



# **CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS PERCEPTIONS**

**2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION**

OPERAÇÃO AMAZÔNIA NATIVA – OPAN



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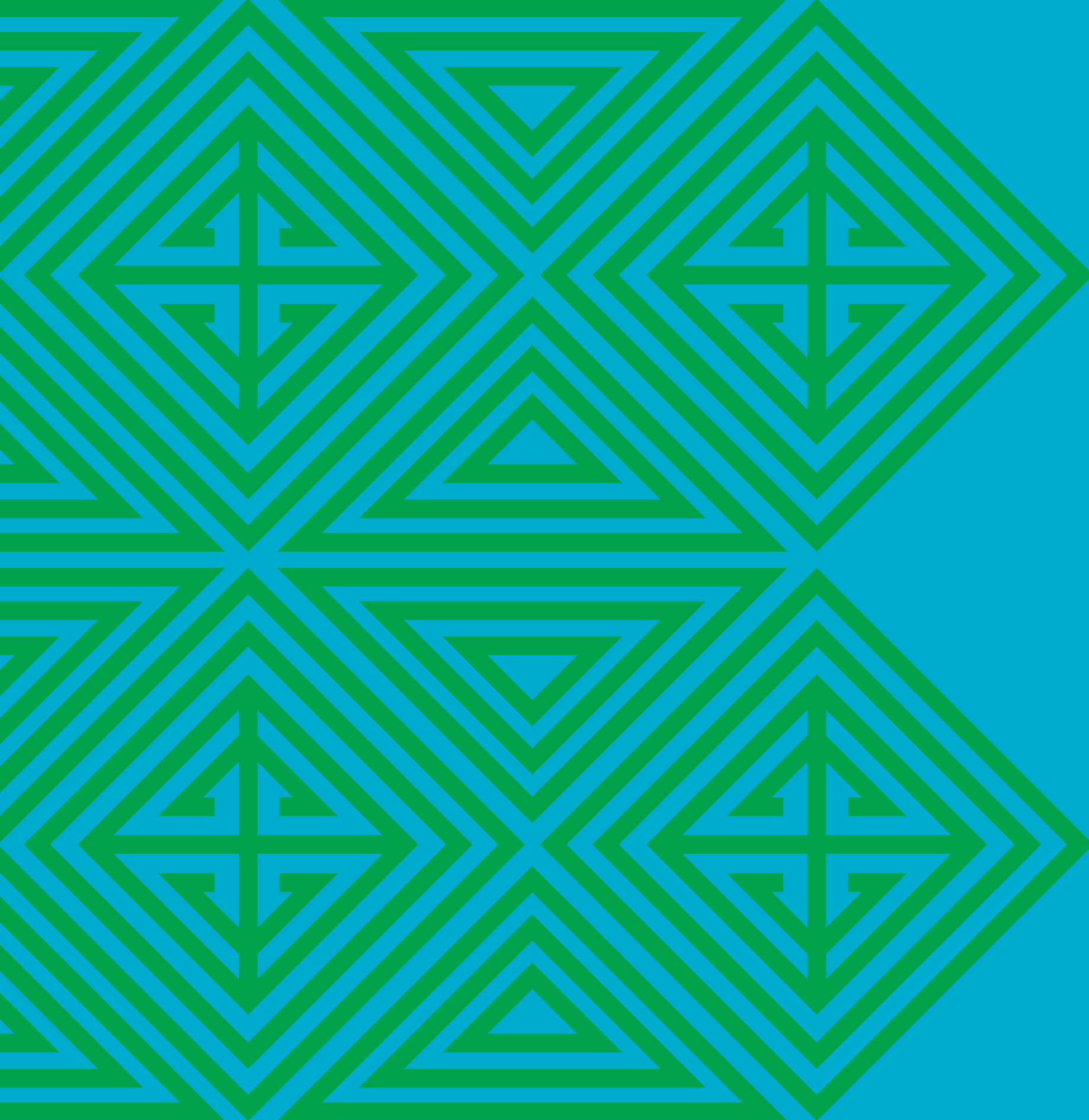


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OPERAÇÃO AMAZÔNIA NATIVA – OPAN  
Mato Grosso, Brasil, 2018



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Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN

## PRESENTATION

OPERATION AMAZÔNIA NATIVA (OPAN), with its almost five decades working in the field of *Indigenismo*, has contributed in a relevant way to the promotion and guarantee of indigenous rights in Brazil. In the midst of many local and global changes, its actions and strategies have been geared toward supporting the demarcation and protection of traditional lands since the 1960s and, more recently, facilitating the implementation of the National Policy on the Environmental and Territorial Management of Indigenous Lands (PNGATI) in the states of Mato Grosso and Amazonas.

Considered priority areas for the conservation of sociobiodiversity, indigenous lands in Brazil have become islands of resilience exposed to the negative effects of land use in the surrounding territory, which are based on the generation of energy through a wide variety of hydroelectric ventures and agribusiness. Nonetheless, this is being resisted by cultures who seek to conserve biodiversity not just as a strategy for survival, but also to ensure the quality of life of future generations: an approach that diverges significantly from the commodification of nature.

Our work also extends to the realm of political action, as we act as representatives of civil society at committees, forums, and councils, monitor the development of government infrastructure projects and their effects on protected lands, and participate in relevant discussions about climate change at the regional level, which has led to, for example, an update of the Manoki people's seasonal calendar. By monitoring indigenous lands through both land and water-based expeditions, we also help produce in loco data on changes to the landscape, natural resources and climate that are affecting indigenous lands.

Thus we understand that, through our institutional strategy of advocating for the protection and management of indigenous lands, these spaces articulate both human and non-human dimensions, contributing to the conservation of ecosystems and the protection of correlating sacred sites. Each



indigenous group determines their management models and makes their analysis and interpretation regarding changes observed in the world.

It's for this reason that the book *Climate Changes and the Indigenous Perspective* came to be. Moreover, in this second edition, two more texts by members of the indigenous community and a reflection on climate monitoring instruments have been included, and the book continues to serve as a record of different indigenous perspectives on their lands, their way of life and the climate. Without any pretense of mapping out climate changes throughout the vast universe of indigenous peoples, this publication brings together perceptions of what has been changing in the daily lives of indigenous people and how to face these challenges from a holistic point of view that aligns with the appeals made by indigenous people at international forums, such as the United Nations (UN).

In the text published herein, the indigenous voices don't talk much about the more or less bold commitments made by national governments regarding emissions goals. They don't offer their opinion on the two, three, or four-degree rise in the average temperature across the planet. They don't talk about carbon credits or clean development mechanisms, nor do they use any of the climate jargon common to the international negotiation table that often appears in the news without expressing anything concrete. They, for their part, show how rapidly their lives have changed due to the influence of non-indigenous peoples, how the animals, plants, and rivers have responded to all the pressure, and what kind of solutions would amount to more than just another stack of papers that will only get in the way of more significant impacts.

For significant changes to occur—big like the challenge of reverting deviations in the world climate—the indigenous peoples in this book look further. And what they see is that it is the development model chosen by countries that needs to change. Solutions must be real and not palliative. Any decision must be preceded by respect for human and land rights and popular participation. Traditional knowledge must be recognized, along with its role in drafting solutions for mitigation of changes to the climate and communities' adaptation to these changes, with access to financial and educational mechanisms. Engaging in dialogue with indigenous peoples is vital to seeing other perspectives and considering other values. Any proposal that does not include these elements is nothing more than mere diplomacy.

Enjoy!

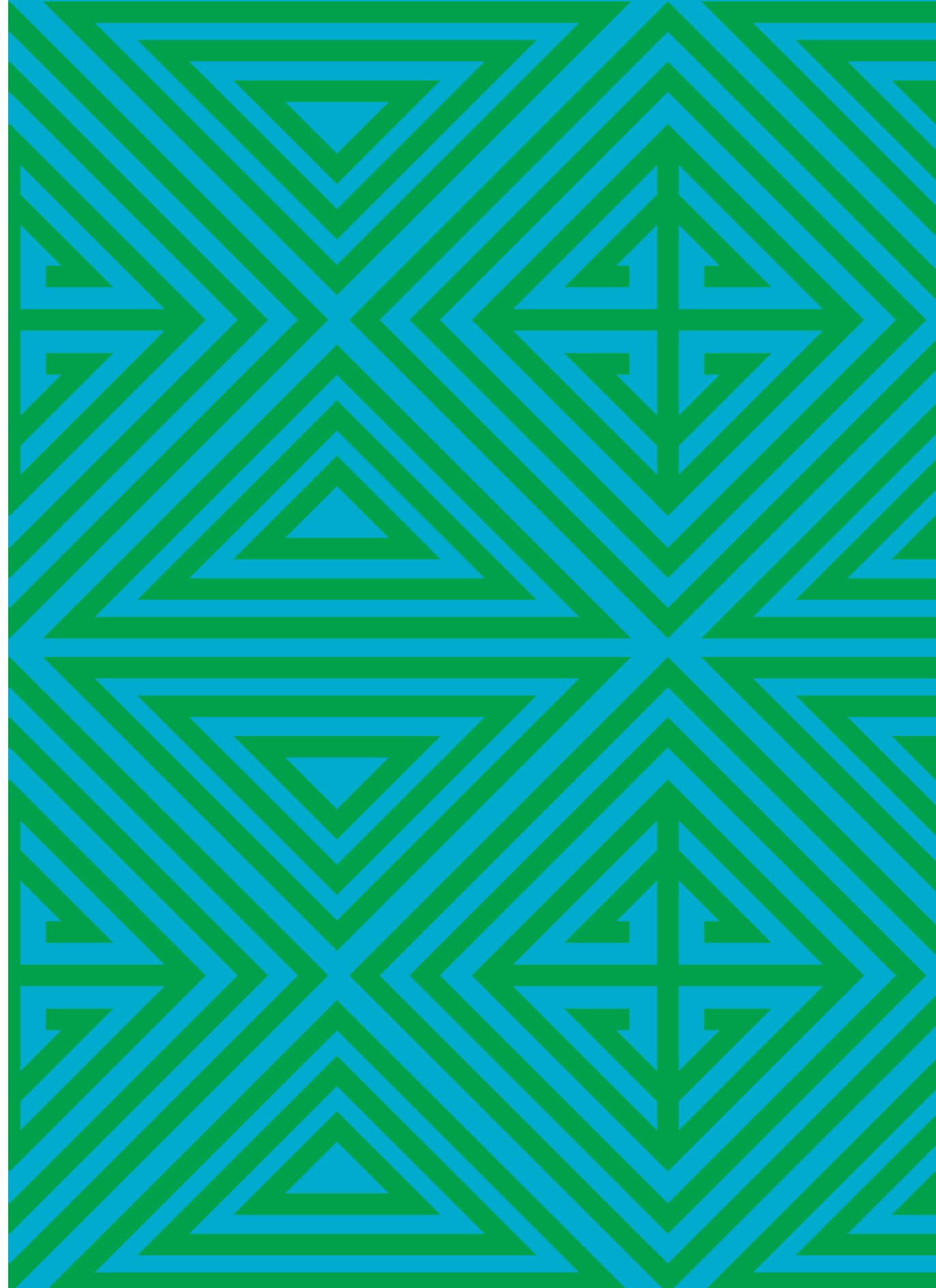




Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN

## IT'S TIME TO LISTEN TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

TARCÍSIO DA SILVA SANTOS JÚNIOR  
AND LUCIANA REBELLATO

WISELY ELABORATED by indigenous people, the texts in this book allow us to see how peoples and lands are being affected by climate change. At this point, this subject goes beyond distinct groups of human beings, their geographic spaces and geopolitical contexts. The seriousness of this issue for indigenous people can be better understood by paying attention to what they have to say about the consequences of the climatic changes they are experiencing in the day-to-day routine of their communities and on their lands, which hold a treasure of natural patrimony. The most prominent actors, even those that live in distinct regions of the state of Mato Grosso, all point to similar problems that have arisen from changes to the climate. They are paying for a bill that is not theirs, but of those private groups who conceive a different logic of using the environment.

