT ARE THE THREATS TO THE CONSERVATION OF THIS TERRITORY?

At the current time, the main threats to the conservation of this area and the peoples who are native to the region are legal and illegal mining, the extraction of timber, the felling of forests for cattle ranches and intensive agriculture, the planting of coca to produce cocaine, unregulated colonization and the extractive economies in general.

They are mirrored in the internal threats to the communities, which are affected by a process of acculturation, due to the meager economic opportunities for the younger generations and the lack of a model of education in harmony with their own values. That means that the youngsters of these communities, seduced by the false values of a globalized Western society, are distancing themselves from their own indigenous traditions and culture.





For the elders who act as the traditional authorities, that is both a grave threat and a challenge. How can they get the younger generations to value and continue with those traditions? How do you maintain the transmission of their culture and knowledge in the midst of the noisy world in which they too live nowadays? How can the Western world and the indigenous traditions coexist?



Today, we are witnessing the rapid disappearance of the last generation of elders who grew up in the heart of the traditional culture and with it, ways of life and manners of relating to the natural world that are thousands of years old and of great value for humanity.

This problem of “acculturation” which the young indigenous people of the Predio Putumayo are experiencing is not only happening there and does not affect

them alone, since it is one of the major conflicts of Western society in our globalized age, which little by little is absorbing every culture and way of life which does not conform to its rules. Thus, we are talking about something which concerns all of us in Colombia, who live in this land that used to be indigenous. We are talking about a generalized tendency to forget that in large part these are our traditions as well.















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# THE ENCOUNTER OF THE ELDERS

(PREDIO PUTUMAYO - COLOMBIA 2018)



In view of the historical and environmental importance of this territory, we find ourselves at a critical moment, both for the indigenous inhabitants of the Predio Putumayo and the rest of the country and indeed, the world.

For those reasons, the traditional elders who founded the Predio Putumayo want to get together and realize a traditional ceremony to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the creation of this reserve with the aim of recalling its origin and the struggle which led to its establishment, and thus reorder the territory on a spiritual plane and open the awareness of the younger generations to its importance.

The elders are calling on everyone to remember the essence of their culture and the reasons which led them to fight for

the recovery of their territory. With this exercise in the restoration of memory, they seek to strengthen the cultural identity and traditions of their people and bring the different generations closer to one another with the aim of securing a better future for their communities.

