



Don't buy this shirt *unless you need it*

continued ▶

by Yvon Chouinard & Nora Gallagher

Featured in our Late Summer 2004 catalog

Near the headquarters of Patagonia, on the central coast of California, the Chumash Nation enjoyed a good life for thousands of years. They lived in small villages and possessed fur blankets, intricate baskets and soapstone pots decorated with shells. They painted elaborate abstracts in mountain caves. In every village were game-playing fields and sacred buildings. Almost every day, most Chumash enjoyed a cleansing sweat in the village temescal. In each village was a granary for stockpiling food that would later be distributed to those in need.

Chumash traded exquisite olivella shells for black pigment, honeydew melons, pine nuts, wild tobacco and various herbs and salt. By the 16th century, theirs was a complex society of hunters and gatherers with a far-reaching, sophisticated trade network.

Other nations along the western coast shared this life. Gerald Amos, a member (and former chief) of the Haisla Nation in Kitamaat, northwest Canada, recalls a friend of his father who would leave home in the dark to paddle to his trapline four miles by water. He would spend the day walking the lines, checking and resetting the traps. “Along the way back to the boat, during the late fall and early winter, the coho salmon would be still in the creeks that they passed, so they would stop at one of these creeks and take a couple of coho, which they would clean and pack home in their backpack together with what-ever animals they had taken in their traps. The fish provided them with their supper later that night.”

In an **economy of abundance**, there is enough.
Not too much. Not too little. **Enough.**

Such lives are often called subsistence, which brings to mind the barest, hardscrabble survival. But there is another way to look at them. At Patagonia we choose to call them “economies of abundance.” In an economy of abundance, there is enough. Not too much. Not too little. Enough. Most important, there is enough time for the things that matter: relationships, delicious food, art, games and rest.

Many of us in the United States live in what is thought to be abundance, with plenty all around us, but it is only an illusion, not the real thing. The economy we live in is marked by “not enough.” We once asked the owner of a successful business if he had enough money and he replied, “Don’t you understand? There is never enough.”

We don't have enough money, and we also don't have enough time. We don't have enough energy, solitude or peace. We are the world's richest country, yet our quality of life ranks 14th in the world. As Eric Hoffer, a mid-20th century philosopher, put it, "You can never get enough of what you don't really need to make you happy."

Europeans enjoy a **25 percent higher quality of life** than Americans (while **we consume 75 percent more** than they do).

And while we work harder and harder to get more of what we don't need, we lay waste to the natural world. Dr. Peter Senge, author and MIT lecturer, says, "We are sleepwalking into disaster, going faster and faster to get to where no one wants to be."

We might call this economy, the one we live in, the economy of scarcity.

Lest you think the economy of abundance is gone with the old Chumash, consider Europe. Europeans still buy only a few well-made clothes and keep them for many years. Their houses and apartments tend to be smaller than ours; they rely on public transportation, and small, efficient home appliances and cars. Europeans enjoy a 25 percent higher quality of life than Americans (while we consume 75 percent more than they do).

Or, look at the people of Bhutan, whose king insists on measuring "gross national happiness."

Any person or nation can grow fatter and fatter, richer and richer, sleepwalking toward disaster. Or we can choose to remain lean and quick, wealthy in beauty and time and, that word that inspired our forefathers, wealthy in happiness.

We don't want to grow larger, but want to remain lean and quick.

In Patagonia's environmental campaign this year, we looked at the plight of wild salmon and what it might take for us to become what Ecotrust calls "a Salmon Nation," a nation of people who make choices that contribute to the health of whole watersheds and the economies of the people who live in them. A salmon nation is a nation of abundance, where people live in a way that fish can thrive. If you think this is an impossible dream, check out Seth Zuckerman's essay "The Gift: Salmon Recovered" and learn how wild salmon rebounded in Alaska after the state employed sophisticated tools like sonar, stream bank counters and airborne spotters to ensure their salmon were not overfished. In the last two decades, commercial catches in Alaska have more than doubled.