Understanding and paying attention to the perceptions of indigenous peoples of climatic changes is a challenge for those of us who have grown up under the influence of a hegemonic school of thought that says the role of technology is unquestionable and can solve all problems. However, without trying to disparage this perspective, it should be noted that it is also necessary to open one's mind to other ways of thinking, acting, and even perceiving changes to the environment.

The texts authors' perception of changes to the climate is based on the close daily relationship with and regular observation of nature they engage in to continue their ways of life and guarantee the future of their people and culture. This is made possible by the knowledge that indigenous peoples have acquired on the weather and the relationships between everything in their environment (fauna, flora, rain, cold, heat) to know where and when these resources will be available for nutritional, medicinal, cultural, or architectural uses, as well as the production of domestic artifacts, hunting, and fishing. On the other hand, non-indigenous peoples' perceptions of changes



to the climate are based on, in a very general and summarized manner of speaking, the development of mathematical and computational climate forecast models that employ historical data on precipitation, temperature, atmospheric pressure, and cloud cover.

The many different components of the environment are not, however, packaged in neat little distinct boxes, but intimately interconnected. For example, the current patterns of distribution, density, flowering, and fruiting of many species of plants evolved in interaction with one another, as well as animals, the rains, winds, and temperature, which all play essential roles in determining the seasons of the year. As previously mentioned, it's in this reality that indigenous peoples' strategies and technologies for managing natural resources are grounded. There is a long history of observations of nature that is passed on with teachings on how to use and occupy their traditional lands. What this comes down to is that the peoples of the forests have a refined eye for the environment and can point out subtle changes when they occur.

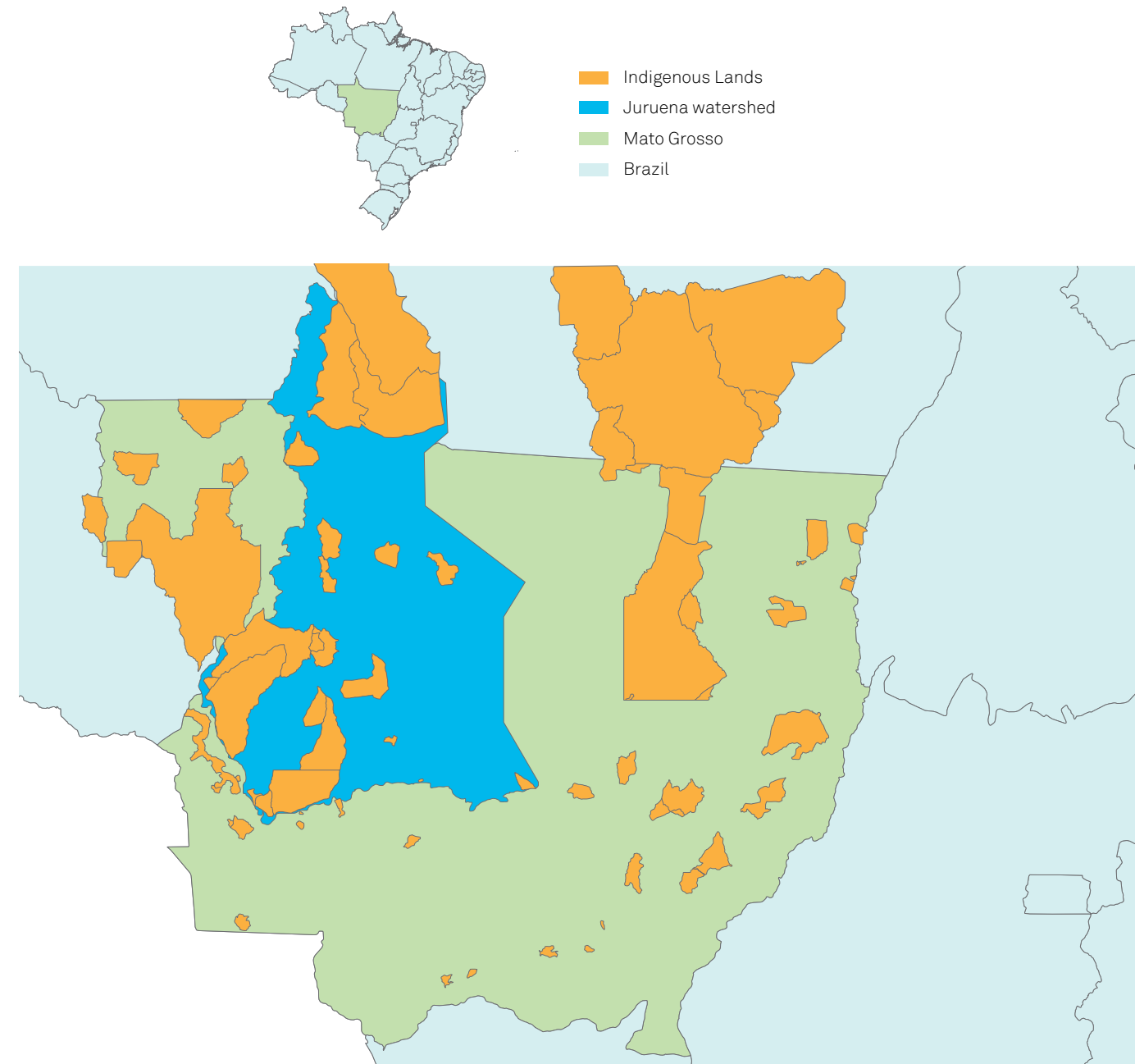
There is currently a variety of digital platforms that allow one to accompany the dynamics of anthropic activities and their correlation with changes to the climate.<sup>1</sup> As a way of illustrating indigenous people's perceptions of climatic changes, a study was conducted<sup>2</sup> on the site The Carvon Source, specifically of the indigenous lands located in the sub-basin of the Juruena river,<sup>3</sup> which, along with the Teles Pires river, are the main bodies that feed into the Tapajós river.

1. Suggested resources for consultation:  
<http://www.dpi.inpe.br/prodesdigital/prodes.php> and  
<https://www.globalforestwatch.org/map>

2. The study conducted on [www.thecarbonsource.org/climate\\_explorer/](http://www.thecarbonsource.org/climate_explorer/) was carried out by consulting data on temperature and precipitation for the indigenous lands whose territory is entirely located within the geographic bounds of the Juruena river's sub-basin. The data presented correspond to what the site provides regarding the high carbon emission situation.

3. The greater part of the Juruena river's sub-basin (190,770 km<sup>2</sup>) is located in Mato Grosso, 26% of which corresponds to 22 different indigenous lands, where around 5,000 indigenous people from 10 different ethnic groups live.

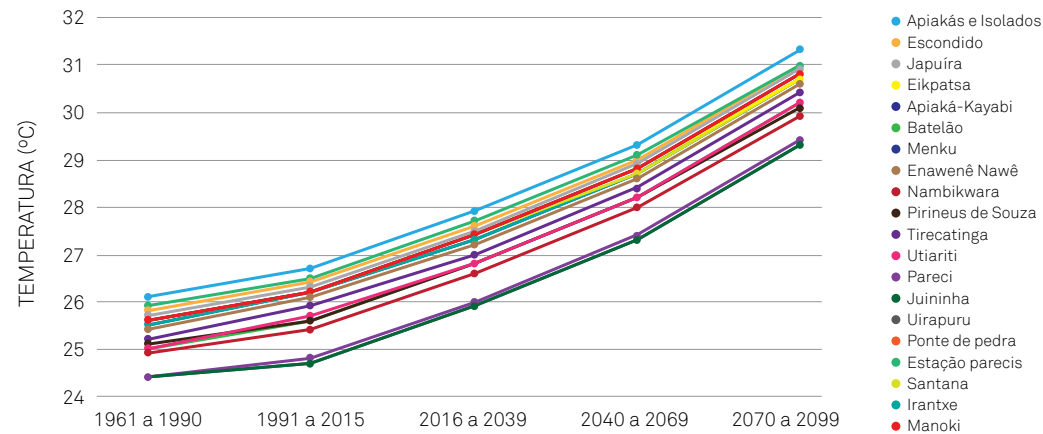
**Indigenous Lands of Mato Grosso, with emphasis on those located in the Juruena watershed**





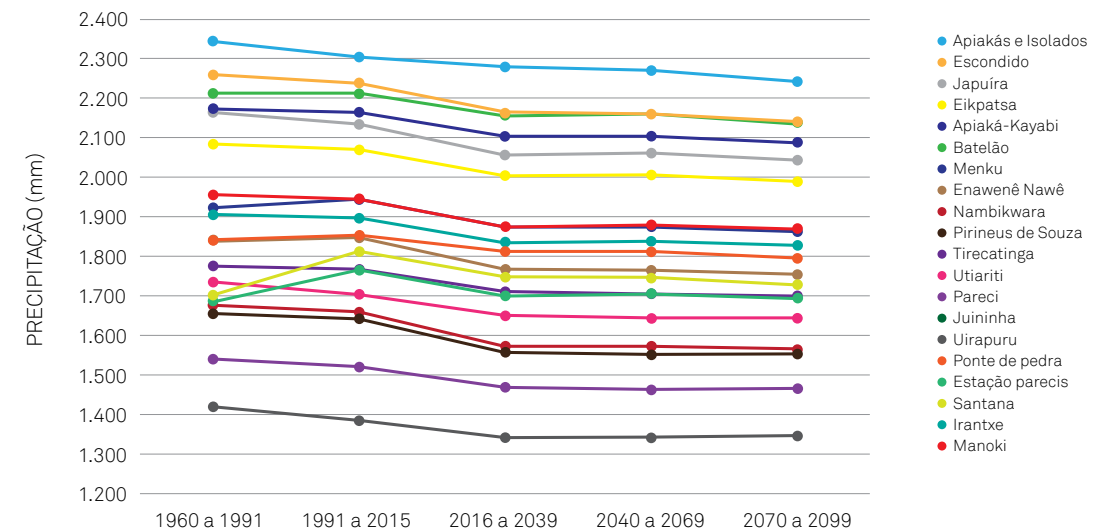
The graphics generated with the data on temperature and precipitation predictions corroborate the perceptions of indigenous peoples. Temperatures are shown to be higher, by 1 or 2 degrees Celsius on all indigenous lands when considering various measurements taken between 1961 and 1990, as well as between 1991 and 2015. It also demonstrates a cumulative increase of between 2 and 3 degrees Celsius in the projections made for each new period (2016-2039, 2040-2069, 2070-2099).

