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# Tsirik - fold the leaves so that others may be guided: A study of how the BriBri women are preserving their culture to ensure a sustainable future for their community

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**Tsirik - fold the leaves so that others may be guided**

***A study of how the BriBri women are preserving their culture to ensure a sustainable future  
for their community***

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PIM 75

A Capstone Paper submitted for partial fulfillment of requirements for a Masters of Arts in  
Sustainable Development at the School for International Training Graduate Institute in  
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

Advisor: Dr. Teresa Healy

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I would like to thank my angelic advisor, Teresa Healy, for her kind words, support and encouragement throughout these last two years. You made this process easy (and even enjoyable) and I will be forever grateful.

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Congratulations to the rest of my cohort who have stood bravely in the trenches with me. Good luck in your future endeavors!

And last, but certainly not least, a grand thank you to my parents, Bobbie and Carl, and my sister, Sarah who have supported me through this experience and all life experiences and who have guided me, encouraged me, and followed me in my crazy nomadic lifestyle.

Thank you all. This paper is for you.  
*If you stumble, make it part of the dance.*

## TSIRIK- FOLD THE LEAVES SO THAT OTHERS MAY BE GUIDED

Nace una nueva era,  
con el descubrimiento de América,  
así de esta manera inicia una bella historieta.  
Por una expedición,  
emprendida por un español,  
llamado Cristóbal Colón,  
que en sus viajes descubrió,  
bellas costas de admiración.  
Costa Rica!, hallada, conquistada,  
y también colonizada.  
Que abarcaron en tu playa, cálida Tropicana,  
en encuentro de una comunidad nativa,  
que han luchado por conservar su cultura  
Indígena,  
aunque en medio de pobreza,  
poseen la mayor riqueza,  
disfrutar de su hermosa naturaleza,  
que viviendo entre palmas y del suelo que  
cosechan,  
solo existe la esperanza que entre ellos descansa,  
que avivan en ritual, con su hermosa danza  
espiritual.  
Porque con líneas y colores  
historias contaban nuestros antecesores,  
que han sido pasadas por generaciones,  
tradiciones narradas, que no han podido ser  
olvidadas,  
demostradas en la arcilla y martilladas en algunas  
figuras tan sencilla,  
tal y como lo demuestran nuestros Indígenas,  
que nos representan desde sus colinas.

-Alba Barrantes

A new era is born,  
With the discovery of America,  
So in this way begins a beautiful cartoon.  
For an expedition,  
Undertaken by a Spaniard,  
Called Christopher Columbus,  
Which in his travels, he discovered,  
Beautiful shores of admiration.  
Costa Rica! Found, conquered,  
And also colonized.  
That spanned your beach, warm Tropicana,  
In meeting of a native community,  
Who have fought to  
preserve their indigenous culture,  
Although in the midst of poverty,  
Possess the greatest wealth,  
Enjoy its beautiful nature,  
That living between palms and the soil they  
harvest,  
There is only the hope that rests between them,  
Who enliven in ritual, with their beautiful  
spiritual dance.  
Because with lines and colors  
Stories told by our ancestors,  
Which have been passed down for generations,  
Narrated traditions that have not been  
forgotten,  
Demonstrated in the clay and hammered in  
some figures so simple,  
such as evidenced by our Indigenous.  
Which represent us from its hills.

-Alba Barrantes (translated by author)

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Acronym Key

WID- Women in Development

GAD- Gender and Development

HDI – Human Development Index

SFS – School for Field Studies

Ticos – Slang for Costa Rican

Siqua- Slang for outsider

SWHA- Stibrawpa Women’s House Association

ACOMUITA- *Asociación de Mujeres Indigenas Bribri de Talamanca* (Association of Indigenous Bribri Women of Talamanca)

INA – Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Institute of Learning)

INAMU- Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (National Women’s Institute)

ASOPRODEAY- *Asociación Pro Desarrollo Àgricola y Económica de Yorkín* (Yorkín Agricultural and Economic Development Association)

Bananeras – Banana companies

ATEC- *Asociacion Talamanquena de Ecoturismo y Conservacion* (Talamanca Association of Ecotourism and Conservation)

ACTUAR- Costa Rican Rural Tourism Association

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

CST- Certification in Sustainable Tourism Program

### Abstract

Bananas are one of Costa Rica's largest exports, along with coffee, palm oil, and cocoa. The banana plantations are large-scale, are most often run by multinational companies, and are considered to be run as enclave economies (Equal Exchange, 2016). This monoculture crop production has been globally accused of human rights abuses said to include, but not be limited to, violating the rights of indigenous people and loss in culture and tradition. For this paper, I studied the effects that large-scale agricultural corporations have on the BriBri, a matriarchal and indigenous group who live on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. As I will show in this paper, the large-scale agricultural programs are affecting the health and fertility of the women of the tribe, as well as redefining gender roles. These changes have further policy implications for the culture and livelihood of the BriBri community. The BriBri have combated many of the negative effects of the commercialization of agriculture by creating and sustaining an agrotourism business model that is helping to preserve and revitalize the BriBri culture.

Many academics have speculated on the effects of tourism on indigenous peoples and ask whether tourism in indigenous communities is a promising opportunity for development or a lurking undercover threat. In this study, I examine how agrotourism influences the identity of the BriBri people, specifically the women, as well as how it encourages the revitalization of the culture, tradition, and language of the BriBri. This paper will further provide recommendations of how the BriBri can continue to preserve their culture, and how the Costa Rican government can reinforce the treaties they signed to stand with indigenous people. The BriBri model has global significance because it stands as an alternative for other indigenous groups facing similar situations, by encouraging the use of tradition, culture, and lifestyle to find solutions to their own situations.

## **Introduction**

Indigenous groups throughout the world are continually marginalized: socially, economically and politically. This marginalization is exceptionally hard for indigenous women as it causes them to be excluded from decision-making processes, financial gain, land access, and human rights. On a micro level, native groups have had to find unique ways to fight marginalization through globalization in their communities. Although Costa Rica is celebrated for its colorful biodiversity, the eight indigenous groups in Costa Rica have faced unique challenges, in a developing country that works closely with many industrialized and technically advanced nations. These Costa Rican groups are the BriBri, Huetar, Chorotega, Teribe, Brunka, Guaymí, Cabecar, and Maleku communities.

For this research, I studied the effects that large-scale agricultural corporations (such as Dole and Chiquita) have on the BriBri, a matriarchal and indigenous group, on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. The plantations hire many local men who often do not return home with the money that they have earned to support their families, and many of whom have fallen ill from the chemicals used in the plantation processing. The large scale agricultural programs are affecting the women of the tribe because they redefine gender roles, affect women's health and fertility, and have further policy implications for the culture and livelihood of the BriBri. In order to combat these adverse conditions, the BriBri have created small scale agro-tourism groups and an all-women's cooperative. The BriBri women of Costa Rica are extremely vulnerable due to pressures from globalization, policies from the Costa Rican government, and the effects of numerous multinational banana corporations that have rooted themselves within

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BriBri land. Indigenous tourism can help native people determine their commitments to their cultural identity as well as to acknowledge their agency and development.

In the BriBri language, *tsirik* means to fold the leaves while you walk so that the others coming behind you can find their way. It captures the cultural mindset of cooperation, communication, and unity with nature. I learned this after an elder in the BriBri community sang me a song and this adage was in the lyrics. BriBri women are creating sustainable solutions to preserve their culture and lifestyle in the face of rapid globalization to ensure that their future progeny can continue to find their way within the BriBri tradition.

Sustainable development is a moving target with numerous context-dependent strategies. The world must continually grow and adapt as these new strategies change in the face of shifting landscape. The BriBri are like the *tsirik* – a good path to follow – for other indigenous groups battling against multinational companies and at risk of cultural absorption. Each individual native group should find its own way based on its own particular indigenous knowledge, traditions, and culture. But the BriBri prove that a path of sustainability is possible and they have become proven trailblazers when it comes to preserving a group's unique heritage against the corporate consumption of indigenous land and culture. This issue has particular relevance on today's global stage as many minority and indigenous groups are the target of worldwide policies. More and more native groups are being represented, particularly in the media, for fighting for their rights within the international arena to maintain unique traditions and preserve indigenous territories.

My practicum position indirectly led me to this research topic. For my practicum, I worked for the School for Field Studies (SFS), a third party study abroad provider, at their

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Center for Sustainable Development in Atenas, Costa Rica. For my job, I acted as a research assistant for two quantitative research projects. The first on road ecology and the effects road noise has on wildlife and the second on carbon sequestration in coffee farms. We visited many organic and sustainable farms as well as the Dole plantation to see how conventional farming works in the country. I was immediately passionate about the banana production and the effects large-scale plantations have on the local community. Through my position with SFS, I learned about the struggles that the eight indigenous groups face in the country due to the high demand for tourism ventures in Costa Rica. In Puerto Viejo de Talamanca (on the eastern coast), I saw and heard first hand how the plantations were negatively impacting local communities and learned how tourism was influencing the identity and culture of Puerto Viejo and its residents.

My research focuses on how the model of small scale agrotourism and cooperative ownership can help BriBri women combat the effects of globalization. I explore the extent to which indigenous agrotourism can fulfill its promise to address marginalization (both socially and economically) for indigenous populations, specifically the BriBri. Finally I consider whether resistance organizations have had a positive impact on BriBri identity, health, and self-determination. This paper will first look at the past literature involving BriBri people, as well as women in development, social capital, and identity theory. I will then explain my practitioner inquiry design and my data collection methods followed by the analysis of my data and my conclusions regarding the BriBri's identity and future.

## **Literature Review**

The literature regarding the BriBri people is limited, and most of the general global indigenous identity research is within the context of Canada and Australia. Given the large number of indigenous groups in Central and South America, I found the lack of research both astonishing and disappointing. Yet, the themes and topics that are relevant to this research can be found amongst the work of many sustainable development scholars. These themes include: gender and development (specifically women's roles in development), social capital, resiliency, agency, and solidarity.

In order to be considered an indigenous person, indigenous people need to self-identify, have their own distinct language and culture, and resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UNPFII, 2015). Historically, indigenous groups all over the world have been marginalized economically, politically, and socially and displaced from their lands and territories (Herforth, 2007). They constitute one third of the rural poor in the world and are viewed as among the most vulnerable and underserved groups (IFAD, 2004). Native groups are often stuck between new technologies and old traditions and have trouble keeping up with the pace of an ever globalizing economy and society. Their exploitation has been exacerbated by many international, national and transnational interests and policies.

Within indigenous groups, women are the most disadvantaged due to their lack of assets, land, occupational mobility, education and literacy, and lack of participation in decision-making or governmental forums (IFAD, 2004). Many deem this term the "feminization of poverty" - a vicious cycle that excludes women from job opportunities, often deepening their

poverty level and increasing their domestic workload (IFAD, 2004). This cycle is intensified by cultures of patriarchy, which further limit women within not only the indigenous municipality, but also the larger outside community.

