



# VIRTUAL MEETING OF COICA YOUTHS

MAY - JUNE 2020



COORDINADORA DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES  
INDÍGENAS DE LA CUENCA AMAZÓNICA

## **VIRTUAL MEETING OF COICA YOUTHS 2020**

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VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE YOUTHS OF  
THE COORDINATOR OF INDIGENOUS  
ORGANIZATIONS OF THE AMAZON BASIN - COICA



Traditional game, Jawalla community - Guyana.

“To talk about the indigenous youth, means going beyond ages. It means understanding them within diversity as part of a stage in which social and cultural aspects determine the role they play in their community as he or she acts as an agent of change that questions, proposes and supports management and leadership. Therefore, the inclusion of youth in social, organizational and decision-making processes is essential for an equitable and just society.” **COICA.**



## PRESENTATION



On March 14 of this year, COICA celebrated 36 years of organizational work and permanent struggle in the 9 countries of the Amazon basin. It was established in view of the social, cultural, environmental, economic and political reality of the Indigenous peoples. During this time, we have made great achievements in rights, but we have also faced adverse situations which have limited the fulfillment of our mission.

For Indigenous peoples, life is a spiral that has a beginning but not an end. In the course of time and space, the constant is change and renewal. We are in times of change and it is important to sow new seeds in order to have a full harvest. In this sense, the current management team of COICA is committed to, and bet its actions in, the involvement and participation of Indigenous boy, girls and youth in organizational processes and decision-making. The continuity of our struggles and the future of our organizations, peoples and our planet depend on the current work that we undertake with the current generations.

One of the mandates of the X CONGRESS OF COICA that took place in Macapá - Brazil in July 2018, was to strengthen the participation of Indigenous women and youth of the Amazon. Thus, it is our moral, political and organizational obligation to generate strategies to fulfill it. We are working hard to comply with all established mandates and this VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COICA YOUTH is one of the first spaces where the youth of the 9 countries of the Amazon basin can actively participate in the analysis and debate of their problems, realities, dreams and proposals, in spite of their technological limitations.

This event leaves us with lessons and learning as well as great challenges. As organizations, leaders and politicians, it is our duty to work in a coordinated and united manner to make the dreams and proposals of the Indigenous youth of the Amazon basin a reality.

I congratulate all the participating youth for their commitment, time and dedication. Welcome to the 'Maloka<sup>1</sup> Mayor', our big house - COICA.

In conclusion and on behalf of COICA, I wish to express deep gratitude to HIVOS for their trust and permanent support to the actions destined to benefit the Amazon, as without their contribution, this "VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COICA YOUTH" would not have been possible.

**Live Amazon, safe humanity**

**José Gregorio Díaz Mirabal  
GENERAL COORDINATOR OF COICA**

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<sup>1</sup> A maloka is a traditional building for family and communal use. It is used by Indigenous peoples in the Amazon region.

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

How many times have we heard politicians, leaders and advocates say with absolute certainty that children and youth are the future of communities, of the nation, and the world? The answer is obvious. However, it must be immediately clarified that, youth are also part of the present and they are one of the most affected generations due to the constant threats to their territories, mainly by the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources through extractive activities in complicity with governments. Therefore, attention must be given to them through governmental, organizational and international policies to aid the indigenous children and youth.

In view of this situation, the current management team of COICA seeks to undertake a model that promotes the involvement and participation of the youth of the Amazon territory. A space in permanent construction, favoring real connection with the history and the struggle that their grandfathers, grandmothers and parents undertook in the past, empowering themselves in their culture, language, traditions and roots in order that they may share their own emotions, feelings, proposals and deepest dreams. The fact that indigenous youth are part of decision making and create solutions in sustainable human development is key to the present and future of Indigenous peoples.

In this context and in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin - COICA, with the support of the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries - HIVOS, carried out the VIRTUAL MEETING OF COICA YOUTHS in the months of May and June of 2020 with the objective of promoting active participation of the youth within the structural organization of Indigenous peoples. There, the youth of the 9 countries of the Amazon basin debated, analyzed and shared experiences on four main very important topics for the Indigenous peoples.

Based on the theoretical and practical perspectives of the participants, this document gathers the problems, realities, proposals and demands expressed by the indigenous youth of the Amazon and calls on leaders, politicians, organizations and allies to join forces to crystalize the dreams of the youths.

In times of transformation, it is necessary to focus efforts on current and future generations to guarantee the continuity of our legacy and the construction of a more respectful and equitable society in defense of the Amazon to ensure the survival of humanity.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the English translation of the original document in Spanish. Most expressions have been kept, offering as much possible the real voice of the youth who were part of this process.

## METHODOLOGY

The VIRTUAL MEETING OF COICA YOUTHS gathered Indigenous men and women between the ages of 16 and 35, all from the 9 Amazon countries, namely: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Guyana, French Guiana and Suriname.

The call was executed through the youth local coordinators, officially delegated by their organizations in the 9 Amazon countries. They, in turn, coordinated the participation of youth representatives in the territory, assuring participation in accordance with the governance and organizational structure of COICA.

Making use of a technological platform which facilitated simultaneous interpretation from Spanish to French, English and Portuguese, 4 webinars were held with the following topics: **1) Identity and Territory, 2) Knowledge and Ancestral Wisdom, 3) Intercultural Education and 4) Youth and Organizational Policy.** Each topic was presented by an expert and one young person shared his or her practical experience on the subject. Then the topic was discussed, and the problems and proposals were raised by all the participants.

In this regard and, based on the interchange of the experiences generated, the following reflections and lessons learned are presented below, based on the contributions of the indigenous youth from the nine countries of the Amazon basin during this virtual event.



# Identity and Territory





## 1.- IDENTITY AND TERRITORY:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity in accordance with their customs and traditions, thus ensuring the preservation of their culture and people.

Considering that, in the current historic time there are infinite factors that influence the constant and sudden changes in society; knowing who we are and where we come from is a tool of strength and resistance, according to the sense of belonging of Indigenous peoples.





Cleaning and healing ritual, Kichwa People of Rukullakta, Napo - Ecuador.

Contextualizing the analysis and the contributions generated, from the worldview<sup>3</sup> of the Indigenous people, the youth define **identity** as the own *recognition of personal being, of being connected with ones history, territory, language, clothing, knowledge and wisdom. It covers all cultural expressions that identify a person, community and peoples; a fact that differentiates one culture from another.*

*"Identity are all of those characteristics that differentiates us from the rest of the world and characterizes us as Indigenous. It includes our language, territory, traditions and culture."*

**Romario Hastings, Akawaio people - Guyana.**

<sup>3</sup> Along this document "worldview" corresponds to the terminology "cosmovision" in Spanish.

Young Indigenous man of the Gavião People.



For Indigenous peoples, identity is closely connected to Mother Earth, which provides us knowledge and wisdom, a fundamental element in creating our worldview and where everything is connected.

Although culture is dynamic, the key principles of the identity of Indigenous peoples are unity, reciprocity, sense of community, collective interests, the minga<sup>4</sup> and protection of the environment as these essential values contribute to the current and future generations of the Amazon basin forging ourselves as defenders of the jungle and the territory; knowing that the balance of life that depends on it.

The concept of identity incorporates ownership of space for the development of self-determination, cultural practices, the sense of belonging and the worldview of each people. It is in these categories that the concepts of identity and territory are closely linked.

*"We carry our identity within us, our culture is rooted in our blood, we know who we are and where we are going. No matter where we live, we must always maintain our customs and our knowledge so that we can persist over time."*

**Delfín Chiriapa, Shuar nationality - Ecuador.**

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<sup>4</sup> Minga is a tradition of community or collective volunteer work for social utility or reciprocal purposes. Is an indigenous tradition of cooperation and voluntary work for the common good.



**Gavião People - Brazil.**

For the youth of the Amazon basin, **territory** is the integral space where all beings coexist in harmony. From the worldview of the Indigenous peoples is where both spiritual and physical, both past and present, nature and humans are brought together to obtain balance for good living and a full life.

Therefore, to guarantee our territory is to safeguard our identity. However, for the Indigenous peoples that inhabit the Amazon basin, being part of a unique territory in the world, with ample biodiversity and valuable natural resources, has been a challenge throughout history due to external threats, either by private companies or by governments which have continually violated our rights under the shield of "development".

Historically, colonization processes have violated our rights, not because we are weak or needy, but because of the application of extractivism policies, implemented in our territories in detriment to those of us who live there, resulting in the expropriation of great wealth, generating suffering and abandonment in the indigenous communities; repeating this throughout history.

*"We are living through a process of invasion of our territories during the pandemic and our Indigenous peoples are being infected by the invaders.*

*Our government in Brazil protects neither our rights nor our territory. It must therefore be clear that there exists no way to maintain our identity or our culture without the guarantee of our territories."*

**Alana Costa Silva Manchineri,  
Manchineri people – Brazil.**



## Problems identified regarding identity and territory:

- One of the biggest and common problems in the territory is the incursion of legal and illegal oil, mining and logging companies as, unfortunately, the competent ministries do not act in a timely manner. These events, over the years, have influenced the way of life of our peoples. Large companies and governments have offered economic aid in exchange for extraction of resources, but in general we are left with the affectation to the jungle, to the rivers, animals and in a total abandonment. In the mines, for examples, we, as Indigenous peoples are treated as slaves and prostitution has become a mean of survival in our communities.

