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# CONNECTICUT POST

GOODWILL VOYAGE BRINGS MESSAGE TO CAPTAIN'S COVE

## CULTURAL EXCHANGE



Brian A. Pounds/Connecticut Post

Esquibel Teucama Dogirama, an Embera tribesman from the Darien rain forest in Panama, dances on the deck of the Pajaro Jai, a 92-foot sailing vessel the tribe constructed by hand. The ship has been docked at Captain's Cove Seaport since last Wednesday.

### Traditional meets modern as tribe members pay visit to Bridgeport

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BRIDGEPORT — As the Pajaro Jai slipped from its berth at Captain's Cove Seaport, the Embera Indians

struck up a tune. Beating handmade drums and playing a traditional flute, the Embera danced on the bow of the wooden, 92-foot sailboat, every inch constructed by hand by members of

the tribe in a remote corner of the Panamanian jungle. The men wore headdresses wrapped in gold and black and

► Please see SAILBOAT on A4

■ To see more photographs of the Pajaro Jai event, see [www.connpst.com/photogallery](http://www.connpst.com/photogallery).

## Sailboat on a voyage to spread goodwill

Continued from A1

topped with feathers. The women dressed in traditional yellow frocks adorned with red and purple stars and sunlike images. Beads and necklaces dangled from their necks.

All sported hand-drawn ink tattoos, alternating between fine lines, diamond shapes and other patterns.

The short sail out of Bridgeport Harbor Monday capped a news conference and public introduction of the Pajaro Jai, in Bridgeport on its maiden voyage as part of a goodwill mission.

Built with tropical wood and employing the ancient woodworking and carving skills of the Embera, the yacht is a traveling billboard designed to attract attention to their cause and spark interest in finding ways to utilize the indigenous people's considerable skills.

"This boat was built over a 12-year period in the jungle," said Jim Brunton, as a crowd of just under 100 mingled around the dock and watched and listened as the Embera danced, played traditional tunes and told their story.

"They built all of it. They carried the wood out of the jungle on their backs. They want to make this boat a shining example of their ability," said Brunton, a Westport millionaire who helped build and pay for the yacht.

Brunton founded the Pajaro Jai Foundation to promote healthy economic development in rainforest countries.

One by one, members of the Embera tribe told their story, speaking through Brunton. The Indians converse in their native tongue and Spanish, but know little English.

"They left their village for the first time. Many had never seen the ocean," Brunton said as he introduced each member of the tribe.

Juan Caisamo, speaking through Brunton, said he hopes his village one day can have a high school. He said "eco-tourists" come to his jungle, but they don't pay any money.

Esquibel Teucama Dogirama said he hopes to build a shop to make furniture using ancient woodworking skills.

"We want to be able to build furniture in the village so we don't have to leave,"



Brian A. Pounds/Connecticut Post

Jim Brunton, left, of Westport, and Embera tribesmen Alberto Rio Tapi present a hand-woven basket as a gift to Kaye Williams and his family, the owners of Captain's Cove Seaport in Bridgeport, where the tribesmen's ship has been docked since last Wednesday.

Dogirama said through Brunton.

Brunton noted that farmers in the region burn 10,000 rainforest trees a year to produce only \$5,000 worth of crops.

He said they must find a more efficient use of resources.

"It was not easy for them to get here. They came because he feels without his land and traditions, he's dead," Brunton said.

Those gathered to marvel at the boat seemed to enjoy meeting the Embera.

Jack Szepessy, of Fairfield, said the Pajaro Jai participated in a sailing regatta over the weekend and then enjoyed a cookout at a nearby marina.

"Many were eating hamburgers and chicken. One of them asked if that's all we eat," Szepessy said with a chuckle.

John Clark, of Westport, who owns a restoration business, said there is a market for their skills. "They make unusual things but don't market it."

Liza Bowen, of West Haven, brought

her two young daughters to see the boat and the Embera, and said it's important to appreciate different cultures.

"I'm trying to motivate my kids to learn about different cultures. I'm an architect and an educator, so I appreciate the efforts they do. We can transmit that to our young ones," Bowen said.

During the brief sail out of the harbor, at least 50 people boarded the Pajaro Jai, not counting the crew. The Embera danced and played on the bow.

"We come into harbors and you look around at all the million-dollar yachts and you realize they represent money and power. This boat represents the little people," Brunton said.

One Embera explained that she left her 2-year-old son with her sister so she could make the trip to America.

"She feels her land is slipping away and her future. She asks such a powerful country how to build a future for her children," Brunton said.