The presence and importance of women is a highly debated topic in the development arena. Some scholars believe that women are the drivers of development because they fill in the missing gap (Tinker, 1990, 31). They can be seen as a disadvantaged group or can be utilized as a resource for further development. Women are responsible for fixing a society destroyed by their male counterparts “based on a shared history of oppression by patriarchal institutions and dominant Western culture” (Schroeder, 1999, 19). Since the colonial period, many missionaries and settlers have believed that women were inferior beings, “bound by tradition, either unable or unwilling to enter the modern world” (Parpart, 1993, 447). Many development planners have continued to assume that Third World women were blocking ideals of development and modernity and that they would adopt more progressive traits once Third World men learned how to organize their societies (Parpart, 1993, 447). As a result, women were extremely committed to achieving the third U.N. Millennium Development Goal - eliminating gender disparity. According to the U.N. Millennium Development Goals’ website, in the 2000s, women account for “41 percent of paid workers outside of agriculture, an increase from 35 percent in 1990” and they “experience significant gaps in terms of poverty, labor market and wages” (UN Millennium Goals).

Danish economist Ester Boserup has proved through her writing the deceptively negative relationship between development and women. Boserup argues that development schemes often deprive women of economic opportunities and that modernization can lead to a

decline in female empowerment and status (Parpart, 1993, 447). Development practices have removed women from their traditional roles in the community, particularly in agriculture and as food producers. Once planners recognized women's roles in economic development, Boserup argued, development would advance in Third World nations (Parpart, 1993, 448). She also states that there is a "positive correlation between the role women played in agricultural production and their status vis-a-vis men" (Razavi, n.d.,3). This led to the emergence of a 'Women in Development' (WID) approach that called for more access and involvement of women in the development field claiming that a "focus on the economic participation of women in development is essential" (UNRISD, 1994, 5). WID aims to improve women's educational and employment opportunities; equality in political and social participation; and increase access to health and welfare services. In sum, the "WID movement that emerged... demanded social justice and equity for women" (UNRISD, 1994, 2). Although seemingly a large step for women's inclusion in development, WID stipulates that women were not included in the economic sector prior to this push. Women in Development emerged in Mexico City in 1975 to argue that women have always participated in economic development, and that further integration of women into development was the wrong approach (Razavi, n.d., 4).

Following this period, Gender and Development (GAD) saw women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. GAD's view also emphasized the need for women to have the capability and capacity to organize themselves to achieve political voice, and recognized that patriarchy and the struggles that accompany it operates within and across classes to oppress women (Hegarty, 2010, 36). GAD addressed the intersectionalities, or the multiple sources of discrimination that affect women, viewing them as active and capable

agents of transformation.

Historically, indigenous women have long been the stewards of indigenous knowledge relating specifically to the management of natural resources. Women, as allies of the environment, are urged to shoulder these burdens and protect the future generations from starvation through the protection of environmental systems (Schroeder, 1999). Without a healthy environment, there is no life for future generations. Women want development that ensures safety and protection for all through access to clean water and healthy food, while men quite often base their development goals around production and consumption. Women in indigenous communities must focus on long-term survival based on sustainable practices, using all possible social capital as an available resource for preservation and development.

Understanding women's role and relationship to development is essential in this process of studying the BriBri. The Women in Development approach denies indigenous women of being highly-skilled females who have something to offer to the developmental process of Costa Rica. Most development paradigms show Third World females and indigenous women as vulnerable and passive, which is not characteristic of the BriBri; a strong, established matriarchal and matrilineal society. Matriarchal societies are often agricultural societies and are often egalitarian and non-accumulating, allowing goods to be distributed and not kept to enhance one person or familial group but rather to equally distribute the goods amongst the members of the community. Matriarchal societies can be considered 'societies of reciprocity' (Goettner-Abendroth, n.d., 5). In these societies, women have the power of disposition, or control of the sources of nourishment and do not allow for the accumulation of political power

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(Goettner-Abendroth, n.d., 6). The nurturing relationships and bonds between members of the community are integral to the health of the BriBri.

Capacity development can create strong relationships between community members, and is defined as the “approaches, strategies and methodologies used by a developing country, and/or external stakeholders, to improve performance at the individual, organizational, network/sector or broader system level” (Bolger, 2000, 19). The objectives of this style of development are to enhance and utilize the skills, resources, and relationships of communities to further support sustainable development. (Bolger, 2000).

Agency is a vital component of capacity development as it gives the most vulnerable people a voice. Agency is the “ability of individuals to exercise their free will and act independently to make choices on their future” (Meadows, 2008, 5). Some researchers believe that structured social systems influence individual agency, while others believe individuals have the ability to influence social structures. The most vulnerable people must develop agency to make real structural change. To effectively use this in local community members, one must utilize the voices of all members of the society, which includes grassroots workers who have the “deepest sense of their organization’s accomplishments, because they breathed and fought, ate and starved with the people they worked with.” (Nagar and Saraswati, 2003, 10). We must use our agency in collaboration with each other to create change within systems, as systems are "more than the sum of their parts" (Meadows, 2008, 2). In order to encourage the empowerment of indigenous communities to use their agency it is important to allow them to define their own values, identities and development goals.

Sustainable development is not linear, however, but multidimensional. Amartya Sen created the capability theory, a development theory and alternative model that goes beyond economic growth and focuses on the inclusion and expansion of people's capabilities. It looks at issues such as poverty and inequality which cannot always be addressed with economic tools or equations alone (Alkire, 2002). This framework is used to assess measures of "social justice, equality, and quality of life... It has also been seen as a theory of social justice – seeking to reduce social exclusion and inequalities" (Alkire, 2002, 6). This approach is both "comprehensive and flexible" and has been used to "investigate poverty, inequality, well-being, social justice, gender, social exclusion, health, disability, child poverty and identity" (Sen, 2005, 151). It has been said that the capability approach inspired the creation of the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990s by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure human progress and welfare in countries. Sen's approach takes into consideration numerous factors of development, and does not just view development as a linear goal or process lead by economic growth. It considers identity and capabilities as significant components in development.

Identity, a social construct of an individual's comprehension of him or herself, is composed of a person's social, cultural, environmental, and political backgrounds, and is what uniquely distinguishes each individual. This can be further categorized by national, ethnic, and cultural identity; national and ethnic referring to the belonging of a nation or in an ethnic group. According to scholar Golubovic, identity is unlikely to change and is more characteristic of pre-modern societies while today's world is made up of numerous melting pots across the globe (Golubovic, 2011). This paper focuses on ethnic identity, which requires stages of

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exploration and commitment to understand (Erikson, 1968). Learning and observing other ethnic groups' norms, cultural traditions and behaviors helps establish a more concrete personal identity by determining and comparing differences and similarities in lifestyles and beliefs. This requires the understanding of other cultures, as well. Golubovic states that culture, the collection of similar customs, language, religion, and behaviors of a particular social group or peoples, is helpful in determining interpretations of "ethnic" identity, as well as understanding one's relation to the natural surroundings and environment (Golubovic, 2011). Because the BriBri are not quick to self-identity as Costa Rican, I will be using ethnic identity to analyze the collective sense of belonging of the BriBri people.

Agency can be created by strong relationships within the community, otherwise known as social capital. For the BriBri women, individual identity is not constructed apart from the rest of the community. Social capital helps women construct identity and gain their title as active agents in the development paradigm. Social capital is key to improving resilience within communities. It also goes beyond economic capital and is defined by a qualitative measurement. Social capital promotes "stability, more leadership, more agencies for helping the solution of public problems" (Lin, 2012, 56). Economic and cultural resiliency is not an outcome but a process more focused on adaptability rather than ingrained stability that evolves as social capital and identity are developed.

The term "social capital" varies from author to author in writings. Jane Jacobs saw social capital as "neighborhood self-government"; for Pierre Bourdieu it meant "distinction"; for James Coleman it is the "power to control events in other people's lives"; for Fukuyama it meant "trust"; and for Robert Putnam it means "sociability" — though all definitions come with

varying degrees of ambiguity (Putnam, 2000). The term “social capital” was first used by Jane Jacobs in her novel, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She used the phrase when describing the struggles urban neighborhoods have with “self-government” and the “actions of governments and capital which thwart them” (Jacobs, 1961, 148). She stated the importance of social capital as a qualitative measure in the following passage:

The districts that are effective enough to defend themselves from planned disruption are eventually trampled in an unplanned gold rush by those who aim to get a cut of these rare social treasures. ... If self-government in the place is to work, underlying any float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighbourhood networks. These networks are a city’s irreplaceable social capital. Whenever the capital is lost, from whatever cause, the income from it disappears, never to return until and unless new capital is slowly and chancily accumulated” (Jacobs, 1961, 148).

This passage does not describe “social capital” as being economic capital defined primarily by a quantitative measurement. Her definition reflects more on social solidarity and the challenges communities face to create and sustain their own self-governments and resiliency, independent of their ruling national governments. Jacobs was interested in the networks of solidarity, webs of trust and collaboration, support for the public, and development of moral norms. Harrison Salisbury describes it as, “Even a ghetto, after it has remained a ghetto for a period of time, builds up a social structure and this makes for more stability, more leadership, more agencies for helping the solution of public problems” (Lin, 2012, 56). Pierre Bourdieu reintroduced the term “capital” from its original Marxist economic definition to a sociological one as both accumulated labor and wealth. Thus, labor and wealth “present[s] themselves as rare and worthy of being sought in a particular social formation” (Bourdieu, 1977). Economic capital, the type of capital most discussed in the modern age, refers to the ownership and control of monetary economic resources. Cultural capital and social capital are less tangible and refer to

the possession of intellectual knowledge and the “aggregate of actual or potential resources” (Bourdieu, 1986, 248). Robert Putnam utilizes similar definitions but categorizes capital as physical objects and property of individuals while he suggests that social capital is the connection amongst individuals. (Putnam, 2000, 19). Social capital refers to the benefits a society receives from the relationships between social networks and the “associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness” (Putnam, 2000, 137). According to John Durston, the concept of social capital is a key component in international development theory as it highlights “problems in both poverty reduction and the promotion of democratic institutions” (Durston, 1998, 3). According to Durston, identity, shared memory, and reciprocity are all aspects of social capital, something is the “intangible benefits of living in a society with well established ‘trust, norms, and networks’” (Aldrich, 2012, 29). By these definitions, social capital tends to be qualitative, while economic wealth quantitative. In an age of globalization and rapid transaction, the term “capital” has shifted to be more abstract and focuses more on social relations and networks. Community members act together more effectively and cohesively in an effort of solidarity to achieve shared objectives and goals. Social capital is necessary and fundamental to the generation of solidarity, which promotes cooperation and collaboration. This further stimulates social networks and capital, ultimately enhancing economic capital, as well as promoting stability and resiliency.

In addition to high levels of agency, adaptation is also important when talking about a community’s capacity to develop social capital. Adaptation refers to “processes, practices, or structures to moderate or offset potential damages or to take advantage of opportunities associated with changes in climate” and involves adjustments to decrease the vulnerability of

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communities and regions to the impacts of climate change and variability (IPCC, 2008, 31).

