

28 Sept 84

MR. RUSSELLJIM
Yakima Indian Nation
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Dear Russell :

You have requested my comment on the implications and problems associated with North American Indian visits to Nicaragua at the invitation of the Nicaraguan Government or groups sympathetic to the Nicaraguan Government. Other people and I who are connected with the Center for World Indigenous Studies have met many times with Indian leaders and people from the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. On the basis of these meetings I would advise North American Indians to decline such invitations and not go to Managua. My reasons are as follows:

1. Nicaragua is using the Indian visitation program for propaganda and international publicity to demonstrate North American Indian support of the Nicaraguan Government and its Indian policies which affect the lives and property of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians who live on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua.
2. The Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians are at war with the Nicaraguan Government and have been for nearly four years. Many Indians have been killed and many Indian villages have been destroyed. Nicaragua has created "relocation camps" and put many Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians in them. Even if North American Indians do not agree with Nicaragua's Indian policies, their visits to Nicaragua "imply" their agreement. Nicaragua is using this implication of support to continue its damaging policies against Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians. Nicaragua wants Indian land!
3. Nicaragua is using its North American Indian visitation program to give VIP treatment to North American Indians hoping that each Indian will return home and compliment the Nicaraguan Government on its treatment of them, and thus by implication its treatment of Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indians. Many NA Indians who have already visited Nicaragua have returned with compliments of Nicaragua. Each person admits that he has not met with Indians who are at war with Nicaragua. They have only met with Indians who are under Nicaragua's control.

For these reasons, I urge North American Indians not to accept Nicaraguan Government invitations to visit Nicaragua. These visits are hurting Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians. They are getting killed!

Sincere regards,

RUDOLPH C. RYSER
Senior Fellow