

# CHANGING PLANET



## As children return to school – photographs of tribal children around the world.

In [Changing Planet](#) September 21, 2011 [7 Comments](#)



[Joanna Eede](#)

On every continent, from the green depths of the Amazon basin to the icy reaches of the Arctic tundra, children raised in tribal communities are taught the skills and values that have ensured the survival of their peoples for generations.

Tribal children are the inheritors of their territories, languages and unique ways of seeing the world; human repositories of their ancestors' knowledge. As they are typically brought up in communities where the solidarity of the group is crucial to survival, children are taught that life is about 'we', not 'I', and balance with nature, not destruction.

*We are not here for ourselves, said Roy Sesana, a Gana Bushman from Botswana. We are here for our children, and the children of our grandchildren.*



Over recent decades, however, many tribal children have witnessed – and experienced – dispossession, disease and despair due to land theft, forced assimilation into mainstream societies and ‘development’ schemes. If their homelands continue to be threatened by destructive external forces; if their values and ways of life are not granted greater respect, the the future of tribal children will be as precarious as their childhoods have often been traumatic.

In Malaysia, Penan children help to build homes from tree saplings and giant palm leaves; beneath the blue-green surface of the the Andaman Sea, Moken children learn to catch dugong, crab and sea-cucumber with long harpoons; in Mongolia, Tsaatan children are taught the ancient herding skills of their parents by corralling reindeer on the grasslands.



Most tribal peoples have a long-term view of life; they take into account in their daily decision-making the future health of the environment and the wellbeing of successive generations.

If the lives of today's tribal children are to be uncorrupted by oppression, exploitation and racism, the governments and corporations that currently violate their rights must adopt similarly sustainable thinking, and look far beyond immediate political or commercial gain.

Recent successes – such as the reopening of the Bushman water hole in Botswana and the Dongria Kondh’s victory over Vedanta in India – show that tribal issues are being increasingly pushed into political and cultural arenas. But there is a long way to go. Tribes are still vulnerable, largely because their lands are still coveted. Their urgent need is for people worldwide to join Survival’s movement and help in its unflinching fight for them to be seen as equals.

A world where tribal children are free to live on their own lands in the way they choose is their prerogative. And it starts with the recognition of two basic human rights: to land and to self-determination.

Think not forever of  
yourselves, o Chiefs,  
Nor of your own  
generation  
Think of continuing  
generations of our families,  
Think of our grandchildren  
And those yet unborn,  
Whose faces are coming  
from  
beneath the ground.



(Quote by Peacemaker, Iroquois Confederacy, USA)



## MEET THE AUTHOR

Joanna Eede was an editorial consultant to Survival International with a particular interest in the relationship between man and nature and tribal peoples. She has created and edited three environmental books, including *Portrait of England* (Think Publishing, 2006) and *We are One: A Celebration of Tribal Peoples* (Quadrille, 2009). Joanna writes for newspapers and magazines on subjects such as the repatriation of wild Przewalski horses to Mongolia, the whales of the Alboran sea, the chimpanzees of the Mahale rainforest, uncontacted tribes of the Amazon rainforest and the Hadza hunter gatherer people of Tanzania. Future ideas include a book about Tibet's nomads.

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Children should never witness despair. They should grow up free and happy. This pictures are so amazing! Thanks!!

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Such amazing pictures!!!!


It is so important that the knowledge of these tribes does not get forgotten. The long-term view of life is something that we often forget when all we want to do is make money.

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