There have been evolving approaches to adaptation, to find and root out the cause of vulnerability through infrastructure changes, rather than simply responding to symptoms.

Adaptation should be referred to as the reduction of vulnerability while simultaneously understanding the "social and political-economic production of marginality and associated risk" that comes with vulnerability (Slocum, TPSD Lecture, 2015). To adapt, we must "analyze the causes of vulnerability in local relations of power, larger political, economic, social, environmental situation" and then adaptation works to improve social characteristics and issues of resilience by supporting health care, education, social networks, and gender equity (Slocum, TPSD Lecture, 2015). But, adaptation strategies need to recognize and acknowledge "women's and men's relative and different capacities, power, social resilience, vulnerabilities, and resources, because gender norms, roles and relations can either enable or constrain adaptive capacities" (WHO, 2011, 31). The role of indigenous women is often undervalued, undermined, or ignored in many societies. As mentioned before, women's resilience is vital in household and community recovery as they act as crucial agents of social changes. But, despite their participation, women often have less time to contribute to community-level decision-making processes (WHO, 2011).

One important expression of adaptation may be found in sustainable and/or alternative tourism. Tourism is the movement of people to places outside of their natural or usual environment, with pleasure being the common motivation (UNWTO, 2016). In the 1970s-the 1990s, tourism was seen as a means of alleviating poverty, in alignment with the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (Lovelock, 2013). Many claim that although global tourism has

brought financial growth to developing countries, it also brings with it an ethical deficit. Recently there has been a boom in “alternative tourism”, such as agrotourism, ecotourism, voluntourism, and pro-poor tourism. Since the 1970’s, there has been concern about how tourism impacts development (Lovelock, 2013, 3). This has led to sustainable tourism development, which takes “full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (Lovelock, 2013, 3). Indigenous tourism is included in sustainable tourism development and as Smith states, there are four “H”s that aid the attractiveness of indigenous tourism: habitat, heritage, history, and handicrafts (Smith, 2016). Indigenous tourism is not just a way to view the stereotypical image of marginalized people but it can be a means in which people aspire to “economic and political power for self-advancement, and as a place of dialogue between and within differing worldviews” (Lovelock, 2013, 145). This does not negate the fact that indigenous tourism can be a dual-edged sword. It can simultaneously exploit and assist indigenous cultures and peoples by commodifying their culture. Although tourism can also be a facilitator of economic independence, it can also continue to reinforce cultural marginality (Lovelock, 2013, 153).

Many academics have speculated over the effects of tourism on indigenous peoples and question whether tourism in indigenous communities can pose as an undercover threat or promising opportunity for development. A bottom up approach, where residents’ values are incorporated in the planning process, is necessary in indigenous tourism to combat the potential for such marginality. The BriBri have embraced tourism as a means to bring economic

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capital to their community, but are doing so with a keen eye on maintaining their traditions, empowering their social agency and preserving their culture for a sustainable future.

Women are often seen as the drivers of development and are therefore crucial for communities to advance and develop in a sustainable way. Many indigenous communities are considered to be struggling in the face of powerful multinational companies and governmental agencies, but despite this, marginalized communities can still have agency within their own communities. High levels of social capital can support indigenous populations by helping to create adaptive practices and sustainable solutions in the face of globalization. Many indigenous women rely on their social networks between other women and women's groups. Specifically, the BriBri's Stibrawpa and ACOMUITA groups depend on their networking, and accumulation of their combined social capital to participate in sustainable development and community decision-making that will ensure their future viability. I am curious if agrotourism supports their social capital and ability to adapt; to further address issues of inequality and marginalization: socially, economically, and politically; and positively helps to reconstruct BriBri identity. Adaptation is crucial to keeping up with the rapid changes that occur in a developing country such as Costa Rica and alternative tourism acts as an expression of adaptation for the BriBri. The insights of the BriBri are novel in determining indigenous identity and resiliency. With this study, I hope to reinforce the idea that adaptation comes in many different shapes and forms for different indigenous tribes globally.

### **Research Methodology, Practitioner Inquiry Design, and Ethical Observations**

I approached this research question using the views of indigenous research methodology and feminist theory to analyze my case study in this paper. Indigenous

methodologies utilize the researcher's worldview along with their relationship to the native land and the land of others by "emphasizing the social, historical, and political contexts which shape our experiences, our lives, positions, and futures" (Smith, 2000, 15). In indigenous research methodology, the researcher is not separate from the topic being researched. They must utilize their own experiences and relationships in order to understand their role and subjectivity within the research. It is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to keep a journal so that feelings, attitudes, and behaviors can be recorded in detail and added to the research at appropriate points. I relied heavily on my journal and analyzed it as a source of information and data. It presented an interesting dialogue of cultural norms, civil rights, and emotional responses for my research, which helped me declare my subjectivity honestly. This can help standardize or normalize the research process, especially when working with people of different races and age groups, which could lead to reporting on 'what's there' rather than finding a greater meaning behind our interactions. It is possible, that even our self-awareness is not enough to keep biases out of research. Ethics and respect are important in indigenous research methodologies, while relationships between researcher and subject are the priority. This cannot be seen as an afterthought in the research process. Indigenous research honors the participants and community at all times.

Secondly, I used critical ethnography in my data collection. Ethnography holistically studies peoples and cultures while critical ethnography secondarily uses ethical responsibility "to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (Marshall, 2011, 26). Critical ethnographers must explicitly consider how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are "acts of domination even as critical ethnographers

reveal the same in what they study” (Noblit, 2004, 3). This is vital because it forces the researcher to acknowledge personal biases and power while viewing the power structures surrounding their subjects. Critical ethnography critiques the subjectivity of the researcher within the research.

Finally, I used feminist theory which places gender relations at the center of any research and understands the multiple intersectionalities of identity such as gender, sexuality, race, religion, country of origin, language, ethnicity, age, etc (Marshall, 2011, 27). Feminist theory shows the challenges and forms of oppression experienced by women in their process of turning “critical thought into emancipating action” (Marshall, 2011, 28). This method of study is particularly appropriate when researching a predominately matriarchal society.

I utilized these three methodologies to inform my research due to the complexity of my research question. Interviewing racial, ethnic, or indigenous groups can be enlightening; race and race relations can inform and shape research and the implications attached to it. This does not negate the fact that as a “white researcher”, there are a “plethora of power struggles that can take place between me, the researcher, and the ‘subjects’ of color” (Dunbar, n.d., 135). It is almost impossible to eliminate western constructions of societies and systems, because there are rules of classification, framing, and practice that skew the research or how it is digested. Especially in regards to indigenous research, which is “underpinned by a cultural system of classification and representation... systems of classifications and representation enable different traditions or fragments of traditions to be retrieved and reformulated in different contexts as discourses” (Smith, 2000, 44). This can help laypeople interpret the research and puts the data in accessible forms. That said, personal social constructs can produce harm

because they place a lens in front of the research that reconstructs and can misconstrue the data represented. It is important to be aware of the racialized subject along with their relationships with other racialized subjects, during the interview process. It is equally important for the interviewee to know who the researcher is as it is for the researcher to ask culturally appropriate questions.

At the time of my interviewing and research, I had been in Costa Rica for a little over eight months and had traveled to Talamanca, on the east coast of Costa Rica, five times for a total of five weeks. I conducted my research in semi-structured interviews and performed passive participant observation through informal interactions with locals, field notes, and self-analysis from journaling. I interviewed administrators of businesses and enterprises within the BriBri community, all of which were conducted in Spanish. All quotations used in this paper were translated from Spanish to English by me. I returned to Atenas, Costa Rica to transcribe the interviews, create my analysis, formulate my thoughts, and write my capstone. All of my information, including notes from participant observation, interview transcripts, data derived from document review and literature review, and author journals, were compiled, transcribed, and translated from Spanish to English. I then used qualitative coding and thematic coding to analyze my data and information using Excel and Microsoft Word. I devised a thematic coding system and came up with three major themes to analyze and organize my data. These themes are: the fight against the resurgence of machismo culture; the reconstruction of the BriBri identity through agrotourism projects; and the circulation and presence of goods, services, and people within the BriBri community to strengthen their culture and community atmosphere in order to sustainably preserve their culture for future generations.

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To get to the BriBri community of Yorkín in Talamanca is no easy trek. Yorkín is in the international park, La Amistad (Parque Internaccional La Amistad), and was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. From the tourist town of Puerto Viejo de Talamanca it is a one-hour drive on dirt roads to Bambú (also known as Bratsi). From this departure point of Bambú, I traveled for one hour by motorized canoe down the Telire River crossing into the Yorkín River. Puerto Viejo is the closest “city” to the BriBri community and Puerto Viejo itself is a five-hour transport from San Jose, the country’s capital, making a San Jose to BriBri trip near nine hours in total. From the disembarking point it is then a brief hike into the BriBri community. Tourists can also elect to walk from Bambú, which takes approximately three and half to four hours. Historically, it would take people many hours to travel by canoe to arrive in the community. Other BriBri families live further isolated into the mountain region, and these areas are only accessible by foot.

On one side of the Yorkín River is Costa Rica and on the other is the country of Panama. The BriBri territory, estimated at 1,500 hectares, is mostly covered by rainforest. There are 250 community members living in this BriBri community, both from the Costa Rican side and the Panamanian side of the river. Within the community there is an elementary school and high school, a community kitchen used for tourist visits, a small health center, and numerous personal houses. The homes are typically constructed from wood with roofs made from dried palm leaves. These roofs need to be changed every five or six years due to the sporadic and unpredictable weather patterns of the Caribbean coast, where rain is a common occurrence, and the prevalence of molds and termites.

### **Expected Limitations and Challenges**

I foresaw some significant barriers to this research, which ultimately added to the final project rather than hindered it. I speak Spanish near fluently, a language that helped me “get by” in my research. But as Ryan indicated, just because I share the same language, does not mean that I can assume that I share similar features of communication (Ryan, 2005). I thought interaction and research would be difficult and that establishing trust might be challenging. I was concerned that I would be regarded with suspicion since I could not gain community membership. Many indigenous groups in Costa Rica experience *communitas*, or the “intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and togetherness” (Rojas, 2009, 119). Additionally, if members leave the village, they can no longer participate in community decision-making. This sense of communal closeness and identity might prove to be problematic for me, as I am an obvious outsider. Location also presented itself as a challenge during my research. As mentioned earlier, the BriBri people live amongst mountains and often the only way of getting there was by boat or ATV and foot.

Interviewing racial, ethnic, or indigenous groups can be very telling and challenging. Despite the anticipated hurdle of being a “white researcher”, I emphasized building a relationship with my subjects before approaching my research. I also kept a journal to keep my personal subjectivity in check by recording my thoughts and methods. Understanding all the aforementioned challenges, all names are withheld to treat their information with the utmost respect and discretion.

