

# Law professor to speak on land rights struggle

The Mayagna Indians' lawsuit against the Nicaraguan government stopped the sale of land used for farming

Jody Burruss

Environment/Science/Technology Reporter

Dr. Lottie Cunningham Wren, a Nicaraguan lawyer, law professor and Miskito Indian, will present the full story of the struggle for land rights by the Mayagna Indians at 7 p.m. tomorrow in 175 Knight Law Center.

This presentation is a part of the "Human Rights for ALL" program, organized by Professor Svitlana Kravchenko and hosted by the law school. The film "Children of the Sun" will be shown at the presentation, giving background about the land the Mayagna are reclaiming, their culture and beliefs, and the relationship the people have with the land.

Land is very important to the cul-

ture, religion and customs of the Mayagna people. The land is considered sacred and is treated with great respect. When the Nicaraguan government wanted to sell logging concessions, the Mayagna people were strongly opposed, and they filed a lawsuit to stop the sale.

The Mayagna people use a lot of the land surrounding the areas where they live. When members of their community go out to hunt, they may take a 15-day trip to ensure they are not overusing the resources in one area.

They use different parts of the land for farming, religion, medici-

nal purposes, burial, hunting and fishing. Cunningham said that western farmers are coming in and cutting down areas they would use to get medicine. This is one of the human rights for which Cunningham is fighting.

"Human rights is a term often used to mean only political freedoms," said Dr. Kravchenko, who will be giving opening remarks at the presentation tomorrow night.

"But social, economic and environmental rights are equally important," she said.

In 2001, the Mayagna people won their suit in the Inter-American Court, and they are now engaged in negotiations for a demarcation of traditional lands.

While the court ruled that the state must carry out the demarcation and titling of the land within 15 months, it has done nothing so far.

Cunningham became involved with this case to help the indigenous people get the rights they deserve. She felt connected with these people.

"I am an indigenous woman," she said.

**"Human rights is a term often used to mean only political freedoms."**

Dr. Kravchenko title

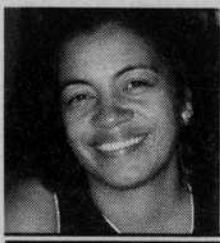
This community didn't have the resources to fight for their rights because they are so poor, Cunningham said. Also, many community members are illiterate. Cunningham helped organize workshops in the community to keep the people informed and to come up with conflict resolutions.

She then acted as a mediator to make sure the community was represented in negotiations with the government. However, the government tried to make deals with the community leaders behind her back, she said.

The decision of this court case is a victory not only for the Mayagna Indians, but also for human rights in general.

"This kind of leadership is what saves the world," environmental law Professor John Bonine said.

Contact the reporter at jodyburruss@dailymerald.com.



Cunningham lawyer

## News Brief

### Lab will charge paper fee

Starting Tuesday, printing in the EMU computer lab will cost 5 cents per sheet.

In the past, students could print as many pages as they wanted for free. But with paper usage rising 50 percent each year, the lab must begin charging students for the pages they print, EMU lab manager Amy McCoy said.

"The word got out that we were free," she said.

McCoy said that the lab tried to get money from the technology fee fund — collected from students — but were denied at the meeting last spring. This left it no choice but to

begin charging.

When students print at the lab, they will have to swipe their student ID before their print job is released. There are several locations where students can put Campus Cash on their cards. McCoy said they are also working on an online option for payment.

The lab also hopes that charging students to print will help reduce waste paper — which is already happening because of the card-swiping process.

"We've cut back on waste amazingly," McCoy said.

McCoy said they are willing to hear comments and suggestions from students at mccoym@oregon.uoregon.edu.

— Jody Burruss

## Fire

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states battling blazes. Recruits were brought in from Canada, Australia and New Zealand to help Oregon crews, Huntington said.

In addition to weather conditions, forest management practices also played a role in the severity of these fires.

Many forest lands have been managed under a fire exclusion policy, which requires all fires be put out rather than allowed to burn. The forests usually have several small fires to get rid of debris rather than a few mega-fires, which are much more destructive.