**Measure and projected temperature for the Indigenous Lands of Juruena watershed, Mato Grosso (1961 to 2099).**



The rains, on the grand majority of the lands, have had a real decrease of up to 100 milliliters, according to measurements taken from 1961 to 1990, and 1991 to 2015. The reduction in rainfall is found to be cumulative in the predictions for the current and future periods. The data presented here is just a small sample of what has been gathered on this subject, which only includes quantitative data on rainfall and temperature. It does not tell us anything about how these elements are distributed, or rather, how the seasons of the year (winter, summer, fall, and spring) are being altered.

**Measure and projected precipitation for the Indigenous Lands of Juruena watershed, Mato Grosso (1961 to 2099).**

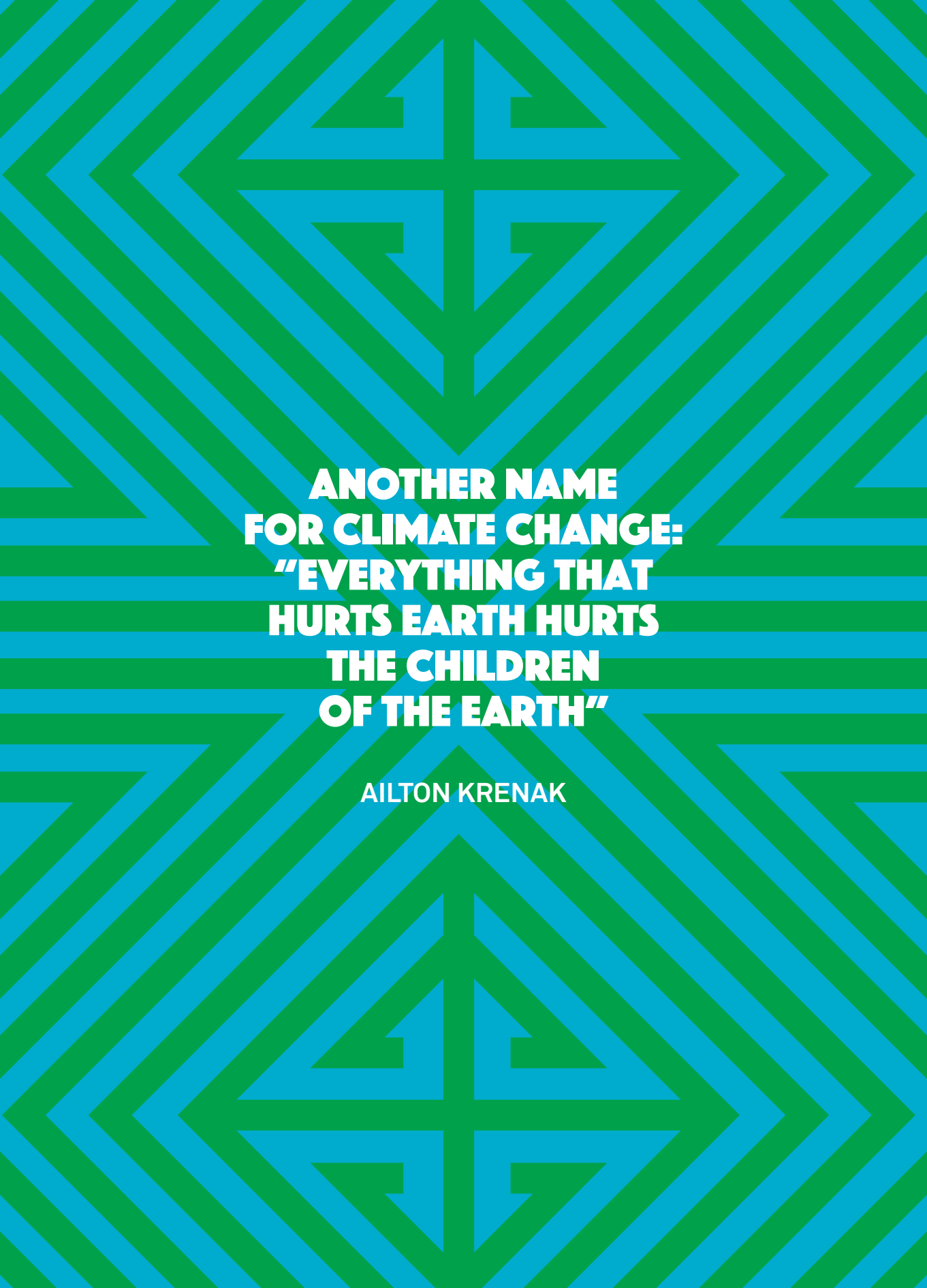


If the current economic model of natural resource use by the non-indigenous were to continue, and the understanding is that it causes changes to the climate, several questions must be reflected upon. Will agribusiness or governments compensate indigenous people for the impacts of climatic changes on their way of life? Will the decrease in agricultural productivity due to a lack of rain lead to pressure being exerted on protected areas by the expansion of crop farming that could take place to compensate for the loss in productivity? Are governments prepared to deal with the possible social and agrarian conflicts that will most likely arise from the expansion of agricultural, mining, and infrastructure projects as they advance more and more on indigenous lands? It's urgent that we pay attention to indigenous people's perceptions of changes to the climate, their technology and survival strategies so that we may be able to deal with the negative impacts of the changes we are imposing on nature.









**ANOTHER NAME  
FOR CLIMATE CHANGE:  
“EVERYTHING THAT  
HURTS EARTH HURTS  
THE CHILDREN  
OF THE EARTH”**

**AILTON KRENAK**

**EVERYDAY**, a thousand loud-speakers alert us about climate changes, that alter rain cycles in several regions where we live. Long droughts and floods affect the production of food, causing the death of fish. Floods follow droughts and the collapse of springs. Since the 1980s, government has promoted conferences and created systems to measure and monitor these changes that are called Climate Change.

So I see that white man, who so far has devastated forests, turned up earth looking for gold and other minerals, poisoning rivers and streams, now also suffers for the consequences of his choices. However, not even these painful losses that affect the lives of millions in the whole world were enough to change the path of this disaster. For sure they imagine that can rule Earth and others living beings inhabiting her.

They didn't understand the alerts our ancient ones have always given, about stepping carefully on Earth, this immense garden of creation, where everything is interconnected, from the highest mountain to the smallest organism that thrives in lichens and stems of small herbs. Long before white's complex systems of measurements and monitoring signal danger, our grandparents showed how our hunt was moving away from our villages, and medicinal plants were disappearing from their habitats – just like the Mid region of Doce River, where Krenak people lives.

But settlers didn't care about that, after all who used those plants or animals were indians only. Settlers looked for medicine in drugstores and food in groceries. This is how plants that were fundamental to our medicines disappeared. Their towns replaced woods and forests, their pasture and livestock occupied the place of wild animals. Now, in the last regions where we still have forests, sustainable business of white people arrive in the form of 'preservation of biodiversity', as a model of environmental service that promises a better climate for the planet.

They didn't understand that Earth is our mother and has enough to supply our needs. As she has the ability to regenerate herself, she doesn't need us on her breast, dismissing this humanity that insists on shaping the landscape where lives, without honoring the wonder of creation that gave us everything we need to live here.

I want to remember here the words of our brother Davi Kopenawa Yanomami in the book “A queda do Céu”:

“In the first times, our ancestors were still few in numbers. *Omama* gave them farming plants he had just received from his father-in-law from the bottom of the waters. So they began to cultivate them, taking care of the forest. They didn't think: 'let's deforest all to plant grass and dig a hole to take metal!' On the contrary, they began to feed from what grows on earth and from fruits of the woods. That's what we do today". (YANOMAMI, 2015)

Today we see that these changes reached our indigenous lands to the point of disrupting traditional ways of occupying the territory. Brazilian State policies, associated to companies and corporations, are damming our rivers and even changing the flow of major basins, like in the region of Xingu, Madeira and Tapajós rivers. Water cycles, forests and all these ecosystems offer us plenty and abundance – which have supported the life of generations of our peoples, including our culture and every expression of a free, autonomous life – are now being impacted.

Indigenous villages are surrounded by soy fields, where poison is released in the air. It affects the life of birds that pollinate and disseminate seeds responsible for recreate life of forests and also causes the distance of bees and other pollinizers, aside from animals that we hunt which have been expelled by the flight of agrototoxin planes that spread pesticides.

Well, how authorities want to talk about climate change if they keep interfering in headwaters and river springs with State policies, ignoring the rights of indigenous peoples?

Indigenous communities in several regions of Cerrado and forests used to live with abundance and prosperity. Now, food security of these peoples is a reason for public policies! First the Brazilian State promoted the destruction of their ways of life. Now, thousands of indigenous families depend on essential food aid or welfare programs like Bolsa Família. For me, this is the most direct and visible effect of climate change in the life of Indigenous Peoples. If we don't have our territories demarcated and respected, agribusiness will keep advancing over all regions of the country, for it shall be the end of food sovereignty of us all and the beginning of our survival.

After quoting the words of our relative Davi Kopenawa Yanomami – from the book “A Queda do Céu”, published this year in Brazil after French and North American editions– I would like to show how our brothers from indigenous nations of North America had already told prophecies on these times of changes we live today, almost 200 years ago.

“We know the white man does not understand our traditions. Any piece of land holds for him the same meaning of any other thing. The earth is not his sister, not even his friend. After wearying it out, he runs away, leaving behind the tombs of his ancestors and dreams of his children” Words of Chief Seattle, clan *Suquamish* and *Duawamish*, 1854.



Photo: Adriana Moura

#### **AILTON ALVES LACERDA KRENAK**

Journalist, environmentalist and writer from the Krenak people. He was born in 1953 in the state of Minas Gerais, Mid region of Doce River. At the age of 17, he moved with his family to state of Paraná, where became literated, graphic producer and journalist. Since the 1980s he has been devoted exclusively to the indigenous movement. In 1985, he founded the Non-Governmental Organization Núcleo de Cultura Indígena, for the promotion and appreciation of the Indigenous cultural diversity in national level. Elected to the Brazilian National Congress in 1986, he took part in the Constitutional Assembly that promulgated the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, advocating for the protection of indigenous rights.