Originally, I felt uncomfortable coming into a community where not only was I unknown but I had no previous indigenous experience or knowledge. I understand the delicate

approaches that are necessary for indigenous research and am sensitive to the fact that I am an outsider in an unfamiliar community. I was immediately comforted that many BriBri appreciate outsiders coming to study their lifestyles because it acts as a marketing tool to get their name and story told (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). One interviewee even stated that they “rely on outsiders for the survival and the continuation of the culture and heritage” (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). Since their identity is reliant on outsiders visiting their communities and understanding their hurdles, goals and accomplishments for their business, their identity and their financial and political status, any researcher seemed welcome to come and take note of the work that the BriBri are doing and their efforts to vitalize their cultural identity and sustainable future as a people.

## **Findings**

### **Costa Rica: A Historical Overview**

Costa Rica is recognized as a human rights beacon in Central America and has been a leader in democracy since 1953. After independence from the Federal Republic of Central America in 1838, Costa Rica has ranked amongst the highest in Latin America in the Human Development Index (HDI) and has remained stable politically for years. It has been able to “build a political democracy and achieve a high degree of social justice in a region where dictatorship and grotesque inequalities have been the sad norm” (Jimenez and Palmer, 1998, 13). Despite the high levels of democracy in Costa Rica, the inequalities in power, land tenure, and representation of the indigenous communities proves this praise to be, in fact, somewhat unfounded. The banana industry has especially created tension for race relations and for the development of indigenous peoples in Costa Rica.

In 1564, Costa Rica was colonized by the Spanish, which increased the presence of trade leading to economic growth and manufacturing expansions; all at the expense and exploitation of the indigenous communities. This trend of mistreatment would follow for centuries and is still present today (Anderson, 2015). The Costa Rican government established CONAI in 1973 in order to protect the rights and interests of national indigenous groups and to encourage their social and economic development. When Costa Rica gained independence in 1821, only 2.4 percent of the overall population were self-identified as being of indigenous descent (Anderson, 2015). According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, as of 2015, there are eight indigenous groups in Costa Rica. These groups who self-identify as indigenous represent 2.4 percent of the total population or about 104,143 people in the country. The eight recognized groups are the Huetar, Chorotega, Teribe, Boruca, Guaymí, BriBri, Cabecar, and Maleku (Herforth, 2007). For many indigenous groups, it is hard to keep up with the development patterns that Costa Rica is implementing in the face of economic globalization.

### **Costa Rica's Relationship with Indigenous Communities**

Costa Rica has signed numerous international treaties and declarations to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and indigenous women, in accordance with Costa Rica's image as a human rights haven (Anderson, 2015, 5). These treaties include, but are not limited to: the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Political Rights of Women; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the American Convention on Human

Rights; and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Anderson, 2015).

The indigenous groups of Costa Rica live in 24 reserves or territories, which were delineated starting in 1956 and set into law in 1977 (Herforth, 2007). In addition, this *Ley Indigena* required all non-indigenous persons to be removed from indigenous territories (Anderson, 2015). Yet, the government has shown no evidence of complying with this law. Since this decree in 1977, the land and territories have been reduced to four times the original size since the decree was signed. It is estimated that 80 percent of inhabitants of this land are non-indigenous due to the fact that indigenous people are allowed to sell their land illegally (Herforth, 2007). The territorial rights of indigenous peoples have been recognized in Costa Rica since 1956. Still, companies are entering indigenous land and taking ownership of land, resources, and people without the consent of the native indigenous tribe. Many indigenous communities feel pressures from corporations to sell their land since they cannot compete with the surrounding economic hardships. Many companies will even promise the tribes a percentage of their profit, and yet when the fiscal year is over, the companies claim they did not make profit and withhold the payments from the indigenous groups (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). The communities frequently have no recourse to claim what was taken or promised.

Much of this land grab and inequity, apparently, comes down to money. The 2013 Human Rights Report on Costa Rica claims that the country is unwilling to pay for human-rights implementation simply because it is too costly. Many *Ticos* (slang for a Costa Rican) have unfavorable views of indigenous groups as they often thwart Costa Rica's aim for globalization,

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agricultural and economic expansion (Anderson, 2015, 9). This desire to ignore indigenous rights springs from the development of the coffee industry. Authors Jimenez and Palmer state that the indigenous communities were the losers of the coffee boom. They were dispossessed of their lands by the rapid pace of agricultural colonization. The only option for the native groups was to move further into the wilderness (towards, for the most part, Talamanca).

The next factor among the efforts of Costa Rica to expand agricultural and economic growth include the introduction of large-scale and multinational banana companies: DOLE and Chiquita (previously the United Fruit Company) specifically. Bananas are one of Costa Rica's largest exports, along with coffee, palm oil, and cocoa. The spread of banana production was a form of European colonialism in the 19th and 20th century and brought "modernity to tropical regions and [made] use of "useless" jungle" (Equal Exchange, 2016). The Chiquita banana jingle itself states, "If you'd like to be refined and civilized, than your eating habits really ought to be revised". These plantations are large-scale, are most often run by multinational companies and are considered to be run as enclave economies (Equal Exchange, 2016). This unsustainable monoculture crop production is often full of human rights violations and abuses, including, the rights of indigenous people. In the 20th century, BriBri land was forcibly taken away by the United Fruit Company who then continued to deforest the land and changed the BriBri's customary agricultural practices (Posas, 2013).

The distinctive characteristic of indigenous peoples is land-rootedness, according to the UN Commission on Human Rights' Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Therefore, this loss of land meant a loss in culture, tradition and economic capability. The UN Commission has deemed this ethnocide, which denies indigenous people the right to develop their culture and

language (Anderson, 2015). The BriBri people have been continuously fighting for their right to land and their right to their own heritage and culture, which are not mutually exclusive as the BriBri's heritage is based on their connection with nature. This loss further depletes the BriBri's ability to grow their social capital, maintain resiliency, and develop a sustainable future.

### **The BriBri People**

In their creation story, the BriBri people were born from seeds planted by their God, Sibö. Sibö, it is said, created Siwá, a set of spiritual teachings, cosmology, philosophy, and a code of ethics that have influenced the BriBri's relationship with nature (Posas, 2013, 49). The BriBri believe that Sibö created them by throwing seeds of corn from the Namásul Mountain, which further created the BriBri clans of Talamanca, and left the BriBri as the protectors and guardians of the land and its natural diversity (Posas, 2013, 49). The Awapa, or Shamans, are in charge of protecting and guarding both the physical and spiritual health of the BriBri.

These health practices take place in structures called "*casa conicas*", or cone shaped houses, with eight stabilizing pillars that represent the construction of the BriBri universe: each pillar symbolizing and representing different animals. The BriBri culture is entwined in the flora and fauna of their land. The BriBri environment is divided into *near* and *far*. The near space is the humanized space which can be changed and the resources utilized. The far space is seen as the property of Sibö and cannot be touched by humanity (Posas, 2013, 49). According to literature and various oral histories recorded, agriculture played a role of lesser importance in the BriBri culture than the roles of hunting and gathering. Despite this focus, BriBri cosmology promotes the commitment to protecting the natural environment by being part of the creation, not part of the destruction.

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The BriBri's knowledge of the land has increased their resiliency to the shocks (major spikes in pressure beyond the normal range of variability for the system) and stresses (an increasing pressure) of the economy, as well as giving them the ability to be successful in environmental stewardship (Posas, 2013, 43). Resiliency is the ability to absorb shocks and maintain normal functioning. The BriBri's stresses are due to social, political, economic and environmental change. A BriBri leader has been noted saying "How can we speak of our history mentioning only human beings if other elements such as water, air, rocks, forests, and animals also intervene in it? They all play a decisive role in our survival" (Posas, 2013, 48).

In the BriBri culture, the land has traditionally been held as a form of "clan property in which anyone linked through the maternal line of the clan... could use these lands" (Posas, 2013, 52). This membership is inherited through the mother along with the right to land ownership as the BriBri are "matrilocal", where the husband joins the wife's family and community upon marriage (Posas, 2013, 52). Working for these multinational companies has redefined gender roles, as men left to work at banana plantations and women stayed home to tend the children. Many indigenous people in these areas work for the companies that have settled on the land, switching the economy from a system where they grew their own food to a primarily cash-based economy (Herforth, 2007). They work long hours for low pay and few health benefits. Many women are employed in unskilled positions where their salaries are not equivalent to their male counterparts. The nature of the fruit industry in Costa Rica has undermined the traditional matriarchal structure of the BriBri clans, and in the process weakened the clan's cultural heritage, environmental well-being and social capital.

Costa Rica is the world's third largest exporter of bananas and in 2007, banana

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plantations covered more than 49,000 hectares, with a revenue of \$659 million US, derived from the hands of more than 35,000 workers. (Barraza, 2011, 708). The Talamanca region, on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, where the majority of banana plantations are found, has the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) in Costa Rica. Yorkín's economy mostly derives from large-scale banana plantations, originating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as other subsistence farming of cocoa and plantains for local consumption. The community suffered greatly in 1978 when an economic crisis hit due to a plant disease, *monilia* pod rot, that rapidly consumed the income source for many members of the community. This crisis, along with other concerns as outlined above, have served as a catalyst for many BriBri families to leave the multi-national banana companies as well as on a brighter note encouraged new revenue sources from tourism.

### **The Problem**

There are many obstacles that BriBri women have to jump through in order to have their voices heard. Distance and language are the two biggest barriers as many of the decision making entities are in the capital, San Jose. This is an expensive day-long trip from Talamanca, and additionally most of the decision making processes are in Spanish, a language and dialect that is not spoken by all BriBri people. Education is also a challenge as many BriBri do not continue schooling after high school. In Costa Rica, minorities and especially the indigenous are poorly represented in the legislative process, making their interests and voices in decision-making processes all but invisible. In addition, a differing valuation system of resources and resource knowledge is used between indigenous groups and *siquas*, or non-indigenous groups.

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This drastic difference in resource valuation can make fighting for certain rights and compromising with the government and legislation complicated.

Having a voice in policy-making is even more difficult for women within the *machismo* culture of Costa Rica where males and their ideals clearly dominate over females. Through my travels and experience living in Spanish speaking countries, the concept of '*machismo*' seems very prominent in Central and Latin American countries and can be seen in everyday interactions. This is a concept in which men have an exaggerated and unrequited sense of pride and entitlement to dominate women. Machismo culture is often seen as the rationale for high levels of infidelity as well as domestic violence in Costa Rica. In this world of machismo culture, men are seen as being more intelligent and more physically capable than women no matter what the circumstances might be. This poses an extra threat to the agency of indigenous women and the revitalization and maintenance of their matriarchal traditions.

Large-scale banana factories also use vast quantities of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and synthetic fertilizers. There has been an increase in pesticide risks in the indigenous community due to the large-scale banana production. In this region, there are significantly higher levels of female factory and farm workers because of the BriBri's matrilineal society. Allegedly, the known risks of pesticide use were discovered in the 1950s but chemical manufacturers exported the harsh chemicals to poorer countries like Costa Rica (Lamb, 2009, 7). By 2008, over 3,500 women were in Costa Rica noticed birth defects and tens of thousands of workers in Central America and Asia were sterile after working in the plantations (Lamb, 2009, 8).

