

Building Today to Protect Tomorrow

*The Secoya Lodge: housing culture,
promoting conservation*

**To visit the Secoya people of Ecuador one must travel
through country infiltrated by oil explorations, logging,
and palm plantations.**

These activities fully depict the deepening intrusions of non-indigenous activities into the Amazon jungle. As a result, local tribes are suffering major negative impacts to their environment and way of life. Exploitation of the Amazon has forced indigenous peoples to change their lifestyle; for the Secoya these changes have reduced their tribe to 500 members. To counteract this trend, the Secoya are turning to sustainable tourism to help save their cherished natural surroundings and cultural dignity.

With support from the Ecuadorian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (AETS) funded by USAID, the Secoya people are developing the Secoya Lodge, a joint venture between the community, a



conservation organization, and tourism operators to generate jobs and income. With proceeds, the Secoya hope to fund a health clinic, support education, and protect endangered flora and fauna such as freshwater dolphins, anacondas, endemic monkeys and an abundance of medicinal plants.

With preservation in mind, the Secoya Lodge will donate five percent of all profits to environmental activities implemented by a local conservation organization (VIHOMA). Secoya Lodge aims to provide a sustainable alternative to logging and palm plantations. The Lodge enables local residents to protect their most important tourism resources— a thriving natural habitat and local culture. Further, tourists who visit the region will better understand the importance of conservation. Tours offered by the Secoya Lodge will depict the impact that destruction to the Amazon has on the surrounding ecosystem. The Lodge facilitates a unique learning experience for tourists and simultaneously empowers the Secoya community to keep their environment intact.

Construction of the Secoya Lodge is underway with cabin designs based on the Secoya's own architectural style while using sustainably-harvested local building materials. Tourists will enjoy nature tours, learn about the Secoya's customs and ancestral traditions, and be able to purchase locally produced handicrafts. The lodge is a joint-business venture, as opposed to a donation, strengthening its sustainability from a community perspective.