## CLIMATE CHANGE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, EDUCATIONS AND DEEP ECOLOGY

SEVERIÁ IDIORIÊ

**WE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE,** for a long time have been alerting on the changes that could happen if we do not pay attention to the environment we live, by observing our actions and correcting or improving our practices. An example of this is the Chief Seattle's speech, from 1855, from the nation Suquamish, state of Washington, to the president of the United States. His words became immortal in a letter. He said that everything we do to earth we will also feel, because "All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected." And continues: "Whatever hurt the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself".

In our thinking, the point is that we can not discuss climate change without reviewing the forms of how the human being has been living on the planet, what has moved his actions and who has actually survived and over whom the struggle to survival has been imposed.

Each society conceives the human body accordingly to its system of meanings, its culture. Each society is abundant of meanings that wish to print on their children and youth through social interactions. And each people weaves a particular web of meanings. When this process begins, culture turns this behavioral patterns into something "natural and universal". However, by simply observing our surroundings we can tell that the human body is affected by religion, occupation, family group, class and other cultural and social factors.

Many indigenous societies still maintain a specialized education as a social practice, binding knowledge, life and work. They are educated during the day-by-day life with the community while farming, collecting fruits, listening to tales from the elders, organizing and participating in collective rites.

According to historical records, the Xavante have lived on the Central Plateau long before the discovery of Brazil. First attempts of contact date back the 17th century. A 19th century royal-letter decreeted war against them. Then, the Xavante followed the paths towards Rio das Mortes, Mato Grosso state, and divided themselves into two groups: the Xerente, who settled in Northern Goiás state, today state of Tocantins, and the Xavante, in the state of Mato Grosso. The Xavante from East Mato Grosso, in the Indigenous Land Pimentel Barbosa, call themselves *A'uwẽ Uptabi*, meaning true people. The *A'uwẽ Uptabi* are a hunting people, people of dreams. To be true people is to be connected to the environment where they live.

For the Xavante based on the village *Wedē'rã*, Indigenous Land Pimentel Barbosa, municipality of Canarana, knowledgeable over cerrados, rivers, valleys and mountains, the way of thinking about oneself, one's peers and other peoples, the way they experience celebrations, chantings, dances and dreams - *A'uwē Uptabi* carry them all within their memories, their hearts and their own body painted with urucum, coal and sometimes jenipapo tincture. The odor of herbs, strings worn around the wrist and ties are used like the ancient used to. For the *A'uwē Uptabi*, everything is interconnected from birth, when parents prepare themselves with herb baths, strings around the wrist and ankles. They prepare to carry the children and, after birth, take care of the growth of the children. Everything is interconnected from the first breath to the last sight. Exactly as said by Chief Seattle, we are only a link of this chain.

Founders of that village are children and grandchildren of *Apowē*, leader who made official contact with the explorer Francisco Meireles in 1946. Previously, this group used to live in village Pimentel Barbosa founded by his grandfather. They founded a new village with the objective of improving their quality of life, with better use of territories of hunting, fishing and collection of Cerrado fruits, and to keep alive the spirit and the *A'uwē Uptabi* traditions. According to *Apowē*, these groups come from an ancient breed, from ancient times. According to his philosophy, one needs to know how to walk throughout this world wisely; one must know the secret of being (both as an essence and as a condition) in the world and how to live in communion with everything that exists in it.

Guided by such philosophy this group, since the 1980s – after officially getting back part of its traditional territories - begins its work on socioenvironmental, cultural and educational issues. Areas degraded by pasture, rice monoculture and logging needed to be repaired with native plants from the Cerrado. They also began implementing best practices on managing fires, according to ancestral knowledge. Balancing the environment was a need.

In 2015, what we see around these areas is the advance of soy plantations together with the destruction of Cerrado. These impact negatively regional climate, the rainy season. We can feel the drought and the high temperatures. The Xavante farming of corn, pumpkin and watermelon are now different. The dry season is longer. And how about the neighbouring cities?

In a promenade through large developed centers, we observe who are coinciding “quality of life and life standard”. There are heliports, green areas and lakes in horizontal condos. And around popular dwellings, what can we find?

What is the relation between all this and climate change? Everything. How is education in developed countries? Do parents have time to educate their children? Which values do they pass on? What kind of children do parents raise for the future, for society? And how public administration has been acting? Does it ensure the right of citizens to live with dignity?

Infinite are the questions, because we want to understand how we've been living. There are endless information and knowledge, but nothing eases the heat, halts tornados and floodings. We do not know the concept of microclimate, but we can feel the difference when a tree is cut down. There is a difference on temperature, the area lacks of humidity and becomes brighter.

Climate change is happening. If we ask the elders on the wet season and dry seasons, they will certainly say there have been changes recently. There is no exact answer. A decade ago, in Eastern Mato Grosso state, close to Rio das Mortes where our villages are located, it started to rain late October and it finished in March. The end of the rain seemed just like the rainy season in Rio de Janeiro, as Vinicius de Moraes sings in Waters of March: a stick, a stone, it's the end of the road, it's the rest of a stump... A knife, a death, the end of the run, and the river bank talks of the waters of March, it's the end of all strain...

We know that climate change is connected to the model of development and progress. We need a cultural and social transformation to re-structure the system of information and education, as said Fritjof Capra in 1982 “in the Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture”. He tells the difference between “deep ecology” and superficial environmentalism. According to him, while superficial environmentalism worries about a more efficient environment to “man”, deep ecology demands radical changes in our perception of the role of human beings in the planet ecosystem. And this, he says, demands a new religious and philosophical base.



However, he says:

Therefore, the movement of deep ecology doesn't pursue a totally new philosophy, but the revival of a consciousness that's part of our cultural heritage. What maybe is new, is a broader ecological view in a planetarian level, supported by the powerful experience of astronauts and expressed in images as "spaceship Earth", and also the new slogan "Think globally – act locally". (CAPRA, 1982, free translation)

So, I think that this was what chief Seattle was talking about. Let's think and act.

Who knows, maybe we should begin preparing roundtables between us, indigenous peoples, seminars in universities, sociocultural-environmental shows, and meetings with local, state and federal politicians. Who knows his could be the beginning.

## SEVERIÁ IDIORIÊ

Of both Karajá and Javaé descent, born in Goiás, Brazil, and a member of the Traditional Council of the Wede'rã village, on the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Lands of the Zavante people, in the municipalities of Canarana and Ribeirão Cascalheira, Mato Grosso, Brazil, she holds a Master's degree in Education from the Mato Grosso Federal University (UFMT) and a degree in Modern Letters with a focus on English and Portuguese from the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Goiás. She is also active in social, indigenous pedagogy, environmental and cultural movements and works as a licensed teacher at the Etenhiritipá Basic Education Indigenous State School.



Photo: Helenice Stela / Seduc-MT

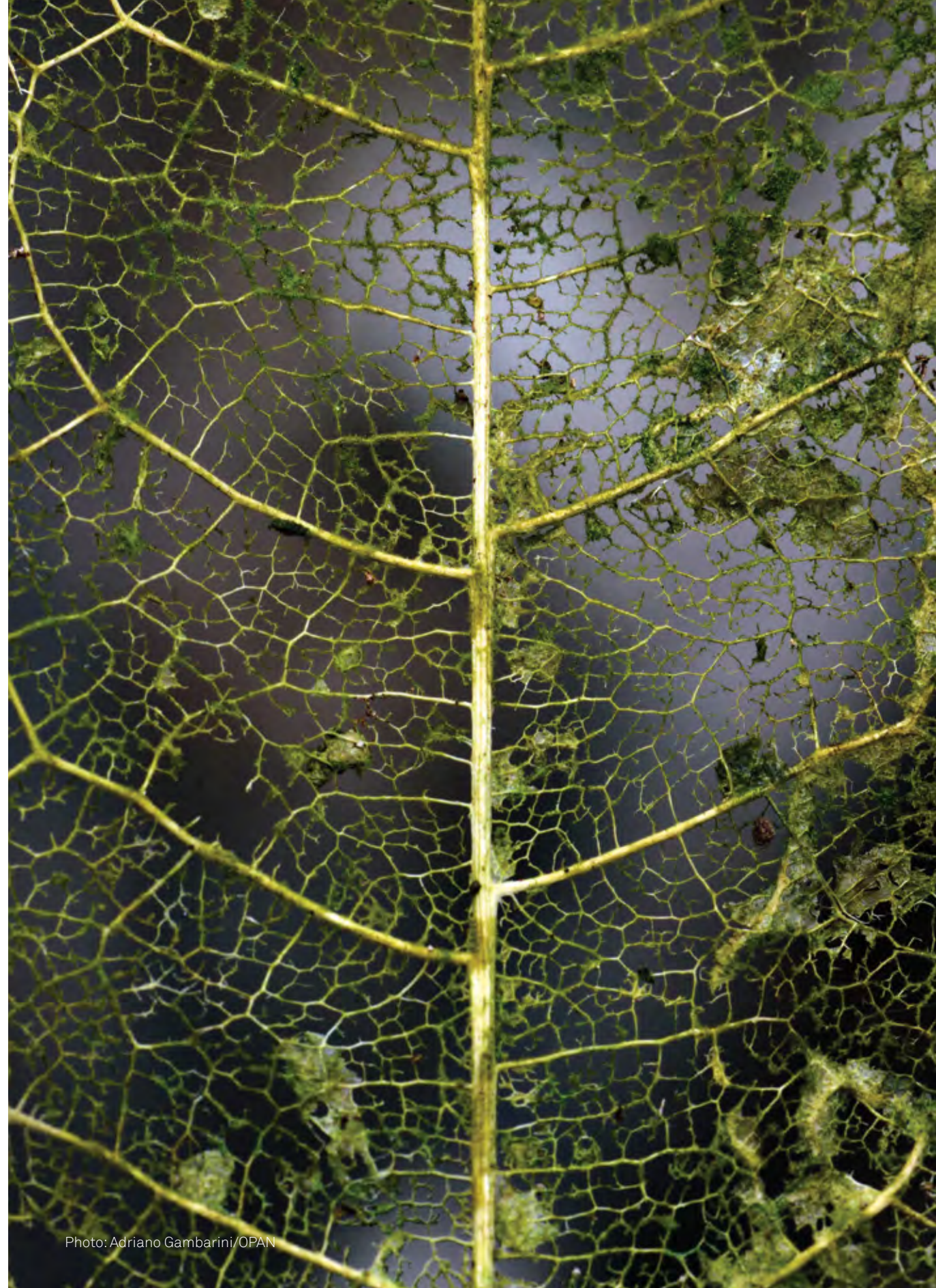


Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN





## CLIMATE CHANGE FOR MUNDURUKU PEOPLE FROM JUARA

MARCELO MANHUARI MUNDURUKU

Joaquim Crixí, leader of Nova Munduruku village,  
overviewed the writing of this text.