The Chiquita Banana Company plays off women as sexy figures dancing with bananas

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and a fruit headdress, an unresisting and uncivilized temptation. In reality, women in the banana industry are the ones applying the majority of heavy pesticide sprays. On many plantations, the women not only apply the majority of pesticide sprays, but also coat the bananas with chemicals called alums in the factory warehouses during preparation for international shipment (Personal Communication, November 22, 2016).

According to a study done in 2011, many indigenous community members used the word "*venemo*" (poison) or "*quimico*" (chemical) to describe the use of pesticides (Barraza, 2011, 710). Although many women expressed concern for usage of pesticides, many men were worried about the economic burden that could result from not using the chemicals, as many middlemen would only pay a portion of the market value if there were spots on the skin of the bananas (Barraza, 2011, 710). To date, the chemicals are still used extensively.

Children living in the areas of banana production tend to eat the fruit from the plantations without washing them, leading to further pesticide exposure and ingestion. The water near these banana plantations is non-potable and contaminated with pesticides and other agrochemicals (Herforth, 2007). In the mountains, where many BriBri communities live, the water is clean but there is no public water services infrastructure (Herforth, 2007). It is clear that banana plantations have placed numerous economic, social, and physical burdens on the surrounding indigenous community that impact their ability to maintain sustainable living conditions.

Because of the presence of large-scale banana plantations, the power structure of matrilocality that the BriBri have practiced for generations is challenged by the men who leave to work for banana plantations. Often the men do not return with the money that they earned

or do not return to their families at all (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). Many men spend their earnings at local cantinas or bars, or find mistresses closer to their work sites. Many young members of the indigenous neighborhoods leave the community to work for these large fruit corporations and often do not return to their home communities. Goods and services are not kept locally, including the bananas that are exported to other countries. The community members are then forced to travel elsewhere to get food and supplies for their families. This challenges the traditional matriarchal structure of the BriBri as men return from work in the fields with a newly found sense of machismo and power. The women, in turn, are no longer the heads of their households, and the concept of *machismo* is embedded and perpetuated within their children, growing from generation to generation. One interviewee said that machismo is like a sickness that spreads quickly through communities (Personal communication, March 3, 2017).

The health of the workers, male and female, as well as the children, is also a problem in these communities, due to pesticides and other undisclosed chemicals that are used on the plantations. Many workers have noticed high rates of cancer and infertility, as well as recorded cases of diarrhea, vomiting, headaches, itching, rashes, allergies, asthma, and occasionally tuberculosis (Barraza, 2011, 711). The indigenous land reserves in Costa Rica house the majority of the three percent of the population that lack potable water, and only about 40 percent of the indigenous population have proper sanitation services such as sewage disposal (Herforth, 2007). The start of mass production and exportation of bananas, along with the introduction of chemicals and pesticides into the environment are all contributing factors to higher infant and overall mortality rates, malnutrition rates, and high rates of infectious diseases in Costa Rica's

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indigenous communities than elsewhere in the nation. These issues have caused the BriBri great distress and reason to re-think their future development. With the modernization of health conditions and diagnosis, i.e. cancers, pesticide poisoning, and miscarriages are due to chemical exposures, the cultural tradition of Shaman's as health providers is also endangered.

### **Agrotourism as a Solution**

Many Bribri women have recognized the destruction of their culture through global fruit initiatives. In order to combat these destructive measures, the women created the Stibrawpa Women's House Association (SWHA) in 1992 and ACOMUITA in 1991 to remain on their land and find educational opportunities or work without leaving home or illegally selling off their property. SWHA acknowledges the potential health problems that are associated with the fruit industry. They work to create a local economy that encourages the community members, especially men, to stay close to home and have healthier and more culturally appropriate lifestyles. The BriBri women have also led empowerment seminars for other local women who are not yet involved in the SWHA organization. Many women within the organization have received training from the national business school, INA (the National Institute for Learning), and INAMU (the National Women's Institute) to learn about tourism, accounting, and other business methodologies. They have created entrepreneurial endeavors including starting a community radio station, ecotourism businesses, organic agricultural farms, and handicraft markets, along with a myriad of adult educational opportunities.

The original idea of organizing SWHA was brought up in 1985 when the BriBri women wanted to combat the economic crisis brought on by the monilia disease that was destroying the cacao crops, furthering their economic struggles. Initially, many of the women were part of

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a committee of the Yorkín Agricultural and Economic Development Association (Asociación Pro Desarrollo Àgricola y Económica de Yorkín (ASOPRODEAY)), a group started and run by men in 1992. Stibrawpa, meaning 'artisan women' in the BriBri language, with the donation of land called the "*Casa de Las Mujeres*" or the House of Women. Soon, the organization grew. The Stibrawpa program was founded by three BriBri women, two of which have since left the community at the pressures of discouragement from their husbands (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). Stibrawpa started with only 30 members until it received funding from the Small Grants Program of the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) and the Global Environmental Facility in 1994 and they grew. This grant has allowed Stibrawpa to offer tourism opportunities so that people can learn about the BriBri culture, their traditions, and their current struggles in today's society. Tourists can also help work on organic farms and learn about the agricultural and farming techniques of the BriBri. These women have been able to engage their social and ethnic capital to develop structures that will prove economically and culturally sustainable.

It took some time for the Stibrawpa organization to find its pace, mainly because of management disagreements, fund distribution, and organizational structure. It was also shocking to many within the organization to learn that their culture and traditions could be of interest and appealing to tourists. Finally, in August of 2001, the organization was formed before the Public Record. The management issues were still very prevalent and they realized the urgent need to have more administrative training (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). At that time, men were also starting to be accepted into the organization as guides and boatmen. Despite this, women are the only ones that are allowed on the executive decision

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making board. In spite of many successes, the community has struggled financially. In 2008, a flood caused by heavy rains destroyed a good portion of the Stibrawpa community. Many of the recently built guesthouses were completely destroyed and many records of the organization were washed away. A church from the United States helped rebuild many of the lost infrastructure, but the community is still working to build and develop a sustainable, long-term infrastructure. The BriBri additionally have designed a way to open their community to outside influences without losing their cultural and ethnic uniqueness.

After arriving to the BriBri community by canoe or by foot, visitors are shown their accommodations in the form of traditional style guesthouses. They are invited to participate in nature-based activities such as swimming in a near-by waterfall, or to learn about traditional medicinal herbs, or to study the local flora and fauna. Meals are prepared from local produce grown in the community and time-honored handicrafts are available for purchase. All proceeds from the artisanal work go directly to the artist who has created the purchased pieces. The BriBri, through the Stibrawpa community, have been able to develop a viable means of stability by adapting to the presence of global interest in their indigenous culture.

The ACOMUITA, La Asociación de Mujeres Indigenas Bribri de Talamanca, or Association of Indigenous Bribri Women of Talamanca, structure is a little different than that of the Stibrawpa House Association. ACOMUITA, was founded in 1991 and was made constitutionally legal in 1999 (Personal communication, March 5, 2017). It started in order to defend and secure the space and rights of indigenous women, and to guide the role of indigenous women. ACOMUITA's four pillars are to protect indigenous women politically, to organize them within the community, to become productoras (women who produce), and to start a chocolate

business. ACOMUITA works with BriBri and Cabecar women to reclaim their land and to be financially independent and stable. They earn income by growing cacao and by selling chocolate to tourists and locals. Every woman in the organization has her own parcel of land to grow cacao that they use for this project together. As one interviewee stated, “we are not housewives, we are administrators and owners of our lands” (Personal Communication, March 6, 2017).

When ACOMUITA started, many men thought it was going to be a group of women coming together to complain about their husbands. Instead, the women of ACOMUITA work to enhance the cultural identity of indigenous women, to increase the knowledge and use of medicinal plants, to promote activities to support health and access to health care services, to work to improve the educational services in indigenous territories, to support new cultivation techniques to prevent the exploitation of land, and to create start-up capital through their cacao production. Additionally, the association works to raise awareness of natural resource management, and to educate women and men about the presence and negativity of domestic violence and discrimination in their communities.

ACOMUITA has a fully functioning governing board and planning committee and recently purchased a new building to further its outreach and development efforts. The women run their business and organization to not only be economically beneficial, but also to encourage indigenous girls to become businesswoman and heads of their households, not just dependent housewives and mothers.

### **Analysis**

I identified three themes emerging from my data to inform the analysis of my data.

These themes are the fight against machismo culture, the reconstruction of BriBri identity, and the circulation of resources within the BriBri community. Male migration to the banana plantations is creating a newfound sense of machismo culture within the BriBri community and thus is further disrupting the matrilineal construction of the BriBri culture. There are many identity challenges that are present within the Talamanca and Puerto Viejo region. These challenges are often caused by external economic forces that favor the rich at the expense of the global poor and encourage the fluid movement of goods and people out of their indigenous communities, which is my second theme. Through agrotourism programs, BriBri women are now able to recreate their identity through maintaining matriarchal power and holding positions for decision-making. And the final theme, the agrotourism model has not only kept goods, services, and money within the local neighborhoods, but also has kept people within the community, strengthening their culture and familial atmosphere. In order to analyze the effectiveness of the two BriBri models studied, we must look at how the identity and lifestyle of the BriBri has been affected by agrotourism. The BriBri use tourism to support and enhance not only their agency but also to further their capacity for development.

#### 1) Employment in banana plantations reinforces gender identity and inequalities

The movement, particularly of men, to work in the banana plantations, generates a sense of male pride and male dominance over the women who are less likely to be hired by these large corporations. The long-standing matriarchal rules that have been within the BriBri structure are then vulnerable to this self-constructed male power in communities, making it hard for women to assert the land-ownership, parenting, and decision-making power that has

been traditionally steadfast in their society. “Machismo is a very dominating system where women cannot rise up and cannot develop their own space” while the agrotourism model brings the control back to the women since they control the finances of the household while the men work on their wife’s and mother’s lands (Personal communication, March 8, 2017).

The presence and consequences of the *bananeras* have also shed light on the definition of *machismo* for many of the BriBri women. Although in many societies, the males are seen to be the ones that perpetuate the machismo culture, many of the interviewees stated that “it is important to realize that women re-educate and perpetuate and are the first transmitters of machismo” to their children (Personal communication, March 5, 2017). While another interviewee mentioned that “the women, we are machistas. And so why do we blame just the men for that?” (Personal communication, March 8, 2017). The need for self-governance is a large focus for the interviewees, with one of the major reasons being the perpetuation of machismo culture and its effects on women specifically. One woman said, “We didn’t want non-indigenous women to unite us or organize us. We want to organize ourselves. Defend our politics and culture and thoughts. A lot of times, women who are not indigenous talk a lot about machismo but they attack it like a problem. But they don’t like the alternatives. We learn how to work with machismo. As long as we respect each other” (Personal communication, March 9, 2017). While another woman stated, “Remember! Machismo is passed down by the women! It is like a grain of rice. One grain of rice makes up a big plate of rice. Women do not like to help other women. We are the first to judge other women. And when we do this, we let the man have more power. There are more women in the world. There are more than 51 percent more women than men in the world. There are less men but they have more power!”

