Many Voices
One Story

Amazon Conservation Team  ANNUAL REPORT 2009
The many voices of the Amazon are joining in a global call to arms in defense of the endangered rainforest and the indigenous people who call it home. This is their story.
From the President

In our connected world, many voices can find expression. Leaders emerge from the most unlikely places, old hierarchies tumble, and new alliances are forged. This past year, global connectedness achieved a kind of critical mass. How else to explain the pace at which the world is now awakening to the story the Amazon Conservation Team has been telling since 1996?

Many voices joined ACT in 2009 to help raise the volume on the ongoing story of the Amazon, its people, and the health of the planet. ACT was all over the map in 2009, connecting policymakers and indigenous leaders, sharing proven and replicable models for achieving indigenous empowerment, and partnering in global projects that recognize that traditional lives are sustainable lives. With global climate change accelerating, investment in sustainable models suddenly makes good economic sense.

As I write, ACT’s flagship mapping projects throughout Amazonia provide growing numbers of tribes with the documented authority to sit with government officials and business interests and negotiate from strength how their land can best be protected. Enhanced GPS-based tools make it easier than ever for tribal cartographers to input enough data to enable estimates of forest values for the global carbon market, thus adding economic incentives to protect and manage sensitive lands. Recognizing the key role of indigenous women in community health and education, ACT has been an avid supporter of connecting female healers with younger women to share and sustain their vital traditional knowledge of nutrition and medicine. We are also encouraged that, increasingly, local governments are recognizing traditional education programs with accreditation and state funding.

Today, the many voices of and for the Amazon can be heard around the world. Listen well: the story they tell carries a message for us all.

Sincerely,

Mark J. Plotkin, Ph.D., L.H.D.
President
When ACT introduced Wiki Kingi, master carver of New Zealand, to Chief Almir Surui at a sustainability conference in 2009, Wikuki Kingi saw the connection between the struggles of indigenous people half a world apart. “This is an exciting time,” he explains. “I have many carvers and artisans from around the Pacific who would love to be involved in this project to carve Pou-taonga (totems – treasures) that tell the world about the Surui and other indigenous peoples and place them along Surui borders as a gesture of solidarity.

“I’m here to help traditional communities on two continents, Africa and South America, share experiences and gain a greater say in the future of their homes, the magnificent Amazon forests and the inspiring landscapes and forests of East Africa.”

“Chief Almir Suoni of Brazil told me about working with ACT to map the Surui borders and their struggle to protect their lands. We want to help our cousins in the Amazon. We believe the forests, including the Amazon and its amazing tribes including the Surui, are a key element in the future healing of Mother Earth.”

Voices around the World

Jane Goodall

In 2009, ACT teamed with the Jane Goodall Institute and Google Earth Outreach to generate a virtual tour of communities in Tanzania and Brazil using GIS technology to fight deforestation; this tour was presented at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen. As an ACT Advisory Board member, Goodall lends a powerful voice to an increasingly global call to protect endangered environments and indigenous communities.
Voices connecting

In 2009, ACT’s fundamental message of making traditional peoples full partners in the conservation of the Amazon—for years, a minority opinion—began to reach exponentially increasing audiences. In a world increasingly desperate for clear and functional solutions, ACT’s unbroken record of success through collaboration now rings true. Connecting tribal leaders and other environmental experts, bringing together respected organizations, and finding common ground among indigenous people and governments across Amazonia, ACT’s story today reaches more ears than at any other time in the organization’s history.

STANDARD BEARERS In 1999, ACT began its ethnographic mapping program with one isolated indigenous group in the northeast Amazon. Ten years later, ACT has carried out mapping and documentation projects with more than 30 partner tribes in virtually every corner of the Amazon. In 2009, ACT was recruited to undertake the mapping of all native lands of an entire country and to join with two consortiums seeking conservation of integrated areas of the Brazilian Amazon.

GOVERNMENT APPROVED Working with Suriname’s Ministry of Natural Resources, ACT pioneered development of nationally recognized training for indigenous park guards. A 2009 agreement with the government to extend training to more villages incorporates many more indigenous communities into stewardship of essential natural resources.