**THE MUNDURUKU PEOPLE** comes traditionally from the Upper region of Tapajós river, where the majority of its population is concentrated in the Indigenous Land of the same name, and most of their villages are located at Cururu River, tributary of the Tapajós River, a region known as Mundurukânia, as quoted in their origin myth. Karosakaybo created the Munduruku in the village Wakopadi, located on the central fields, close to the headwaters of river Krepori, nearby the east border of the land demarcated in 2001.

Late 1970s, the Munduruku people from Mato Grosso state, living today in the municipality of Juara, migrated from Upper Tapajós, in Pará, accessing river Juruena, inspired by their strong familiar bond with the Apiaká people and by the exploration of native rubber trees for their latex, the single economic activity at the time – a legacy of government incentives during the II World War. Nowadays, they co-exist with their neighbouring ethnic groups Apiaká and Kayabi, enriching and strengthening traditions and local indigenous culture in the Indigenous Land Apiaká-Kayabi, 60 km from the urban area of the city of Juara.

Nowadays, this Munduruku population of 137 people live in the Nova Munduruku village, at the right bank of the Peixes River and registered in the Brazilian Indigenous Agency FUNAI on 24th June 1988. Their sociocultural context is close to the reality of their peers within the indigenous land. They share with the Apiaká and Kayabi peoples all welfare policies in a variety of fields, such as education, health, sports, and citizenship projects that build up capacities in both communities. Today this intercultural relation is quite friendly, with not only interethnic marriages among these peoples, but also sharing the same sustainable economic activities regarding the wealth and non-logging forest products of this land.

### **WHAT DO THE MUNDURUKU PEOPLE FROM JUARA THINKS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate change for the Munduruku people is considered a major problem to our way of life, taking into consideration its interference on the natural cycle of annual seasons, impacting in a variety of ways traditional farming, artisanal fishing, and activities related to the production of food. We believe that everything is interconnected to nature. Our people believes that throughout the times nature brought us here, giving us knowledge about time, space and the cycle of life of the living beings in the world - as such, we worry about the environment we live facing this recent critical framework.





Munduruku children helping to put out fires. Photo: Marcelo Munduruku.

We worry that our livelihood is considered obsolete, because we look forward to living and co-existing accordingly to the way of our antecessors. This is getting harder everyday amid public policies that prioritize only a single form of production, without concerns or control on the use of natural resources in the state of Mato Grosso, or other states of our federation. The problem is getting worse each year, and brings along situations that later will build up to irreversible consequences, as the silting up of rivers and the building of hydroelectric dams at the major rivers of the Amazon, a region where riverine and traditional peoples live.

### **HOW MUNDURUKU FROM JUARA FEEL AND CO-EXIST WITH CLIMATE CHANGE**

Our people is passing through an adaptation process, considering that we are not in our traditional territory and that we are still understanding and enjoying the potential of this place. Our capacity to adapt comes from the first contacts with the non-indigenous society, of course together with the loss of some habits, the reversal of values and adoption of some behaviors that were needed to capacitate people to represent us in a variety of movements.

Regarding climate, we are looking forward to implementing projects that enrich cultural practices, promote the use of medicinal plants, the gathering and planting of seeds used in artcrafts and ornaments, the gathering of nuts, and efforts to value this product of many uses, just like forests. They are included on the school calendar, as the collection of wild fruits in the field of agroecological practices, because our school has a flexible curriculum for this thematic.

We try in every way to bring to our children and youth the knowledge and the advantage to protect rivers and headwaters, fire control, the visibility and valorization of biodiversity in our environment, and impacts that hydroelectric may cause in cultural, environmental and social aspects, as much as development policies of our state and country.

### **HOW MUNDURUKU FROM JUARA WOULD LIKE TO OR SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

These issues may be subject of debate in the following ways:

- Awareness raising on appropriate use of the forest, rivers and fauna, which are resources that in a certain way become valuable only after an economic input;
- By enjoying the potential of green economy in places like settlements, indigenous lands, among others;
- By searching for incentive policies to sustainable economic alternatives for organic products, once the production in our state is focused on monoculture
- By debating over the consequences of mega development projects such as hydroelectric, agribusiness and the lack of public policies towards risk societies, as well as indigenous villages, riverine population and quilombolas;



- Establish partnerships in order to develop sustainable activities towards population under risk
- Look for market alternative to forest products and an effort to aggregate value to those products with technical support or a follow-up mechanism of small business – like incubators, cooperatives and associations already working in sustainable activities.

### MARCELO MANHUARI MUNDURUKU

A member of the Munduruku people and an indigenous teacher in the Nova Munduruku village with a degree in Languages, Art, and Literature from the Mato Grosso State University (UNEMAT). Dedicated to strengthening the Munduruku cultural movement in Mato Grosso, he is also a writer, musician, representative of the Munduruku people at the State Education Council, and a leader of the Nova Munduruku village, on the Apiaká-Kayabi Indigenous Lands, in the municipality of Juara, Mato Grosso, Brazil.



Photo: Marcelo Munduruku



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN





**WE MUST  
PRESERVE NATURE  
TO CONTINUE  
EXISTING**

TIPUICI MANOKI

**WHAT ONCE WAS REALITY** it has become now history, same as many other stories told, that sometimes are hard to believe. When I was a child, my grandfather still used to fish at the bridge over the São Domingos stream, which crosses the village Cravari. Many people used to fish there, took their food from this creek. Today it's history. When I cross that bridge I remember when I was a child and we used to catch fishes with my grandfather. He used to tell that during the rainy season the river got full of fish that swam up river Cravari to the São Domingos stream.

Today I'm grown up and my grandfather is already living together with *Inuli* (God), and I still cross that bridge. I see many children swimming, but today I'm happy that they don't need only fish for their food, because if they did they wouldn't have what to eat. Today the São Domingos stream is available only to bathe, to get relieved from the heat and to be entertained during weekends. Children have fun, and I hear many people to complaining that the stream is poor. I remember when my grandfather and I used to seat on top of the bridge to go night fishing, and many other families also did the same. The São Domingos stream and Cravari river used to be full of fish. Today it's not possible to see fish anymore, because the Small Hydroelectric Plant (SHP) Bocaiúva was built a few years ago, obstructing the passage of fish to rivers upstream this SHP.

We know that Mato Grosso state is the largest grain producer and also a champion in cattle breeding, thus devastating its forests. As if it isn't enough, licensing proceedings for small and large hydroelectric projects follow in full steam. All this let indigenous land under siege by large farms of soy and cattle. Today, they are killing rivers and its fish. Licensing proceedings do not take into consideration the participation and the voice of indigenous peoples, even if they take place close to indigenous lands.

We understand that by killing nature they are also killing us, indigenous peoples. There are many other sustainable ways to develop this country, in a way that all are benefited. We know that preserving the environment is not a responsibility only for indigenous peoples, but for all society in search of a better world. Without nature it won't be possible to live in this planet called Earth.

For a people that have been taking care and living with nature - and everything we have depends on nature - it is hard to cope with all this climate change. Previously, we knew when it was supposed to rain, when it was dry, when it was cold, thus we knew when to work on the farm to set fire, to plant and to har-

vest, all these following mother nature. Nowadays, it's not possible to do this because we can't tell the annual seasons anymore, neither we can follow the moon. For our grandparents, the moon season was very important, for it was time for the plants to grow beautiful and with lots of fruits. Due to thoughtless attitudes of man, harming nature, many of these practices were lost. Now, when it should be a dry season it rains and when should be cold it is warm.

What we can do for our mother nature is to fight with all our strengths against the interests of federal government, and municipal and state governments that want to destroy even more. To struggle in order to keep our territories preserved and to demarcate lands that were not yet demarcated. For the nature we preserve today is humanity's safety for tomorrow. All are benefited by the nature we preserve, but few have this view on indigenous peoples.

We have already contributed a lot to humanity, but, in order to do more, we need to be heard by decision-making agencies, and, above all, the law of this country must be enforced. Society must understand that fruits don't grow at the supermarket shelves and that the water they drink don't flow magically off the tap.



Children playing in the river at Cravari village, Indigenous Land Irantxe.  
Photo: Tipuici Manoki.

In order to the existence on Earth to continue, we must know how to respect nature and know how to use what it offers to us. One must understand that money can't buy everything. While each one of us don't do our part, we'll be far from reaching out a solution to all that is happening. One shouldn't harm nature, Earth, because we understand that without it we don't have health, education and, above all, happiness to our people.

We can't blame nature for all catastrophes that have been happening, for man is guilty for what is happening. Nature is only responding to its suffering. Fish need water, water needs the woods and we need it all to eat, breathe and live.



Photo: Personal archive.

### TIPUICI MANOKI

A leader of the Manoki people, resident of the Treze de Maio village, and teacher at the Cravari village, on the Irantxe Indigenous Lands, municipal Brasnorte, northeastern region of Mato Grosso, Brazil, she Holds a degree in Social Sciences at the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT). Before going to college, she was an indigenous health worker serving his people. She currently actively participates in the indigenous movement and wide range of other movements supporting social causes.



# RÓ NA WAHÖIMANAZÉ - TO LIVE IN CERRADO

CAIMI WAISSÉ XAVANTE

Text based on an interview with uncle Waza'é,  
Village elder, August 2015.

**IN ANCIENT TIMES**, the territory of the Xavante people *A'uwẽ* didn't have the arbitrary limits that form our borders today. Our boundaries were types of vegetation and the limits were natural. That's why we believe everything is interconnected. We are and we make part of the Cerrado ecosystem. It feeds us and it's up to us to respect it.

Since we are born, there is a connection in each Xavante to the territory we live in. Our parents were prepared to conceive and to take care of our development following the birth in a close relation with environment. Using ceremonial wood earrings, buriti strings for protection and herbal baths, we were thought, dreamt and conceived within our mother's uterus. When we are born, we receive from the basts of the Cerrado, the riparian forests or the buriti paths small strings used in bracelets and anklets which are sacred for protection. Our mothers and fathers were fed from corn porridge and other light meals offered by the territory.

As such, we are interconnected to everything from nature that involves us; she feeds us, strengthen and supply us; we take care and should worship her as our Great Mother. Our life and our rites of passage and initiation are interconnected to her from the first breath to the last sight. We celebrate nature



Village Wede'rã, August 2015. Photo: Ponto de Cultura's collection Apowẽ.



Cerrado, August 2015. Photo: Caimi Waiassé Xavante.