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(Personal communication, March 1, 2017). ACOMUITA and Stibrawpa programs teach women how to function within the machismo society but also teach the importance of addressing and discussing the machismo culture with both boys and girls in youth organizations. One interviewee said “We are the ones that educate ourselves and our children. And show our kids machismo. We reproduce it. If we show real equality, the society would be different” (Personal communication, March 1, 2017). The banana plantations just expose the gender inequalities that have been present for years, and women, themselves, augment and feed these inequalities.

### 2) Re-establishment of women’s identity through tourism

The BriBri are known to be very “hidden” people that live in the mountains and away from the mainstream culture. Many BriBri hold maintenance, landscaping, or other low-paying jobs (Personal communication, March 19, 2017). Their surrounding community members all suffer from identity crises such as the large numbers of legal and illegal expatriates and foreigners as well as the presence of Afro-Costa Ricans and other Caribbean identities. This conflict of identity makes it hard for the BriBri to establish their own identity norms and assert their identities in the small communities of Talamanca and Puerto Viejo as well as in Costa Rica as a whole. Through agrotourism programs, BriBri women empower their identity through holding decision making positions, showing the world their culture and identity and establishing connections with other indigenous groups to create relationships and build social networks, in effect growing their social capital.

Indigenous tourism is included in sustainable tourism development. According to C. Ryan, indigenous tourism is not just a way to view the stereotypical image of marginalized

people. This form of tourism can be a means in which people aspire to “economic and political power for self-advancement, and as a place of dialogue between and within differing worldviews” (Ryan, 2005, 4). This does not negate the fact that indigenous tourism can be a dual-edged sword. It can simultaneously exploit and assist indigenous cultures and peoples by commodifying their culture. Although tourism can also be a facilitator of economic independence, it can also continue and reinforce cultural marginality (Lovelock, 2013, 153).

Tourism seems, as described in my interviews, to have positively influenced the BriBri identity by increasing their cultural pride and self-esteem but also their own acceptance of staying in the indigenous regions and working for the sustainable benefit of their own communities. One interviewee stated that “tourism can be negative and positive. With the people here, there was a consensus that it is a common vision... In general, the vision is the same- to defend the environment and to learn about our culture” (Personal communication, March 9, 2017). I observed a general sentiment both within the indigenous Costa Rican groups and throughout the general population of Costa Rica that the BriBri are very timid and do not like to socialize with *siquas*, or foreigners. Many outside societies, including the rest of Costa Rica, might misconstrue this shyness and sense of humility as an indication of rudeness. Tourism forces the BriBri to step away from their discreet and reserved manners. They must now interact with tourists and share their homes with outsiders. Although this has forced a change in societal interaction, tourism has also helped many people within the BriBri community to find their “voice” and to take pride in things that otherwise would be considered not important within the BriBri community. Community members are willing to share with outsiders how they construct the roofs of their houses using palm fronds and how they cook

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certain specialty dishes and foods tourists eat. Some members teach the visitors new words in BriBri or Spanish, or navigate the rushing waters of the nearby rivers, or take them to encounter medicinal plants that are often used by the Shamans. Although the BriBri are pushing beyond their societal norm of shyness, and internalized community, tourism is allowing them to remain immersed in their cultural traditions while enhancing and growing their social and ethnic capital.

During my interviews, group pride amongst the BriBri was extremely evident and people were pleased to announce their personal indigenous identity. One interviewee stated “Of course! Yes! I am BriBri!” while another claimed “if you were to ask me 15 years ago, I would say no. But now, I am a BriBri leader” (Personal communication, March 5, 2017). The solidarity between BriBri families and between the seven other indigenous groups is palpable as well. Many of the interviewed stated the solidarity and support they feel they provide one another. A leader of one organization stated “Indigenous groups aren’t recognized by the state, especially women’s groups. Solidarity between us all.” (Personal communication, March 1, 2017) and many claimed that they are a community standing shoulder to shoulder. A non-indigenous woman stated that she knows there are a lot of indigenous women who suffer from depression and are very timid. One leader of an organization stated that they are there to change that (Personal communication, March 9, 2017). The interviews expressed this new surge of confidence and the desire for other indigenous groups to experience the same resurgence and cultural pride, by stating “many of the elders told us that we can’t return to what it was like. We are giving people the example that they too can do this. It is an example of a happy life. For you, it is an example for you and your partner. It is hard to live in war. There is no peace or

tranquility” (Personal communication, March 6, 2017). I observed that overall, there has been a sense of reconciliation and harmony within the BriBri community since the emergence of the Stibrawpa and ACOMUITA organizations.

Authenticity of the “indigenous experience” is also at question. Many tourists, when entering an indigenous community, expect the “tourist gaze”, or the idea of indigenous peoples dressed in traditional clothing often made of leather, living in primitive homes, wearing primal jewelry, eating basic food and speaking crude language (Urry, 1990). This concept, as described by sociologist John Urry, is the expectations placed on host communities by tourists to have the authentic experience. The tourist gaze is seen as either a destructive concept that reduces indigenous groups to primitive and pre-colonial images of native peoples and where their traditions and cultural heritage is seen as a commodity. It can also help enhance cultural identity as the interest of tourists might reinvigorate traditions (MacCannel, 1984, 375).

This concept of the tourist gaze or the commodification of culture does not apply, as seen with the Stibrawpa who wear uniformed professional clothing with their organization name and the employee name embroidered on it. “What you see is who we are” and they further claimed that they did not offer traditional dance performances because that is not what they do anymore (Personal communication, March 8, 2017) But, on the other hand, many tourists come to indigenous communities as a nostalgic trip to what used to be or to experience “archaic” lifestyles, and might be disappointed to see the development that has occurred within the communities, especially when the community who claim to be preserving their traditional lifestyle. One interviewee stated that they chose to listen to music wearing headphones but will only do it inside their house since it is not what is expected (Personal communication, March 9,

2017). Another interviewee stated that it would not hurt to bring back traditional wear and performances but it is not what they do anymore, so instead they should focus on who they are in the present day. Unfortunately, it is possible that in the long-run, the changes that are being made to be competitive within the rapid development of communication in the country (for example, cell-phones, motorized boats, internet access), as well as the changes needed to run a successful business, might threaten or even reduce the amount of tourists that are interested in visiting the indigenous communities.

The Stibrawpa and ACOMUITA programs also have instilled a new sense in pride of being a woman, and the strengthened roles of women. One interviewee said “The woman has a good quality and virtue that the man does not have- we give life, light, and all the education. It is the role of the woman” (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). And another interviewee added “this is the role for indigenous women and non-indigenous women. When God created the world, for us, the role of the women was important through ceremonies and all of the other processes, have to involve women. It is our responsibility to protect” (Personal communication, March 8, 2017). Women in the BriBri communities are regaining this cultural sense of responsibility to protect their families, their land and their culture. One stated “God gave us this role and responsibility. Everyone has their own responsibility. I can’t have the same role or calling as you. We all have our own. And you can’t have mine” (Personal communication, March 8, 2017) It is also within these organizations that women find their roles and responsibilities as founders, presidents, accountants, treasurers, and board members.

Of the three female founders of Stibrawpa, only one is still involved in the organization. The two other founders had to leave because their husbands did not agree with their wives’

involvement in the organization. The remaining founder claimed that her husband realized how important this institution was and supported her (Personal communication, March 5, 2017).

Overall there seemed to be a wealth of evidence pointing to husbands supporting their wives within the organization. One woman's husband joined ACOMUITA before they were even married because he understood the significance ACOMUITA had for not only women and children, but his heritage as well.

Another way that the BriBri keep their heritage going is the continuation of clan names within the Bribri community. The families take the last name of the mother, while the "outsiders take the last name of men, of the father, because the government only recognizes that" tradition. This policy causes some tension between the Costa Rican government and the BriBri (Personal communication, March 4, 2017). This also shows the desire for many BriBri families to have girls as the clans and power are passed down through the female, as matrilineal societies do. "We unit in clans, and the clans are of the mother. And that is why, when a woman is born, it continues the clan. And if it is the man, it ends the clan. My daughter will only take my clan. And my son's son will take the clan of his mother" (Personal communication, March 9, 2017). One interviewee also stated her desire to have a girl, even though her four children so far have only been boys. She also mentioned that she trusts girls to return home after school and work while she has less confidence in the young boys to do so. She hopes that her daughter will not only pass on her clan, but also be an active member in the indigenous community. Younger community members will need to fully invest in cultural identity and sustainability of traditions and not succumb to the lure of global homogeneity in order for the BriBri to survive within their communities.

3) Agrotourism programming attempt to keep goods, services, capital and people local

Both the Stibrawpa and ACOMUITA groups strive to keep goods and services local and to not only keep money flowing within the community, but also to keep people within the community. When community members leave to find work or an education outside the society, it makes it very difficult to preserve ethnic traditions, identity and cultural heritage. It is especially hard to keep this heritage alive when the majority of young people leave the communities seeking better economic or social opportunities. By creating a hospitable environment and an agrotourism model, as well as by selling artisanal goods and chocolate, the BriBri are keeping both economic and social capital flowing within their community. They are encouraging healthy food production as opposed to the exposure and consumption of pesticides within the banana and coffee plantations. They are providing work opportunities for young and old, male and female, in order to encourage members to stay and work and thrive within their own communities. And their organizations are providing educational options which teach not only Costa Rica's expected curriculum but also BriBri heritage, language, and culture. And finally, the agrotourism businesses are bringing in outsiders to understand and learn about their indigenous culture, and to leave and spread the word about the BriBri as people who have created a thriving culture and who plan to stay and work in the lands where they have traditionally lived. Unfortunately, these internal strides are not always supported or acknowledged outside of the boundaries of the BriBri communities.

Many development programs, created by a neo-liberal market economy, can put pressure on indigenous groups to preserve their economy (Attanapola and Lund, 2013, 4). Neo-liberalism within Costa Rica has created increased competitions amongst the larger cities and

created deep and widening inequalities between social groups within the nation. The discrepancies in the services provided to the lower income citizens, usually found in rural areas amongst the eight indigenous groups is a gap that needs to be addressed. Indigenous people construct their identities based on social practices situated in their traditional lands, as mentioned earlier. But, under neoliberal policies, “these meanings are disarticulated to establish new cultural meanings to depoliticize indigenous peoples’ claims” (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2014, 4). The expansion of economic and financial markets requires more globalization movement between countries and often calls for increased natural-resource extraction which historically displaces people. The cost and burden of these natural resource exploitations has historically fallen on indigenous peoples, specifically indigenous women. These gender inequalities are reinserted when a place is neoliberalized (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2014, 4). Although an important aspect to consider while discussing indigenous and BriBri rights, the effect neoliberalism has on indigenous groups and indigenous women in developing countries could be a rich project for further reflection and research. The lack of political capital that the indigenous populations generally experience undermines these at risk populations from advancing the agenda of maintaining sustainable cultural heritage ties while being able to partake in the economic, health and social benefit of development within national boundaries.