The policy caused flammable material to accumulate, Huntington said. Without occasional fires decreasing the fuel load, dead plant debris piles up, becoming dry and extremely easy to ignite. "The environment is somewhat dependent on fire," Huntington said. Also, areas that have been burned in the past or infested with insects were not salvaged, creating an even heftier fuel load.

"American public lands have undergone radical changes in the last century due to the suppression of fires and a lack of active forest and rangeland management," United States Forest Service spokeswoman Heidi Valetkevitch said.

If passed, the Healthy Forests Initiative will increase controlled burns, expediting fuels reduction projects. It would also remove imposed procedural requirements for Forest Service appeals, making it harder for many groups to appeal logging decisions. The plan may

also strengthen efforts to fulfill the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, which was designed to protect habitat and recreational areas while sustainably harvesting timber.

The Sierra Club is one group that strongly opposes the initiative. Paul Shively, Sierra Club's regional representative in Portland, objects to the HFI because he feels it has more to do with logging than with forest health or protection.

"This is a forest industry dream bill," he said.

SC issued a press release saying the bill fails to adequately protect communities from fires, guts important environmental protections and increases destructive logging practices.

Although both federal agencies and environmental groups want to decrease the acreage burned in future blazes, they have different ideas about how to do it.

"We all have different science and goals," Huntington said. But in the end, he said the desired result is the same. "We all want healthy forests."


SC has constructed its own strategy called the seven point plan.

Parts of the club's plan include more controlled burning, preserving forest safeguards and protecting ancient and wild forests from logging.

More information about the Sierra Club's seven-point plan is available at its Web site, sierraclub.org.

For more information about the president's Healthy Forest Initiative, visit www.usda.gov.

Contact the reporter at jodyburruss@dailymerald.com.




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## Riot

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Currently, the city has no agreement that would allow it to bill the University. And without any admission of responsibility, it's unlikely the University could be held accountable for the actions of its students.

"Essentially, (University officials) are not allowing that they have any responsibility," Carlson said. "They are assuming that the students involved in this activity are students of the city of Eugene."

Torrey concurred, saying he'd like to see the University help the city in the aftermath, but acknowledged the city can't take legal action.

In the meantime, EPD Chief of Police Thad Buchanan said detectives will continue searching for individuals involved in last week's riot.

Police have enhanced videos to use as a tool for prosecutorial evidence. Detectives have not yet attempted to contact individuals about the riot, but Buchanan said the time has nearly come.

"Participants involved that night that wish to voluntarily come forward and cooperate with the police

will be released on a citation — they will not be taken to jail," Buchanan said. "However, we cannot make that promise to individuals who are contacted and charged as a result of our investigation."

**"If you know of the people who were involved, tell us who they are and we will make sure they are brought to justice."**

Jim Torrey  
Mayor of Eugene

In addition to voluntary confessions, city officials said they are seeking help from the community.

"If you know of people who were involved, tell us who they are and we will make sure they are brought to justice," Torrey said. "And if, in fact, they didn't do anything wrong, hopefully nothing will happen to them."

Meanwhile, EPD will essentially reinstate its "Party Patrol" to saturate the neighborhoods surrounding

the University in an attempt to prevent more chaos.

The increased patrols — which will be used mainly to preserve a "no tolerance" policy on alcohol violations — will cost the city substantial amounts in overtime pay. In past years, the patrol cost taxpayers between \$6,000 and \$10,000 per weekend, Buchanan said.

Torrey also suggested the creation of a "buffer zone" that would surround the University. Torrey said penalties for alcohol and riot-related offenses should be doubled within the zone.

"There needs to be a sanction that will get the attention of the people that are committing these crimes," Torrey said.

Finally, city officials said they hope the University will take steps to adapt their student code of conduct to apply to activities that occur off campus.

"I'm going to take the position that the University is going to openly work with us," Torrey said. "We are going to find a way to deal with this."

Contact the senior news reporter at bradschmidt@dailymerald.com.