Village Wede'rã, August 2015.  
Photo: Ponto de Cultura's  
collection Apowẽ.



Limit of Indigenous Land Pimentel Barbosa,  
bordering a pasture, May 2008.  
Photo: James Welch/ Ponto Cultura Apowẽ.

through songs, dances and *zõmori* expeditions, when we cross each variety of vegetation of the Cerrado. We are the people of the Dream. In order to dream our songs and to be wise and understand the answers to our doubts and problems we should feed ourselves from species coming from our ecosystems, hunting boar, tapir, deer, anteater, among others. Our mental, physical, and spiritual health is interconnected to what surround us, the way we feed ourselves and live our lives in each moment.

However, everything has been changing with tragic consequences to us due to territorial reduction, deforestation around indigenous lands, pollution from pesticides and climate change, problems that affect directly the health of communities. Development policies in Brazil don't respect our livelihood and don't care if exploit, pollute and desecrate the Earth. There are projects of hydroelectric dams, soy plantations with pesticides, river contamination. Social projects of the Federal Government, such as food aid and family stipend program Bolsa Família turned our food poor in nutrients and make us dependent of products that come from cities, while our farming, hunting expeditions and fishery receive little support.

To face these issues, which are socioenvironmental problems, our greater challenge is to continue to teach our youth the *A'uwẽ* philosophy. Our rites of initiation and passage must happen as they always happened, as our ancestors and the Spirits that we can't see have taught us. Each godfather should know his responsibility in passing through the essence of our people, the way we conceive the world and respect the place we came from, physical and spiritually.

To continue traditional education, godfathers, parents and grandparents teach and educate orally the youth during hunting expedition, fishery and gathering fruits and straw. To reach these goals, our people is assimilating *warazu* (non-indigenous) techniques in our favor. The village's Indigenous School *Etenhiritipá* organizes the knowledge of the tradition in Xavante and Portuguese languages. Ponto de Cultura *Apowẽ* register in audiovisual formats every activity in the villages and in the cities, as well as our habits and rituals. With these, we try to undo the illusion of the things brought from the world of *warazu* that have blinded our youth, some godfathers and elders.



In the last years, we managed to conduct our fire hunting as our grandparents used to. We are studying the best way to use fire while hunting or farming. To a better consumption of proteins, we have developed projects to manage and monitor boars populations. Results will come in the following years. All that in the Indigenous Land Pimentel Barbosa, located in the state of Mato Grosso.

That's why we want to be consulted in relation to public policies, from the federal level – such as the economic growth induction program PAC – to the municipal and state-level, that impact directly the surroundings of our territory with projects related to tourism, highways, railwats, hydroways, monoculture plantation, among others. We'd like to see projects of environmental education in the cities, that teach the youth to understand the ecosystem of the region they live. But, mainly, we want that public administration in municipal, state and federal levels to recognize that we can hold partnerships for projects that take care of our region and the planet. Everyone rely on the socio-environmental equilibrium to live better as human beings.

We, humans – the top of the food chain -, have been destroying everything, disrespecting everything in the name of progress. How about the quality and continuity of the life of human beings? And about other beings? We must think ahead and take a stand in relation to impacts that the planet is suffering. Take a stand. Otherwise we are lost and shall be no longer planet Earth.

## CAIMI WAIASSÉ XAVANTE

Member of the Xavante people, Porexa'õno clan, Hötörã men's group, and the family belonging to the sacred wood lineage, Wamari tedewa, and grandson to Apowe. He is married with children and grandchildren, and lives in the Etenhiritipá village, on the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Lands, in the municipalities of Canarana and Ribeirão Cascalheira, Mato Grosso, Brasil. Professor of the Portuguese and Xavante languages, he is currently director of the Samuel Sahutuwe Basic Education Indigenous State School, in the village of Etênhiritipa, on the same indigenous lands. He also serves as an Indigenous Pedagogy Advisor for Mato Grosso. A filmmaker since 1990, he has produced 10 movies, 3 of which have received awards at both national and international film festivals. He is also a representative of the Alliance Association of the Peoples of Roncador, the Etenhiritipa Xavante Associação, and member of the Indigenous Writers and Artists Center.



Photo: Manoel Ramos Junior



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN

# CLIMATE CHANGE FOR THE MANOKI PEOPLE

MANOEL KANUNXI

Text written based on an interview occurred in August 2015,  
in Cravari village, Indigenous Land Irantxe (MT).

**AT THIS MOMENT**, the Manoki people are really concerned about climate change, because we no longer understand the cycles of nature as we used to. Our ancestors knew well the weather. We used to control our work, we used to plan. We had seasons of rain, drought, the right moment to plant and to harvest. Climate is changing and we are very worried about the future.

Nowadays, we observe that if we plant something in the season we used to, there is no result. And if there is some result, harvest is late, not in the right moment, neither abundant as it was before. We have no longer seasons in right times. Weather is crazy!

These changes, as I can see, are closely related to agribusiness, with all their soy farms around us. We're surrounded. When agribusiness and its deforestation that comes with it weren't here, our understanding of the weather was way better. We knew the right weather and worked on the right time. Now weather is changing all the time. Cold comes suddenly. We don't know if a cold breeze is coming or not, but we have noticed that when it comes, it's only for two or three days and not so cold as it used to. In the same way, heat is rising a lot. Seasons that should be colder are always warm.

So, with deforestation and all this heat, the fire breaks out over nature. Everything has a connection. That's why we, the protectors of the remaining woods, are managing to reduce burning within our land. We are preparing ourselves, together with supporters, to defend our land from fires, which are more frequent with the heat and warmth.

Our relation with nature is different, affected by climate change. We worry a lot about the future. We don't know where humanity will get. Our food is being affected because we don't harvest in the right time, we don't have the same production as we used to. We always had our food from traditional farming. That was for sure. Nowadays, sometimes we have, others we don't. Without planting and harvesting, we depend on the food sold in the city.

We used to know nature, and our pajés (shamans) knew the weather from the stars, from the plants and even from the animals seen in the woods. Now, even the animals' reproduction is changing. There are animals that we don't even see anymore, so, in fact, we don't know if they are still breeding or have already disappeared forever. Animals are dying because of the climate and because of deforestation.



The Manoki people are beekeepers. The Manoki honey has always been recognized by its quality. Due to climate variations, flowering have been changing every year. Now, we don't have the same production of honey as we used to. Bee flowers appear on the wrong season, when we are not prepared for its collection. We can also see a reduction of bees. They are going away or dying because of the weather. They can't survive under these new conditions, strange to their habits so they are being extinct. It affects our honey production, but also our lives, because bees are important to pollinate and spread their life over the woods.

We feel that these more intense climate change came together with the advance of agribusiness, deforestation and government projects, such as hydroelectric plants. Our area here is surrounded by harvests of soy, corn and cotton, harming us a lot, mainly because of the poison they use on their crops. Waters are contaminated, and also the land. We can see that fish are in lower numbers: or died from the poison, or are trapped by dams and cannot reproduce anymore.

Those dams, larger and smaller hydroelectric plants are erradicating fish and changing the characteristics of the river. The river is smaller in size and volume. This is a one reason we don't have the same convivial relation with the river as we used to have. We don't even know if in the future we'll have a river, because headwaters are deforested and springs are drying up. For all this, we no longer can live as we used to, hunting and fishing. Animals and fish are on the wane, the wood is on the wane, the river is on the wane. We no longer maintain that cultural bond with hunting and fishing, because it's impossible.

We do live these climate changes and they affect us everyday. We feel that there is more dust, which mixed up with pesticides in the air we breath causes diseases in our people. It seems that flus and pneumonia are stronger than before. However, it seems that no one cares. Our health is also threatened.

### **WE MUST BE HEARD**

Governments change, but we still don't know what's the government stand and action towards climate change. Politicians talk a lot about it, but don't actually do anything to halt it. We can see that we, indigenous peoples, are being ignored by the government in this discussion. We feel isolated.



Extensa área convertida ilegalmente em pasto dentro da TI Manoki. Registro de 2013. Photo: Arquivo OPAN

It's time for us, indigenous populations, to get together to discuss how climate change affects us. We need to talk about our concerns with the governments and ensure opportunities to debate our worries, to solve the issue. The government must understand what concerns us. But it seems that the government doesn't worry about it, because it only wants to see agribusiness growing and making more money. Meanwhile, the health and the well-being of the indigenous populations and the Brazilian population are, in general, not being considered.

We, as indians, must show that government has to be concerned and truly active towards this. We get the impression that, notwithstanding what they say on television, government is not concerned about it, because constructions that put an end to rivers and cause more and more deforestation follow through. We have a lot to say. It's possible for us, indigenous, to get together and show the government that we can't live like this and, in the future, no one will be able to live. Government must give us opportunities in assemblies, with representatives, with researchers and all specialists, in order to engage into serious discussions, for we are also experts on nature.

We still believe that there's a way to fix this situation. But for this to happen we must stop deforestation and do it now. At this moment, we know very well that the cut-down forest and the plantation areas are enough. If they used this whole cut-down area to produce food for the people, everyone would live well and there would be no hunger. The point is that we don't eat soy, and the people and the environment are not a priority. All this soy is sent abroad, to make money and produce other things.

There is no need for more deforestation, but to replant the forest and preserve the remaining ones. People talk about it as if it's not possible, but it is. One only needs the will. The problem is that the government seems to be blind for the solution, because of the interests of the big ones. We discuss within our communities, we point out the paths, but the government must listen to us and must have the will to do it. This is the only way to stop this destruction and try to solve this issue of climate change, so we can have a future. This is how indigenous have lived for years.

The business people involved in logging, hydroelectric constructions and agribusiness believe that deforestation is the better way to live, but it's not like that. We want to show governments that there are other ways. Indigenous peoples know this. They live in this land since forever. Zero deforestation can be one solution, but it depends upon everyone consciousness. We must all get together to help and learn to take care of the planet in a different way.

Some of our indigenous peers are already fighting and discussing climate change in several places. We must get together and get together and fight in order to show white people that this is not how we survive. We live together with nature, we are also part of it. The world was created for us to live accordingly to our role in it. Of course we can cut down a tree, prepare our small farms, our work, hunt something here or there, but it must be done in a balanced way.

Today, more developed countries can see that situation is difficult and are willing to discuss solutions, but this is because they already destroyed their woods and forests. But how they can solve if now they come to Brazil, where forests still exist, in order to devastate it too? Our population must be aware that this is not development. We can't let happen here what happened there. We must use their experience and continue our struggle to protect what we still have of forest and water, thinking on ways to reduce impacts of the harm already done. It's the only way for a try to diminish the bad things about climate change.



Photo: Andreia Fanzeres

### MANOEL KANUNXI

Leader of Manoki people. He lives in Asa Branca village, Indigenous Land Irantxe, municipality of Brasnorte, Northwestern Mato Grosso, Brazil.