## **Discussion**

Reflecting back to the research question, “How is this model of small scale agrotourism and cooperative ownership helping BriBri women in combating the effects of globalization? Do these organizations of resistance have a positive impact on the BriBri identity, health, and self-determination? And, does indigenous agrotourism fulfill its promise to address marginalization

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(both socially and economically) for indigenous populations, and specifically for the BriBri?”, I think the BriBri have done an outstanding job of combating globalization with positive impacts on their identity, health, traditions and culture. And as far as my research informs, agrotourism has at least, within the short term, supported the BriBri in addressing marginalization. Yet, it is important to note possibilities for long-term success and improvement within this field.

Part of the reason that indigenous communities tend to be amongst the most marginalized and ignored communities across the world is the global desire for progress and development, while indigenous communities are seen to be "living descendants of pre-invasion inhabitants of lands now dominated by others" (Anaya, 2004, 3). Although the plight of the indigenous world has continued for years, it has recently reappeared loudly on the global stage, specifically with the media's coverage of the fight of the Hunkpapa Lakota, Sihasapa Lakota and Yanktonai Dakota peoples at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in the South Dakota, in the United States in 2016.

Throughout this research process, it was made extremely clear that my interviewees were well aware of what was going on politically in my home country. The inauguration of our 45<sup>th</sup> President took place before my interviews while millions protested in the Women's March in cities across the globe. It proved to be the largest protest in the history of the world with the goal of calling out harsh legislation that would effect women's rights, immigration policies, and racial equality, not only in the United States, but globally. Many women I interviewed understood and spoke to this issue of equality. They said that it is not specific to BriBri women, to Hunkpapa Lakota women or to American women. It affects women everywhere and all women. Indigenous women in Costa Rica and around the world need their voices heard now

more than ever, given the potential consequences of some of the new policies being enacted by President of the United States. The knowledge that the women I interviewed shared about the global stage speaks to the fact that even the most removed communities are politically and socially aware even the most removed communities are politically and socially aware that they are involved in the international system of cultural, political and social structures.

### **Conclusion**

Before I list recommendations, it is vital to note that not all communities are homogenous and what works for some might not work for others. Molding each process based on the specific group and their own indigenous knowledge and situation is critical to success. I tread lightly while creating recommendations for the BriBri and treat their efforts and accomplishments with humility and respect as I, the author of this project, personally have no indigenous background. I am providing recommendations from my educational background that I think is within the full capacity of the BriBri.

The two BriBri organizations have clear visions and hopes for the future of their culture and communities. It might be helpful to create strategic plans to support the vision and future of their individual organizations to align with the goals they have for the community. The BriBri could define their limited number of stakeholders and lay out their specific goals that the stakeholders can help them meet. In addition, they can identify the carrying capacity for existing projects and availabilities for improvement. A business plan including financials, stakeholders, personal background on people involved within the organization, goals and milestones for future years, marketing strategies, and potential targeted tourist groups could be drawn up to affect future determinants. This might also mean establishing partnerships with

other BriBri organizations and clans or even other indigenous groups in Costa Rica or worldwide to share best practices and approaches.

The BriBri can also work to integrate their own community development goals with regional and national goals to hopefully create a symbiotic relationship between the Costa Rican government and the BriBri. For example, Costa Rica aims to be carbon-neutral by 2021 (Lang, 2016). There has been some debate about the participation of indigenous groups within the REDD+ programming, a mechanism to increase forest cover and stop climate change by Reducing Emissions from Reforestation and forest Degradation (“REDD”) in developing countries. Costa Rica was the first country in the world to negotiate with the World Bank to sell REDD credits (Lang, 2016). Globally, there has been a call for indigenous participation in REDD programming to help create solutions for forest growth. In 2009, negotiations were made with indigenous parties without the knowledge of the rest of the clans. Many indigenous groups in Costa Rica are against REDD, because it

“disrespects [their] worldview by placing a price on and commodifying [their] forests, [their] sacred sites, [their] rivers and all beings that inhabit them... [They] demand that [their] way of taking care of forests be respected, as it goes far beyond projects that come from outside. Those projects divide the fabric of [their] ancestral communities, which has enabled the mountains to remain intact today. As indigenous peoples say: We cannot sell the air, the water, gold or the mountain ... if we drain the lifeblood of the forest, it will die.” (Lang, 2016).

Despite this backlash, many BriBri are hoping for complete transparency within the REDD program which could help bring indigenous issues to light within the Costa Rican government agenda. It can also promote and give voice to female involvement in policy making. One of my interviewees stated “development means the end of nature. We can do it in a way that works with nature. Not the *siquas*, though.” (Personal communication, March 3, 2017). This could also help bring the “indigenous agenda” to the international sphere to hold accountable the Costa

Rican government for the aforementioned treaties and laws that were enacted and that the government agreed to uphold.

Another aspect of the tourism business that is extremely necessary in 2017 is a creative and accessible marketing strategy. I recommend that the BriBri organizations to start marketing on their own without sole reliance on ATEC (Talamanca Association of Ecotourism and Conservation) and ACTUAR (Costa Rican Rural Tourism Association), two large tourism companies in Puerto Viejo and other tourism companies. I found it almost impossible to contact and find these groups and communities when I was trying to access their available tours. With the accelerated global rise in social media, the BriBri might want to find ways of expressing themselves within this age of rapid technology. The goal would be mixing indigenous knowledge with more modern technology to achieve the desired impact of access and empowerment. Using these tools would enhance the BriBri visibility and could be a means to promote indigenous populations issues beyond Costa Rican borders.

Relying strictly on ecotourism for a sustainable economic gain can be inconsistent as it relies on international and national markets of tourism. The BriBri sell their goods within their communities and outside but enhancing this revenue resource by perhaps developing videos to show how goods are made with native materials and traditional methods, might aid them in creating an internet presence and thus more reliable economic capital. The Costa Rica Certification in Sustainable Tourism Program (CST) provides a free-to-apply certificate which is based on physical and biological parameters, lodging and infrastructure, external clients, and socio-economic environments. By obtaining this certification, it could help the BriBri broaden their outreach to tourism groups in Costa Rica and aid in their marketing strategies.

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There are many policy options that are available to the Costa Rican government that could support their indigenous peoples. The government could create and provide a market for indigenous groups to sell cash crops (like ACOMUITA) in order to cut out the agricultural middleman. The government could restore reservations in an area that is more conducive for these cash crops to help the indigenous communities by keeping their produce local. They must make all water potable and provide basic life services in rural areas, to enhance the quality of life for these challenged areas. This could also include dispatching more mobile clinics to indigenous neighborhoods and health clinics, schools, and language-learning institutes. Technology services could be improved such as fast and reliable internet or cell service. The government could improve national and international commitments to support indigenous peoples, along with providing political forums in localized areas to reduce distance travelled, for indigenous concerns to be directly communicated. Entrusting women's groups with funds and resources could increase the capacity of indigenous communities and enhance the overall economic status of Costa Rica. And finally, policies or laws could be enacted that reduce or outlaw the use of pesticide in banana and pineapple plantations and other agricultural lands. This is understandably difficult since so many stakeholders have economic interests and investments in this process, but at the very least the government could encourage an increase in awareness of potential risks of pesticides within indigenous communities. Requiring timely notifications of when pesticides will be dropped on plantations could also be very effective to allow people to keep children inside and wear appropriate attire for full skin coverage. Governments have the ability to encourage an education exchange to utilize indigenous knowledge to improve or change soil fertility. This would increase productivity on monoculture

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farms and teach new farming techniques to indigenous and commercial farmers. The use of natural barriers and/or major vegetation between housing and plantations to minimize chemical or pesticide exposure could also be encouraged or subsidized. Some critics also call for the construction and use of pipelines to carry clean water to surrounding communities and sewage away from neighborhoods providing basic life amenities to improve health and social well-being. While even more extreme, some are suggesting the relocation of housing and territory for indigenous populations to avoid such problems.

Finally, I believe I would be remiss if I did not provide recommendations for tourists or expatriates for how to support indigenous communities in Costa Rica. Tourists can check with local agencies about indigenous tours and how they can economically support local initiatives and/or to learn about their communities and cultures. Tourists can opt to stay in BriBri-run or owned hotels, hostels, and guest houses. Foreigners can recognize the impact that alcohol and drugs have on the community, and not encourage impairment. One of my interviews stated that “tourists have an effect on the youth more with drugs and alcohol” (Personal communication, March 2, 2017). Upon returning home, tourists can buy sustainably produced, organic bananas and produce when available in their local grocery stores. Lastly, by speaking about experiencing indigenous cultural within Costa Rica, tourists can help lend a voice to the BriBri beyond the borders of Central America.

The BriBri community, using strong “traditional ecological knowledge, resilience-promoting agricultural and land-use practices, and emerging support structures and efforts at income diversification”, give optimism about their sustainable ability of keeping their livelihoods and culture alive (Posas, 2013, 52). My research shows that agrotourism programs

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enhance the preservation of indigenous cultures by keeping social and economic capital flowing and staying within the communities. Tourism increases confidence within indigenous people with respect to their identity, and supports and encourages healthy lifestyles and food choices. I also believe that agrotourism fulfills its promise to address the marginalization of the BriBri people by expanding their exposure to outside communities. It also gives them opportunities for increasing their capacity to be more visible in their communities by becoming businessowners, teachers, and community organizers. Especially in this world of unrest, worry, exclusion and crisis, we need groups of women to find their voices, forge their own paths and boldly and proudly create their unique agency while maintaining their cultural backgrounds, identities and histories.

The BriBri women can be considered the first drop of rain that causes others to fall. Together, they can create a river that can make effective change in the policies and views of the multinational companies that have acquired the BriBri land, the Costa Rican government who has not previously supported the indigenous groups of their country, and the tourists that travel to Costa Rica. The BriBri act as the *tsirik* to guide others to using their strengths, to finding their voices, their capabilities, and to building resilient communities to not only preserve their culture but to adapt to the changes that threaten their heritage and histories. It was and always will be, an honor for me to study and hear their culture and stories, words and songs. I am humbled to stand with them to show my support and I am encouraged to further find my own voice and identity. I hope that my research can also be a form of *tsirik* and has folded a new leaf that will guide and encourage others to continue researching the need for sustaining indigenous cultures.

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**Appendix A: Map of Costa Rica situated in Central America**



Figure 1: Geographical map of Costa Rica situated south of Nicaragua and north of Panama in Central America.