At Patagonia, we are dedicated to abundance. We don't want to grow larger, but want to remain lean and quick. We want to make the best clothes and make them so they will last a long, long time. Our idea is to make the best product so you can consume less and consume better. Every decision we make must include its impact on the environment. We make ski jackets that are the right jackets, with no compromises, yet they are elegant enough to wear over dress clothes in a storm in Paris. (Most ski jackets sit in the closet nine months out of the year.) We want to zero in on quality.

THIS ISSUE'S SPONSOR:



GEL 2005
A new kind of conference.

April 28-29,
2005,
New York City

COME TO GEL 2005
(GOOD EXPERIENCE LIVE)
IN NEW YORK! Gel is the only conference of its kind, exploring what it means to create a good, meaningful, or authentic experience. Business people, artists, and innovators attend.

GO

In the economy of abundance, wild salmon are given back rivers in which to run. Trees grow to their natural height. Water is clean. A sense of mystery and enchantment is restored to the world. We humans live within our means and, best of all, we have the time to enjoy what we have.

Take Action

Help support Ecotrust. Ecotrust works to build Salmon Nation, a place where wild Pacific salmon and people can thrive.

For more information visit <http://www.ecotrust.org>.

[Advertise](#) | [About this ad](#)

info

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yvon Chouinard is the owner of Patagonia and is working on a book about the Patagonia philosophy of business.

Nora Gallagher is the author of two memoirs, *Things Seen and Unseen* and *Practicing Resurrection* (both published by Alfred A. Knopf and Vintage Books), and the editor of *Patagonia: Notes from the Field* (Chronicle Books). She edits environmental essays for Patagonia.

DOWNLOAD THIS

This manifesto is available from <http://changethis.com/10.DontBuyThisShirt>

SEND THIS

Click here to pass along a copy of this manifesto to others.

<http://changethis.com/10.DontBuyThisShirt/email>

SUBSCRIBE

Learn about our latest manifestos as soon as they are available. Sign up for our free newsletter and be notified by email. <http://changethis.com/subscribe>

info

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You are given the unlimited right to print this manifesto and to distribute it electronically (via email, your website, or any other means). You can print out pages and put them in your favorite coffee shop's windows or your doctor's waiting room. You can transcribe the author's words onto the sidewalk, or you can hand out copies to everyone you meet. You may not alter this manifesto in any way, though, and you may not charge for it.

NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

Move around this manifesto by using your keyboard arrow keys or click on the right arrow (→) for the next page and the left arrow (←). To send this by email, just click on .

HAVING PROBLEMS SAVING TO DISK?

First, make sure you have the latest version of Acrobat Reader 6 which you can download from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. If problems persist, it may be due to your Acrobat Reader settings. To correct the problem (for Windows), a reader, J. Hansen, suggests going to your Acrobat Reader Preferences > Options > Web browser Options. Check the “Display PDF in Browser” option. Then click on Save to Disk .

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

	PC	MAC
Zoom in (Larger view)	[CTL] [+]	[⌘] [+]
Zoom out	[CTL] [-]	[⌘] [-]
Full screen/Normal screen view	[CTL] [L]	[⌘] [L]

info



BORN ON DATE

This document was created on 13 December 2004 and is based on the best information available at that time. To check for updates, please click here to visit <http://changethis.com/10.DontBuyThisShirt>

COPYRIGHT INFO

The copyright in this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. Please direct content feedback or permissions questions to the authors.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial–NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.

Cover image from <http://www.patagonia.com>

ABOUT CHANGETHIS

ChangeThis is a vehicle, not a publisher. We make it easy for big ideas to spread. While the authors we work with are responsible for their own work, they don't necessarily agree with everything available in ChangeThis format. But you knew that already.

ABOUT THIS AD

This sponsor has provided financial support to help make the publication of this issue of ChangeThis possible. Sponsors have no say over the content that ChangeThis publishes. If you wish to sponsor a future issue of ChangeThis, use [this form](#) or contact sponsor@changethis.com. Thank you.