STRENGTHENING AND SAFEGUARDING In the Colombian Amazon, ACT has partnered with local indigenous communities, the national park service and the national Amazon region natural resource management authority to implement reserved and protected area management plans and to begin assisting in the monitoring and protection of five indigenous and protected areas. Additionally, ACT is working with the national rural development authority to collaboratively initiate the process of expanding 20 indigenous reserves in three departments.

GLOBAL ECONOMY In 2009, ACT played a central role in the development of the most advanced indigenous-led carbon credit project in the Brazilian Amazon, collaborating with other NGOs and assisting the Surui people to feature this effort at COP 15, the UN world climate change conference in Copenhagen.

In 2009, ACT employs 85 people, most of them working in Brazil, Colombia, and Suriname. Each member of the ACT team leverages expertise and creative thinking to make a real difference in every corner of the Amazon.
Amasina has worked with ACT President Mark Plotkin for years to transmit his plant wisdom to younger members of his own tribe through a longstanding Shamans and Apprentices program in Suriname. Mapping indigenous lands is the crucial first step toward tribal empowerment, and ACT helped pioneer the concept.

“Paradise endangered is not yet paradise lost,” together with people like Chief Almir of the Surui tribe. ACT is using the miracles of modern science alongside ancient knowledge, tradition and culture. Mixing two worlds results in a powerful new approach to conservation.”

“I want to live a traditional life in my ancestral homeland in Suriname. The mapping that ACT does helps my people to protect the medicinal plants and sacred places that make our life possible and keep the forest healthy.”

“Voices of Innovation

Jeff Bridges
Academy Award-winner, ACT Advisory Board member since 2002, Academy-award winning actor Jeff Bridges understands how ACT’s innovative mapping projects can help achieve real results for the people of the Amazon. “I care deeply about the fate of these forests,” he says.

Amasina the Trio tribe, Suriname

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Mapping: changing the landscape of power

Map, manage, protect—at the heart of this elegantly simple expression of ACT’s mission is an idea so powerful it can change the way Earth looks from space and stop a bulldozer in its tracks. ACT helped pioneer ethnographic land mapping in the Amazon as the first essential step toward empowering indigenous people to identify and protect the rainforests, their ancestral homes. As global carbon markets open up, these maps also become vital negotiating tools to establish land values and ensure payment to rightful landholders. In 2009, ACT’s lengthy experience in land use documentation and demonstrated ability to bring indigenous peoples into the conservation discussion made it the natural choice of governments and NGO consortiums to replicate these successes with additional communities overseeing vast tracts of rainforest.

SURINAME DIGITIZED Working with Suriname’s government and indigenous and Maroon communities living on over 26 million acres, ACT has completed mapping of nearly two thirds of the country’s area as the necessary basis for the eventual establishment of indigenous land rights.

LAND RIGHTS PROTECTED ACT supported our indigenous partners in Brazil’s Xingu Indigenous Park—with whom ACT mapped the reserve’s entire 7.5 million acres—and helped them rally support against the planned construction of dams with potentially devastating environmental impacts.

CONNECTING THE DOTS In 2009, ACT was brought on as a key partner in two USAID-funded consortia working to increase local deforestation prevention capacity and build large-scale conservation corridors in three major Amazonian states of Brazil. ACT’s mapping and diagnostic achievement with the Surui is being applied as a keystone for the latter project.

MOVING FORWARD As a result of the efficiency and effectiveness of ACT’s strategies, the state secretary of the environment requested that ACT help lead the ethno-environmental diagnostic and ethno-zoning process for Wai-Wai lands, essential for zoning these traditional territories as protected areas.

CARTOGRAPHY OF A PEOPLE Millions of acres of Brazilian rainforest lands inhabited by the Kaxuyana, Wai-Wai, Tekiyana, Tureyana, and Kahiyana tribes have been mapped with ACT’s guidance, the first step toward significantly improving the long-term conservation of an area over twice the size of the state of Maryland.

In 2009, the total amount of indigenous homelands mapped by ACT and our partners jumped from 40 million acres to more than 60 million acres.

As more tribal partners recognize the advantages of working with ACT to map and monitor their homelands, more endangered rainforest comes under indigenous management.

