

Can Citizens of Industrialized Nations Help Indigenous Peoples Keep Their Land?

An Exploration of Responsibility, with a focus on the Amazon



Indigenous Waorani elders, youth and leaders gathered in Puyo, Ecuador, on February 27, 2019, to launch a lawsuit against the government's auctioning of their ancestral lands to the oil industry. (Photo credit: Mitch Anderson/Amazon Frontlines), article by Reynard Loki of Independent Media Institute, April 8, 2019, at: <https://www.alternet.org/2019/04/we-do-not-want-to-disappear-indigenous-peoples-go-to-court-to-save-the-amazon-from-oil-company-greed/>

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The Question We Sought to Address

In my class *Developing Sustainable Environmental Responsibility*, I ask my students to think about what we are responsible for doing in the face of accelerating environmental damage. We think of ways to meet our responsibilities that we can sustain over time. The typical focus that students choose is to transform one's own activities and to advocate for US policies (local and national) that reduce our collective impacts. When I introduce the question of what responsibility we owe to people who live in other countries, students acknowledge a responsibility to consider the problem and look for ways to make a difference, but the task of learning how to do that seems overwhelming.

In 2018 this question received a concrete focus when a friend in Brazil, a former environmental official with whom I had worked in the late 1990's, asked me for ideas to help Davi Kopenawa, a chief of the Yanomami.¹ Paulo Coutinho, (now known in Brazil as a consultant to the education project *Guerreiros da Amazônia*),² sent me information about an agroforestry project that Kopenawa wanted to launch. He wrote that Kopenawa was looking for ways to keep the young people from leaving the forest for the cities, and that keeping the tribe together was a way to protect the land from many incursions. Coutinho was working as well with Ailton Krenak.³ Krenak and Kopenawa⁴ are foremost Indigenous advocates for South American Indigenous rights. Kopenawa's 2013 book *The Falling Sky* "paints an unforgettable picture of Yanomami culture, past and present, in the heart of the rainforest—a world where ancient indigenous knowledge and shamanic traditions cope with the global geopolitics of an insatiable natural resources extraction industry."⁵



When I shared this with my students, one said that she came from Brazil and belonged to an organization of Brazilian students. She raised with them the idea of helping the indigenous peoples develop in the ways that made sense to them, and reported an enthusiastic response. Some asked how they could send money to help with the agroforestry project. Another student put me in touch with then BU professor Julie Klinger, who annually took students to Brazil and

¹ "Yanomami, also spelled Yanomamö or Yanoamö, South American Indians, speakers of a Xirianá language, who live in the remote forest of the Orinoco River basin in southern Venezuela and the northernmost reaches of the Amazon River basin in northern Brazil. In the early 21st century the Yanomami probably numbered about 32,000 individuals throughout their range." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

² See <https://www.facebook.com/amazonguerreiros> and <https://www.branding.news/2018/06/28/tbt-amazon-warriors-summoned-to-crush-mosquitoes/>

³ <https://www.gaiafoundation.org/chico-ailton/>

⁴ <https://www.survivalinternational.org/articles/3512-DaviYanomami>,
<https://www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/laureates/davi-kopenawa-hutukara-yanomami-association/>

⁵ <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674724686>

had helped bring representatives of an organization of Yanomami women to BU. From Julie I learned about a Yanomami effort to develop an eco-tourism capacity. Here was a tribe expressing a desire to retain their culture while also finding ways to relate to the modern world. And it seemed that the modern world contained at least some people who wanted to help them but didn't know how.

At first we pursued the idea of sending money to the Yanomami through *Amazon Smile*, a method of making donations when buying products. It seemed right that the *Amazon Co.* should be a vehicle for helping the Amazon itself. Because the *Amazon Smile* donation is very small, we also had the idea that we would popularize this practice and then write to *Amazon* management and urge them to follow their customers and send even more help to the place whose name they had been using all these years. It seemed one way for citizens of an industrialized nation to develop some sense of connection with others, however distant in miles and culture. Paulo Coutinho sent information about how to send money to ISA, (Instituto



Ailton Krenak, Davi Kopenawa, Ailton's son Naca, and Paulo Coutinho, received from Coutinho in 2018.

Socioambiental, which has worked “in defense of the rights of indigenous people, traditional communities and the environment” since 1994),⁶ and/or the Hutukara Associação Yanomami.⁷ But we learned that *Amazon* would only permit donations to organizations located in the United States. We also considered responsibilities to donors, who need ways to know how their donations are put to use. We decided alternative strategies for giving were also necessary.

Students in my 2019 class *Research for Environmental Agencies and Organizations* took up the question of how to help and researched the issue. They learned that the rights of Indigenous tribes were recognized by changes to the Brazilian Constitution in 1988 (Ailton Krenak is credited with helping bring this about). These changes included “the abandonment of the assimilationist point of view, which considered the indigenous peoples as a transitory social category, destined to disappear”, and “that the rights of the indigenous peoples over their lands are defined in the concept of original rights that are prior to the creation of the State itself....a recognition that the indigenous peoples were the first occupants of Brazil.”⁸ They learned about the principle of the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation and/or Consent (FPIC) before

⁶ <https://www.socioambiental.org/en>

⁷ <http://hutukara.org/index.php/contato>

⁸ https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Brazilian_Constitution

any development is conducted on one's land, outlined in the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

They learned that the rate of deforestation had actually slowed in the past decade, and the drop was “partly driven by government policies, such as stricter enforcement” (*Forbes Magazine*).⁹ But Brazil had just elected Jair Bolsonaro as president, and there were many articles such as *National Geographic*'s “Brazil's Amazon Forest Is In the Crosshairs”, which informed us that:

