

## THE KUNA INDIANS

- I. **Location**
  - a. Majority – San Blas Islands
  - b. Mainland – Maduwgan: reservation
  - c. Small % - Capital City, Panama
  
- II. **Language**
  - a. Kuna or “Tule”
  - b. Spanish
  - c. Some English
  
- III. **Houses**
  - b. Thatched roof
  - c. Some into government houses on mainland
  
- IV. **Clothing**
  - a. Women – hand-made blouses
    1. Molas – intricately sewn with a reverse appliqué technique
    2. Paint faces with a rouge made from achiote seeds
    3. Gold nose rings
  - b. Men – more western wear
  
- V. **Food**
  - a. Grow – plaintain
  - b. Bananas
  - c. Avocados
  - d. Many other fruits
  - e. Corn
  - f. Some tuber plants – manioc
  - g. Wild game
  - h. Fish (Tilapia – a staple)
  - i. Drink – a boiled chichi
  
- VI. **Religion**
  - a. Animist
  - b. A creator God – now far away
  - c. Poni – groups of malevolent spirits causing sickness and disease
  - d. Nuchus
    1. Hand-carved dolls (a protection against malevolent spirits)
    2. Saila – Shaman
  
- VII. **Political System**
  - a. Advanced – possibly more advanced than any tribal group in the world
    1. Congresos – meetings
  
- VIII. **A People That Will Not Bow**
  - a. 1992 – government assures it will keep settlers out of Alto Bayano National Park

- b. April 28, 1993 – Kuna and Choco Rebellion at ABNP
  - 1. Encroaching settlers
  - 2. Hold hostage Government of the Province
  - 3. Block Pan American highway
  - 4. Demonstrate in Darien and Chiroqui
- c. Panamanian Congress – fails to pass bill – 1993
- d. Government – expands land concessions for mining i.e. 10 in 1991-95; in 1994 – increased tensions
- e. 1994 – LAC & Panama denounce NAFTA
- f. Kuna – wants US to leave – plan to develop eco-tourism in the area
- g. 1995 – clash with officials of Colon
  - 1. Wanted – 18,000 Hectares of Coastal Territory – Hotel Development
  - 2. Government – land unproductive
  - 3. Kuna – damage environment (inter-press service 9/29/95)



