

Radio Mosoj Chaski, Cochabamba

by Luis Eldon Porter
Station director

On 12 April, 1999 a new 10 kW station went on the air on 3310 kHz from the town of Cochabamba in the southcentral highlands of Bolivia. In this area thousands of tiny villages and huts are scattered throughout some of the most inaccessible terrain in the world.

There are few roads, and those that exist are often impassable. Here, in some of the most remote areas of the Andes live the majority of the Bolivian Quechua, descendants of the Incas.

Throughout the region, a herdsman with his llama and radio is a common sight. Radio is essential in the life of a Quechua.

Due to their isolation, many Quechua and rural Bolivians rely on radio for news, personal messages, and entertainment. Many perceive radio to be more credible than face-to-face communications.

Own station

For many years, there has been talk of forming a Quechua-language station that could serve all of Bolivia. Several feasibility studies were conducted over the years, and the decision was made to proceed with the commissioning of a Quechua-language station broadcasting on shortwave.

As funds were collected and plans were made, it was decided a state-of-the-art tropical-band transmitter was needed for the project. It would have to have a rugged design, high-efficiency, low operating costs and minimal maintenance needs.

We chose a new tropical-band transmitter from Omnitronix because of the simplicity of its design, its modular construction and the ability to use "off-the-shelf" replacement parts. The crated transmitter was shipped by air from the Omnitronix headquarters in North Wales, Pennsylvania, to La Paz, Bolivia, and over land to Cochabamba.

When the large transport truck arrived, it was quickly muscled into place by 20 enthusiastic Quechua workers. The installation which was supervised by Omnitronix engineer Wayne Borthwick, was not without its challenges, due to the high altitude and abundant rainfall.

Initial testing

All packing materials were quickly removed, and the transmitter was installed. Power, audio, and antenna were connected and we began testing.

At 7 kW of output power, we experienced a VSWR trip and the transmitter would not transmit at any higher power. Further investigation found a burned insulator on the antenna. This was probably caused by mud contamination during installation.

Once a new insulator was installed, we went to full power without further problems.

Radio Mosoj Chaski is broadcasting entirely in the Quechua language and has been heard by DX-ers in more continents. QSL-letter is signed by Gerente Eldon Porter.

(Courtesy Radio World)