Indigenous youth, as part of the Amazon territory, recognize that communities live with many limitations such as lack of transportation, education, health and basic services. The reality in which we live is bleak. In none of the 9 Amazon countries has extractivism generated development for the Indigenous peoples.

*"Oil companies have always offered basic services, but they have never complied. However, in spite of all the change and affectation, we continue to take care of our territory as it is our home, our pharmacy. We must take care of it not just for the present generations, but above all for the future generations."*

**Gladys Alvarado Nenquimo, Waorani nationality – Ecuador.**



● Governments do not guarantee the rights of Indigenous peoples, as stipulated in the different international agreements and treaties. This situation has become even more evident during the pandemic, in which the discrimination and lack of attention in which we live is very visible. We do not have adequate services, health infrastructure or education. The COVID-19 prevention protocols and other policies implemented are not adapted to the cultural, social, geographical and territorial reality of Indigenous peoples. They do not take into account our languages, customs and traditions, which is why the few actions that reach the communities by the governments fail.

One of the reasons that determine this situation is the lack of political good will, as well as scarce representation in large decision-making spaces. Public officials do not come from the Indigenous peoples and those who do, forget their place of origin influenced by the western system.

*“We do not demand more than anyone else - only adequate attention where our Indigenous peoples feel supported and are part of the governments.”*

**Jhomar Maynas, Shipibo people – Peru.**



**Sipaliwini community, border between Brazil and Suriname.**

- Globalization and the new dynamics of society are factors that influence changes in the way communities live, which leads to changes in practices and traditions, often resulting in their disappearance, and with them the sense of belonging or identity.
- The negative influence of external agents that break into the community harmony and ways of life, have made us dependent on the system. Given the precarious conditions in which we often live, and in search of better days and to improve our lives, adolescents and youth migrate to cities in search of a better education. In these circumstances, when we feel beaten and hit by discrimination, exclusion and adaptation entails a drastic change in lifestyle combined with limited economic resources.

*"In my experience, in the process of finalizing my university studies there were many difficulties as I was far from my community and having to adapt to the western world. However, over time, I have actively participated in the organization which has been fundamental for the revaluation of my culture and my identity."*

**Genaro Escalante, Shipibo people - Peru.**



**Amarîni Arutâ Apurinã community - Brazil.**

● Young people are also affected when state entities or foreign organizations present policies or projects aimed at intervening in our communities, and only the leaders or presidents of our organizations are the ones making decisions regarding these interventions. Youths are not valued as having the capacity and determination to influence the destinies of our territories. Under these circumstances, we want our word to be recognized - our voice to be heard.

It is essential that, at the community, organizational and state levels, Indigenous youth are represented and have an active part in decision-making processes.

*"In big decisions, we are not taken into account; the voices of the youth are not valid, much less the ones from women. We know that, traditionally, family or community decision-making belongs to adults and in most cases to men; but that must change."*

**Mireya Tsakimp, Shuar nationality - Ecuador.**





## What do we, the youth, propose in the face of these problems?

- We cannot blame only governments and foreign agents for our loss of identity. Actions must begin within ourselves to rescue all ancestral knowledges. We must be more curious and innovative and take actions in accordance with reality which will allow us to subsist as Indigenous peoples.

Throughout history, knowledge has only been orally transmitted from generation to generation. However, now it is important that we begin to record and document everything that our grandfathers, grandmothers and parents know so that this knowledge can be shared with future generations. With the influence of so many external cultures, it is necessary that we design our own tools to guarantee the transmission of knowledge and wisdom of our peoples to strengthen our identity.





**Vaupés River - Colombia.**

● We must be youths that build an identity in pro of the fight for our territories. Therefore, we must build our identity based on more than just academic titles and processes. Defense of our identity must be a priority no matter what difficulties may arise. We must be agents of change; allow us to build something more solid in our organizations and communities.

As youths, we must feel proud of our roots and our origins as it is the only thing that will allow us to revalue our customs and traditions. Our identity is what will give us the strength to confront the influence of factors such as discrimination.

*"Indigenous peoples are the guarantee of the world; if we did not exist, it is very likely that the Amazon as we know it, would not exist."*

**Hernán Nay Vargas, Tacana people - Bolivia.**

*"As youths, in the framework of interculturality, we can develop various types of enterprises such as tourism, gastronomy, etc., under the principles of the indigenous economy as an alternative of development with identity for Amazonian peoples."*

**Beisy Arana, Uwottuja people – Venezuela.**

- The organizations, governments and international allies must seek development proposals with identity; developing activities compatible with the practices, knowledges and ancestral wisdom or know-how of the Indigenous peoples.

Beyond the present economic needs, other alternatives should be sought that can be worked on in the territory and that should be implemented based on the principles of the peoples, such as reciprocity, solidarity, sustainability and cooperation.

- Based on the work that already exists in the communities linked to their own life plans, strategies must be included that focus on the revaluation of identity and, that based on this, spaces such as community assemblies or schools, where each member of the community plays a role; where boys and girls, adolescents, youth, men and women, grandfathers and grandmothers work collectively, getting involved in the transmission of knowledge, so that everyone can be empowered from an early age to strengthen their identity, as part of an Indigenous people that doesn't give up.

*"It is important that youths of the entire Amazon basin share our positions and thoughts. The more participation we have, the more we empower our identity as Indigenous youth."*

**Mariah Lall, Arawak people – Guyana.**



- This space provided to us by COICA has been enriching and important, as it has allowed the youth to build knowledge from our own worldview. We have been able to express our desires and dreams, allowing us to forge ourselves as leaders, knowing our origins and also learning to use the current tools of knowledge. In this sense, it is paramount that, in favor of the revitalization of the identity, this type of spaces, both virtual as in person, continue to be generated.
- One of the greatest limitations in our communities is limited access to new technologies and basic communication infrastructure, as this affects the participation of many of us. Our commitment is that, based on the knowledge we acquire, we replicate the experience to those who do not have access to technological infrastructure and whose voices are generally not heard.

*"These spaces help us to share our experiences and make the effort each one of us is making in their territory known, which encourages us to continue fighting for the defense of our territory and the preservation of our cultures."*

**Asdrúbal Cayap, Shuar nationality - Ecuador.**

**Chart 1:** Analysis of the problems of the first axis.

Identity and Territory	
<p>Based on the criteria and contributions previously analyzed, two central problems have become evident in relation to this first theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Loss of identity</li><li>● Invasion of territories</li></ul> <p>Which are derived from the following causes and whose effects are evident in the territory.</p>	
Causes	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Violation of Indigenous peoples' collective rights.</li><li>● Discrimination.</li><li>● Indiscriminate exploitation of resources through extractive activities.</li><li>● Globalization and imposition of the western model.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Exclusion and historical invisibility of Indigenous peoples.</li><li>● Loss of language and culture.</li><li>● Denial of identity.</li><li>● Socio-environmental and cultural damage in Indigenous peoples' territories.</li><li>● Lack of public policies with cultural relevance.</li><li>● Migration to the cities.</li><li>● Disinterest of youth to safeguard their identity.</li></ul>
Proposals made	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Generate socio-cultural spaces involving all community actors to strengthen and reevaluate identity.</li><li>● Return to the territory and strengthen community principles.</li><li>● Encourage permanent dialogue with grandfathers and grandmothers for the transmission of knowledges.</li><li>● Promote the exchange of experiences among youths.</li><li>● Generate development proposals with identity.</li><li>● Involve youth in the organizational and educational processes of the community.</li><li>● Document and put into writing the knowledges and wisdom of grandfathers and grandmothers.</li><li>● Include the strengthening and revaluation of identity in the life plans of the communities.</li></ul>	



# Knowledge And Ancestral Wisdom



## 2.- KNOWLEDGE AND ANCESTRAL WISDOM:

There are approximately 511 Indigenous peoples living in the Amazon basin, 66 of which live in voluntary isolation and initial contact<sup>5</sup>. Each one of them have their own territory, language, clothing, culture, knowledge and wisdom. They are owners of their own realities which establish their own vision of the world. Thus, in the Amazon there are as many worldviews as there are Indigenous peoples.

The worldview of the Indigenous peoples is based on the interrelationship with the environment around us, in which one lives in harmony with nature, where human beings are an integral part of. Where one does not possess, but rather protects. To live in the community in accordance with the worldview of the Indigenous peoples represents living in harmony, under the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, collectivity and in joint participation in mingas, cleaning fields, sowing and harvesting - activities that are performed with songs and rituals in gratitude to the jungle for the abundance that we receive from it.

Although each village has a different way of interpreting reality and each has their own particularities that distinguish them from the others, love and respect for Mother Earth and for all the elements that comprise it is what unites us all.

*“We can interpret our worldview as the interrelationship that exists between people and the environment. For indigenous peoples, both the physical and spiritual levels are related; (this is reflected) in all experiences we have with the community, the sacred basins, our customs in raising children, in cultivating and harvesting the ground and in the way we live our daily lives.”*

**Alexis Grefa, Amazon Kichwa nationality – Ecuador.**

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<sup>5</sup> COICA (Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin).





**Crafts Palikur, Kamuyeneh community - French Guiana.**

For us as youths, **ancestral knowledge and wisdom** are all the practices, traditions, ceremonies, uses and customs that indigenous peoples and communities possess, which have been transmitted from generation to generation for centuries. These are focused on the use of medicinal plants, agroecological calendars based on the protection and sustainable use of the territory, conflict resolution with community intervention, among others. Mainly, it has been preserved through oral transmission and practices between parents and children, within the framework of community coexistence.