Gwen Emanuel-Smith
Suriname Program Director

In 2009, ACT was chosen to work with the Suriname government to demarcate 64 percent of the nation’s total land area housing 90 percent of our indigenous brothers and sisters. Since we initiated mapping in 2000 in Kwamalasamutu in the southern interior, the effort has become a powerful tool for amplifying the voices of our indigenous partners. Under increasing pressure from multinational natural resource extractors, Suriname struggles to regulate rights for indigenous lands. Ethnographic mapping has become a key component of a regional Amazonian initiative to assess opportunities as well as such threats as resource extraction, dam building, and climate change.

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ACT cofounder and Vice President of Programs Liliana Madrigal works with ACT in-country colleagues and indigenous partners to build esteem and advance human rights among women across Amazonia. In 2009, ACT continued longstanding initiatives in the Colombian Amazon that encourage sharing and transmission of vital traditional healthcare practices through women healers conferences, mamas and apprentices programs and the installation and maintenance of medicinal and nutritional gardens.

“ACT helps connect indigenous women so that they can share their vast traditional and shamanistic knowledge. Better than anyone, they understand: if you don’t have your health—including the health of the planet—you are sick. We work to give equal voice to women.”

“For many mamas are taking their secrets to the grave. Without their voices, we lose hold of the past while the health of our forest homes declines. I work to preserve the wisdom of the grandmother. In every respect, they symbolize Mother Earth.”

Strong Voices of Leaders

—— Liliana Madrigal
ACT Vice President of Programs

—— Charito Chincunque
president, Union of Women Healers (ASOMI)

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Working with ACT, ASOMI president Charito Chincunque is a leading organizer of gatherings in Colombia that connect women healers with apprentices and other women to share vital traditional medicinal and gardening techniques and protect culture and nature. As awareness spreads of the central role of women in maintaining healthy traditional communities, such leadership will continue to develop among ACT’s tribal partners.
Sharing traditions, ensuring the future

ACT’s approach to environmental conservation in the Amazon has always operated on the assumption that the indigenous people of the forests know best how to manage and sustain the rainforests. For thousands of years, they have stewarded the land. They depend on its richness for their way of life. In the face of rapid change and rampant deforestation, ACT supports the people of the Amazon by helping them develop the capacity to lead themselves, to determine their own destiny, to combine their wisdom with the best available scientific knowledge, and to forge a new synthesis of cultural conservation and nature protection.

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND LAND ACT continued to expand a biocultural corridor in the Colombian Amazon, advancing the connection of indigenous lands to existing national parks and increasing the protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of rainforest.

SKILL BUILDING In lands surrounding the Tumucumaque Mountains of northern Brazil, ACT provided capacity building and institutional support to the two indigenous associations of the region to develop the necessary skills to run their associations, administer resources, and develop environmental protection strategies.

TRADITIONAL HEALERS ACT made possible three gatherings of traditional healers, men and women, from multiple tribes across the northwest Amazon. They shared their successes and struggles. They connected in countless ways to better protect their rainforest lands and cultures.

GOOD MEDICINE In four remote villages of Suriname, ACT supplied all necessary support to community traditional medicine clinics that ACT had previously constructed. The support provided continuous opportunities for elder tribal leaders to share ancestral medicinal knowledge with younger generations.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY In the village of Tapu in Suriname, ACT provided financial management, product commercialization, and urban marketing training to indigenous women to produce and package ground pepper for sale. Their products are now available in the capital city of Paramaribo in a pilot project.

Now hear this For the Ingano and Coreguaje indigenous communities of the Colombian department of Caquetá, ACT continued to fully fund the operations of two indigenous-run radio stations that broadcast 40 hours of community programming weekly.

1/3 of the carbon locked up in tropical vegetation in the world is estimated to be in Amazon rainforest trees.