**Appendix B: Map of Indigenous Territories within Costa Rica**

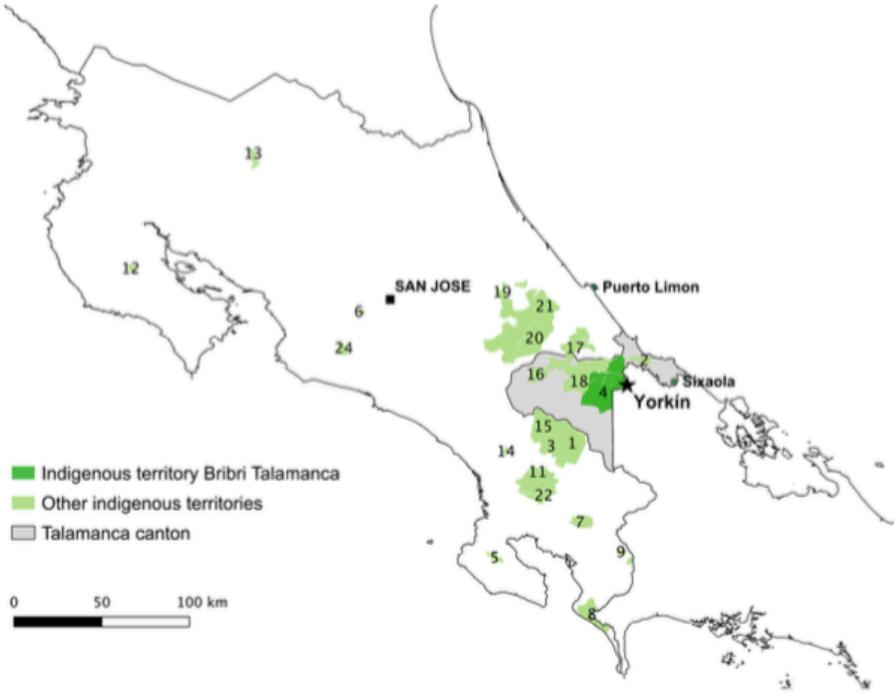


Figure 2: Map of indigenous territories within Costa Rica.

- 1. Bribri de Cabarga
- 2. Bribri de Keköldi (Cocles)
- 3. Bribri de Salitre
- 4. **Bribri de Talamanca**
- 5. Guaymi de Osa (Ngäbe-Bugle)
- 6. Huetar de Quitirrisi
- 7. Guaymi de Coto Brus (Ngäbe-Bugle)
- 8. Guaymi de Conteburica (Ngäbe-Bugle)
- 9. Guaymi de Abrojos-Montezuma (Ngäbe-Bugle)
- 10. Guaymi de Altos de San Antonio (Ngäbe-Bugle)
- 11. Terraba (Teribe)
- 12. Matambu (Chorotega)
- 13. Guatuso (Maleku)
- 14. China Kicha (Cabecar)
- 15. Cabecar de Ujarras
- 16. Cabecar de Telire
- 17. Cabecar de Tayni
- 18. Cabecar de Talamanca
- 19. Cabecar de Nairi-Awari
- 20. Cabecar de Chirripo (Duchii)
- 21. Cabecar de Bajo-Chirripo
- 22. Brunka de Curre (Rey Curre)
- 23. Brunka de Boruca
- 24. Huetar de Zapatón

(Global Forest Watch 2016)

## **Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter (English)**

**Title of the study:** Tsirik - bend the leaves so that others are guided: a study of how the BriBri women are sustainable to preserve their culture

**Name of the researcher:** Emily Rose Blau

Dear interviewees,

My name is Emily Rose Blau and I am studying sustainable development at the School for International Training (SIT Graduate Institute). I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I am conducting as part of my research for my master's thesis. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask if something is not clear, before you decide if you would like to or are able to participate or not. If you decide to participate, please sign and date at the end of the form.

### **Purpose of the study:**

I am studying how the BriBri women, a matriarchal and indigenous group, on the Caribbean coast in Costa Rica, organizes themselves in an ever-globalizing world and how they respond to the economic effects of large-scale banana companies. These large scale agricultural programs are possibly affecting the women of the tribe because they redefine gender roles, affects the health and fertility of women and children, and has further policy implications. In order to combat this, the BriBri have created small scale agro-tourism groups and an all-women cooperative. My research question will be "How is this model of small scale agrotourism and cooperative ownership helping BriBri women in combating the effects of globalization?" I want to know how the BriBri can make this model long-term and sustainable in their community. And finally, if indigenous agrotourism fulfill its promise to address marginalization (both socially and economically) for indigenous populations, specifically the BriBri.

### **Your participation within the study:**

Your participation consists of a short interview with me with 10 to 15 questions. It will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. I will ask permission to record the interview. If you would still like to participate in the interview but would like for it not to be recorded, please indicate on the form below.

### **Foreseen risks or potential discomfort:**

There are no foreseen or predictable risks associated with participating in this study. During the interview, you have the right to not answer any of the questions or discontinue your participation at any time. All your information will be confidential and anonymous.

### **Privacy:**

No one will have access to the personal information that we collect as part of this interview apart from me without your direct permission. The information collected in this study will be saved in my personal computer and any notes or recording will be deleted after the end of the

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investigation.

**Participation and withdrawal:**

Your participation is voluntary. If you refuse to participate, your refusal to participate or decision to discontinue participation during the study will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your signature to indicate your preferences

I, \_\_\_\_\_, accept that the interview is being recorded. Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, do not accept that the interview be recorded. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or would like more information about the study, please contact me via email at emily.blau@mail.sit.edu or 7276-7794

In the effort to maintain the ethics of all proposed research of SIT, this study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of SIT. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a participant in this research or the investigation in general and you cannot contact the researcher, please contact SIT institutional review Panel at the following address/email address / phone number:

School for International Training  
Institutional Review Board  
1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676 Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676  
used  
irb@sit.edu  
802-258-3132

Thank you for your knowledge and participation. I pledge to relay your message and your knowledge to the best of my ability. If I can help you in any way, please do not be afraid to ask.

## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter (in Spanish)**

Consentimiento informado del participante

**Título del Estudio:** Tsirik - doblar las hojas para que otros sean guiada: un estudio de cómo las mujeres BriBri son sostenible preservar su cultura

**Nombre de la Investigadora:** Emily Rose Blau

Estimado entrevistados,

Soy Emily Rose Blau y estoy estudiando Desarrollo Sostenible en la Escuela para Entrenamiento Internacional (SIT Graduate Institute). Me gustaría invitarle a participar en un estudio que estoy conduciendo como parte de mi investigación para mi tesis. Su participación es voluntario. Favor de leer la información abajo, y preguntarme sobre cualquier cosa que no tenga claro, antes de decidir si quiere participar o no. Si decide participar, le voy a pedir que me firme este formulario y le daré una copia.

### PROPOSITO DEL ESTUDIO

Voy a estudiar la gente BriBri y su método por el cual están interactuando con empresas agrícolas multinacionales. Mi pregunta para investigaciones es "Es este modelo de pequeña escala agroturismo y cooperativa la propiedad ayudando a las mujeres de la gente BriBri en la lucha contra los efectos de la globalización?" Analizar cómo otros grupos indígenas pueden traducir este modelo con sus propios valores culturales y necesidades disminuir la corrupción, la marginación y la inseguridad alimentaria. Las otras preguntas son "¿cómo los grupos indígenas pueden hacer este modelo sostenible y a largo plazo?" y "¿Agroturismo de indígenas cumple con su promesa de abordar la marginación (social y económicamente) para las poblaciones indígenas?"

### PROCEDIMIENTOS DEL ESTUDIO

Su participación consistirá en una corta entrevista conmigo, durante cual le voy a hacer entre 10 a 15 preguntas. Requerirá aproximadamente 30 minutos de su tiempo. Le pediré permiso de grabar la entrevista, pero si desee que no la grabe, todavía puede participar en la entrevista.

### RIESGOS O INCOMODIDADES POTENCIALES

No hay ningún riesgo predecible como parte de participar en este estudio y no habrá ninguna sanción si es que usted decide no participar; la participación es voluntaria.

(Solamente para las entrevistas) Durante la entrevista usted tiene el derecho de no contestar cualquiera de las preguntas o discontinuar su participación en cualquier momento. Su nombre y cualquier información que le identifique será anónimo.

### CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Nadie tendrá acceso a la información personal que recaudemos como parte de esta entrevista aparte de mí sin su permiso directo. Toda la información recaudada en este estudio se guardará

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en mi computadora personal y cualquier apuntes o grabación se borrará después del final de la investigación.

#### PARTICIPACION Y RETIRADA

Su participación es voluntaria. Si usted niega a participar no habrá ninguna sanción o pérdida de cualquier beneficio a cual tenga derecho. Puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y discontinuar su participación sin sanciones. Usted no está renunciando derecho a cualquier demanda , derecho, o remedio legal a causa de su participación en este estudio de investigación.

“He leído lo precedente y entiendo sus contenidos y acepto participar en el estudio. Afirmo que soy mayor de 18 años.”

Firma del/la participante \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de la investigadora \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Ponga sus iniciales para indicar su elección:

\_\_\_\_\_ (iniciales) Acepto que se grabe la entrevista

\_\_\_\_\_ (iniciales) No acepto que se grabe la entrevista

#### INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO DE LA INVESTIGADORA

Si tiene alguna pregunta o desea mas información sobre el estudio, favor de contactarme al correo emily.blau@mail.sit.edu o 7276-7794

#### DERECHOS DEL PARTICIPANTE – INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO DEL IRB

En el empeño de mantener los niveles éticos de todas las propuestas de investigación de SIT, este estudio ha sido revisado y aprobado por el Panel de Revisión Institucional de SIT (IRB por sus siglas en inglés). Si tiene alguna pregunta, duda, o queja sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación o sobre la investigación en general y no puede contactarle a la investigadora, favor de contactar al Panel de Revisión Institucional de SIT a la siguiente dirección/correo electrónico/número telefónico:

School for International Training  
Institutional Review Board  
1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676  
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA  
irb@sit.edu  
802-258-3132

Muchas gracias por su conocimiento y participación. Me comprometo a transmitir su mensaje de la mejor manera que pueda. Si se puedo ayudar de alguna manera, por favor no tenga miedo de preguntar.

## **Appendix E: Interview Guide and Questions**

Interviewer: Emily R. Blau

Title: Tsirik - bend the leaves so that others are guided: a study of how the BriBri women are sustainable to preserve their culture

### For proprietors of BriBri business and enterprise:

What is your position in relationship to the BriBri community/culture?

In your eyes, are there any setbacks indigenous groups experience in Costa Rica?

How are they (if they are) combating these setbacks?

In what ways may tourism have affected your society?

Why did the women of Stibrawpa created the association?

How did the BriBri women of Stibrawpa construct their model?

What is your hope for the future for this agrotourism model within the BriBri community?

How many tourists do you get per year?

Do you interact with the multinational banana companies? Have they affected your lifestyle?

Do you have any concerns about working and living near banana plantations?

### For outside community members:

What is your position in relationship to the BriBri community/culture?

In your eyes, are there any setbacks indigenous groups experience in Costa Rica?

How has the Costa Rican government worked with indigenous communities?

What is the current status of indigenous communities in Costa Rica?

How, if so, have large-scale banana corporations affected sustainable development here in Costa Rica?

What is the outside community doing to support indigenous groups?