He won on a platform mainly built around change and order after the worst string of corruption scandals and economic troubles in Brazil's modern history. But he also wooed rural landowners and businessmen...A big theme for this former military officer was taming and exploiting the country's vast Amazon expanse. Beneath and within the extraordinary biological bounty of the lacework of rivers and towering forest canopies, enormous mineral and timber and hydropower resources remain unexploited. Bolsonaro disparaged Brazil's minorities and indigenous tribes and discounted their land claims, pledged to loosen forest and environmental regulations and enforcement, to open reserves to mining, and to ban international environmental groups.¹⁰

Government had generated hopes of protection. Now government would accelerate the problem and erode the new recognition of Indigenous rights. This increased the sense of urgency and helplessness. But the students also learned how consumers in the Northern Hemisphere have played a role in these developments, buying products and investing without thinking about how their use of money contributed to the destruction of the forest. It was not just that companies such as BlackRock, State Street and Vanguard finance Archer Daniels Midland and Bunge, two of the largest agribusinesses operating soy and beef production, that causes the problem, but all who participate in the chain of commerce that causes deforestation. The estimates that 90% of the deforestation in the Amazon is caused by agricultural businesses makes us wonder: am I, too eating up this precious resource? Some students learning how cattle ranching is estimated to account for the majority of current deforestation rates adopted the attitude that we should all stop eating meat.¹¹ Not everyone was in agreement but in addition to

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelmarshalleurope/2018/10/30/brazil-has-been-slowing-the-destruction-of-the-amazon-rainforest/#2b259736609e>

¹⁰ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/12/amazon-rain-forest-conservation-chico-mendes-anniversary-jair-bolsonaro/>

¹¹ “Cattle Ranching in the Amazon Region.” *Global Forest Atlas*, Yale University, 2015, <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/amazon/land-use/cattle-ranching>. Salazar-lópez, Leila. “Bolsonaro Wants to Plunder the Amazon. Don't Let Him.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 29 Jan. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/01/29/opinion/bolsonaro-wants-to-plunder-the-amazon-dont-let-him.html. “Global NGOs: Dirty Dozen Companies Driving Deforestation Must Act Now to Stop the Burning of the World's Forests.” *Amazon Watch*, 30 Aug. 2019, <http://amazonwatch.org/news/2019/0830-dirty-dozen-companies-driving-deforestation-must-act-now-to-stop-the-burning>.

the health argument about reducing intake all have agreed that responsible consumers should understand how their meat is produced, and take action to influence responsible production.

It is helpful to know that the Nature Conservancy is working with Brazilian banks, EMBRAPA (the Brazilian Government's agricultural research agency) and others to develop responsible agricultural policies and practices, with projects such as the Sustainable Livestock Farming Working Group, the Brazilian Forest Dialogue, and the Round Table on Responsible Soy.¹² This may not benefit Indigenous peoples and may only mitigate industrial agriculture, but the Conservancy also works with indigenous peoples. A project with the people in Oiapoque, in northern Brazil, to conserve "key local resources, such as river turtles and açai berries", was also to "create income-generating alternatives", and was recognized by Brazil's government as a model for native territories across Brazil." The conservancy established an environmental and territorial management center for Indigenous leaders intended to "foster their effective participation" in government.¹³

Where forest had been converted to soybean production and then ravaged by fires, Conservation International has helped ISA help Indigenous projects to restore the soil. The Xingu people are implementing "the muvuca farming technique — sowing a large and varied mixture of seeds that yield plants native to the area, such as cashew and açai...by using traditional knowledge, the group ensured the seeds used would produce the highest yield of vegetation native to the land, while restoring the soil."¹⁴

Stories about good work, however, must be placed in the context of continuing and various forms of forest destruction. In addition to clearing (and burning) forest to raise food for export, *Amazon Watch* reported that "tens of millions of acres of indigenous Amazonian territories and isolated rainforest are slated to be auctioned off for new oil drilling in the western Amazon".¹⁵ Despite the protests and legal action taken by Indigenous communities, GeoPark, Amerisur, Frontera Energy, and Andes Petroleum have been looking for oil on native land. My students asked, how do these actions not violate UNDRIP? By funding the continued drilling, BlackRock, Citi Bank, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, and JPMorgan Chase become complicit. Can they be persuaded to change? *Amazon Watch* recommends pressuring the companies and

Lawson, Sam. "Consumer Goods and Deforestation: An Analysis of the Extent and Nature of Illegality in Forest Conversion for Agriculture and Timber Plantations." *Forest Trends*, 2014, www.forest-trends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/doc_4718.pdf.

¹² <https://www.nature.org/media/brasil/sustainable-agriculture-brazil.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/brazil/stories-in-brazil/partnering-with-indigenous-peoples/>

¹⁴ <https://www.conservation.org/blog/notes-from-the-field-indigenous-peoples-protecting-nature-through-tradition>

¹⁵ "Building People Power to End Investment in Amazon Crude." *Amazon Watch*, 2020, <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2020-building-people-power-to-end-investment-in-amazon-crude.pdf>

moving any business you have with them elsewhere, if they do not respond. But not enough people are paying attention.

With these thoughts we launched the project of learning about the organizations like *Amazon Watch* that could make the connections that would help the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, and perhaps other peoples as well, to keep their land, and defend their right to live as they wish. This project (an ongoing work-in-progress) contains information about how to send money directly to the Yanomami, but mostly focuses on the organizations that claim to work collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples, and also have offices in the United States.

The Question We Shouldn't Have to Ask

Why should First World people help First Peoples? Does asking this question imply a cultural superiority?

In addition to the fact that rainforests and other undeveloped areas of the world are important to the health of the biosphere, (“the rainforest still constitutes a carbon sink by absorbing around 600 million tonnes per year”)¹⁶, it is important to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples because their continued existence, in the cultural forms and practices they have developed, is a precious part of humanity’s heritage. Even though many in the developed world know little about these ancient societies, they may understand that to lose them by rapid assimilation, destruction, or dispersion is a loss of indescribable proportions. To many, the modernized world has a sameness and just knowing that humans in faraway places live their lives in different ways is an enrichment of current existence. It is also true that Indigenous Peoples generally have a relationship with nature that holds important lessons for modern societies, where that relationship may have been lost, or is accessed through artificial means that render it inauthentic, or damage it.

The Amazon is a region that contains many of the remaining cultures that have persisted for centuries without modernizing. It contains much of the world’s store of species and is populated by peoples who have established ways of living that have preserved the flora and fauna around them. This is superior to modern culture, which has not yet developed ecologically sustainable civilization.

While many in the developed world may regard Indigenous Peoples as “undeveloped”, or “primitive”, those who have an understanding of the importance of their knowledge of the land

¹⁶ Research News provided by [Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres](https://phys.org/news/2019-11-forests-amazon-important-carbon.html) to phys.org, Nov. 11, 2019, <https://phys.org/news/2019-11-forests-amazon-important-carbon.html>

and the living things around them know that the modern world can suffer in comparison. Many citizens of the developed world have lost the knowledge of how to coexist with the rest of life.

There is much to be learned from Indigenous Peoples. But if they cannot continue living on their land, we will never have the chance to learn it.

Deforestation has dramatically increased - 55 percent in the Brazilian Amazon “in the first four months of the year compared to the same period last year, according to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research.”¹⁷ The World Wildlife Fund estimates that “27 per cent – more than a quarter – of the Amazon biome will be without trees by 2030 if the current rate of deforestation continues.”¹⁸ In addition mining, both artisanal and corporate, leaves areas devastated and releases heavy metals and other poisons; oil extraction has contaminated vast areas, and the road-building accompanying all these activities has allowed incursions into formerly remote areas, leading to crime and other destructive intrusions.

The Amazon is also threatened by the market for wood. In 2013 Greenpeace published a two-year investigation that concluded that 78 percent of logging in Para State was illegal,¹⁹ and identified US companies importing illegally harvested wood.²⁰ Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council, the Brazilian organization CERFLOR, (recognized by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC)), the Amazon Alternative, (which promotes the use of certified sustainable forestry projects, and Imaflora’s Social Fund for Certification, which seeks to increase the small number of certified operations,²¹ represent a path forward. However, when *FSC Watch* reported in 2008 that Veracel’s eucalyptus monocrop operations were improperly certified, it claimed that the company then hired Imaflora “to continue its deception”.²² World Rainforest Movement reported in 2013 that the FSC certification had become “an additional difficulty” in their efforts to stop the damage of industrial tree plantations.²³ In 2017 Rainforest Alliance announced an effort – in collaboration with other organizations, to improve accountability and ethical standards, inviting public participation.²⁴ Concerned consumers cannot simply look for a label, but need to inform themselves of the value of certifications, and if they can, participate in the evolution of standards.

¹⁷“Deforestation of the Amazon has soared under cover of the coronavirus”, Jamie Robertson and Lorand Bodo, *NBC News*, May 11, 2020 <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/deforestation-amazon-has-soared-under-cover-coronavirus-n1204451>

¹⁸ https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/deforestation_fronts2/deforestation_in_the_amazon/

¹⁹ <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/research/logging-the-amazons-silent-crisis/>

²⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20140630230608/http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/Global/usa/planet3/PDFs/Forests/AmazonUSLacey.pdf>

²¹ <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/project/forest-certification-brazilian-amazon>

²² http://www.fsc-watch.org/archives/2012/10/08/Veracel_Sustainabl

²³ https://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FSC_consultation_and_complaints_procedures.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/press-releases/accountability-framework-public-consultation-open>

Pharmaceutical company extraction of plant essences to produce medicines, without payment to the people who live on the land, (whose traditional practices reveal where the companies should look), is another problem that illustrates what evolving a responsible relationship entails.. Because of such issues as the 2011 claim of Brazil’s environmental enforcement agency that pharmaceutical companies were using “the yellow-and-green Kambo frog to create anti-inflammatory drugs without distributing benefits to local residents”, the Amazon Bank of Codes was announced in 2018, an attempt to stop “biopiracy”. The Bank would facilitate the payment of fees by investors for the use of genetic sequences from organisms from the forest, using blockchain technology.²⁵ But Jim Thomas of ETC, an organization that works to give effect to the ethical intentions of such standards as the Convention on Biological Diversity,²⁶ suggested that “Companies may use the database of genetic codes to go prospecting to find information they need, and then slightly alter it or find another way to avoid paying royalties....companies would send people into the Amazon to gather material...they would negotiate over whether they would be able to move that material out of the country. Now, you won’t even have to leave Toronto to scan the DNA.”²⁷

After a patent was granted in 1995 for the use of turmeric in wound healing, the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), India, New Delhi filed a reexamination case with the US Patent the Trademark Office, and won cancellation of the patent on the grounds that “turmeric has been used for thousands of years for healing wounds and rashes and therefore its medicinal use was not a novel invention. Their claim was supported by documentary evidence of traditional knowledge, including ancient Sanskrit text and a paper published in 1953 in the Journal of the Indian Medical Association”.²⁸ Building on this is the creation of the Traditional Knowledge Data Library, a collaborative project between CSIR and Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, to “help prevent misappropriation of traditional knowledge belonging to India at International Patent Offices.” It will record the traditional knowledge. If not respected and surrounded with enforceable restrictions, this could also become a “one-stop shopping” site for biopirates.

The effort described in this report must be an ongoing effort. The individual who wishes to relate responsibly to the rest of the world must become informed about these instruments and participate in their development, so that they become effective protections and not avenues for corrupt appropriation. A good first step is to know that the Convention on Biological Diversity, that went into effect in 1993, affirmed three great principles:

1. The conservation of biological diversity

²⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-biopiracy-genetics-feature-idUSKCN1OJ02Z>

²⁶ <http://www.etcgroup.org/international-fora/biodiversity-cbd-sbstta-ipbes>

²⁷ Reuters, note 22.

²⁸ <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/preventing-biopiracy/>

2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.²⁹

Responsible citizens of the United States should also know that the CBD was signed by President Clinton but not ratified by the Senate. The Center For Biological Diversity and Defenders of Wildlife sum up recent history: “Beginning more than 20 years ago, leadership by the USA led to the most comprehensive agreement ever written to reduce the global loss of biodiversity. Then, our nation stepped away while nearly every other nation in the world joined the CBD. The USA stands starkly isolated as a non-party, harming our world image and our ability to affect global conservation and sustainable use efforts.”³⁰ Responsible actors should be informed about proposals to actively address the intent of the CBD, for example the proposal by 49 scientists to manage by ecoregion and set E.O. Wilson’s proposal of protecting half of the world’s natural areas as a real goal.³¹ Commenting on the proposal the *Guardian* wrote in 2018 that “Indigenous people are now widely recognized as some of the best defenders of nature after decades of being sidelined.”³² There are hopeful ideas that need much help to achieve full fruition.

The deforestation is forcing many Indigenous tribes out of their land. Bolsonaro has cut funding of organizations that worked with tribes and stated that ““Where there is Indigenous land, there is wealth underneath it.” He has declared that “The Indigenous person can’t remain in his land as if he were some prehistoric creature”, reduced fines for violating Indigenous rights, and attempted to legalize illegal mining and step up development of the Amazon.^{33 34 35 36}

The cultures living there for centuries have the right to continue their lives without interference. An offense against their basic rights is an offense against the right of any individual to continue

²⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/intro/>

³⁰ https://defenders.org/sites/default/files/publications/the_u.s._and_the_convention_on_biological_diversity.pdf

³¹ <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/67/6/534/3102935>

³² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2018/jun/28/scientists-call-for-a-paris-style-agreement-to-save-life-on-earth>

³³ “As Bolsonaro Keeps Amazon Vows, Brazil’s Indigenous Fear ‘Ethnocide’”,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/19/world/americas/bolsonaro-brazil-amazon-indigenous.html>

³⁴ Rainforest Action Network, and Rainforest Action Network. “Amazon Fires: How Can You Help? - The Understory.” Rainforest Action Network, August 27, 2019. <https://www.ran.org/the-understory/amazon-fires-how-can-you-help>.

³⁵ James, Charlie. “As the Amazon burns, cattle ranchers are blamed. But, it’s more complicated.” *National Geographic*, 30 August 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/08/amazon-burns-cattle-ranchers-blamed-complicated-relationship/>.

³⁶ “Brazil: Halt illegal cattle farms fuelling Amazon rainforest destruction.” *Amnesty International*, 26 November 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/brazil-halt-illegal-cattle-farms-fuelling-amazon-rainforest-destruction/>.

as a member of the culture to which they belong. The assault upon the peoples of the Amazon is an assault upon all cultures.

The World Wildlife Fund says that more species are found there than anywhere else. Destroying that biological life to extract what lies under it is generation of wealth for only a few and for only a moment in time. It exemplifies how the short-term economic goal of production, the hallmark of the industrialized world, can foolishly destroy the incalculable value of life itself.

For centuries the people of the developed world have intruded upon other cultures with the belief that bringing modern development to them was for their benefit. But history shows us that the destruction of original cultures that this has caused has been a preventable tragedy. An alternative way of interacting, that does not presuppose superiority on any side, and which is respectful of cultural and individual rights, lies before us.

The Amazon should not be the only concern of responsible individuals in the developed world. Forests in Southeast Asia are being cleared to make way for palm oil plantations, threatening the extinction of the intelligent orangutan and impoverishing communities, when palm oil can be cultivated in a sustainable manner. In Canada, tar sands extraction and pipeline construction are opposed by Indigenous Peoples, as well as others, as the thirst for economic growth is destroying great stretches of the Boreal Forest and threatening water supplies, as well as promoting further greenhouse gas emissions the world can no longer tolerate. These and similar events around the world are forcing the issue of how citizens of the developed world can be more responsible for the conservation of human culture and the natural environment. It is not necessary to simply stand by and observe what is happening. There are organizations taking action.

Indigenous Peoples may not have the ability to go into court and defend themselves. But we can donate to organizations that do this work. Indigenous Peoples also have ideas about how they wish to develop. If they can come up ecotourist destinations that they themselves manage, with agroforestry projects, with sustainable forms of development in collaboration with responsible entities, they can structure their own way of relating to the modern world, provide jobs for their people, and acquire the means and partners they need to resist incursions and defend themselves.

This review takes a look at organizations that provide aid to indigenous tribes directly, and that claim to be working with the tribes, not deciding things for them. It contains some information about each organization and what they do, stressing the collaborative projects they report. We cannot claim to have independently investigated the information each organization provides, so if you are looking to donate money or time, we hope you will educate yourself further. We have included suggestions about how to evaluate organizations.



Davi Kopenawa of the Yanomami

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/8413>

We also know that there are many great organizations that we did not cover. In addition to information about giving to organizations, we have included some ideas about how to help that don't involve money. Our intent is to inspire thinking about how constructive action can be taken. If we help indigenous peoples develop as they choose, we may help protect the remaining natural places of the world, and preserve cultures that have much to teach us about ourselves, and about living in accord with nature.

Although on April 26, 2019 there was a victory for the Waorani tribe against the Ecuadorian government in which the Supreme Court ruled that the government could not auction off their land without consent of the people,³⁷ other tribes in Ecuador have land up for auction. It is hoped that lawsuits can also help to protect their land as well. This is also happening in Peru where the government has sectioned off 64 areas of Indigenous People's land to be auctioned to developers. The Tierra de Resistentes³⁸ is a compiled report of the dangers that ethnic minorities and environmental activists face: they have a high risk of violent attacks or murder by supporters or workers in the drilling, logging and mining industries. Over the past ten years there have been more than 1,300 attacks and many murders in seven countries.

Fires and clearing are contributing to the already severe worldwide climate crisis. The carbon stored by the rainforest is being released into the atmosphere. The ability of Indigenous Peoples to remain on their land is in great danger.³⁹ Although the ways and beliefs of these

³⁷ Reiderer, Rachel. "An Uncommon Victory for an Indigenous Tribe in the Amazon." *The New Yorker*, 15 May 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-uncommon-victory-for-an-indigenous-tribe-in-the-amazon>. Accessed 20 October 2019. (<https://colombiacheck.com/especiales/tierra-resistentes/es-co/>)

³⁸ <https://tierraderesistentes.com/es/>.

³⁹ Casado, Leticia; Londono, Ernesto. "Under Brazil's Far-Right Leader, Amazon Protections Slashed and Forests Fall." *The New York Times*, 28 July 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/world/americas/brazil-deforestation-amazon-bolsonaro.html> Accessed 23 December 2019.

people may be foreign to us, are we not connected? Are we not, as my students seem to believe, all members of one planet?

NOTE

Commenting on a draft of this report, Paulo Coutinho wrote that a desire to help the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon should also extend as well to those who are no longer living on the land. He wrote: “80% of this population lives in cities and towns where the worst problem is lack of sewage treatment, solid waste management, water distribution, poor health assistance and *POVERTY. That`s the most urgent problem in the Amazon.*” This project did not include research on efforts to address this, but some of the organizations listed below may do so, and in particular support for the concept of Indigenous rights can help.

Forms of Aid

In our review of different organizations that aid Indigenous People we found that the provided forms of aid fit into three general categories:

- Advocacy and legal aid in fighting rights violations and environmental damages, or promotion of necessary legislation.
- Grants or funding for projects which provide monetary aid for different causes, such as transport of indigenous leaders to conferences, projects to improve communities, and sustainability improvements.
- Training which involves better farming practices, best land use practices, and how to best market products for profit.

Non-Monetary Ways to Help Indigenous Peoples

Contact your representatives and ask them to increase support for implementation of the purposes of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

- UNDRIP “establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples.”⁴⁰ Ask your representatives to attend to the issues raised by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

⁴⁰ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

Contribute or ask your government to contribute to the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.⁴¹

- Government, non-governmental organizations, public and private groups, and everyday people can contribute. This fund helps Indigenous representatives travel to meetings and assemblies involving the expansion and protection of their rights, their position in decision-making processes and other relevant gatherings.

Push your government to ratify and support the implementation of ILO Convention No. 169⁴²

- Also known as *The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention*, Convention No. 169 was adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1989 in order to remove the “assimilationist orientation” of earlier standards, and recognize “the aspirations of (indigenous) peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain and develop their identities, languages and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live”. The United States and Canada have not ratified this convention.

Raise awareness

- The organizations below can supply more information. You can sign up to receive news from them. Becoming more informed by many sources can help sort out who is working with the people on the land to help them determine their own future.
 - *Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica* (COICA) the umbrella organization of the indigenous organisations of the Amazon Basin. Since its founding it has been advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights. <http://www.climatealliance.org/indigenous-partners/coica.html>

The recently formed *Amazon Emergency Fund*, fiscally sponsored by the Rainforest Foundation U.S., is coordinating with COICA. “Governance decisions will be carried out under strict coordination and communication by an established Governing Council which includes indigenous leaders from COICA and its member organizations, representatives of participating NGOS, donors, and advisors who together have formed the Founding Solidarity Circle.” <https://www.amazonemergencyfund.org/>⁴³ The fund is currently seeking to raise money to help traditional communities respond to the pandemic.

⁴¹ “UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.” OHCHR. Accessed December 12, 2019. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ipeoples/ipeoplesfund/pages/ipeoplesfundindex.aspx>.

⁴² “ILO Convention No. 169.” *Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca*, [URL](#), Accessed 8 Dec 2019.

⁴³ To join the Founding Solidarity Circle, make a major gift or to recommend grantees, please contact: amazonemergencyfund@gmail.com

- *The Center for World Indigenous Studies*, a global community of indigenous studies activists and scholars. <https://www.cwis.org/>
 - *Amazon Conservation*, which works to empower local peoples. For example, the organization partnered with local communities in Bolivia to develop a GIS program to manage their açai trees, design an innovative safety harness to make harvesting berries less dangerous, and teach best practices for harvesting the fruit. <https://www.amazonconservation.org/>
 - *Alianca da Terra*, which has created the Produzindo Certo Platform to “encourage real changes in the rural environment and offer the necessary transparency for companies that operate in agribusiness to fulfill their commitments to responsible production and, together with producers, offer confidence to consumers”. <https://www.aliancadaterra.org/>
 - *Amazon Conservation Team*, which describes its work as follows: “Our efforts begin in the field. We ask our partners what they want, what they need, and what they envision for their future. They identify which lands are most important to them, and they tell us what they need to protect them. From these discussions, we develop strategic courses of action - what we call initiatives - that lead us together towards our goals.” <https://www.amazonteam.org/>.
- Share what you learn; start conversations at your workplace or school.
 - **Restrict your purchases of products from Indigenous Peoples’ lands to those which are produced sustainably with the collaboration of local people**
 - Beef exports are driving a great deal of clearing of Amazon rainforest.⁴⁴ A study published in the American Chemical Society has found that in an average American diet, beef consumption creates 1,984 pounds of CO₂e annually.⁴⁵ Replacing beef with plants would reduce that figure 96 percent, bringing it down to just 73 pounds of CO₂e. Beef-lovers can reduce consumption for dietary health and buy locally sourced meat.

⁴⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/08/27/how-beef-demand-is-accelerating-amazons-deforestation-climate-peril/>

⁴⁵ Eshel, Gidon, Alon Shepon, Elad Noor, and Ron Milo. “Environmentally Optimal, Nutritionally Aware Beef Replacement Plant-Based Diets.” *Environmental Science & Technology* 50, no. 15 (2016): 8164–68. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.6b01006>.

- Write to corporations that engage in operations on indigenous lands and let them know you want them to work collaboratively with the free, prior and informed consent of the original peoples who live there, and only with their permission to operate on their land.
- Seek out products made by Indigenous Peoples and sold by companies that practice fair exchange.⁴⁶

In addition to voting with your dollar and helping to raise consciousness, you can write or encourage shareholder resolutions to end destructive and unjust practices. You can urge companies to align their practices with their stated values, and demand that they divest from Amazon crude oil. You can support companies who do the right thing. While it seems that one consumer cannot move the market, many can. If enough people let companies and others know that they only want to do business with responsible businesses, companies may discover an interest in being responsible.

We cannot here provide a list of who is doing the right thing. This is a work in progress. But below is a non-exhaustive list of U.S. organizations that claim to help the peoples of the Amazon. (If you wish to donate to the Amazon using *Amazon Smile*, (see below), you will have to select an organization with offices in the United States). All information is taken from the organizations' websites.

U.S. Organizations that Provide Aid to Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon

Amazon Watch

520 3rd Street, Suite 108,

Oakland, CA 94607

1 (510) 281 9020

Website: <https://amazonwatch.org/>



Amazon Watch offers environmental advocacy and training, with the goal of preventing the destruction of the Amazon. Amazon Watch targets sources of harmful mining practices, deforestation, fuel extraction, and the destruction of indigenous lands. They work to promote the knowledge and practices of Indigenous Peoples and challenge encroaching governments and corporations, and support lawsuits against environmental destruction.

Project examples:

- Research showing JPMorgan Chase and Black Rock are financing the continued expansion of fossil fuel companies into the Amazon
- Spreading the word about the Ecuadorian government dividing indigenous territory to be auctioned to corporations

⁴⁶ See, for example: <http://clac-comerciojusto.org/> and <https://www.fairtradefederation.org/>

- Generating opposition to the Belo Sun gold mine which would cover 620 square miles and harm three indigenous tribes
- Support of the people of Santa Clara de Uchunya fighting deforestation by palm oil companies on their ancestral lands.

You can help Amazon Watch by making a donation, supporting associated businesses, or attending their events. Any amount can be donated, and they accept both PayPal or credit card. Additionally, donations can be set as monthly installments.

Rainforest Action Network

425 Bush Street, Suite 300
 San Francisco, CA 94108
 Main Office: 415-398-4404
 Email: answers@ran.org
 Website: <https://www.ran.org/>

**RAINFOREST
 ACTION NETWORK**



Rainforest Action Network (RAN) investigates and pressures companies engaged in destructive trade with Op-eds, social media, peaceful protests, petitions, and direct communications. RAN also makes direct grants to indigenous and grassroots organizations that promote community-led solutions, recently providing over \$4.5 million dollars to more than 400 organizations around the world. RAN has developed guidelines for working with indigenous and “frontline” communities. When working to preserve forests, protect the climate, and uphold human rights “by challenging corporate power and systemic injustice” it “will not represent a company as being ‘socially / responsible’ if we are working with partners and frontlines communities and they are dissatisfied with attempts to resolve their concerns.” https://www.ran.org/partner_guidelines/.

Project examples:

- Keep Forests Standing Campaign, Exposing Brands and Banks Driving Deforestation
- Brands and Banks: Disclose Your Impacts petition
- Protect An Acre grants

You can help the Rainforest Action Network by making a one-time or monthly donation. The money that you donate can go directly towards their Climate Action Fund their Protect-An-Acre Program. Set donations start at \$25, and there is an option to set your own amount. PayPal or credit card are both accepted as payment options.

Rainforest Alliance

125 Broad Street, 9th Floor
 New York, NY 10004 USA
 Phone: +1 (212) 677-1900
 Fax: +1 (212) 677-2187



Email: info@ra.org

Website: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>

The Rainforest Alliance describes itself as “an alliance of farmers, forest communities, companies and consumers committed to creating a world where people and nature thrive in harmony.” Two million farmers in 76 countries follow their standards which include environmental integrity and human rights, and two million hectares are covered by their “integrated landscape management” for conserving biodiversity and improving rural livelihoods.

Project examples:

- RAN has just released a new certification for responsible production, to optimize accuracy, credibility and consistency in the use of their brand. <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Rainforest-Alliance-Labeling-and-Tracemarks-Policy-May-2020-1.pdf>
- Sustainable farming projects in a community forestry concession in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve
- The FarmGrow app, which uses digital information access to help farmers assess conditions and do multi-year planning. In 2019 Rainforest Alliance held an international competition in 2019 to develop a remote-sensing data function for the app, to incorporate satellite, radar or drone data.

You can donate to Rainforest Alliance directly through their website. Make a one time or monthly monetary donation. The money is used to help the Rainforest Alliance work with local communities to conserve rainforests. Set donations start at \$25, and there is an option to set your own amount. By donating \$1000 or above, you can become a “Canopy Associate” and receive exclusive benefits, including updates on the impact of your contributions and opportunities to connect with other community members during special events.