*“The knowledge and wisdom of the Indigenous peoples are characterized by being transmitted from generation to generation through stories, myths, hunting and fishing practices, the use of ancestral medicine and coexistence with our jungle.”*

**Jenny Piruch, Shuar nationality – Ecuador.**



**Crafts Uwottuja People - Venezuela.**

Based on our own experience as youth, there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge, either positive or negative, represents the general information of certain aspects that can be acquired academically or through daily activities.

On the other hand, wisdom represents deep knowledge possessed by the elders, older ones, mother midwives, healers, sages and wise men, who after a long process of connection with the cosmos, the spirits and Mother Earth, acquire the wisdom that harmonizes the community.

By talking to our elders, one acquires the wisdom of the ancestors. However, the most important thing is to put it into practice. This ancestral wisdom cannot be acquired all of a sudden. It represents a whole process and must be built in the community and in the territory - in direct connection with the principles as Indigenous peoples and Mother Earth.

*"Everything depends on the interest one has, on what one inculcates in one's thought; that is where wisdom comes from; knowledge is what a teacher teaches one, wisdom comes from effort."*

**Salvador Miraña, Miraña people - Colombia.**



## What are the challenges that youth face in order to preserve ancestral knowledge and wisdom?

- The world of indigenous youths turns around these conceptions and principles that govern Indigenous peoples. However, there is a predominant worldview that insists in separating human beings from nature, the spiritual from the physical, and where only what is seen by the eyes exists; confirming that Indigenous peoples worldview throughout history has been denied and minimized, and along with it, the ancestral knowledge and wisdom, which has been acquired through years and years of interrelation with nature.



**Use of the Tapiyà ant in ritual,  
Marakè - French Guiana.**



● It is evident that when inquiring information regarding the worldview of Indigenous peoples, most of the published documents belong to people outside the communities. Professionals intrude into the territories and the ways of life of the peoples to gather information that is generally worked under a western vision, without a joint analysis and depending on short periods of time, making it difficult to make a real diagnosis. But, why are we not the ones writing our own and true history, as we are the ones who possess the knowledge, who feel our realities and needs?

We, Indigenous peoples, have always been subjects of research. They take hold of our knowledge, they place us in museums, in statistics, and from the outside everyone has an opinion on what we should or should not do.

*"We must work more on ancestral knowledge and ancestral wisdom to leave a trail as Indigenous youth. As our cultures are mostly oral, in these times of the internet it would be convenient to keep records, create books and videos of our practices and be able to transmit the wisdom of our ancestors, instead of letting anthropologists and ancient books speak about our culture."*

**Yann Kayamaré, Kalin'a people – French Guiana.**



● However, we recognize our own fault in this issue of revaluation of knowledge and wisdom. We consider that a large part of the current generation is no longer concerned that their grandparents are dying and taking along with them the wisdom of our peoples, which has been transmitted throughout the years. In many cases, we prefer a conventional doctor or pharmacy and do not learn about the benefits of the plants of the jungle. The education that we are part of changes our way of thinking and living. This happens when we do not have a strong identity and for fear of discrimination, many prefer to deny their roots, do not speak their language and are ashamed to say that they come from an Indigenous community.

● Another issue is when professionals who are trained in our own communities, when they go to the city, they don't return. They forget their people and those who do return have a total lack of commitment. They impose their new beliefs influenced by the external world that criticize our customs, and want to generate a change not adapted to the worldview of the Indigenous peoples.

*"It is very important for us as young people to talk with our grandparents, to learn, to get to know; to be taught the ancestral knowledge that is very important for our future, for our people, for our territories. This is the way our ancestors have been resisting until now. This ancestral wisdom can only be taught by them, our grandparents, our shamans<sup>6</sup> and the wise men of each village."*

**María Arana, Uwottuja people - Venezuela.**

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<sup>6</sup> A person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits.





● As we deepen on knowledge and ancestral wisdom, it has been inevitable that we young people analyze the situation we are currently living regarding COVID-19. The Indigenous peoples in the 9 Amazonian countries are being terribly affected, especially the communities on the borders. This pandemic has brought to light the historical abandonment in which we live by the governments, the lack of basic service infrastructure and the exploitation of our territories, which as a whole has aggravated our survival.

The infections in our communities are not counted in the statistics as most of us have preferred to stay at home and stick to our own knowledge and wisdom, making use of ancestral medicine and practices, as many of those close to us who went to hospitals and, after not receiving adequate care, returned in ashes. In this time of pandemic, ancestral medicine is helping us to resist and fight this virus which, like most threats, comes from outside.

*"This situation hurts. Seeing that there are nefarious authorities who don't care about the Indigenous peoples and don't provide any assistance. But we can take care of ourselves and protect our families with the use and consumption of ancestral medicine given to us by the 'Pachamama'".*

**Wayra Samuel Shiguango, Amazon Kichwa nationality – Ecuador.**

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<sup>7</sup> Pachamama is a concept that comes from the Quechua language. "Pacha" can be translated as "world" or "Earth", while mama is equivalent to "mother". Thus, Pachamama is understood as Mother Earth.

## What do we, the Indigenous youth, propose to solve this problem?

In all aspects analyzed by the Indigenous youth, it is evident that the governments have turned their backs on us, trying to overshadow and suppress us, constantly violating our rights. Therefore, we, the youth, ask ourselves: How are we preparing to face the adverse circumstances that arise in our territories, which are increasingly stronger and mainly affect the disappearance of our knowledge and wisdom?



Cassava elaboration - Guyana.

- Our first task is to return to our roots, to the communities to strengthen and empower ourselves, to work deeply on our identity. There are various ways for adapting to the current reality and at the same time for recovering the practices and traditions of our peoples. Taking as a basis the millennial wisdom and combining it with what has been learned in the academy, without losing sight that the primary duty is the protection of our peoples. Before implementing any activity, even for economic purposes, it is essential that we work on strengthening and recovering our identity.

*“Young people are constantly building their knowledge to strengthen our communities. These spaces contribute significantly to this in view of the many important issues to discuss and analyze.”*

**Nathalia Bacca, Inga people – Colombia.**



**Guarayos People, Beni - Bolivia.**

*“As an indigenous woman I began to work on the issue of community tourism, an Indigenous tourism, and in that process, we began to work with the grandmothers and grandfathers, to rescue what they thought about this. In this case focused on bird watching, we started with this question and determined that birds for Indigenous people are of vital importance; in this way we began to rescue all that wisdom and ancestral knowledge.”*

**Zaiza Rodríguez,  
Cubeo people - Colombia.**

● In view of the conflict between protecting Mother Earth, the conservation of our ancestral wisdom and providing for our economic needs, we view it is essential to consider development projects with identity. In this sense, rural tourism projects are considered as an ideal example of how an activity, mainly economic, can serve as an alternative to develop and promote the values of Indigenous peoples, sharing knowledge and wisdom in order to transmit them to new generations.

Tourist initiatives analyzed here have considered, from the beginning, the worldview of the community involved. Starting with an analysis of how the community members interpret the tourist activity, the contribution of each of its members, from children to the grandfathers and grandmothers, is analyzed, integrating all the elements of the Mother Earth to implement each of the activities in a sustainable way.

- Moreover, as indicated in the previous theme, considering that the revitalization of ancestral knowledge and wisdom is essential for strengthening our identity, we insist on the need to begin writing and documenting our myths, legends, principles and medicinal use of plants. Furthermore, we must research about our language, clothing, gastronomy, music, dance and so many other practices that are maintained in each village and others that have been lost over time but are in time to be revalued. This activity is framed as one of the greatest challenges for the current Indigenous youth of the Amazon basin.

*"It is our duty as Indigenous youth to use alternative tools to protect our values, our principles and cultural legacy we have inherited. We can combine what we have learned in the academies with the wisdom of our peoples, our communities and our grandparents. It is important to record information, although the tradition is oral; without changing the essential, we can start writing."*

**Yensi Franco, Jivi people - Venezuela.**

One weakness is that we have nothing in writing. For this reason, we insist that, according to the possibilities, we the youth have the responsibility to make the world know who we are, our way of thinking, the principles and that oral heritage that we have received from the Indigenous peoples and our ancestors. We have sufficient tools to do so, we speak our native languages and also foreign languages. We know the western customs together with our knowledge and ancestral wisdom, with which, indigenous youth can build together a solid structure that allows us to advance in the protection of our peoples.





- Based on the analysis of our realities, repeated in each country of the Amazon basin, we, the youth, are aware that the struggle is permanent for the Indigenous peoples.

We are clear that the reality we face is not new. Throughout history, our peoples have resisted multiple external threats, such as the violation of our rights, invasion of our territories and now the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, we are convinced that, from our trenches, the generation of these spaces, where we can share and create proposals for the benefit of our peoples, will aid us in our resistance, in safeguarding our knowledge and wisdom and in the defense of our territories.

*"All that knowledge that is still preserved in the communities can be used as a school, to teach children and young people through training processes, forged from the wisdom of our elders."*

**Rodolfo Gómez, Marui people – Colombia.**





**Maloka, Peleletpoe community - Suriname.**

● Furthermore, in order to strengthen our actions in the territory, we, the youth, propose that COICA, as a regional organization of the 9 Amazon countries, create a technological platform to which all the indigenous youth have access to and where we can share our personal and organizational experiences. The objective would be that successful practices can be replicated, and we can all constantly give feedback with our own knowledge, generated from the Amazon territory, thus influencing the preservation of ancestral knowledge and wisdom.

