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ARTICLE FROM "ABORIGINAL EXPORT SUCCESS"

SPIRITUALITY DRIVES FOUR WORLDS INTERNATIONAL

“Starting from within, working in a circle, in a sacred manner, we heal ourselves, our relationships and our world.”

So begins the international trade agreement signed by Canadian Aboriginal organizations and leaders of the Otomi Nation during a trade mission to Mexico in May 1999. Not the rhetoric, the words summarize the guiding principles, and underpin the profound vision and success, of the Canadian Aboriginal organization that facilitated the signing - **Four Worlds International Institute for Human and Community Development** - and its economic arm **FOUR DIRECTIONS INTERNATIONAL**.

Four Worlds' success stems from its unique focus on the importance of culture and spirituality in all dimensions of human and community development.

An internationally recognized leader in human and community transformation, Four Worlds International has roots going back 30 years, when its founder Phil Lane Jr. (who serves as Four Worlds' International Coordinator and Four Directions' President) began working at the grass-roots level

with Indigenous peoples around the world, including Bolivia, and Papua New Guinea. Four Directions International was created in 1995 to fund the organization's non-profit humanitarian work.

The trade agreement in Mexico with the Otomi, representing more than 100,000 indigenous peoples, points to potential investment and profit-making opportunities for Canadian Aboriginal businesses and communities. The include the production and export of organic coffee and herbal medicines for re-export, the distribution of environmental and information technologies, and the provision of technical assistance in sustainable forestry practices. Four Directions already has a North American-wide distribution system in place through its partnership with U.S.-based Lotus Light Inc., a joint venture with Canadian information technology company **Syntec**, and a distribution agreement with the U.S. environmental technology firm PolleyTech Corporation.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has supported the work of Four Worlds for the past year, particularly in Mexico, where officials continue to help facilitate the implementation of the trade agreement.

DFAIT's Senior Advisor and Circumpolar Affairs Division, Laurent Charette, says, Four Worlds had already done most of the leg work. "This trade mission was the right timing for Four Worlds; it gave them high visibility in Mexico. But they had been meeting and consulting with potential partners there for the past seven years."

The mission, sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations, Contigo of Canada, was the first-ever Canadian Aboriginal trade mission to Mexico.

Charette feels that while Four Worlds has all the elements of a modern trade organization, its integration with the native spiritual tradition is "one of the keys to developing long-lasting relationships with Indigenous peoples around the world."



Thaayrohyadi Serafin Bermudez de la Cruz, General Co-ordinator of the Otomi Council, and Phil Lane Jr., sign the Reunion of the Condor and Eagle: Social Development and Trade Unity Pact.



Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade