



World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Venezuela : Pemón

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Updated December 2017

Profile

Pemón are the fourth largest indigenous community in Venezuela and live in the southeast region of Venezuela. According to the 2011 national census, they number around 30,148 people. Their traditional subsistence activities include agriculture, hunting and fishing. Pemón divide themselves into three sub-groups based on dialect, Kamarokoto, Taurepan, and Arekuna.

Historical Context

There is no historical record of Pemón prior to 1750. The first Catholic mission was established on Pemón lands in 1931 and shortly after it was discovered that the land was rich in gold and silver, resulting in a gold rush that began in 1936.

In 1993 the National Indian Council of Venezuela (CONIVE) protested against the signing of a contract for the development of Pemón land by the Ministry of Energy and Mines which would mean blasting part of the rock in Roraima National Park. Besides being in violation of Pemón religious beliefs, it brought into question the government's environmental policy.

Although Pemón leaders showed some support for the Chavez government, in 2001 they knocked down electrical towers and kidnapped executives of Corporación Venezolona de Guayana in protest of government plans to build an electrical plant.

Current Issues

Although mining and tourism have provided some employment opportunities for the Pemón, they are divided on the extent to which these activities are negatively affecting their communities and territory.

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