*"I would like to invite you to reflect on what we are experiencing and to analyze how we, the youth, are going to support our leaders and our representatives. We have the capacity to propose ideas from our worldviews, our own thinking, our law of origin, to overcome the realities that have affected us throughout history."*

**Vanessa Teteye, Bora people – Colombia.**



Wayampi traditional ceremony - French Guiana.

● Finally, we insist that, despite the fact that youth, leaders and communities defend our territories, we work on strengthening our identity and preserving our ancestral knowledge and wisdom. Progress will not be made if external agents and governments constantly attack and violate our rights. For this reason, we demand that action be taken, that the current legislation in protecting Indigenous peoples be complied with for real change in the territory, and that we can live together in a more just and inclusive society that respects diversity.

Despite the oppression and influence of external models, the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples has been preserved over time, transmitted from generation to generation. In this way, many youths are still here, proud of our roots and promoting actions in the territory that contribute to our permanence in time and space.

**Chart 2:** Analysis of the problems of the second axis.

Ancestral knowledge and wisdom	
<p>Very connected to the first theme, the contributions made have been framed within a central problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Loss of ancestral knowledge and wisdom</li></ul> <p>Causes and effects of which are detailed below:</p>	
Causes	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Loss and denial of identity.</li><li>● Discrimination and exclusion.</li><li>● Invasion and indiscriminate intervention of territories.</li><li>● Globalization and imposition of western cultures.</li><li>● Migration to cities.</li><li>● Lack of public policies with cultural relevance.</li><li>● Insufficient communication means.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Devaluation and disinterest in safeguarding ancestral knowledge and wisdom.</li><li>● Preference for western practices.</li><li>● Harm to biodiversity.</li><li>● Acceleration of climate change.</li><li>● Abandonment of the territory.</li><li>● Absence of written records of ancestral knowledge and know-how.</li><li>● Limited access to information.</li></ul>
Proposals made	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Record and document the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples.</li><li>● Generate our own spaces of participation involving all members of the community.</li><li>● Revalue ancient wisdom through the adequate use of western tools and knowledge.</li><li>● Compliance by States with current legislation that protects Indigenous peoples.</li><li>● Develop projects and initiatives that take into account the principles of Indigenous peoples, such as rural or community tourism.</li><li>● Create a technological platform for the exchange of experiences in all 9 countries.</li></ul>	



# Intercultural Education

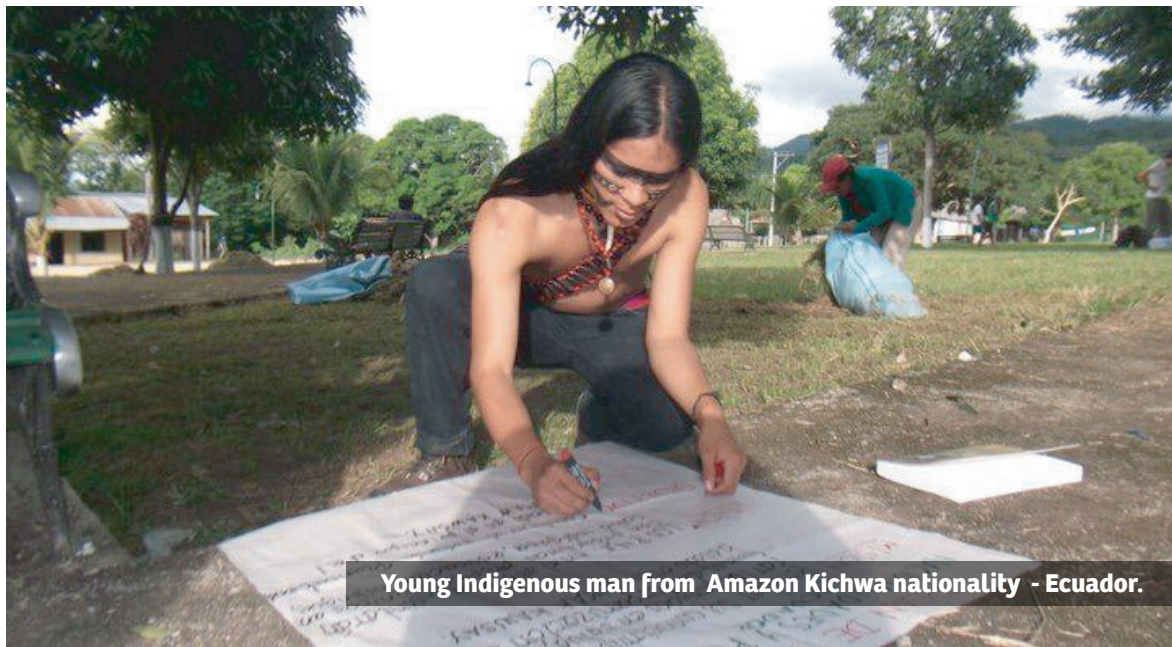


### 3.- INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Based on the understanding of the concepts of identity, territory, ancestral knowledge and wisdom, as previously analyzed, the youth comprehend the historical importance of education as a learning process through which human being obtains knowledge, allowing them to develop skills, customs, beliefs and ways of thinking and acting.

For the above reason, education has been the flagship of struggle of Indigenous peoples' organizations, understood as a fundamental right. With the proposal of an intercultural education, we have fought for the respect and recognition of the diverse practices and knowledge attributed to the Indigenous peoples, with the aim to generate adequate policies for a timely coexistence of the different cultures, without the pressure of a single imposed and hegemonic thinking model.

As Indigenous peoples, we understand that interculturality takes into account the diversity and interaction between different cultures. Thus, the concept of intercultural education does not correspond exclusively to Indigenous peoples. The struggle for this right demands the recognition and appreciation of all knowledge and wisdom on equal conditions, taking into account that no culture is more or less - simply different.



Young Indigenous man from Amazon Kichwa nationality - Ecuador.

In this sense, the youth of the Amazon basin view **intercultural education**, as a permanent training and learning process that considers the use of original languages and the worldview of the peoples as a fundamental principle. Likewise, that, in combination with the conventional knowledge system and practices, contributes with a community vision that breaks the classic style of an exclusively theoretical learning; based on practical experiences generated through direct contact in the territory with the community and Mother Earth, with the use of adapted didactic materials as these benefit all.

*"It is important to educate in open spaces, to achieve a true connection with our Mother Earth."*

**Cesar Quintero, Mapoyo people – Venezuela.**





**Jawalla community - Guyana.**

Faced with this issue, we, the Indigenous peoples, have witnessed that, under imposition and violence, the system of domination has sought to annul us, to erase us from history. Taking into account that their definitions of "civilization" include the disappearance of mother tongues, customs, ancestral knowledge and wisdom - in itself, the disappearance of our peoples. That is why it is our strength and reason for pride, as Amazon indigenous youth, that despite so much damage and historical exclusion, we remain on our own feet to fight for the defense of our territories.

*“Perhaps most of us, at some point, have been discriminated when we have arrived to the city or the university. However, in my case, the discriminatory comments never made me feel less; on the contrary, I made a double effort to make my culture known and valued, both in my student career and at the university.”*

**Yulissa Trigos, Yine people - Peru.**

Our parents, grandfathers and grandmothers fought; many dying on the road traveled for demanding of our rights. Today, based on international treaties, intercultural education is recognized in the legislation of most countries in the Amazon basin.

However, no real changes have been made in educational models as unfortunately, paper endures what action does not achieve. Everything has been left in theory, in the archives of governments that, in many cases, do not have the moral or political will to implement intercultural educational processes. This scenario repeats in different countries of the Amazon basin, where processes are not visible.

*“We, as Indigenous peoples, have rights, but these are invisible. Those are rights on paper, rather than in practice. They only recognize us when it comes to implementing economic development projects proposed by the western world. We are interested in sustainable development, in community development.”*

**Nathalia Bacca, Inga people – Colombia.**



Jawalla community - Guyana.

## Challenges identified in the implementation of conventional and intercultural education:

- Due to the influence of the dominant system and globalization, as analyzed in the previous topics, making our way in a foreign educational system, where the rules of the game are imposed and where what is different is excluded, is extremely complicated. It represents a great challenge for Indigenous peoples to adapt to an environment where materialism dominates and where human beings are more productive, but more dehumanized, more rational but less sensitive.

*“Through the influence of their language and music, the western world is sneaking into our territories. We must therefore start from home to listen to the stories and narratives of our elders, in order to safeguard our identity and mother tongue.”*

**Salvador Miraña, Miraña people - Colombia.**

- The limitations of basic services in our communities include the educational system that, in spite of the governments constant offers to provide education in exchange for exploitation of our territories, have not been complied. This is why we do not have an educational infrastructure, and if one exists, it is precarious and centralized. We have to travel long distances, taking many risks given the limited transportation and difficult access conditions. All this is directly linked to learning deficiencies, as physical conditions of educational centers are as important as the work of teachers, the availability of teaching materials, technology and other complementary services.

These limitations, which drag on from the basic educational level, become visible in the problems that arise to include us in high school levels as well as in higher education, even more when those are in urban areas.

*“Due to the influence of western education, in school, we see things through the lenses of the west. We must remove those lenses in order to see from our own worldview and be able to implement our education.”*

**José Gudiño, Puinave people – Venezuela.**





Coeroeni community - Suriname.

- With regard to the transmission of knowledge, the assignment of external teachers who do not have an understanding on interculturality and the worldview of the peoples; from the most basic educational levels the imposition of an external model begins, which dissociates us from our identity by using a foreign language and learning within four walls. This situation threatens the cognitive development of students, but above all, it disconnects us from nature, and therefore from the community.

*"In our villages, our mother tongue is still strong, but I am the only bilingual Indigenous teacher. This is a weakness as there are many difficulties when a non-indigenous teacher enters our communities and has to adapt to our language. However, teachers from our community are already being prepared to strengthen interculturality at our schools."*

**Inai'ury Carneiro Pompeu, Guajajara people - Brazil.**

*“In French Guiana, the issues of discrimination and the distance we have to travel to study is a problem we face in order to educate ourselves. Those youths who graduate move to the metropolitan France where they are alone in a place where they cannot speak the language and where they feel lost. Many leave school to return to their families and, being that there are few university options in Guiana, we cannot really move forward. I believe that this problem affects all the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon. The youth present here have a lot of work ahead.”*

**Anaïs Labonte,  
Macouria people – French Guiana.**

● When Indigenous youths seek higher education, we face an even greater challenge. We must leave our territories and communities and begin a new lifestyle, which is difficult for us as this requires immediate adaptation to other standards. In this environment, discrimination is one of the greatest threats we face because of the prejudices generated by our origins and our ways of thinking.

Economic limitations also have a great influence and due to the complexity of the situation, in many cases we as youths give up and prefer to seek employment in the cities, most of which are informal jobs with very unworthy wages. This cause the loss of our identity and disconnection with our peoples. As a result of the historical abandonment of governments in the Amazon basin, there are few university options, which limit our possibilities. In the end, many of us stagnate and in the most serious cases there are young people who, due to the lack of opportunities and employment, become depressed and end up committing suicide.

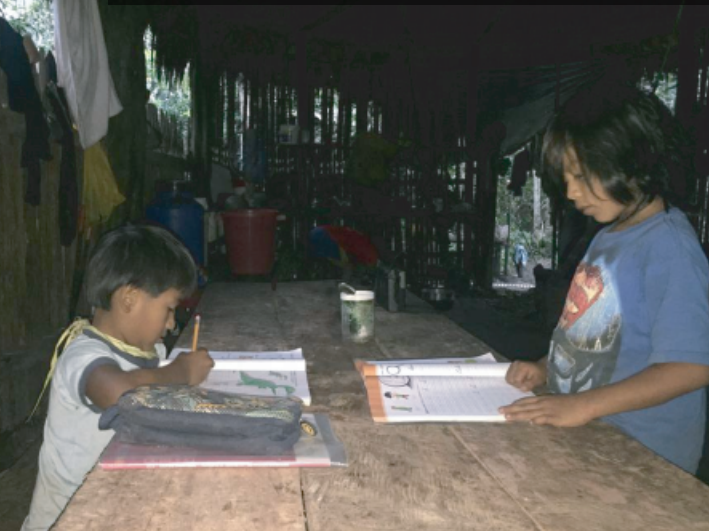




**Jawalla community - Guyana.**

● It is necessary to emphasize that the contents of the curricula taught at all levels of education are obsolete and contain information pertaining only to western cultures. They do not take into account the diversity and worldview of each territory, nor the pace of learning or needs of the students.

The principles of educational content should be to preserve and respect the wealth of the peoples, generating from these spaces more equitable and fair processes, with a view to what is ours so that there is no distortion of the original realities.



- As Indigenous youth of the Amazon basin, we consider teachers to be a key human factor in strengthening educational models. However, within the framework of intercultural education, the teachers assigned are not indigenous and do not comprehend the importance of our worldview as they are trained based on knowledge far from diversity, with a polarized thought, as demonstrated in the classrooms.

There are cases in which Indigenous teachers and professionals who go to the city to study, return to their communities and no longer speak their language, nor have held onto their ancestral knowledge and wisdom. In this sense, having few indigenous educational professionals, who preserve their identity and sense of belonging, is a weakness and a factor that distant ourselves from the empowerment of our identity.

*"It is unfortunate that there are indigenous fellows who go out to the city to prepare, study and return to the community, but when they become teachers or professionals in other areas, they no longer preserve their language or ancestral knowledge and wisdom."*

**Nanki Sharup, Shuar nationality - Ecuador.**



San Ignacio de Velasco Town - Bolivia.

- One of the great challenges that we face within our organizations is the generation of our own options to rescue our knowledge and wisdom. A large part of the current generations is no longer interested in learning their mother tongue and prefer to be educated in foreign languages, often to improve their economic situation, and in other cases because they are definitely disassociated from their identity, their community and their people. It is therefore essential that, we generate our own innovative tools and spaces to ensure that our boys and girls, teenagers and youth do not turn their backs on their roots but fall in love with them, that they do not turn their attention outwards, but that they return to look inwards.

*“Own-education aims to develop collective and individual skills, strengthen our own system of thought and promotes the empowerment and defense of our rights.”*

**Daniela Guzmán, Ñengatu people – Venezuela.**





## In this regard, what do we, the Indigenous youth of the Amazon, propose?

The fourth sustainable goal of Agenda 2030<sup>8</sup> determines that we must: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, considering that education is one of the most powerful and tested tools to ensure sustainable development of any nation.

Under this context, from the voices of the indigenous Amazonian youth, and with the experiences sustained in the diversity of each one of our spaces, we propose:

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<sup>8</sup> The Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDA), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, were conceived as an ambitious and universal agenda to encourage countries and the international community to develop inclusive and sustainable development strategies.

● One of the bases for guaranteeing Indigenous peoples' rights is their recognition in the legislation of each country. That is why we, the indigenous youth of the Amazon basin, raise our voices and demand that this be initiated. Although the Amazonian countries of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela have ratified ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples<sup>9</sup> Suriname, Guyana and French Guiana have not recognized this basic and important instrument for the full exercise of the rights of Indigenous peoples, which represents a great threat to our survival. This is the starting point for the implementation of regulations related to intercultural education. However, as with most laws, they are not complied with in practice.

In countries where corresponding regulations are already in place, predisposition and political will from governments to comply with what is already established and to generate sustainable processes together with Indigenous peoples, is urgent.

Our demand is that access to both types of education be seen as a right. Just as there is access to western education, the right to attend and to learn from one's own knowledge and wisdom and that these knowledges be of good quality, must also prevail. If we do not act timely, many Indigenous peoples are at risk of disappearing.

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<sup>9</sup> Convention 169 was adopted by the 76th Conference of the International Labor Organization, ILO, in Geneva, on June 27, 1989. It includes the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on ESCR, International Covenant on Civil Rights and Political, the evolution of international law since 1957 and international instruments on the prevention of discrimination.





**Yarinacocha Lake, Ucayali - Peru.**

- It is also important to generate our own spaces of education, ones that are born from our needs as youth and under the principles of the Indigenous peoples, based on the experience of successful cases in the territory. Therefore, it is essential that the creation of the Policy and Leadership Training Schools for all the 9 Amazonian countries be considered. These spaces constitute scenarios to involve the youth; spaces that allow the generation of new leaderships and from there analyze the way to link with formal or conventional education. We must strengthen education from our own point of view, since without this it is not possible for us to advance as peoples in the strengthening of intercultural education.

*“The Indigenous peoples of the Colombian Amazon currently have a Policy training school, which has been a space for the indigenous youth to sit down and talk for the first time about education, about our own and intercultural education. This has allowed us to raise our voice, strengthen our struggle and position the word of the youth.”*

**Héctor Yucuna, Yucuna people – Colombia.**

● It is necessary that we begin to appropriate the spaces at all educational levels and in our organizations and communities; we must build our own curriculum in each of our counties. This will contribute to include contents adapted to the reality of each territory, to generate our own didactic materials and thus strengthen the identity of the Indigenous peoples.

In some countries such as Peru, there are already successful experiences where indigenous organizations have been involved in building the national curriculum and the same can be done in other Amazonian countries.

Oyapock River,  
Wayampi community - French Guiana.



*"It is very important that in the educational processes, the particularities of each town are taken into account; although we look alike we are different, each one presents ones needs and difficulties according to the territory."*

**María José Bejarano, Chiquitano people – Bolivia.**

- In order to guarantee intercultural education of quality, work must be done on access to opportunities under equal conditions, so that Indigenous peoples can engender professionals specialized in the field of education and who, on the basis of their worldview and fluent use of their mother tongue, can build intercultural and inclusive educational spaces. In countries such as Brazil, in some of its states, progressive work has been carried out on intercultural education policies that are having an impact on basic, secondary, and higher levels.
- As an ambitious but necessary proposal, we present the idea of creating an Amazon university for the 9 countries, that can become operational in one of them and could later be extended to the entire Amazon territory. This own space would be ideal for young people to receive training complementary to conventional education. A space of diversity, in which all cultures are respected. Besides delving deep in the knowledge and wisdom of each of our peoples, it would be a learning instance, with the objective of putting our mother tongue into practice, contributing to the development of our own indigenous thought.

*“Intercultural bilingual education is a very important and widely discussed topic. But I want to put on the record that in my state of Amapá, the Indigenous youth together with the organization are working hard on this, to recover what we have lost, which has been a lot. We are fighting and one day we will win.”*

**Magner dos Santos, Karipuna people – Brazil.**



**Achuar community, Morona Santiago - Ecuador.**

● According to the current context, an option adapted to the Amazonian territory, both for its territorial and geographical dynamics, is the development of processes for the implementation of itinerant universities as these would allow the youth to study while remaining in their territories. Thus, the exchange of knowledge and wisdom can be generated in the field, in direct contact with the community and in connection with Mother Earth. Therefore, through the implementation of daily activities that are carried out within the communities, we will generate our own intercultural and Amazonian thinking.

● Work must begin with each one of us; it is key that for the joint creation of the life plans<sup>10</sup> of each one of our communities and Indigenous peoples, actions and strategies to strengthen the intercultural educational system are included, so it responds directly to our realities.

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<sup>10</sup> Planes de Vida in Spanish are the planning tools local and indigenous communities build for deciding activities in their territories, respecting their “cosmovision” and own realities.

**Chart 3:** Analysis of the problems of the third axis.

Intercultural Education	
According to the analyzed contributions made, a main problem is evident: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Implementation of a mono-cultural and exclusionary educational model.</li></ul>	
Causas	Efectos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Lack of political will on the part of the authorities.</li><li>● Non-compliance with current educational legislation.</li><li>● Top-down educational public policies.</li><li>● Lack of empowerment, of current generations, in our own education<sup>11</sup>.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Lack of recognition of international treaties and agreements concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples.</li><li>● Limited access to intercultural education at different levels.</li><li>● Educational policies without cultural relevance (teachers and mono-cultural contents curricula).</li><li>● Imposition of educational policies that do not respond to cultural and geographical realities.</li><li>● Loss of ancestral knowledge and wisdom</li></ul>
Propuestas planteadas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Create an intercultural university for the 9 Amazon countries.</li><li>● Generate processes for the implementation of itinerant universities in the territories of the Amazon basin.</li><li>● Implement Policy and Leadership Training schools in COICA's grassroots organizations.</li><li>● Include intercultural education as a fundamental axis in community life plans.</li><li>● Build a database of teachers and wise-men/women in each of our communities.</li><li>● Involve Indigenous organizations and communities in the curriculum development of each country.</li><li>● Strengthen our own education from our families and communities.</li></ul>	

<sup>11</sup> “Educación Propia” refers to the own Indigenous peoples’ education.





# Youth And Organizational Policy



## 4.- YOUTH AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

In order to understand the current dynamics of indigenous organizations, we, the youth, have analyzed the functioning of our previous government models. Communities and Indigenous peoples had our own system of community government, each with its own particularities. They functioned according to their realities and needs; with the leadership of a “cacique” or a council formed by wise men/women, grandfathers and grandmothers, who, depending on the geographic and cultural situation, was managed under a social structure of matriarchy or patriarchy.

In its dynamic, developed in the daily life, in coexistence with nature, each member of the community played a role. The elders and grandparents are the wise, those who have the ancestral knowledge and wisdom, as well as the caretakers of the land. Women as weavers of life and transmitters of languages and cultures. Children and youth as learners of all that wisdom and executors of the plans guided by the elders.

As we have analyzed, due to both the influence of globalization and the changing dynamics of societies, young people have witnessed how our communities and indigenous peoples have adapted to new organizational structures, combining their own processes with those of the western system.



Today, Indigenous organizations are in a constant process of learning and restructuring. Without their influence and work, the recognition of collective rights as Indigenous peoples would not have been achieved. Today we are all fighting for a very important cause which is the defense of the Amazon.

Under this premise, the Indigenous organization currently constitutes the organized structure of communities and Indigenous peoples. Under the principle of unity and reciprocity, it fights for the rights and defense of the territories of its peoples. They represent the peoples and watch over their interests, so they are not invisible to the rest of the world.



In order to guarantee the work of the indigenous organizations, their actions must follow and adequate **organizational policy**, which we, the youth, define as the decision-making process that indigenous organizations execute based on the proposals and alternatives presented in the areas of policy, rights, justice, education, health, among others, for the defense of the identity, the culture and territory. In this way, it contributes to the construction of an intercultural society, breaking the gap of historical exclusion historically imposed on the Indigenous peoples.

In the framework of joint work with the organizations - under a process of our own struggles and dialogue with the leaders, the youth have won our spaces. Our voices are heard, which has allowed us to generate processes based on our needs in the territory, aimed at strengthening our language and therefore our identity.

*“Through the organizations we have gained recognition. If we stay exclusively in the communities, we will not gain anything. Everything is forged through struggles, which today are being made visible and the organizations are gaining more strength.”*

**Magner do Santos, Karipuna people – Brazil.**





The spaces for gathering and exchanging of experiences among Indigenous youth in each of our countries have become effective as they had allowed us to create strategic alliances with other social movements. From these agreements, we have gained the strength we need as Indigenous peoples to face the problems that most affect us.

*"French Guiana is facing an upsurge of Indigenous youth involved in organizational policy. In 2017 there was a large demonstration in which we, the youth, were involved. It allowed the French government to hear the voices of the Indigenous peoples in the struggle against mining in our territory. The participation of Indigenous youth is becoming more and more transcendental as we are beginning to focus our attention on what is most important: our identity and culture."*

**Yann Kayamaré, Kalin'á people – French Guiana.**



*“As part of the Youth Coordination of the Colombian Amazon, we have been participating in demonstrations on the media. In front of the national government, we have a regional Amazonian space where, for the first time we, the Indigenous Amazonian youth, have participation and voice in the decision-making process. These are spaces that we have been gaining with the strength and resistance of the indigenous struggle.”*

**Héctor Fabio Yucuna,  
Yucuna people - Colombia.**

There have been successful experiences in the territory through training processes generated from the management of the indigenous organizations, with a special focus on working with the youth. Colombia is an example, that through the Policy Training School implemented for the indigenous youth of the Colombian Amazon has managed to generate important processes, strengthening the participation, the critical analysis and the action of the youth in topics such as: communication, the role of the Indigenous woman, organizational processes in cities, among many others of no less importance.

As Indigenous peoples, we have our own spaces and expressions of communication - essentially linked to Mother Earth. Identifying and declaring these communicational manifestations contributes to the conservation of ancestral knowledge and wisdom and consolidates our own communication as a mechanism of resistance for indigenous youth.

*“Spaces of the circle of the word, our own fabrics and arts, ancestral medicine, connection with nature and its manifestations - these are our own systems of communication that as youths we must protect and value. As technology advances, to use these means to possess and get involved in the promotion of knowledge and wisdom is to consolidate the right to indigenous communication.”*

**Vanesa Teteye, Bora people - Colombia.**



In this context, it has become evident that, in addition, Indigenous organizations, through the spaces generated in urban areas, represent a support and strength for the youth and in general for the Indigenous peoples who have had to migrate to the cities for different reasons. This allows us to preserve our identity and maintain a link with the territory, despite being far from our families and communities.

*"As indigenous youth, we can influence even if we are not in the territory, from the feeling of belonging to our identity, to our people."*

**Claudia Mejía, Murui Muina people - Colombia.**

## Problems identified in the context of indigenous organizations:

- One aspect we youth are clear about in this context is: the objective of being part of our organizations is to always generate processes that benefit our peoples. The search for political spaces to occupy public positions is not linked to the organization, as when dignity is obtained in electoral processes, one goes on to represent the government, and no longer the organization. Each space has its own purpose; however, there are sectors that do not conceive of this difference and get involved in organizational spaces with political intentions.
- Some organizations have been weakened due to a lack of knowledge of administrative, financial and technical aspects, limiting the fulfilment of the objectives for which they were created, causing distrust from the bases and in some cases, leading to the fractioning of the organization. However, we the youth have the capacity and responsibility to get involved in strengthening the organization based on our knowledge.

*"We are here to continue working, to strengthen our rights as indigenous peoples, as youth."*

**Miguel Rojas, Piapoco people – Venezuela.**



*"They don't believe in the capacity of young Indigenous women as these don't have experience in organizational matters. The challenge is to begin to remove this paradigm that women do not know about organizational processes, that they should only be in the kitchen or in the 'chakra' <sup>12</sup>.*

*As young people, we must know 100% of our cultures and 100% of the western cultures since it is there where we can find this convergence to promote the cultural processes."*

**Zaiza Rodríguez,  
Cubeo people - Colombia.**

● In some countries, the statutes of the grassroots organizations do not provide for the legitimate participation of youth. However, the participation of the youth is essential to guarantee our involvement in organizational processes and with it, the continuity of the fight for the defense of our territories.

● There are also great challenges in the involvement of Indigenous women in organizational processes. As youths, we have seen that, both at the community and organizational level, Indigenous women do not have the confidence to participate in the generation of proposals; and when involved, there are limitations as gender discrimination and that internal regulations at the organizational level do not contemplate the inclusion of women, due to the fact that traditionally, decision-making was assigned to men.

In this context, it is urgent to take action to guarantee spaces for participation with equal conditions.

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<sup>12</sup> Chakra is a sacred ground space designated for cultivation.

## What are the youth's proposals regarding organizational policy in the Amazonian territories?

- The main commitment of those of us already working within Indigenous organizations is to convene and involve more youth as many are still not aware of the importance or impact these Indigenous organizations have in the struggle processes.
- That COICA, as a regional organization, continues supporting and promoting spaces of participation and involvement of the indigenous youths of the 9 countries of the Amazon, such as bi-national meetings of indigenous youth organizations, political training and leadership schools, consolidation of a network of Indigenous Amazon youths with different work fronts such as: art (painting, music, dance), education, training, economy, rights, etc., with the objective of strengthening the organizational work of the youths, making our common problems visible and through alliances facing them together.

