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THE DEBATE ABOUT LAND AND NATIVE PEOPLES WORDS FROM THE WEB

In occasion of the donation by the Benetton group of a significant area of land in Patagonia in favour of the local indigenous populations, an exciting online publishing experiment in seven languages. Open to reflection, ideas and co-operation, linked to the world and to "others".

Ponzano, 3rd November, 2005. Benetton Talk: the Group acts and talks about what it does. And listens: it welcomes the world's opinions. A new site, **benettontalk.com**, starts a conversation with young people on the Internet on the topical, important subject of land and indigenous peoples. In fact, in January 2006, Benetton will make available 7,500 hectares of land to the government of Chubut Province, in Patagonia (Argentina), to be used for the needs of the native peoples. A symbolic gesture of social responsibility aimed at contributing to the dialogue in the context of the long-standing controversy between the Mapuche and the Argentine state.

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Benettontalk.com starts a conversation on this subject with the online community, to talk and be talked to, to explore, to encourage understanding, to gather up the threads of reflections and weave together the many differences. "Everything will be collected on a portal", says the home-page editorial, "which being the Web is a good way to encourage discussion and avoid it turning into a monolog. And not only because the Internet allows for interactivity but also because its very nature encourages making contact with others".

Visitors to **benettontalk.com** will be able to access the two main sections, fully-fledged independent sites with a regularly changing subject. They can read news items, look at photos and videos and then download them or send them by email. They can explore the topics through a vast choice of related links. And, above all, present their ideas and reflections, start a dialogue with the site.

In addition to the theme of land and native populations in Patagonia and other places around the world, the multimedia narration – text in seven languages (in addition to Italian: English, French, Spanish, Arab, Japanese and Chinese), image and video galleries, music – addresses and explores the topic of **dying languages**. Two subjects which put forward the common and urgent necessity for attention and protection of part of the geography and history of humanity, which will otherwise be irretrievably lost.

Benettontalk.com's adventure will continue in 2006 with the story of the genetic richness of life, children affected by war and other topics of global interest.

Section 1 – PATAGONIA TALK AND THE DONATION OF LAND IN PATAGONIA

This section opens with a significant piece of news: Benetton's donation of land in Patagonia to the Argentine authorities so that it may be used in favour of the indigenous peoples. The story includes the correspondence between Luciano Benetton and the Argentinean Nobel prizewinner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, an impassioned interlocutor.

Then we take a look at similar situations around the world with a description of the momentous lawsuit which the Australian aborigines have brought against the national government for the property rights of a vast area of Western Australia, including the city of Perth. Or the four indigenous communities in Venezuela to which president Hugo Chavez handed over the property rights to almost 700,000 hectares of land.

Lastly, back to Patagonia in order to understand why no other region of the globe has the same effect on the western imagination as this land on the edge, a frontier of the inhabited world. We roam from the journals of great explorers such as Darwin and writers such as Chatwin (*Travel diary*) to exploring everyday life on the vast farms (*On the estancia*), from a map of native communities in Argentina to the cosmovision of the Mapuche: time, the land, medicine and the sun, the stars, music.

Section 2 – BABEL WORDS

According to Unesco, languages are dying at the rate of one every two weeks. By the end of this century, half the languages spoken around the world – 6,912 according to Ethnologue – will disappear. Languages die when no one speaks them any more. The languages seriously in danger today are those spoken only by old people and no longer taught to children, due to outside causes or circumstances within the community imposed by changes in the socio-economic context in which their language evolved.

Babel Words talks about some dying languages: such as that of the Defaka, a small ethnic group of south-western Nigeria; Dyirbal, a language spoken by Australian aborigines in north-eastern Queensland; Eyak, whose destiny is tied to that of Marie Smith, a lady of over 80 years of age who is the last person still speaking this Alaskan language. The *Voices on the Net* subsection presents a number of interesting sites which help to keep dying languages alive through transcriptions, dictionaries, audio recordings, images and videos that talk, through the Web, of languages and cultures.

For further information:

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