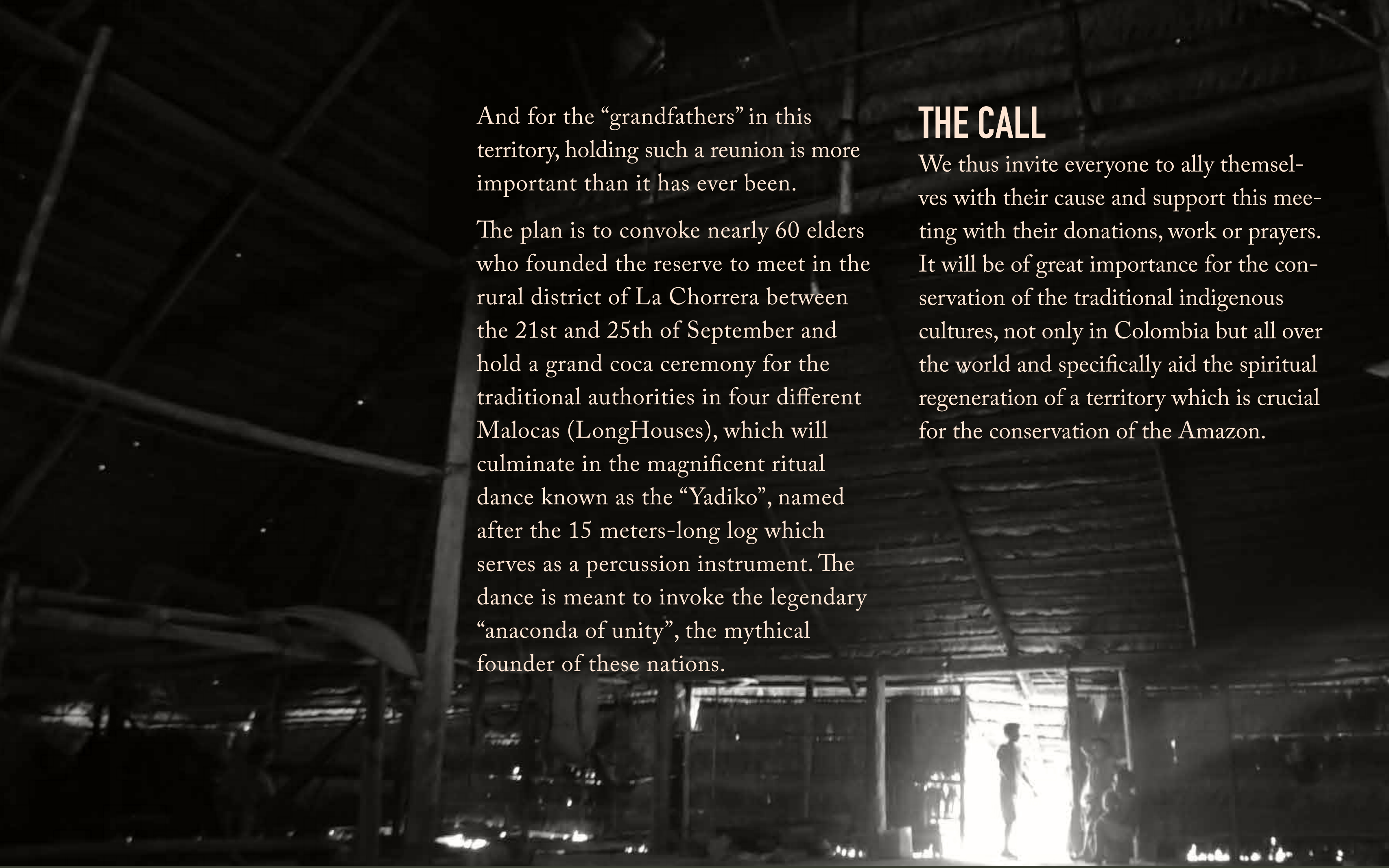
The elders who founded the Predio Putumayo reserve intend to sit down and engage in the ritual use of coca, in a ceremony which will inspire them with visions of the past and future of the reserve, and enable them to transmit their knowledge to the younger generations and the rest of the world.

The last time these important spiritual authorities of the Amazon met together was in 1998. This kind of gathering of the elders of different ethnic groups only occurs in cases of extreme need.









And for the “grandfathers” in this territory, holding such a reunion is more important than it has ever been.

The plan is to convoke nearly 60 elders who founded the reserve to meet in the rural district of La Chorrera between the 21st and 25th of September and hold a grand coca ceremony for the traditional authorities in four different Malocas (LongHouses), which will culminate in the magnificent ritual dance known as the “Yadiko”, named after the 15 meters-long log which serves as a percussion instrument. The dance is meant to invoke the legendary “anaconda of unity”, the mythical founder of these nations.

## THE CALL

We thus invite everyone to ally themselves with their cause and support this meeting with their donations, work or prayers. It will be of great importance for the conservation of the traditional indigenous cultures, not only in Colombia but all over the world and specifically aid the spiritual regeneration of a territory which is crucial for the conservation of the Amazon.







# RECORDING THE PROJECT



**A**s a first step, we would like to promote, organize and coordinate this reunion. And as a second step, make a documentation of this historic event which takes advantage of digital technology to assemble and guard pictures, sounds and words that will transmit the wisdom of these indigenous elders to future generations.

We would like the record of this event to be expanded into a documentary film, in a series of small audiovisual contents for the Web and a series of Virtual Reality (VR) stereoscopic documentary contents. The public will be able to enjoy the meeting in an online digital archive and a printed and digital publication.

These audiovisual materials will be designed and produced by the 4Direcciones audio-visual studio ([www.4direcciones.tv](http://www.4direcciones.tv)), along with a group of indigenous youngsters from La Chorrera. In this way, we hope to bring these youngsters closer to their culture in a respectful manner.











# THE FUNDING



To make this project a reality, we seek to raise approximately one hundred thousand dollars with your help.

The great distances and difficulties of access mean that a large part of these resources are invested in logistics, such as transportation, food and lodging for the elderly.

Below we enclose two detailed budgets of the necessary resources for the meeting and for the registration of the event.









# Thank you!

Archive photos by: Fernando Urbina / Photos of the Reservation by: Richard Decaillet.