*“Resistance is not fighting or generating chaos, resistance is building, it is a way of making our thoughts and daily life visible. Therefore, I propose that from COICA, a collective of art be created and that through a virtual platform we can make known to the world our creative art and work, from our territories and dreams. Use art as a tool of resistance.”*

**Yanda Montahuano, Sapara nationality – Ecuador.**



**Amazon Teenagers and Young Indigenous people network meeting RAJIA  
Platanillal community - Venezuela.**



- With the aim of consolidating work plans together, once the current circumstances are overcome and, based on the contributions made in this virtual meeting, it is important that the First Congress of the Youth of the Amazon basin is held in order to strengthen the youth as fundamental actors in the struggle to defend our territories.
- At the statutory level, we consider that it's necessary to create a Youth Coordination in the grassroots organizations of each country and in COICA. This is with the aim of having international representation and to articulate action plans in the 9 countries. The youth must have a legitimate coordination to influence and participate in all spaces.

*"It is motivating to know that we are not alone, that we count on the Directive of COICA that believes in the Amazonian youth and that there are also allies of our struggle. We as young people must make an effort to reach each community, each village and guarantee that these spaces also occur in the communities. Young people are part of the solution, our participation and actions are key to continue breaking inequalities and generating our own solutions."*

**José Gudiño, Puinave people – Venezuela.**



**Mituseño community, Urania, Vaupés - Colombia.**

*“Something very important about the meetings in the Amazon basin is that we are getting stronger and are already champions in organizational policy.”*

**Alana Manchineri,  
Manchineri people - Brazil.**

- Considering that gender equality is a challenge in Indigenous organizations, it is important that the political will of our leaders exists to work on strategies to generate equitable spaces, to involve Indigenous women in the organization.

- We must strengthen the communication network of the youth leaders of the national organizations of COICA with strategies that allow the consolidation of their own communication as a mechanism of resistance for the Indigenous youth.

*“This has been a very interesting space to learn and disseminate everything that is being done in each of the countries. Let us take advantage of new technologies, of these new virtual formats, with the aim of keeping in touch and in tune with all the indigenous peoples, so that our presence is felt.”*

**Cesar Quintero, Mapoyo people – Venezuela.**

- Involve the technical staff of our communities in the processes of the indigenous organization as with their professional knowledge they can strengthen these, ensuring also that they do not disassociate themselves from their community or people.

*"We have analyzed many proposals, but their implementation requires financial resources. It is important that a fund can be created and managed for the youth of each country, as we all have different problems. We cannot remain only as observers; we must start to act and be the leaders that our people need now and for the future."*

**Mona Lisa Sabajo,  
Lokono people – Suriname.**

- One issue that has not been widely discussed, but is important for the organizations to consider, is mental health. When young people move to the cities to continue their education, they experience culture shocks and suffer affectations to their identity and to their spiritual and mental stability.

*"Those of us who have the opportunity to enter universities, our greatest challenge is to contribute to our territories, to our organizations in defense of our Pachamama, because it is the best option for the benefit of our peoples. We owe it to our organizations."*

**Wayra Shiguango, Amazon Kichwa nationality – Ecuador.**





**Nomatsigenga ancestral complex. Pangoa Valley - Peru.**

- In the framework of the processes that are being generated in favor of the youth by the Indigenous organizations, it is important that, in addition to the use of technological means as social media and virtual platforms, other communication spaces adapted to the territories are used, such as radios; to allow empowerment and involvement of youth in training processes in communities that don't have access to internet.
- We call upon our leaders, parents, grandfathers and grandmothers to trust the youth and to get involved in our causes which are the same as theirs, so in a joint work we can strengthen ourselves as Indigenous peoples.

*"In this, the wise and adults also have a responsibility. It should not be just simply us looking for them, they must also come to us."*

**Liliana Hernández, Guanano people - Colombia.**

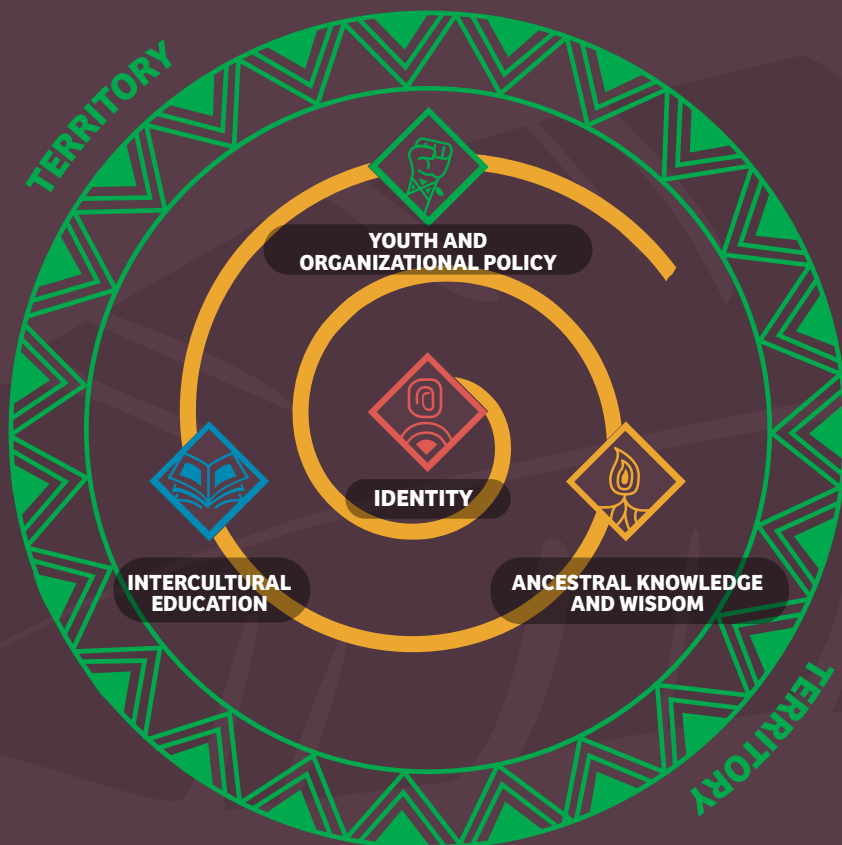
**Chart 4:** Analysis of the problems of the fourth axis.

Youth and organizational policy	
<p>In this subject, one of the central problems analyzed is the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Limited participation of youth in organizational policy.</li></ul>	
Causes	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Lack of interest of leaders and elders.</li><li>● Statutes of the organizations do not consider the leadership of youth.</li><li>● Lack of knowledge about the administrative, financial and technical processes within the organization.</li><li>● Influence of partisan politics in the organizations.</li><li>● Loss of identity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Exclusion of youth.</li><li>● Lack of legitimate participation of youth in organizational processes.</li><li>● Lack of legitimate participation of youth in organizational processes.</li><li>● Mistrust and division among the grassroots organizations and the youth.</li><li>● Lack of interest in Indigenous organizational involvement.</li></ul>
Proposals made	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Implement policy and leadership training schools from COICA for all 9 Amazonian countries.</li><li>● Convene and involve more youths in the participation spaces of indigenous organizations.</li><li>● Create and register the Youth Coordination, within in the statutes of the COICA national organizations of each country and at a regional level.</li><li>● Implement the First Congress of Youth of the Amazon basin.</li><li>● Hold bi-national meetings between youth organizations of the 9 Amazonian countries.</li><li>● Strengthen the communication network of young leaders of the regional organizations of the Amazon basin.</li><li>● Include the subject of mental health in the different spaces of debate in the organizations.</li><li>● Enhance the use of radio stations as an instrument to socialize the actions generated by the Indigenous organizations in the territory.</li><li>● Involve the technical professionals that emerge from our communities in the indigenous organization.</li><li>● Build a network of Indigenous Amazonian youth with different work fronts.</li><li>● Implement strategies that allow for more equitable spaces within the organization for equal participation of both men and women.</li></ul>	



## CONCLUSIONS:

The following image summarizes the theoretical and practical perspectives that the Amazonian indigenous youth have discusses in the framework of this virtual event with the analysis of four thematic axes.



## Threats

- Violation of Indigenous peoples collective rights.
- Indiscriminate exploitation of resources through extractive activities (oil, mining and logging) .
- Globalization and imposition of economic models.
- Discrimination.

From the notion of the spiral - a pattern present in various forms of nature - whose ancestral symbolism represents the process of growth, evolution and continuity, that goes from the inside to the outside, based on the debates and consensus of the participating youths, it is concluded that **identity** is the center of everything. Knowing who we are and where we come from is key for the construction of processes sustained in benefit of our cultures. Only from a strengthened identity we can revitalize and put into practice our **knowledge and ancestral wisdom**, understanding that they are the basis for the preservation and survival of our peoples.

Based on this ancestral wisdom, we can get involved and demand an **intercultural education** from our own, in order to find and merge our own and others knowledges and cultures, always knowing what our center is. We, the **Indigenous youth**, believe that this whole process is the basis for our effective and sustained involvement in indigenous **organizational policy**; returning to our roots, to our identity, again and again, but on a different level.

