

# Climate in the Hands of Brazil - Indigenous Groups



## What do Indigenous people have to do with Climate Change?

- *Indigenous tribes in Brazil are just one example of the indigenous work being done to protect lands across the globe*
  - *When you think of the lands that need to be protected what immediately comes to your head?*
    - *A. tropical rainforest*
    - *B. Grasslands*
    - *C. Forests*
    - *D, Prairies*
    - *E. All of the above*
  - *If you said E, you are correct! All of them need to be protected, and indigenous groups are doing work (and living) in all sorts of biomes/habitats*

- *Now, when you think about mitigating the effects of climate change, do you immediately think of helping polar bears and melting ice caps?*

Think Honestly:      YES      NO

- *Many of you might say yes, and that is okay! It is very shared perception of the “primary” issues of climate change*
- *While those are CRUCIAL issues, it is important to expand past the knowledge of just these two issues. To begin in this learning, I want to share what I found researching various indigenous groups who have been struggling and tackling climate change for decades.*



## Indigenous Brazilians: Why are we looking specifically at them and their work?



### Brazilian Tribes:

ONE of the countries we are focusing in on, and here are some facts about them:

- *Indigenous people protect **80%** of the world's biodiversity. This protected land is an incredibly large sum of the earth's natural resources, species, and everything else that lives within these limits.*
- *This must mean there is a lot of people in these tribes helping protect so much land right?*
  - ***False.** Indigenous people are less than **5%** of the world's population and their immense efforts still get little-to no recognition, help, awareness, and support.*
- *Well the first reason starts with the geographical location - The Amazon rainforest and other habitats in this country keep a lot of the world's ecosystem stable:*
  - *Many people call the Amazon Rainforest, specifically, the "**lungs of the world**" - there are hundreds of animals and biodiversity, and if it is threatened, the whole world is tipped over on the "climate scale" - In other words, Climate change would, and is, quickly worsened by this Rainforest being at threat*
- *We are also looking at Brazil because it is home to hundreds of indigenous people (**400-500 tribes** in the Amazon Rainforest-natural geographic ) that are, and have been, combating **deforestation, drought, logging, air pollution, water pollution, forest fires, and way more.***
- *Due to the right-wing political situation in the country, the land in Brazil - specifically the Amazon - is not being protected, rather, it is being exploited much faster than it was ever before.*

- In Brazil, there is the *Amazon rainforest*, which is the largest tropical rainforest in the world, as well as the most diverse biodiversity
  - There are *millions of animals, insects, trees, freshwater, land*, and more than scientists can even record.
  - "Brazil is home to some of the *most carbon-rich forests in the world*, with about *63 billion tonnes of carbon locked in.*"- this is *10% of earth's carbon* stored in all ecosystems
  - There are hundreds of *bodies of water* which hold tons of freshwater (as well as salt waters)
    - Rivers, streams, lakes, waterfalls, etc.
- The tropical forest is massive, but it is shrinking *SO QUICKLY*
  - Do you think it is:
    - *B. 7.5 kilometers wide*
    - *A. 5.5 kilometers wide*
    - *C. 10 kilometers wide*
    - *D. 3 kilometers wide*
      - If you said B, 5.5 you are correct!
  - (it is "so big that the UK and Ireland would fit into it 17 times!" (natural geographic )
- The Amazon rainforest also produces *20%* of the planet's oxygen! (TNR )
- There are so many other reasons, but these are just some!



## How does looking at Indigenous work and resistance matter and help?

(this information is from Climate Home News )

- This study done reveals that strengthening *forest rights* for these communities is a cost-efficient strategy to preserve at least *37 billion tonnes of carbon* around the world.
- Indigenous communities hold a large sum of the earth's forests, but this is being taken away from them
  - in various countries indigenous legally own "more than 500 million hectares of forests globally, about *one eighth of the world's total.*"
- A large amount of land is being cleared on earth, and without these forests the world's climate will be completely knocked off balance:
  - For reference:
    - "13 million hectares of forest are cleared every year at a rate of *50 soccer fields a minute*"!

- How much forest land do you think is cleared every two minutes? - (which is as much time as you spend brushing your teeth for perspective):

- A. 100 soccer fields cleared
- B. 200 soccer fields cleared
- C. 150 soccer fields cleared
- D. 50 soccer fields cleared

- If you said A, you are sadly correct! 100 soccer fields every 2 minutes.

- The protection of legal rights of the indigenous people who hold land in the Amazon rainforest would:
  - Help prevent “27.2 million hectares of deforestation by 2050” in Brazil, meaning that protection could stop 12 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions that could be polluted into the atmosphere!
  - “Prevent logging, roads, mining and other forces that will destroy the forest.”
- There was a study that showed that the amount of deforestation happening inside the land owned by Indigenous people was 0.6% versus the 7% outside their ownership

## Conclusion:

- Indigenous tribes need to be supported and focused on as they continue to brace themselves against Brazil's government that is working against them, the effects of their home being destroyed, legal rights stripped from them, violence (hate crimes) towards them, and general lack of the outside public acknowledgement and resources.
- So...
  - These Brazilians need to be given **more rights** and be insured **protection** in order to



continue and expand the work they are doing - which is selflessly helping the entire world without most people knowing!

- **Governments** in countries like Brazil (meaning in similar circumstances) should

listen to the Indigenous **techniques** for environmental preservation rather than posing their own solutions without consultation

- We have to keep in mind though there is only so much international Indigenous groups can do and we **don't want to put this burden** solely on them - nor come in to help as white and western saviorism.
  - Many groups may not be able to **handle the enormous pressure**, especially from mining, industrial logging and infrastructure projects like building of roads, dams, and pipelines
- There needs to be more information spread about their efforts included alongside the names of people like Greta Thunberg.

#### **Some names to remember!**

- Samela Sateré-Mawé
- Artemisa Xakriabá (I saw her speak at a climate strike!)
- Anita Akawil Yudja
- And many many more

- **Donating** is important! You can search online - try to donate primarily to Indigenous groups if you can!
- **Educate/research** yourself on policies that are protecting or endangering groups!
  - I.e. "Policy-making: The Nature Conservancy is working with the Brazilian government and local indigenous organizations to develop the country's National Policy for Environmental Management in Indigenous Lands." ([nature.org](https://www.nature.org))
- **Research** if you have questions
- Spread CREDIBLE slides and infographics about this topic on **social media**
- **Follow** social medias of some climate groups or new services/or subscribe to website newsletters or read articles

When we think about Climate Change going forward and how to slow it's impending destruction of habitats, animals, land, and global warming, we should highlight a key factor that helps our world: indigenous groups.

**“Greta [Thunberg] says we should listen to the scientists. But what scientists need to do is listen to the wise people of the forest.”**

- **Antonio Nobre**

Some sources:

- <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/brazil/stories-in-brazil/partnering-with-indigenous-peoples/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/15/a-journey-to-the-centre-of-the-amazon-in-radical-bid-to-solve-climate-crisis>
- <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/geography/physical-geography/amazon-facts/>
- <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.climatechangenews.com/2014/07/28/brazils-indigenous-tribes-the-low-cost-solution-to-climate-change/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1615999919277000&usg=AOvVaw1RI-L3vub-CzgghP-m09vK>
- And more