## THE MEHINAKU PEOPLE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

MAYAWARI MEHINAKO

**THE PEOPLE MEHINAKU** believe that climate change is making more and more complicated the everyday life and co-existence of humans and all living beings. We need to think ahead in order to preserve and conserve nature that gives us well-being in life. Brazil is a territory with a lot of wealth, major biological, environmental, and cultural heritage. Unfortunately, inhabitants of this country have not been able to protect this wealth. Nature has been degraded without concern on the use of biodiversity for the future.

According to the view of Mehinaku people, world population is growing and citizens don't realize the importance of a healthy planet. Nature needs to be cherished and protected because life depends on her. As we are currently living under capitalism, a great destruction is happening - the degradation of nature - and living beings don't have proper space to live. Due to capitalism, climate change is uncontrolled and only a few people are concerned about nature.

Even if federal laws protect us, few groups don't respect the Constitution and others think only as individuals, looking for profit and better life conditions no matter the price. As examples, there are large farmer owners, cattle ranchers, loggers, businesspeople, etc., who destroy land and nature and don't think about Brazilian communities. They are more and more powerful, the highest class in Brazil and it's hard to stop them. They rule Brazil. They know the laws, but they don't respect them. In practice, the law is never in force as legislated.

In 1500, colonizers arrived in Brazil looking for exploitation only. Today, the Brazilian people still can't deal with nature and also only want to exploit it. As a result of this degradation is climate change. We now have less rain, the wind is now stronger in the region and in a few states there's even lack of water.

Authorities are not concerned about nature, thinking only about economic development and trade, destroying nature without planning. Nature is a country heritage, it belongs to us all. That's why the Mehinaku people thought on ways to teach non-indigenous about the importance of nature, because all beings depend upon the planet. If we don't know how to preserve biodiversity, the future of the country and of the whole world will be very hard.

Like us, researchers and scientists should also teach and raise awareness of the population. We need a full education for society, in order to under-

stand as one the lives of all beings and the Earth. We're only living on the planet for a while, it was not created by us or only for us, we must know how to use it. Without nature there is no pleasant life, there is no health, food, education nor safety.

It's essential to disseminate indigenous knowledge through records and books to put on concerns and lessons in favor of the preservation of nature, thus easing climate change. These records will be a source of research and knowledge over nature. The same must happen at the media, showing mechanisms of protection and sustainable use of nature.

It's essential to strengthen and enforce federal laws, so agribusiness people respect us. They must begin to understand that what they are doing is harming the future of the country and of the planet. The world needs respect and humanity.

#### **HOW WE FEEL AND COPE WITH CLIMATE CHANGES**

The Mehinaku people feels very disturbed about climate change due to several consequences to our lives. Every indigenous territory is now an island surrounded by agrobusiness, where indigenous inhabit with hardship.



Aerial view of Mehinaku Village at Xingu Indigenous Park.  
Photo: reproduced the internet

Our community has always got together to take care and to protect what we have within our land, otherwise all of it could end. We don't destroy our forests and farming fire is controlled, well-monitored in order to prevent the burning of medicinal plants and needed raw material. We must use well the available natural resources, otherwise climate change will get even stronger. World population is growing and we can all think together on actions to ensure the Earth's future.

As our community sees, climate change began when colonizers came from other countries, laid siege to indigenous and destroyed nature. Nowadays, life is hard, temperatures are higher, we see a lot of rain with strong winds, and a few people died in climate tragedies that didn't exist in the past.

While some regions lack water, indigenous people continue to preserve nature and to take care of river springs. However, a major problem is that we're not recognized as wises or as important to preservation of life. It would be important that we are heard in order to raise awareness of the Brazilian people on climate change. We live in this land since its origin, we have a lot of knowledge from the past, from ancestors, that we can teach to non-indigenous. However, our point of view is never considered by the government and is not being spread out, and this would be essential to the Brazilian population and the world.

#### **HOW MEHINAKU PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS**

For us, it's a necessity to ensure that indigenous rights and knowledge are considered in all three levels of government - municipal, state, and federal - so that indigenous people have the right to participate in seminars and meetings about climate change, as well as to talk about issues from the reality of living in our villages.

Indigenous peoples have more knowledge about nature than literates that study theory. We have practical knowledge. Thus, indigenous people can organize themselves to teach the world about the value of nature. We, indigenous, would also talk to farmers and cattle ranchers to raise awareness on the importance of nature.

According to our proposal, the Ministry of Environment and all government should invest more on publishing books about how to take care about the planet and in full education for the people to protect nature and humanity.



We, indigenous, are always called incapable and unknowledgeable by people with prejudice, but this happens because we don't have the same opportunities and recognized rights. We, indigenous, should be part of the teaching staff of universities, so our particular view over climate change can contribute to researchers and academics.

We shouldn't think only in the present. We better take care of the future. We must think through the idea that we already lost many of the wealths of the planet. Indigenous people must participate in Municipal Assemblies, State Assemblies and National Congress, with voice and respect, in order to discuss climate change together with authorities. We, indigenous, can contribute to and enrich the knowledge of non-indigenous in order to plan the future of the country and of the planet. After all, no one knows the nature as much as the originary peoples.

### MAYAWARI MEHINAKO

A member of the Mehinaku people, Alto Xingu, Xingu Indigenous Lands (TIX), located in the northern region of the state of Mato Grosso, in the municipality of Gaúcha do Norte, in the southern part of the Brazilian Amazon, he works as a teacher and holds a degree in Languages, Arts, and Literature and is a member of the Indigenous Pedagogy School State Council (CEEI), as well as a member of the National Commission on Indigenous Pedagogy Education (SECAD and MEC). An internationally-recognized artist, he is famous for his wooden benches carved in the style of the Mehinaku and other indigenous peoples.



Photo: Personal Archive



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN



## CLIMATE CHANGE FOR THE KAWAIWETE PEOPLE

PIKURUK CAVALCANTE KAYABI

**IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE KAWAIWETE PEOPLE**, the creator of the world and of living and non-living beings is *Tuiararé*, who created all that exists. Together with his members, he created *kupeirup*, that is the origin of the food in the Kawaiwete traditional farms. Those who know the spirits, the Kawaiwete pajés (shamans), explain that everything that's happening today with climate change is related to deforestation of headwaters, streams and springs and all these is causing the death of the Earth.

Observing all that men on Earth cause in nature, *Tuiararé* himself gathered his allies to increase the heat and see how men from the Earth would behave with such a high temperature, as we to feel that the heat is increasing. That's why we, Kawaiwete, respect nature and use the earth how *Tuiararé* himself taught us, so we can prepare our traditional farms and have products of quality for our health. This fine earth for Kawaiwete is called black earth (terra preta), which nowadays we find little where we live due to the increasing of indigenous population on the Indigenous Park of Xingu (IPX).

Scientists, for the Kawaiwete, are our own shamans, as they own the knowledge of how the world is and have great respect for the phenomena of nature. They are guided by spirits and show respect by following these guides to prevent *Tuiararé's* revolt against us, living beings existing on Earth. This is how Kaiawate lives.

Against all this great deforestation made by non-indigenous man – with large plantations, implementation of hydroelectric plants in every river, the construction of railways, highways, etc – the owner of the Earth, creator of the world, revolts himself against humanity. Climate is changing in the whole world. If man doesn't minimize it, the trend is to get even warmer.

Kawaiwete people is a nomad people. They keep changing from village to village so the woods they used previously may recover and, four years later, they may be useful again for farming. Crops are fertilized with natural manure, prepared with old leaves, insects and other nutrients that earth itself offers. All this knowledge comes from our scientists. We respect and believe that we must take care of nature. This is the only way the owner, the creator, will see that we're enjoying respectfully and looking after what he gave us, following his guidings.

According to the declaration from some elder Kawaiwete, originally their people came from the Teles Pires river, in Pará, where they then came to the Xingu.



By the time the Kawaiwete arrived, the state of Mato Grosso didn't have municipalities around the Indigenous Park of Xingu. The elders say that nature was primitive at the time, the air they breathed was more pure and earth had a lot of nutrients, so they used to harvest high quality crops.

Now, crops from our gardens are getting weaker as large farms of soy monoculture approaches. Climate in the whole world is changing, not only in the state of Mato Grosso. This is a consequence of deforestation and the applying of pesticides poison which weakens the Earth. We believe that poisons are spread by the wind and the rain, and contaminate the Indigenous Park of Xingu.

I would like to register here the knowledge of my people. And also tell everyone that every human being must respect nature in every sense, for she is life. Referring to water specially, as it's already a problem in several places of the world. If we don't take care and respect the Earth, the owner of nature himself can revolt and even those who inflicted no harm over nature will also pay for it. That's why we must cooperate with nature and respect the woods, the margins of rivers and existing springs, because it's from her we take our food, and everything we need to survive.

### PIKURUK CAVALCANTE KAYABI

Graduated in Nature Sciences by Unemat. Indigenous researcher, he coordinates projects on documentation, revitalization and conservation of indigenous language Kawaiwete. Director of Central Indigenous School Diaurum, Kawaiwete people, Lower region of Xingu river, at Indigenous Park of Xingu, located at the Northeast region of the state of Mato Grosso, Southern Brazilian Amazon.



Photo: Prodoclin / Museu do Índio



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN

# THE WARÁ OF XINGU AND THE CLIMATE CHANGE

PIRATÁ WAURÁ

**THE WARÁ PEOPLE** speaks a language from the linguistic group *Aruák* and live in the Indigenous Land of Xingu, state of Mato Grosso. This society divides itself in three villages: *Piyulaga* and *Piyulewene*, located in the Upper Xingu municipality of Gaúcha do Norte, where nearly 400 individuals live; the third village is also called *Piyulewene* and is located in the Mid Xingu municipality of Feliz Natal. Our people has been preserving a diversity of traditions and rituals in our culture throughout the years.

Climate change have impacted the way of living in Waurá's culture for a long time. We understand that these facts are alterations occurring on the broader climate of the planet Earth and we know that they are caused mainly by human action. We see an important increase on air pollution as well as temperature, and our major challenge has been adaptation, mainly from the last decade up to present times..

In this way, climate change is causing a lot of problems to Wará society, affecting mainly of the traditional calendar that the people follow according to their traditions and habits. We are very worried about our farming, for instance. The weather has changed, heat increased, rain decreased, our cultivation period is confused.



Village Piyulaga, Xingu. Photo: Piratá Waurá. 2014



In ancient times, the river had its ordinary flow, forests around our territory weren't destroyed, fire wouldn't escape from our control while preparing the land for farming. Nowadays, we can see more and more the end of exuberant forests that used to surround the Indigenous Land of Xingu. Farms of soy and cattle are occupying the land around us, pressing the Xingu territory, we're surrounded. We also feel the river drying often, and higher temperatures of the water. Besides this, the heat dries the forest floor\* coverage, turning it in a powerful fuel for fires around the river springs.