All these processes can only be developed with the **guarantee of the territory**, of the integral space where our daily life is conjugated in connection with Mother Earth. However, there are constant **threats** against our Amazon territories such as the violation of the collective rights of Indigenous peoples by the States and the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources through large-scale extractive activities implemented from the dominant system.

Even though the Amazon region contributes significantly to the gross domestic product of the Amazonian countries and due to its biodiverse characteristics, it contributes with the highest amount of oxygen to the world, it is the most excluded and invisible territory, deprived of fundamental rights such as basic services, education and health.

In this context, we the youths have identified the urgent need to return to our roots, to our communities and to our territory; to begin rescuing the practices that distinguish us as Indigenous peoples, especially those that are based on the principle of harmonious coexistence with nature, where the human being is part and not owner of it, we protect and safeguard the elements that inhabit it. **This need is not out of simple nostalgia or rebellion; it represents an act of revolution in the face of the environmental and civilizational crisis that the world is currently in** as consequence of bad decisions of the ones that govern and the ambition of human beings, who under the capitalist model have intensified extractive activities, as they conceive nature as an object and not a subject of rights.

It is important to be clear that we find ourselves in a key moment for humanity. Our wise ones, grandmothers and grandfathers are leaving us and we are not able to do much. However, it is our commitment as Amazonian indigenous youth, to take urgent action to safeguard that wisdom and transmit it to the new generations. The survival of the Indigenous peoples is in our hands.

Finally, we conclude that all the problems and threats present in our territories and forms of life will not cease if the political will of the States, organizations and international instances do not execute opportune strategies with cultural pertinence in benefit of the youth and Indigenous peoples.

Our desire is that this first virtual encounter be only the beginning of a phase where spaces for participation and involvement for the youth of the 9 countries of the Amazon basin be consolidated.

**The youth are the seed of resistance and strenght;  
we will defend and protect our territories!**



## LEARN ABOUT COICA NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:



**AIDSESP (Peru): Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana** [Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle] was formed 40 years ago. It represents 9 regional grassroots organizations located in the north, center and south of the Peruvian jungle, comprising 109 federations and 1,809 communities where more than 650,000 Indigenous women and men from 64 Indigenous peoples grouped into 19 languages families live.



**COIAB (Brazil): Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira** [Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon] was founded on April 19, 1989 and has its headquarters in Manaus. It is the largest indigenous organization in Brazil as it is composed of 46 regional grassroots organizations of the nine Brazilian Amazon states. It is estimated that the Brazilian Amazon occupies 50% of the national territory and has an indigenous population of 440,000 inhabitants, with 180 Indigenous peoples and 160 own languages.



**ORPIA (Venezuela): Organización Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Amazonas** [Regional Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon] was created in 1993 through a Regional Congress and is based in the indigenous state of Amazonas, in the city of Puerto Ayacucho. It is composed of 35 grassroots organizations of 20 Indigenous communities that inhabit the Venezuelan Amazon.

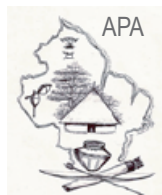


**CIDOB (Bolivia): Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia** [Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia] was founded in 1982 and is based in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Its 13 regional organizations are currently comprised of 34 Indigenous peoples from the east, Chaco and the Bolivian Amazon. These peoples live in the entire lowlands' region, in 7 of the 9 departments in the country, namely: Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, Tarija, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba and Norte de La Paz.





**FOAG (French Guiana): Federation Organisations Autochtones Guyane** [Federation of Indigenous Organizations of French Guiana]. The Indigenous population is estimated at 19,000 inhabitants, approximately 10% of the total population of the country, where Indigenous peoples such as: Kali'na, Pahikweneh, Lokono, Wayana, Wayapi and Teko live.



**APA (Guyana): Amerindian Peoples Association of Guyana** was formed in 1991 and is based in Charlotte Street Bourda - Georgetown. The APA structure comprises 80 grassroots organizations located in five of the ten administrative regions of the country. It is estimated that more than 70,000 women and men belonging to 9 Indigenous peoples live in Guiana.



**OPIAC (Colombia): Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonia Colombiana National** [Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon] is based in Bogota and was created in 1995. It is comprised of 20 grassroots associations representing 56 Indigenous peoples in 162 communities in an area of 406,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of approximately 76,000 inhabitants.



**OIS (Suriname): Organization van Inheemsen en Surinam** [Indigenous Organizations in Suriname] was founded in 1994 and is composed of 9 Indigenous peoples living in 10 districts. OIS is the only organization certified by the Presidency of the Republic of Suriname to defend and promote the interests of the Indigenous peoples in national and international issues. Suriname is the smallest country in Latin America, but 93% of its territory is rainforest and is home to approximately 30,000 Indigenous women and men.



**CONFENIAE (Ecuador): Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana** [Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon] was founded in 1980 and is based in Puyo - Pastaza. It is comprised of 23 grassroots organizations and federations in the 6 Amazonian provinces of Ecuador, and represents 11 nationalities: Kichwa, Shuar, Achuar, Waorani, Sapara, Andwa, Shiwiari, Cofan, Siona, Secoya and Quijos.

## Speakers :

Mario Bustos.  
Elizabeth Buenabad.  
José Gregorio Díaz Mirabal.  
Jhomar Maynas.  
Jenny Elizabeth Piruch.  
Inai'ury Pompeu.  
Héctor Fabio Yucuna.

## Participants:

### PERU

Aroteya Calderón, Ashaninka people.  
Rusber Rucoba, Shipibo people.  
Sintia Portocarrero, Ashaninka people.  
Margare Díaz, Shipibo people.  
Franklin Chimanca, Nomatsigenga people.  
Jhomar Maynas, Nomatsigenga people.  
Blanca Pascual, Ashaninka people.  
Pedro Corisepa, Harakbut people.  
Yulissa Trigoso, Yine people.  
Rusber Pizango, Shawi people.  
Genaro Escalante, Shipibo people.

### VENEZUELA

Jesús Yuriyuri, Warekena people.  
María Arana, Uwottuja people.  
Ebertina Rodríguez, Yekwana people.  
Cesar Quintero, Mapoyo people.  
Jheisllyn Brice, Baniva people.  
Nelkys Guzmán, Ñengatu people.  
Martin Herrera, Jivi people.  
José Gudiño, Puinave people.  
Miguel Rojas, Piapoco people.  
Mileidy Franco, Yekwana people.

### BRAZIL

Alana Manchineri, Manchineri people.  
Inara dos Santos, Sateré-Mawe people.  
Jessica Nascimento, Apuriña people.  
Elcio da Silva Manchineri, Manchineri people.  
Rodrigo Yaray Tupari, Tupary people.  
Kokinire Haraxare, Gavião people.  
Magner dos Santos, Karipuna people.  
Eldely Narciso Laparra, Palikur people.  
Haratumá Maurerri, Javaé people.  
Ariene dos Santos, Wapichana people.  
Cristian Tseremey'wa, Xavante people.  
Inai'ury Pompeu, Wajajara people.

### BOLIVIA

María José Bejarano, Chiquitano people .  
Hernan Nay, Tacana people.  
Everton Gonzales, Leco people.  
Andrea Leal, Quechua people.  
Gabriel Gil, Chiquitano people.  
Carly Poñe, Guarayos people.  
Elisa Barequí, Chiquitano people.

## **FRENCH GUIANA**

Lydie Yubitana, Lokono people.  
Yann kayamaré, Kalin'a people.  
Mylène Jean-Jaques, Kalin'a people.  
Lorenzo Mac-intosh, Kalin'a people.  
Anaïs Labonte, Palikur people.  
Murwin Biswana, Lokono people.  
Brandon Tawayan, Wayampi/Teko people.  
Erine Batiste, Palikur people.

## **GUYANA**

Dan James, Wapichan people.  
Don Stoll, Arawak people.  
Danella Clement, Akawaio / Macusi people.  
Azoney Clement, Akawaio / Macusi people.  
Romario Hastings, Akawaio people.  
Mariah Lall, Arawak people.  
Nandanie Jerry, Akawaio people.

## **COLOMBIA**

Zaiza Rodríguez, Cubeo people.  
Nathalia Bacca, Inga people.  
Salvador Miraña, Miraña people.  
Mercy Cruz, Piratapuyo people.  
Gerson Arambula, Tikuna people.  
Vanesa Teteye, Bora people.  
Rodolfo Gómez, Murui people.  
Nery Góngora, Cubeo.  
Claudia Eimenekene, Uitoto people.  
Edgar Gutiérrez, Cubeo.  
Karen Sanda, Kichwa people.  
Wendy Kuetgaje, Uitoto people.  
Héctor Fabio Yucuna, Yucuna people.  
Liliana Hernández, Guanano people.

## **SURINAME**

Mona Lisa Sabajo, Lokono people.  
Marcello Araitjamare, Kaliña people.  
Birambie Romano, Kaliña/Lokono people.  
Liguori Merselino, Lokono people.

## **ECUADOR**

Delfín Tuntiak Chiriapa, Shuar nationality.  
Martín Chamik, Shuar nationality.  
Alexis Grefa, Amazon Kichwa nationality.  
Gladys Alvarado Nenquimo, Waorani nationality.  
Maraska Aguinda, Quijos nationality.  
Mireya Tsakimp, Shuar nationality.  
Tobías Quenama, Ai' Kofan nationality.  
Asdrúbal Cayap, Shuar nationality.  
Yanda Montahuano, Sapara nationality.  
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Nanki Sharup, Shuar nationality.













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