Rainforest Foundation

1000 Dean Street, Suite 430

Brooklyn, NY 11238

(212) 431-9098

rainforestfoundation@rffny.org



The Rainforest Foundation “works on-the-ground to secure land rights for indigenous people. We strengthen indigenous land security and train indigenous communities to use technology to protect their forests. By investing directly in indigenous communities, we connect people who are deeply motivated to conserve their ancestral lands with the tools, training, and resources

necessary to protect their rainforests... rainforests protected by Indigenous communities have the lowest rates of deforestation in Central and South America.”

Project Example:

Turning Information into Action “Rainforest Foundation-trained indigenous technicians in the Tech and Rights Hub compile and analyze satellite data to detect possible deforestation, and then distribute reports via USB drives and email to local communities. Indigenous monitors in each community use the reports to investigate possible incursions and document any deforestation or illegal activities using specialized apps on their smartphones.”

Reporting to community assemblies and to networks of communities compiles the data and advocates with the state. “The communities use a consensus model to decide on the appropriate response and take action. Each community is in charge. Each decides how they want to fight back against deforestation.”

Rainforest Foundation partners with the Organization of the People of the Eastern Amazon (ORPIO), the World Resources Institute, and Columbia University to collect, “analyze, and systematize the data and results to determine which interventions are working and improve the impact and efficiency of the program.”

Donate at <https://rainforestfoundation.networkforgood.com/projects/99005-amazon-emergency-fund>.

Cultural Survival

2067 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02140

(617) 441-5400

Website: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/>

Cultural Survival



Cultural Survival’s Advocacy Program “supports Indigenous Peoples around the globe by amplifying grassroots movements to bring awareness and international pressure to their struggles while enhancing Indigenous communities’ capacity, always at the invitation of community leaders, to demand and assert their rights outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since 2005, Cultural Survival has held consultative status with UN Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOC).” The organization provides expert testimony, coordinates Indigenous participation in international bodies, and reports to the Human Rights Council. The groups

performs investigation and communication of their findings to the public through such projects as Indigenous Rights Radio, and has provided grants and technical assistance to over 350 Indigenous-led projects of advocacy and development in 64 countries.

Project examples:

- Submitted a report with recommendations to the UN on mitigating ongoing violence against the Indigenous Peoples of Columbia
- Advocated for “human rights defender” Daniel Pascual Hernández, who spoke against the creation of a cement manufacturing plant in Guatemala.
- Reporting on violent repression by police special forces against hortaliceras, Mapuche women who have traditionally sold home-grown fruits and vegetables on the streets of Temuco, Chile.

Set donations start at \$25, and there is an option to set your own amount. You can make a monthly or one-time donation. Additionally, you can donate stock or other securities or intern/volunteer for cultural survival.

Survival International (USA HQ)

PO Box 26345
San Francisco, CA 94126
510 858 3950
info.usa@survivalinternational.org
<https://www.survivalinternational.org/info>



Survival International states that their mission is to “stop loggers, miners, and oil companies from destroying tribal lands, lives and livelihoods across the globe. We lobby governments to recognise indigenous land rights. We document and expose the atrocities committed against tribal people and take direct action to stop them.” The group points to over 200 victories since 1969, but notes that “our work is far from over and we need your help.”

Project examples:

- Uncontacted tribes. “There are more than a hundred uncontacted tribes around the world. They are a vitally important part of humankind’s diversity, but they face catastrophe unless their land is protected. We’re doing everything we can to secure their land for them, and to let them live.”
- Survival has supported the Yanomami, the largest relatively isolated tribe in South America, working with tribal shaman Davi Kopenawa and Pro-Yanomami Commission on the campaign for the demarcation of Yanomami territory, supporting their health and education projects, and working on the [#StopBrazilsGenocide campaign](#).

If You Use Amazon to Buy Products

You can choose to donate to the real Amazon through *Amazon Smile*. *Amazon Smile* is a method by which a consumer using the Amazon company system can donate money to organizations incorporated in the US. You can choose the organizations listed above that provide aid to the indigenous people who live in the Amazon.

Because only 0.5% of the purchase cost goes to the charity, it makes sense to take complementary action. After you donate through Amazon Smile, you can write to the company's headquarters to urge them to donate larger amounts to the people of the Amazon. You can urge others to do the same. Amazon has profited greatly from use of the name Amazon. It can be urged to use some of its vast resources to help preserve the land with which it identifies.

Those who use the Amazon system and who recognize the importance of protecting the Amazon, can communicate their perspective to the company by writing to:

Amazon.com Inc.
410 Terry Ave North
Seattle, Washington 98109

It is also easy to call corporate headquarters at (206) 266-1000, or to send a fax to (206) 266-7010. Additionally, customers can share their opinion by posting comments that other customers can read. See: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/community-help/official-comment-guidelines>.

Sending Money To the Yanomami

Hutukara Association

The Association, founded in 2004, is led by Kopenawa but governed by a General Assembly, Board of Directors and Council of Regional Representatives. It receives support from ISA. Hutukara is currently seeking donations for radiophones to improve communications between members. Crafts, such as handwoven baskets, are for sale on the site: <http://hutukara.org/>

When asked how to send money to the Yanomami, Coutinho consulted with Krenak and Kopenawa, and was told to send it through the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA). This information was received from ISA's Marcos Wesley in late 2018. The ISA official responsible for working with the Yanomami is Matthieu Lena.

If choosing this option, it is advisable to first email Lena and Wesley to confirm what will happen with donations. Marcos Wesley de Oliveira: marcos@socioambiental.org; Matthieu Jean Marie Lena: matthieu@socioambiental.org>

Banco: Banco do Brasil
Agência: Monte Caburaí
Endereço: Avenida Ville Roy, 5156
Bairro São Francisco
69306-665 Boa Vista - RR
Brasil
Agência: 2617-4
Conta corrente 24190-3
Swift: BRASBRRJBHE
Iban: BR0800000000026170000241903C1

Other Organizations

The troubles faced by the indigenous people of the Amazon are shared with indigenous people around the world. There are many foundations fighting for people who may otherwise find themselves voiceless in the First World conversation. Following is a very brief list of groups that work internationally and in North America. Most of these groups are focused on providing legal assistance. These are only examples and is not by any means an exhaustive list.