Javier Ortiz Bahamón Colombia Program Director

For the indigenous cultures of the Amazon forests, the right to oversee their traditional lands in their natural state is fundamental to their identities. The land determines their paths to learning, to caring for their spirits and bodies. Unfortunately, indigenous peoples have lost huge tracts of their territories, and this threatens their cosmology and traditional knowledge. The world is trying to reestablish its respect for nature, a drive accelerated by life-threatening climate change. ACT’s objective in Colombia has been to work in partnership with indigenous communities to protect their territories and by sharing their ancestral knowledge of nature, identify new adaptive strategies for the world.
Moving to Alaska from the Pacific Northwest three decades ago, Janice and Edward Todd have watched as change and development followed. Climate change is coming to Alaska, threatening to “cause further warming, rising sea levels, loss of glaciers and loss of habitat for sea mammals,” explains Janice. “Indigenous people possess an invaluable reservoir of traditional knowledge. If we work together,” she says, “more people will become aware of the changes we are making on the entire planet.”

“Only five percent of the charities we rate have received at least five consecutive four-star evaluations ... This ‘exceptional’ designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Amazon Conservation Team from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”

—Charity Navigator, May 2010

Voices of Support

“... in that time, it has changed dramatically. Earth is a living planet. What happens in the Amazon eventually impacts people everywhere. That’s why we support ACT.”

—Janice and Edward Todd

ACT supporters, Homer Alaska

Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent evaluator of charities, gave its highest rating to ACT for the fifth consecutive year, indicating that ACT consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way, and outperforms most other charities in America.

www.charitynavigator.org
A message of Hope

The many stories that come out of the Amazon Conservation Team—and the Amazon—all add up to one message: ACT makes a real difference to real people on the ground across Amazonia. Working shoulder to shoulder with tribal leaders, global environmental powers and government agencies, ACT is implementing real programs to combat global climate change, advance human rights and promote environmental conservation.

In this extraordinary moment, the story of the Amazon could go many different ways. Only with the support of visionary agencies, organizations and individuals can ACT help the people of the Amazon participate in the unfolding story of their ancestral homeland and protect the world’s last great rainforests.

Contact ACT to find out how you can join your voice to ours in support of the Amazon rainforest.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE In 2009, ACT’s assistance to the Surui people’s biocultural conservation efforts received feature coverage in the San Francisco Chronicle, while ACT’s co-authorship of research demonstrating the existence of a viable indigenous medical diagnostic system in the Suriname rainforest was a highly accessed entry in the prestigious peer-reviewed Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine.

A WEB OF VOICES Thanks to growing numbers of supporters using the global power of social networking and digital media sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, ACT’s story reaches farther than ever before.

WORLD STAGE After receiving a coveted Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship in 2008, ACT President Mark Plotkin and Vice President Liliana Madrigal were invited to share the story of ACT’s work in the Amazon in addresses to the 2009 Skoll World Forum. Meanwhile, at the 2009 leading edge Bioneers conference, ACT-Brazil Program Director Vasco van Rosmalen was a featured speaker on saving rainforest biocultural diversity.

The largest rainforest on Earth, the Amazon is also an ecosystem supporting perhaps 30% of the world’s terrestrial species.

BECOME PART OF THE STORY Support ACT today!

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Arran Stephens
President and Founder
Nature’s Path Organic Foods

A 2009 EnviroKidz Giving Back Award from Nature’s Path, North America’s number one organic cereal manufacturer, is helping an ACT-established cooperative program with the Suriname state-sponsored elementary school in the village of Kwamalasamutu expand to include 80 more students. “It means so much to us to be able to support socially conscious organizations like ACT that are actively working to preserve the environment and improve the sustainability of traditional forest cultures,” said Arran Stephens, President and Founder of Nature’s Path Organic Foods. “We think our loyal customers who made our donation possible would be proud of the work that ACT does.”
**2009 HIGHLIGHTS**

**Impacting the Climate Change Discussion**
ACT is playing a central role in the development of the most advanced indigenous-led carbon credit project in the Brazilian Amazon, collaborating with other NGOs and assisting the Surui people to protect over 600,000 acres of rainforest.

**Advancing the Conservation of Millions of Acres of Amazonia**
Millions of acres of Brazilian rainforest lands – inhabited by the Kaxuyana, Wai Wai, Tekayana, Tunuyana and Kahyana peoples – have been mapped with ACT’s assistance, the first step toward significantly improving the long-term conservation of an area over twice the size of the state of Maryland.

Working with Suriname’s government and indigenous and Maroon communities that live on lands covering nearly two-thirds of the country (over 26 million acres), ACT has helped the groups to map their traditional lands, a critical step toward the granting of land management rights.