"We demand to be told of what is happening. Previously, we knew how to control fire when preparing the land. Now it goes on and it doesn't stop. This region used to be different. We also knew when the rain would stop and when it would come back, now we don't", said chief Awaulukuma Waurá.

Humanity, mainly non-indigenous, don't think about the health of the planet. But it's simple for us: we need to reduce forest burning, respect indigenous territories – where the forest is taken care as a cultural good -, to stop burning fossil fuels, to stop polluting plants, and to implement recycling, garbage control, among the solutions. We can understand how easy is to talk about it, but the real problem is how to do it. Everything would be easier if people were truly aware. The problem is that people with power choose money over environment, so the situation is getting harder and harder.

We, from the Wará culture, rely on nature and have a lot of knowledge to share: how to traditionally re-forest, how to take care of environment in our region, about ways to clean the land for our subsistence crops and ways to re-grow fallen trees.

Between closing a factory that causes major pollution, to help nature, and maintain it to gather more power, everyone chooses to keep polluting factories. It must be reviewed. We all must work hard to help reverting climate change, because we, indigenous peoples alone, will never make it.

Facing all this, we know that unity can be the true key to the solution of our problems. Everybody is suffering a lot with the heat, not only the indigenous. And water, the main source of life for living beings, is diminishing. Everybody is being affected, not only us. But we have a lot to contribute to the solution of these problems.

\* Forest floor is a coverage formed by disposal and accumulation of dead organic matter in different stages of decomposition over the soil or aquatic sediment.

We need respect and recognition from governments to indigenous peoples. Nowadays, representatives and senators in Brazil, elected by us, don't represent us, trying to approve PEC 215\*\*. This project harms us and will bring even more destruction to forests and territories. We must be heard, respected. And we need support, people that can fight with us, NGOs for the conservancy of woods and defence of territories – and also governments, only all together we can save the world for the future.

\*\* Projeto de Emenda Constitucional (PEC 215/2000): This Constitutional Amendment Project transfers final decisions on demarcation of indigenous lands from the Executive to the Legislative, spheres the extension of Indigenous Land demarcated and allows the revision of demarcation processes already concluded, ensuring indemnization to farmers occupying the Union's areas.

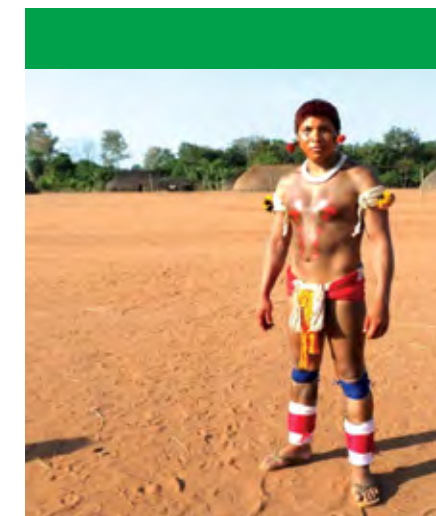


Photo: Personal Archive

## PIRATÁ WAURÁ

Waurá people. Son of Kamo Waurá and Yakakumalu Waurá. Indigenous teacher since 2007, when he got involved in a program for the development of indigenous teachers in the intercultural learning of the Haiyô project. Graduated with a Intercultural Degree on Language, Arts and Literature by Unemat, in Barra dos Bugres city, Mato Grosso. Lives in the Piyulaga village, Indigenous Land of Xingu, Gaúcha do Norte, Northeast Mato Grosso, Brazil. He is a teacher at the State Indigenous School for Basic Education Piyulaga, in his community.



## THE JURUENA RIVER: THE ROAD OF THE FOREST PEOPLES

PAULO HENRIQUE MARTINHO SKIRIPI

**BRAZIL**, which will turn 519 years old on the 22nd of April, 2019, is quite unfamiliar with its indigenous multi-ethnic socio-diversity. Up to the present moment, it's still not known for sure how many different peoples there are or even how many native languages are spoken in the country. There are few indigenous publications and few museums, and few movies or TV shows being made by indigenous people, which is to say that few indigenous people are telling their own story from their perspective. However, in spite of the arrival of the outside world, the Rikbaktsa culture continues to be present on its native lands. The language is part of our people's social and personal communications. This historical experience is present in every human being who constructs their own form of survival.

One of the main challenges indigenous peoples face is non-adherence to and non-enforcement of the laws in effect. Governments themselves disrespect these laws, showing their true face of disregard for civil and human rights. I understand that, with every day that goes by, we are more prepared to face this world that is so unpredictable and full of excessive bureaucracy and disrespect. We will never stop fighting and asserting our rights.

The Juruena river has long served as a road for us, people of the forest, who have always enjoyed peace living on our lands and freely preserving our traditional culture. Now we face a threat posed by large projects planned by the federal government, like the construction of large-scale hydroelectric power plants and small hydropower plants on our river.

The changes the river has already undergone, with the water level receding significantly and a significant decrease in the fish population has come to interfere with our economic sustainability. That's not to mention the vast expansion of monoculture farms into our indigenous lands, which release large quantities of agrochemicals into the environment, killing fish larvae during the *piracema* (fish breeding season). Fishing is prohibited during this time, but not the use of agrochemicals on crops, which are carried into the rivers by flooding, affecting the reproduction of fish, the main staple of our diet. This process has meant a lack of fish and game for our cultural celebrations and even the production of handicrafts. It is in this way that the history of entire peoples have been lost and they have disappeared from planet Earth. But this will not happen to us, the Rikbaktsa people. We will fight until we lose our last war, with the certainty that, as long as indigenous peoples exist, so will forests and conserved natural environments. That is why our cause is resistance.



This being the case, the UN Conference on Climate Change must discuss how to regulate investments into the projects that counties carry out in Brazil in the name of progress, which directly affect indigenous lands and destroy thousands of the lives that make up Brazil's biomes. The UN must also invest in adherence to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989, also known as ILO-convention 169, respecting the consultation protocols developed by each group of Brazilian Indigenous peoples, and do so according to the interests of these peoples in the preservation and maintenance of their culture and ethnicity.

Indigenous peoples must effectively participate in the decision-making process of policies regarding any collective interests that may come to affect our lands and our ethnic and cultural identities. May all indigenous people be permanently compensated, financially and meaningfully, for all damages caused to the environment.

### PAULO HENRIQUE MARTINHO SKIRIPI

Is a member of the Rikbaktsa people, 50 years old, and resides in the village of Palmerinha on the Erikpatsa Indigenous Lands, in the municipality of Brasnorte, Mato Grosso. He holds an undergraduate degree in Social Sciences and has completed a post-graduate specialization course in Indigenous Education at the University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT). He works as a teacher in the Barranco Vermelho village.



Photo: Personal Archive



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN



## THE RIKBAK TSA PEOPLE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

JUAREZ PAIMY

**THE WORD “RIKBAK TSA”** means “warrior people.” We of the Rikbakt sa people have traditionally lived in the northeastern state of Mato Grosso, along the middle and lower part of the Juruena river, the middle of the Arinos river and the Rio do Sangu e river. We currently reside in the municipalities of Brasnorte, Juara, and Cotriguaçu and have migrated along the Juruena river since our first years of contact with the wave of colonial expansion that took place in the region from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Before contact, we were approximately 5,000,000; now our population is a little less than 2,500. A significant reduction in our population occurred between the years 1950 and 1963, due to conflicts with rubber tappers and the flu and measles epidemics they brought with them.

Climate change has created many big problems for the lives of the Rikbakt sa people and is a threat to our survival, as it has interfered with our traditional calendars, farming of traditional crops, fishing, and hunting, as well as the harvesting of native fruits. It has also interfered with the lives of aquatic and forest creatures, as well as had a negative impact on the natural materials we use in our cultural ceremonies.

The Rikbakt sa believe that if this continues, life on the planet may come to an end for many species, if not all of them, or their life cycles may be significantly shortened. Due to public policies that favor agribusiness, hydroelectric power plants, deforestation, excessive use of agrochemicals, and uncontrolled slash and burn practices, or rather, various kinds of environmental degradation, it is becoming more and more difficult to control or understand the climate situation. Our pajés and elders, who know natural phenomena very well, believe that the current way of thinking about and using the environment will lead nature herself to bring irreversible consequences to the entire population of planet Earth. Moreover, this will especially be true for indigenous populations that are very familiar with and depend on natural phenomena to carry out their everyday activities, along with their traditional customs and rituals.

The main challenges our people have been facing since the first years of contact to the modern day is continuing our resistance to this degradation and living on our territory. Even though, as the story goes, Brazil is about to mark the 519th years since its “discovery,” the Rikbakt sa were here long before that. And, over the years, the Rikbakt sa people have continued to stay and resist the grand economic temptations that have presented themselves in various situations involving environmental degradation, such as logging, mining operations, hydroelectric power plant and highway construction, and more.



The people see and feel how the Juruena river is becoming changing more and more from previous years due to the degradation of its headwaters, the silting of its bed, the pollution of its waters, the loss of biodiversity and the drastic reduction in its fish populations. The water is no longer fit for consumption, whether it be in the form of drinking, cooking, washing clothes, or bathing, as it has become increasingly muddier.

The level of droughts and floods vary from one year to the next. Even our calendar of traditional knowledge regarding fishing and planting crops has undergone very significant changes. Our most experienced members and our elders say that temperatures have been excessively high, and as a consequence, the earth is becoming too hot and could burn or bake all of the seeds and saplings of the various species we plant on our traditional farmlands.

The World Climate Conference needs to address deforestation, measures to reforest headwaters and riverbanks, uncontrolled and abusive slash and burn practices, hydroelectric power plants, as well as agribusiness and its excessive use of agrochemicals.

Furthermore, the indigenous population must be involved in decision making regarding these matters, participating in discussions at every level of policy-making, whether it be the municipal, the state or the federal level. To do this, we need to have indigenous representatives in the legislative bodies of the municipalities and the states, as well as at the National Congress, and the Federal Senate of the country. However, until this happens, all discussions that involve and affect an indigenous population should be addressed at assemblies that include the entire indigenous population, principally leaders, caciques, teachers, and pajés, where many aspects of these projects that might affect our societies should be fully explained to them.

## JUAREZ PAIMY

A member of the Rikbaktsa people, he currently lives in the village of Curva, on the Erkpatsa Indigenous Lands, in the municipality of Brasnorte, Mato Grosso. He is 50 years old and a teacher. He holds an intercultural teaching position with the Hayô project by Seduc/MEC and is currently studying for teaching certification at the FAEL Long-distance School of Education in Juína, Mato Grosso.



Photo: Personal Archive



Photo: Adriano Gambarini/OPAN











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