International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs

Prinsessegade 29 B, 3rd floor
DK 1422, Copenhagen
Denmark
(+45) 53 73 28 30
Website: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/>



IWGIA's mission is to advocate and locally promote the rights of indigenous people. By protecting their rights, indigenous people's societies have the freedom to develop in the way that they want and have a say in decisions that affect their ways of life and land.

The International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs was instrumental in the formation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the creation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They supported the work for indigenous people in Africa to have their rights recognized by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

This foundation currently offers three different donation types: DIBS, PayPal, and credit cards like MasterCard and Visa. Specific values are possible, but payments are in euro. There is a monthly donation option ranging from 10 to 30 euro. Additionally, they offer a member option which is 30 euro a year. A member status lets you interact with other members in the IWGIA forum, run to be a board member, and attend biennial member's meetings.

You can also help IWGIA by sharing their publications in order to help raise awareness.

New World Foundation

New World Foundation
680 West End Avenue,
#1C New York, NY 10025
+1 (212) 249 1023
<https://newwf.org>



New World Foundation overall goal is a “democratic future for the United States”. The organization works for this goal by fighting against voter suppression, economic inequality, anti-union bills, poor public education, and environmental abuses and dysregulation. Their work is especially important to low income communities as well as indigenous populations.

Native American Rights Fund (NARF)

1507 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302-6296
(303) 447-8760
Website: <https://www.narf.org>



NARF's primary mission is protecting the rights of America's native peoples by offering legal assistance to “Indian tribes, organizations, and individuals nationwide who might otherwise have gone without adequate representation.” NARF has assisted over 250 tribes by protecting inherent sovereignty, helping tribes continue their traditions, assuring the return of remains and burial goods from museums and historical societies, and protecting the voting rights of Native Americans.

Monthly or one time donations can be made directly on their website (<https://www.narf.org>), starting at 25\$ or a custom amount of your choosing. They accept both credit card and paypal. Additionally, you can support them by buying merchandise on their online store. “Proceeds from the sale of NARF merchandise go directly to helping defend the rights of Indian tribes, organizations, and individuals nationwide.

Partnership with Native Americans (PWNA)

16415 Addison Rd

Addison, TX 75001-3210

(800) 416-8102

Website: <http://www.nativepartnership.org>



PWNA promotes sustainable, self-sufficient Native American communities that are located on “remote, isolated and impoverished reservations. They work to provide “Material aid, educational support, and community-based services.” PWNA works to ensure that supplies make their way directly to the people who need them.

Donations can be made directly on their website, starting at 25\$ or sent in by mail using a printable donation form provided by their website.

Indian Law Resource Center

602 North Ewing Street

Helena, MT 59601

(406) 449-2006

MT@indianlaw.org

Website: indianlaw.org



The Indian Law Resource Center offers legal assistance to Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. Their goal is to provide assistance to Indigenous Peoples who seek to protect their land, cultures, and way of life. They are a nonprofit foundation that works solely for the goal of assisting “Indian and other Native nations and tribes” in their fights to protect their lands, heritage, and human rights. They offer legal advocacy throughout the Americas and are currently working alongside the Indigenous Peoples in Brazil and the Amazon. By offering legal representation, the Indian Law Resource Center allows indigenous communities to fight for themselves and shape their own future.

Donations can be made directly on their website, with the option of donating your desired amount. Additionally, you can decide which projects will receive your donation. In addition, they also provide non-monetary ways to help.

Evaluating organizations

This is not an exhaustive guide to organizations that can accept donations to aid the peoples of the Amazon rainforest. We hope this introduction will encourage readers to undertake their own research. In doing so, it is important to know that there are organizations that check the validity of claims by charities. You can see if the organization has been reviewed or awarded by websites such as:

- Guidestar
 - Charity Watch
 - Charity Navigator
 - Great NonProfits
-
- Check to see if the organization posts regular news updates on their website
 - Check to see if they have partnerships with other organizations
 - Check to see if the organization directly works with indigenous people or consults with them to ensure that the organization is representing their wishes:
 - check their news, about us, or our work pages which typically contain information on recent work
 - contact the organization with questions
 - search the web for stories about the organization's work

Thank You For Reading This

The difficulties of first peoples can appear distant from our “First World” lives. But overlooking the violence that is being done to the lives, lands and traditions of “First Peoples” is irresponsible. That it may be difficult for us to see their struggle does not excuse unwillingness to try. Indigenous Peoples may be out of our line of sight, but the roots of their problems are close to home. What we buy, where we invest, who we support seem like local decisions, but their effects can be widespread. Our actions can have a ripple effect that cascades down to the overlooked and underrepresented. In that same vein, our ability to help is just as powerful. We hope that if you learn about the work of the organizations noted in this introduction, and others that you can discover through pursuing an interest, that this will provide a sense of connection to other peoples in the world. Taken together, we all comprise the miracle of humankind, which cannot be understood otherwise. Being an ally in the fight to help Indigenous Peoples stay on their land is a way of acting on a sense of loyalty to the essence of humanity, and because we have much to learn from peoples who have lived sustainably on their land for millenia, perhaps it can be part of an awakening that the developed world sorely needs. We are grateful for your attention to these matters, and we thank you in advance for any action you take honoring the spirit with which this is written.

Please share any comments or relevant information by writing to: rreibste@bu.edu, with “Indigenous Peoples” in the subject line. Thank you for your efforts!