ACT is continuing to expand a biocultural corridor in the Colombian Amazon, advancing the connection of indigenous lands to existing national parks and increasing the protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of rainforest.

**Empowering Tribal Communities**
ACT built a training facility for Brazil’s Surui people so that they can educate members of their community and advance the sustainable management of their 612,000-acre reserve. In addition, ACT is funding the Surui in their work to collect complete data on the biodiversity found within their territory.

ACT supported our indigenous partners in Brazil’s Xingu Indigenous Park, assisting in their efforts to build support against the planned construction of dams with potentially devastating environmental impacts. Thanks to this pressure, the environmental permits needed to proceed with the dams’ construction were canceled.

**Sharing Ancestral Knowledge**
ACT made possible three gatherings of traditional healers – both men and women – from multiple tribes across the Colombian Amazon, so that they could share their strengths and struggles and find ways to better protect their rainforest lands and cultures.

In four remote villages of Suriname, ACT supplied all necessary support to community traditional medicine clinics that ACT previously constructed, and this support provided continuous opportunities for elder tribal leaders to share ancestral medicinal knowledge with younger generations.
Funds are presented according to the accrual method of accounting.

ACT once again earns the highest rating from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent evaluator of charities, for our efficiency in exceeding industry standards and for outperforming other charities in fiscal standards.

ACT is a member of EarthShare, a federation that represents the nation’s most respected environmental and conservation charities in hundreds of workplace giving campaigns across the country. ACT participates in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #10410), and state employee charitable campaigns. EarthShare’s payroll contribution program allows donors to direct their contribution directly to ACT. To find out more about how you and your workplace can support ACT through payroll deductions, please call Dana Milyak at 703-522-4684.

Audited financial statements available upon request.

$10,000 and up
Anonymous (3)
ABRA Foundation
William M. Cameron
FORTIS Consortium
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
Rainforest Fund
Fred & Karen Schaufeld
Skoll Foundation
USAID

$50,000 To $99,999
7 Bar Foundation
Corpoamazonía
Everett Dowling
Gwendolyn Grace
Melinda Maxfield
The Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
David & Stephanie Dicke
The Rockefeller Brothers Trust
Dutch Embassy
The Armand G. Erpf Fund
Gesso Foundation
Laura & Gary Lauder
LUSH Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
George Meyer & Maria Semple
Elizabeth Munro & Gary Haney
Nature’s Path Foods, Inc.
Erdman & Margaret Ostrow
Wendy & Mike Paine
Resnick Family Foundation
RSF Innovations
Suriname Conservation Foundation
Swift Foundation

$10,000 To $49,999
Anonymous (2)
Robert & Paula Boylin
Nelson & Michelle Carbrott
The Carl & Roberts Deutsch Foundation
David & Stephanie Dicke
The Rockefeller Brothers Trust
USAID

$1,000 To $9,999
Leonard & Jayne Abess
Daniel S. Alegría, MD & Mary Page Hufty, MD
Gregory Scott Allen
Anonymous
Aydar Foundation
Robert Bass Berry
Black Mariah
Bloggers Family Foundation
Jack & Kristina Boylin
Brett Byers
Lynda Cameron
Yvon Chouinard
Robert & Usha Cunningham
Leslie Danoff & Lawrence Robbins
Tamar Datan & Sandra Shihadeh
Mary Cowan
Roy & Estrella Dunn

Andrew Tobias & Charles Nolan
United Nations Development Programme

$1,000 To $8,999
Leonard & Jayne Abess
Daniel S. Alegría, MD & Mary Page Hufty, MD
Gregory Scott Allen
Anonymous
Aydar Foundation
Robert Bass Berry
Black Mariah
Bloggers Family Foundation
Jack & Kristina Boylin
Brett Byers
Lynda Cameron
Yvon Chouinard
Robert & Usha Cunningham
Leslie Danoff & Lawrence Robbins
Tamar Datan & Sandra Shihadeh
Mary Cowan
Roy & Estrella Dunn
SUPPORTERS

ACT made every effort to ensure that our donors are listed correctly. Please forgive any mistakes and contact us with your corrections.