8000 Drums Pilgrimage

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Budget: $1,000 - $10,000
Website: http://www.8000drums.org
In 1999, the Four Worlds Organization in Canada and the Elders and Wisdom Keepers Council of the Otomi Toltec People in Central Mexico held a gathering for the reunion of the Eagle and the Condor, and together they had a vision. The vision was carried by the leaders of the gathering, and resulted in the First Continental Summit of the Indigenous Peoples in Ottawa in 2001, hosted by the Assembly of First Nations. The Summit made a commitment of unity for social, economic, and cultural cooperation among all the people of North and South America, including the creation of the Indigenous University (www.indigenousuniversity.org).

In 2003, the Otomi Toltec Elders held a meeting to further the vision, and developed a program of education and development including the use of drums for healing all our relations, holding circles for telling stories and sharing teachings and ceremonies to bring more harmony, peace and unity to our peoples from the north and the south, to transmit the ancestral wisdom, to educate our families & communities, and to share our cultural heritage with present and future generations.

I've been part of this vision, helping organize the drumming and teaching circles for Peace and Happiness. In 2004, I started a long pilgrimage to visit tribes and communities in Mexico, South and North America, sharing the message of the 8000 Sacred Drums Ceremony, an ancient tradition that used to promote the unity and healing of our peoples. Different Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit have been interested in this initiative, so they have been supporting this gathering in their own lands and territories. We are planning to reinstate the 8000 Drums Ceremony at the Centro Ceremonial Otomi in March of 2012, and this proposal is to continue the pilgrimage in Canada after the gathering, to share our experience with people who were unable to attend.

The 8000 Drums event has already had intergenerational participation, where elders, young people, children, women and men have been part of this drumming, at the same time joining our intentions to come together, honoring our ancestors, sharing stories about our peoples and about the meaning of the drums. We talk about how can we educate each other through ceremonies and in community, how can we heal our hearts, ancestral memories, lands, our clans, and our relationships. Through these gatherings we call for everyone to take responsibility to follow the sacred teachings of our ancestors and to receive the teachings of our wisdom keepers and elders. We all need to learn how to heal our Mother Earth and all beings, how to live with more peace and respect, and how to bring happiness to our lives.

The ceremony, teaching, and healing of the 8000 Drums, of the Reunion of the Eagle and the Condor, and of the Indigenous University has already made a difference in the lives of people throughout North and South America, giving people a sense of unity and a focal point to gather and celebrate our shared heritage.
What categories best describe who your group or organization serves (check all that apply)
First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

What best describes your group or organization
Cultural and language program.

How long have you, your group, or your organization been operating?
More than 5 years

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**Innovation**

**Define your idea / project in 1-2 short sentences**
The Pilgrimage will share the commitments made during the 8000 Drums Ceremony and will model the Indigenous University's participatory cultural education.

**Select the stage that best applies to your solution**
Established (it has been running for a while, has grown and know it is making a difference)

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**Social Impact**

**Please tell us about the social impact of your idea or project**
The social impact of the teaching circles is immediate, because of the experiential form that includes drumming, talking, praying, chanting, telling stories, and co-creating workshops, events, ceremonies and gatherings. The experience to date with the exchanges between the indigenous people of Central Mexico and the Canadian First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, has demonstrated that the modeling that the pilgrimage brings to people who participate conveys an authentic sense of the ancestral teachings - people remember how to live responsibly, with integrity, impeccability, good communication, and an ongoing practice of gratitude and compassion. The message of unity conveyed through the 8,000 Drums Ceremony has already played an important role in the communities that have participated.

**Your Future Goal(s): Tell us what you hope to achieve with your idea or project in the next year**
I hope to achieve an awakening among participants to a new way of being, a new level of responsibility and care for Mother Earth

**In 5 years, what will be different as a result of your idea/project?**
The First Nations, Metis and Inuit will have experienced healing and transformation. More people and communities will remember the meaning of the drum as an instrument for peace and unity. The teaching circle will be seen as a legitimate way to learn the native stories, the songs, the language, the reconnection with nature and the message of the elders and wisdom keepers. Young people and adults will be empowered to continue this practice, teaching and sharing the wisdom and medicine of the drum. The practice will create a huge drum family – a sense of shared values, teaching, and meaning, which in turn will foster solidarity, respect and understanding between Indigenous Peoples.

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**Sustainability**

**Tell us about the people/ partnerships that are already involved and why they are important to your idea or project.**
Partners include: 1) the Council of Otomi Toltec Elders and Wisdom Keepers and other native people from Central Mexico (like the Aztec groups), 2) Drum Circles from Indigenous Peoples from North and South America (Guatemala, Bolivia, Argentina) who have participated in the Annual 8000 Drums Global Ceremony, 3) First Nations, Metis and Inuit people who have been part of this event in the past years; 4) Global Community Initiatives, a non-profit organization which has been supporting this project in the USA; and 5) 8000 Drums circles in British Columbia, Alberta, Regina, Ontario and Quebec. All of the partners are important for the project because they represent the unity of north and south, of the Eagle and the Condor, of all people in North, Central, and South America.

**If there are other people/partners that you will reach out to tell us who they are and why they will be important to your idea or project.**
For the pilgrimage in Canada to be successful after the 8000 Drums Ceremony in March, we will need to involve a broad spectrum of Canadian indigenous organizations as hosts and co-creators of the pilgrimage and teaching circles. This would include the Assembly of the First Nations, the Metis and Inuit Organizations, Four Worlds, Native Youth Movements, Drumming Circles, University groups, and cultural centers from Canada. Another important audience for the teaching circles will be teachers associations and teacher training programs. If the teachers can be shown the effectiveness of the participatory, inclusive, and culturally meaningful approach to learning, our hope is that schools will adapt to the new ideas to get all students more involved in this type of learning.

**Describe the kinds of support you receive (other than money) or will need to support your idea or project (e.g.: donated, space, equipment and volunteers)**
We need a space for planning and coordinating the project in Canada with equipment, volunteers, coordinators and liaisons from the Metis, Inuit, and First Nations lands. We need travel assistance and visas for a delegation of 4 or 5 Wisdom Keepers traveling from Mexico to Canada. We need lodging, food, and transportation for at least six months in order to complete this 8000 Drums Pilgrimage. We will pass in different towns and communities, visiting schools, universities and Indigenous Peoples for the gatherings and teaching circles. We need advertising, promotion in the media, to communicate and share this message to each area so the elders, families, young people, and children can participate and experience these social, educational, cultural and spiritual events.

**Do you currently have funding for your idea or project?**
Yes (answer the next two questions)